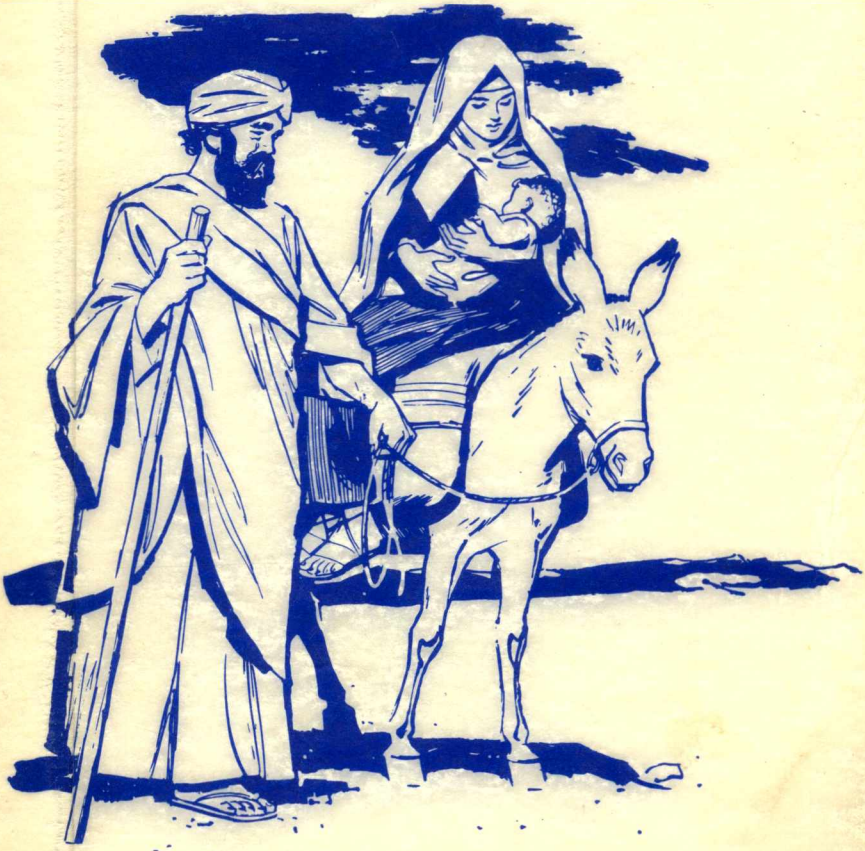
The Story of the New Testament

Ralph Earle



The STORY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

by

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PREFACE

The Bible is a divine-human Book. It is a revelation from God, but it was given through human instruments. We all believe in the inspiration of the Bible. We must also recognize the fact that it was written by men. It is of divine origin, but it is also of human origin. It is this human origin of the New Testament which is the special field of study treated in this book.

The relation of the divine and the human in the inspiration of the Bible is frequently ignored or misunderstood. Jesus Christ is both human and divine, in one Personality. So the Bible is of heavenly origin and at the same time from an earthly source.

We must recognize the fact that the New Testament was not dictated to stenographers by the Holy Spirit. The inspiration was not mechanical, but intelligent and vital. The writers were inspired in their thinking and feeling as they wrote. They thought the thoughts of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, and have recorded these thoughts for us.

The Synoptic Gospels give us the human side of the life of Jesus Christ. We are not to neglect this any more than the spiritual interpretation of Christ found in John's Gospel and in the Epistles of the New Testament.

Just so, we should not neglect the human origin of the New Testament. In our study together we shall seek to learn more of the literary and historical background of the New Testament writings, as well as to survey briefly their contents.

RALPH EARLE

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I

THE GROWTH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Bible of the Early Christians

Can you imagine any Christian being without the New Testament? Hard as it may be for us to envision such a situation, yet thus it was with the Early Church for the first twenty years of its history. None of the first generation of Christians ever saw a complete New Testament, and some of them, such as Stephen and James, never had the privilege of reading even one of the twenty-seven books of the new faith.

Were these early Christians then without a Bible? Not by any means. They accepted and used the sacred Scriptures of the Jews. In this they followed the example of Jesus, who quoted the Old Testament writings and ascribed to them divine authority. The authors of the New Testament were led by the Spirit of inspiration to adopt the same attitude. The Old Testament was the Bible of the early Christians.

The Septuagint version, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, made at Alexandria, Egypt, about two hundred years before Christ, was the missionary book of crusading Christianity in its first generation. To it later was to be attached the Greek New Testament to form the Bible of the Christian Church.

2. The Appearance of the New Testament Writings

a. The Letters of Paul. The New Testament began as a missionary book. The first units of it were written on the foreign mission fields by the greatest of all missionaries, the Apostle Paul. Its purpose was essentially missionary, to instruct and establish the new converts.

Some writers have argued that the Epistle of James was written at about A.D. 45, and so was the first book of the New Testament to appear. Others claim that Galatians was written around A.D. 48. But most scholars, whether conservative or liberal, are agreed in assigning

this place to Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians, written at Corinth not earlier than A.D. 50.

The occasion of this First Epistle gives us an insight into the motive that produced most of the books of the New Testament. Paul had recently left the newly established church at Thessalonica, because of Jewish persecution. He was now waiting at Corinth, eager to learn of the welfare of his Gentile converts in Macedonia. When Timothy brought him the news he wrote at once to the Thessalonian Christians, commending, exhorting, and instructing them. It was as missionary founder and general superintendent of the early Gentile churches that Paul wrote most of his Epistles. After an interval of probably only a few months, the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians followed the First. These were the two products of the apostle's pen on his second journey.

During his third missionary campaign Paul wrote the two letters to the Corinthian church, the one to the churches of Galatia, and the one to the Christians at Rome. The Epistle to the Galatians may, however, have been written earlier.

The cream of Paul's writings—Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians—appeared when his thinking had had time to settle during the four years he spent in prison at Caesarea and at Rome. The fruit of the great apostle's fellowship with Christ is here seen in its greatest richness.

The last group of Paul's Epistles, the so-called Pastorals, appeared some five years later, near the end of the apostle's life. First Timothy and Titus were written probably after Paul's release from Roman imprisonment, while he was making further journeys. Second Timothy is his swan song, written shortly before his martyrdom, in Rome, at about A.D. 67.

b. The Synoptic Gospels. Somewhere near this time three of our Gospels appeared. Mark was probably writ-

ten first, in the fifties or sixties. Matthew and Luke appeared soon after, either in the sixties or seventies. We do not know the exact dates of the Synoptic Gospels.

c. *Acts.* The Book of Acts, the earliest record of church history, takes us to the end of Paul's two years in prison at Rome. Whether the book was published at that time or not we cannot tell. It gives us an account of the working of the Holy Spirit in the Early Church and also furnishes us with a historical framework in which to place the letters of Paul. Without the Book of Acts many allusions in the Pauline letters would be very obscure.

d. *The Epistle to the Hebrews.* The anonymous Epistle to the Hebrews, the theme of which is the superiority of Christianity to Judaism, was probably written in the middle sixties, shortly before the epochal destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. With the fall of that central stronghold of Judaism, and the final cessation of the sacrificial Temple worship, much of the immediate occasion for the writing of Hebrews would seem to have passed away.

e. *The Catholic Epistles.* The word catholic means "universal," as in the Apostles' Creed. The Catholic, or General, Epistles are designated thus because they are not written to any specific church but to the Church at large.

The Epistles of Peter, James, and Jude were probably written during the period in which Paul wrote his Pastoral Epistles. Tradition has it that Peter was martyred at Rome at the same time as Paul. That would make his Epistles contemporary with Paul's later ones.

f. *The Johannine Writings.* The writings of the Apostle John—his Gospel, three Epistles, and Revelation —are supposed to have been the last of the New Testament writings to appear. According to the tradition of the Church they were written by the beloved disciple during the last decade of the first century, and probably

in the last half of that decade. The aged patriarch of the apostolic Church was to close the New Testament revelation with his great vision of the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God.

3. The Formation of a New Testament Canon

Thus it would appear that at the end of the first century the Christian Church possessed all of the writings of our present New Testament. But this does not mean that all the churches had all the twenty-seven books which we now possess in one volume. The facts would indicate that such was far from being the case. The first step of producing these books had been taken. But the second step of selecting an authoritative list, or canon, of New Testament writings still remained.

a. The Collections of Epistles and Gospels. Let us visualize the situation for a moment as it appeared at the time of Paul's death. The churches at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica would each have at least one of Paul's letters. There would have been some exchange of letters among the nearby churches. This is suggested by Paul's instruction to the Colossians to share their letter from him with the Laodiceans, and to read also the one which he had written to Laodicea (Col. 4:16). But it is not at all probable that any one church possessed the complete group of Pauline Epistles as we now have them.

The first step, then, would be for someone to make a collection of Paul's letters, as they were to be found in the various churches. The motive for this may have been the reading of Acts by someone who was thus led to see the very important place held by Paul in the Early Church. This is suggested by Professor Goodspeed, who thinks that this collection of Pauline letters was made and published sometime between the publication of Acts and the writing of Revelation.[1]*

* Footnotes will be found on pages 127 and 128.

The next logical step would be the collecting of the four Gospels. Since John's Gospel was not written until near the close of the first century, this collection was obviously not made until early in the second century. Professor Goodspeed places the date at round A.D. 120 to 125.[2]

It has long been assumed that all the writings of the first two or three centuries circulated during that period only in the form of rolls, or scrolls. This was due partly to the fact that our oldest manuscripts of the Bible go back only to the fourth century. But discoveries made within just the last few years have revealed the very interesting fact that Paul's letters were published in the third century all in one codex, or leaf book. The leaves of these codices were of papyrus, the word which has given us our term "paper." Papyrus was made from a reed by that name, which grew on the banks of the Nile River, in Egypt. Since papyrus was perishable stuff, except in the very dry climate of Egypt, no complete papyrus books have been found. But 86 leaves (172 pages) of a papyrus codex of Paul's Epistles, dating probably from the early third century, have now been recovered.

There is some evidence that the New Testament writings may have circulated frequently in the second and third centuries in four books, or codices. One would contain Paul's Epistles and another the four Gospels. The Book of Revelation, in keeping with its unique character, circulated by itself. Acts was sometimes placed with the four Gospels and sometimes with the Catholic Epistles. It is closely connected with the latter in the earliest manuscripts which we have.

b. The Canon of Marcion. We have no canonical list of the books of the New Testament coming from the early part of the second century. We have evidence, however, of the existence of the various Gospels and Epistles in the writings of the Early Church fathers. It is these al-

lusions to and quotations from the various books of the New Testament that constitute what is called the external evidence of their existence and of their use as sacred scripture. This evidence is of considerable quantity and value.

The first attempt that we know of to indicate a fixed number of books for the New Testament canon was made by Marcion, a Gnostic heretic who lived at Rome. At about A.D. 140 he put forth a list of the books which he accepted as authoritative. One of the main beliefs of the Gnostics was that spirit is good, but that all matter is evil. It follows logically from this that a Good God cannot create a material universe and that Christ could not have had a physical body. Consequently, Marcion rejected the Old Testament and much of the New. His New Testament consisted of ten Pauline Epistles (omitting the Pastorals) and Luke's Gospel, minus the first few chapters.

It will thus be seen that Marcion did what others in more modern times have done. He accepted the parts of the Bible that agreed with his notions and rejected the rest.

c. *The Muratorian Fragment.* Probably Marcion's action roused the orthodox Church of the second century to take steps toward fixing a canon, or standard list, of books to be accepted by the whole Church as sacred, inspired Scripture, worthy of a place beside the Old Testament Scriptures.

The first of such lists that we have, and the only one from the second century, is the Muratorian Canonical Fragment from about A.D 200. It is a fragment, because the first part is broken off. It starts with Luke's Gospel. But it states that this is the third Gospel and lists John's Gospel as fourth. So there is no room for doubt that the list started with Matthew and Mark.

Besides the four Gospels, this list includes Acts, thirteen Pauline Epistles, Revelation, and some, but not all, of the General Epistles. Its testimony agrees with that of the rest of the evidence from the second century that the four Gospels and thirteen Pauline Epistles were accepted first by the Church. It was only later, and after much discussion, that the General Epistles were acknowledged by the whole Church to be a part of the sacred canon of the New Testament.

The case of Revelation is interesting in this connection. It was used as scripture by Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, two of the leading Christian writers of the second century. The dispute about the canonicity of Revelation came at a later period. "There is no evidence that during the second century any orthodox collection of Christian writings omitted the Revelation."[3]

d. The Close of the Second Century. We may sum up the situation at the close of the second century by saying that we have evidence of the use in the Church at that time of all our present twenty-seven books of the New Testament, except II Peter. It appears that that book, together with II and III John, Jude, and James, was not accepted by all the Church of the second century.

e. The Canonical List of Athanasius. The earliest definite list of exactly our twenty-seven books of the New Testament is to be found in an Easter letter written by Athanasius to the Christians of Egypt in 367. In this the great champion of orthodoxy states that our present twenty-seven books, and no others, were to be considered canonical.

f. The Decision of the Councils. It must be understood that the councils of the Church did not select the books to be included in the canon of the New Testament. They simply gave official approval to that which had already been decided by the combined Christian consciousness of the Church, led by the Spirit.

The Council of Carthage, in 397, gives a canonical list of New Testament Scriptures which includes exactly our twenty-seven books, and no others. This decision was ratified by the Council of Carthage, in 419, and by later general church councils.

These official statements indicate that at the end of the fourth century the Christian Church accepted as divine Scripture the same New Testament as we now possess. Its best leaders had already given their sanction to such a decision in the second and third centuries.

"The development of the canon may seem haphazard and indefinite, but we believe that the providence of God was back of it, guiding the church to the selection of just those books that His Spirit had inspired. Are we in doubt about what we now have? Is there a single book that we would be willing to lose from our New Testament? On the other hand, read the extra-canonical books and see if there is one that you would be willing to put on a par with the books of the New Testament. No, God does not always lead the church infallibly; but we do believe that He did eventually lead it unerringly to just those books that He wanted in His New Covenant. And the history of fifteen hundred years points to the same conclusion."[4]

Does the reader have any doubts in the matter? Let him secure a copy of the New Testament Apocrypha. Even a brief perusal of the books contained therein will cause him to agree heartily with the judgment of the Church of the first four centuries.

4. The Transmission of the New Testament Text

a. Ancient Manuscripts. It may seem a little startling at first to realize that we have no original manuscripts of any part of the New Testament. But such is the case. The oldest manuscripts which we have go back only as far as the fourth century. We do have papyrus fragments from the second and third centuries, however,

which are of great value in confirming the text of these oldest manuscripts for the limited portions covered by the papyri. The Chester Beatty papyri were discovered in 1931. Three of them, which are dated in the third century, contain considerable parts of the New Testament.

The statement that we have no original manuscripts might at first sight raise the question: "How can we know that we have the original text of the books of the New Testament?" That is a fair question to ask.

The first answer that should be given is that we have some five thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, in whole or in part. By a careful comparison of these different manuscripts, especially the older ones, one may feel a great degree of certainty in constructing the correct text.

One sometimes hears the statement made, rather blatantly, that there are thousands of variant readings in the text of the New Testament. The statement, as it stands, is correct. But the implication intended in the statement is very misleading and entirely unjustifiable. It must be remembered that all of these five thousand manuscripts were copied by hand, before the days of printing. That is what we mean by a manuscript: it is something written by hand, not printed.

Now, in copying by hand it is impossible to avoid having some errors. If twenty copyists were set to the task of making reproductions of even a short document, there would be some differences. Everyone who has had to copy quotations frequently knows how easy it is to make some mistakes, in spite of great care. But in comparing the many different manuscripts these copyists' errors can be "weeded out" and the best text restored. The very enormity of the number of Greek manuscripts in our possession is a strong guaranty of our ability to recover approximately the correct text.

But let us consider again the statement to the effect that there are thousands of variant readings in the dif-

ferent manuscripts. We have said that the statement is misleading. It gives the impression that the manuscripts are literally full of errors, and that it is quite impossible to hope for a restoration of the true text.

The first fact that should be noted is that a very large proportion of these variant readings are due simply to differences in spelling or in grammatical form. When it is remembered that these written manuscripts cover a period of over a thousand years, from the fourth century to the invention of printing in the fifteenth, the differences in spelling are not at all surprising. An early copy of our King James Version, made only about three hundred years ago, would look rather strange beside the text of our Bibles today. We accept without question the elimination of archaisms in our modern versions, and we should expect it also in ancient times.

The facts of the case are that the number of truly relevant variations in the readings of the text of the different manuscripts is really amazingly small. And these actually significant variations have been weighed with extreme care by textual experts. The result is that we need fear no uncertainties as to the validity and reliability of our present Greek text of the New Testament. And let us always remember that no doctrine of Scripture is affected materially by any of these variant readings. We have a sure foundation for the great doctrines of our Christian faith. The more one studies the field of textual criticism, the more firm does this foundation appear.

Considerable publicity was given to the purchase of the Sinaitic manuscript. The Codex Sinaiticus was purchased by the British government from the Russian government for half a million dollars, the highest price ever paid for one book. It was then placed in the British Museum, where the Alexandrian manuscript already was kept.

This Sinaitic manuscript was discovered by Tischen-

dorff in 1859. He rather naturally overestimated its value. He thought he had recovered the pure text of the original manuscripts of the New Testament. But we realize no single manuscript is entirely free from error.

The Vatican manuscript is considered to be the oldest and best Greek manuscript now extant. It apparently comes from the early fourth century, and Sinaiticus from the latter part of that century. Sinaiticus, however, is more complete, having all of the New Testament. Vaticanus is broken off at the ninth chapter of Hebrews. Where these manuscripts agree, especially when supported by an ancient papyrus, there seems little room left for doubt in the matter.

b. Jerome's Vulgate. The standard, or authorized, Bible of the Roman Catholic church is the Vulgate version in Latin made by Jerome near the end of the fourth century. This hermit scholar worked long and faithfully in his cell in Bethlehem, the town of Jesus' birth.

This Vulgate, or common, version—so-called because it came into such common use—wielded a large influence on all subsequent translations, including English versions. Unfortunately, its text is far from being perfect.

c. Erasmus' Greek Testament. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Reformation era, work was begun on a new edition of the Greek New Testament, to be printed. This work was done by Cardinal Ximenes. But before he had his text ready for publication a certain Swiss printer decided to make a publisher's "scoop" by getting out a printed Greek Testament first. So he asked the great scholar, Erasmus, to prepare such a volume. The latter went to work and in less than a year's time he had the manuscript ready to be printed. It was published in 1516.

Erasmus was a real scholar, but this piece of work was very hasty and rather superficial. He used only a few late Greek manuscripts of definitely inferior value.

d. The King James Version. Unfortunately, this Greek text of Erasmus became the main basis for the New Testament of our King James Version. That is, the so-called Authorized English Version was translated from a Greek text which was only a slightly altered form of Erasmus' Greek Testament. This fact alone is responsible for many of the weaknesses of the King James Version.

This translation was made in 1611, at the order of King James I, of England. The work was done by a group of the best Hebrew and Greek scholars in that country and was done well. The King James translators are worthy of high commendation. But it must be remembered that they had a relatively poor Greek text from which to translate. Our two oldest and best Greek manuscripts were not then available. A third valuable manuscript, Alexandrinus, arrived in England too late for this work. So the Greek textual basis for the New Testament of the King James Version is faulty in a number of places.

e. The Revised Version. This fact, together with the changes appearing in the English language since 1611, led to a call for revision in the nineteenth century. The need for this became felt increasingly, until finally a revision committee was appointed to undertake the task. The Revised New Testament appeared in 1881 and the entire Bible in 1885. It was hailed as a great contribution to a better understanding of the Bible.

f. The American Standard Version. The American members of the Revision Committee were not satisfied with some of the decisions of the committee as a whole with regard to particular translations. But since the English had taken the initiative in the work of revision, the American section of the committee agreed not to put out a separate American edition of the Revised Version for fourteen years.

As soon as the time limit was up the American Standard Revised Version was ready for publication, appearing in 1901. It has come to be used widely for study purposes, although it has not by any means superseded the King James Version for general use.

The respective superiorities of these two versions are rather apparent to any careful student, especially to one familiar with the Greek text and the history of textual criticism.

From the literary standpoint the King James Version stands supreme in all English literature. It has poetic beauty and oratorical grandeur unsurpassed in any other writing. It has influenced subsequent literature more than any other book. Its superior value for pulpit and private devotional use is acknowledged by intelligent ministers and laymen alike. It is the Bible of our fathers and mothers and still holds peculiar power to bless us as we read it. It must be conceded, however, that the American Standard Revised Version is more accurate and up-to-date and hence more desirable for study use. Some words in the version of 1611 have completely changed their meaning since that date. Others have become obsolete. If one wishes to have a rather literal translation of a text, he should consult the American Standard Edition of the Revised Version.

g. The Revised Standard Version. During the fifty years after the New Testament was revised in 1881 the English language continued to change in vocabulary and style. Also thousands of papyri were discovered, throwing new light on the meaning of the Greek text. Added to this was the fact that the American Standard Version had never become popular for use in private devotions or public worship.

In 1929 the copyright of the American Standard Version was transferred to the International Council of Religious Education, which appointed a revision committee.

The work of this committee began in 1930, but due to lack of funds it was suspended from 1932 to 1937. In the latter year the translation work began in earnest. The Revised Standard Version of the New Testament was published in 1946, the entire Bible appearing in 1952.

h. The New English Bible. Unlike the versions described above, this is not a revision but a fresh translation of the original Greek and Hebrew. It was made by leading British scholars, who began their work in 1947. The New Testament appeared in 1961, the whole Bible (including Apocrypha) in 1970.

The New English Bible is a free, vigorous translation and refreshingly readable. Its interpretative paraphrases do not always meet the approval of everyone, and in some instances British terms are used that are unfamiliar to American readers. But it is a very useful version.

i. The New American Standard Bible. The purpose of this work was to furnish a revision of the American Standard Version (1901) "in clear and contemporary language." The project was sponsored by the Lockman Foundation, which produced *The Amplified Bible.* The New Testament was published in 1963, and the Old Testament is expected by 1971 or 1972.

This is probably the best study Bible available in English. It accurately represents the original in modern English.

Discussion Topics

1. What is the relation of theology to missions? to one's own personal experience?
2. The relation of the divine and human factors in the inspiration of the Bible.
3. What principles guided the Early Church in its selection of a New Testament canon? (See B. F. Westcott's *History of the Canon.*)
4. The story of the discovery of the Sinaitic manuscript.

II

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

1. General Itroduction

a. Meaning of the Term Synoptic. The term synopsis is a Greek word which means "seeing together." The first three Gospels are called the Synoptics because they present the same general view of the life of Christ, in contrast to that found in John's Gospel.

b. Why Four Gospels? It has often been asked why there should have been four Gospels composed instead of only one. The answer seems fairly obvious. No one writer can be expected to appreciate all the phases of the life and character of his hero. One point of view is never complete or satisfactory.

The differences between John's Gospel and the Synoptics are so obvious as to require no argument. But it is often lightly assumed by casual readers of the Bible that the three Synoptic Gospels all tell the same story. We would suggest that the more one studies these three Gospels the more he will be impressed by their distinctive characteristics and purposes. He will appreciate the value of each.

c. The Synoptic Problem. The study of a harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, with the text printed in parallel columns, is a very revealing one. The student is impressed at one and the same time with the striking similarities, amounting in places to exact reproduction, and the very great divergences. How can we account for these similarities and differences? This is the Synoptic problem.

That there was some connection between the Gospels in their composition seems almost unquestionable. In some places the wording of the three Synoptics is exactly the same. In still more instances two of them agree exactly. It would appear that there must have been some copying of each other or of a common document.

A comparison of the Synoptics will indicate first of all that Mark's Gospel is almost entirely narrative, a record of the activities of Jesus, while Matthew and Luke devote a large space to the teachings of Jesus. In other words, they are more didactic.

A second apparent observation is that the three Gospels follow much the same general chronological framework for their accounts of the life and ministry of Christ.

These facts have led almost all New Testament scholars today, both conservative and liberal, to agree in accepting a two-document hypothesis. This theory holds that Mark is the oldest of the Gospels and that Matthew and Luke used Mark for their historical framework.

The large amount of the teachings of Jesus common to both Matthew and Luke is accounted for by the theory that these two writers possessed a common document known as the *Logia*, or *Sayings*. Scholars refer to this source as "*Q*". No trace of such a document has been found, but it seems fairly obvious that Matthew and Luke had some common source for their records of the sayings of Jesus. Matthew may have taken down much of Jesus' teaching in shorthand, which we know was in use in the Roman Empire of that day.

The simplest solution of the Synoptic problem, then, is the suggestion that Matthew and Luke both made use of Mark for their historical outline, and *Q* or some *Logia* for their records of Christ's teaching.

That this does not answer all the problems involved must be admitted. Canon Streeter has sought to help the situation by postulating further documentary sources,

such as *M* for the material found only in Matthew and *L* for that peculiar to Luke.

One of the best aids for the solution of this problem is to be found in the preface to Luke's Gospel, consisting of the first four verses. Some would aver that we have no right to seek for human sources behind the Gospels. We should believe simply that the Holy Spirit gave the material to each writer as we now have it.

Fortunately, we have an answer to this, right in the sacred Scriptures themselves, for Luke tells us that he used sources, both oral and written, for the construction of his account of the life of Christ. Listen to the opening statement of his Gospel, as given in the Revised Version:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed (Luke 1:1-4, A.R.V.).

The truth of the matter seems to be, then, that Luke used both oral and written sources for his Gospel. The fact that Matthew has many verbal agreements with Luke would indicate some common sources used by both. But room should always be left for the fact that Matthew had traveled with Jesus and so could have his data first-hand. This was not true of Luke, who probably never saw Jesus. He must inquire of others who had seen Jesus, and read books written by those who knew Christ.

As has already been hinted, it is altogether possible that Matthew may have composed a *Logia* of the sayings of Jesus, taken down by him at the time of their utterance. He may then have selected, under the guidance of the Spirit, the sayings which he wished to include in his

Gospel. Luke may then have made a different selection, and different grouping, of material from this same document. The best material of the *Logia* having thus been incorporated in these two Gospels, that document itself may have disappeared.

2. The Gospel of Mark

a. Authorship. The tradition of the Early Church is unanimous in ascribing our second Gospel to John Mark. There is also the same unanimity in declaring that, in his Gospel, Mark has given us Peter's interpretation of the life of Christ. So this book might fairly be called "The Gospel according to Peter, as recorded by Mark."

Let us hear two or three witnesses in the matter. Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, wrote at about A.D. 140: "Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, though not indeed in order, whatsoever he remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, who adapted his teaching to the needs of his hearers, but with no intention of giving a connected account of the Lord's discourses, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as he remembered them."[1]

Justin Martyr, writing about the middle of the second century, quotes Mark 3:17 as being from "Peter's Memoirs."

Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, writing near the end of the second century, says that after the departure (probably death) of Peter and Paul, "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter."[2]

A number of other testimonies to the same effect might be given. But perhaps these will suffice to show that in Mark's Gospel we have Peter's view of the life of Christ.

Mark's connection with Peter is confirmed by the latter in his First Epistle where he writes (5:13): "The church . . . saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son." This accords well with the traditions quoted above.

Who was this Mark who wrote the second Gospel? His full name was John Mark. John was his Jewish name, a very common one. Mark was his Roman name. Just as the great missionary apostle is best known by his Roman name Paul, rather than his Jewish name Saul, so the author of the second Gospel is most commonly called Mark.

We are not told anything definite about the childhood of John Mark, but one incident in his Gospel presents a fascinating suggestion. In connection with the arrest of Jesus in the garden, Mark writes (15:51-52): "And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."

This incident is found only in Mark's Gospel. Why should Mark have recorded it? The most natural answer would seem to be that he himself was the young man mentioned.

This suggests an interesting reconstruction. We know that the home of John Mark's mother was a meeting place for the early Christians in Jerusalem. When Peter was released from prison, as recorded in Acts 12, he went first to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered together praying for him. It has been suggested, therefore, that the Last Supper and Pentecost may have taken place in a large upper room in the home of John Mark's mother, who was perhaps a wealthy widow. At least, her husband is never mentioned.

Let us reconstruct this incident of the garden, then. Judas Iscariot had left the supper in the upper room and

gone to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. He returned with an armed mob and naturally went first to the home where he had left Jesus. Failing to find Him there, he left to seek Him elsewhere.

Meanwhile young John Mark, roused by the heavy voices and the light of the torches, was interested to see what was going on. Sensing what was happening, he grabbed the nearest covering and hastened out into the night to warn Jesus of His danger. But the mob reached the garden ahead of him and he was nearly captured in the confusion that followed. Leaving his improvised robe in the hands of his would-be captor, the young lad hurried back to bed, but probably not to sleep!

This reconstruction accords well with what we are told of John Mark's part in Paul's first missionary journey. The young cousin of Barnabas decided that he would like to go with his relative on the great missionary adventure (Acts 13). But he did not last long. He had plenty of enthusiasm, but he lacked stability and perseverance.

Because of Mark's failure on the first journey, Paul was determined not to take him on the second journey (Acts 15). He did not want a quitter in the crowd, so Mark accompanied Barnabas back to Cyprus, while Paul was left to choose a new companion for his further travels.

We are glad that the story does not end there. Paul, who disparaged young John Mark at this time and rejected his services, in his letter to Philemon (v. 24) calls Mark his "fellowlabourer." He does the same in Col. 4:10-11. And in his last Epistle, written to Timothy, he says, "Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry" (II Tim. 4:11).

So Mark, the young man who failed miserably and disgracefully, finally made good. What a lesson for those

who become discouraged with their failures! It is never too late to begin a new day.

So much for the question of authorship and the life of the author. Now let us look at the Gospel which he wrote.

b. Character. The main characteristics of the second Gospel are very marked. We might say that the personality of Peter is plainly reflected in this Gospel. Like him it is quick in movement, active, impulsive. The chief characteristic, then, is *rapidity of action.* The narrative moves swiftly from one event to another. The Greek word which is translated "immediately," "straightway," "forthwith," occurs no less than forty-one times in this Gospel. It reveals the tone of the writing.

A second prominent characteristic is *vividness of detail.* A comparison of the same incidents in the three Synoptics will result in some interesting discoveries. Though Mark is the shortest of the Gospels, yet it has many vivid details not found in Matthew's and Luke's accounts of the same incident. It records the looks and gestures of Jesus, and often gives us the minute details of His actions.

Another characteristic is *picturesqueness of description.* The outstanding example of this is Mark's account of the feeding of the five thousand. He tells us that the people sat down in companies on the green grass. The word which he uses for "ranks" means literally "flower beds." The hundreds of people attired in the bright-colored Oriental garments of red and blue, sitting in groups on the green grass of the hillside, made a beautiful scene which was registered indelibly on Peter's mind. He used to describe it graphically in his preaching, and his young interpreter, Mark, caught the picture and reproduced it for us in his Gospel.

This, then, is preeminently the Gospel of *action.* It does not have the long discourses of Jesus, as found in

Matthew and Luke. There is more of Jesus' doings and less of His teaching than in the other Gospels. This is reflected in the fact that Mark records eighteen of the miracles of Jesus, but only four of His parables, as against fifteen in Matthew.

This emphasis on activity fits in well with the idea that Mark evidently wrote his Gospel especially for the Romans. Corroboration for this is found in the fact that he uses ten Latin words, some of which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament. He has fewer references to the Old Testament than the other Gospel writers. It is also very significant that he furnishes explanations for Jewish words and customs. Obviously he was not writing for Jewish readers. It might also be mentioned that the word law does not occur in his Gospel, though it is found eight times in Matthew, nine times in Luke, and fifteen times in John.

Mark was probably with Peter in Rome for some time before he wrote this Gospel and he had ample opportunity to become acquainted with the Roman type of mind, and so to write a Gospel which would appeal to the Romans.

c. *Contents.* One of the first things to strike our attention when we look at the contents of Mark's Gospel is the omission of much of the material found in Matthew and Luke. Both of the latter have a genealogy of Jesus. Mark has none.

This is in keeping with Mark's purpose. The Romans did not care about a man's genealogy. The question they asked was not, "Where did he c o m e from?" but, "What can he do?" They were more interested in power than in pedigree. They demanded that a man "produce the goods," that he demonstrate his ability. It was not his ancestors and their fame that counted but the man himself and his own accomplishments.

So Mark presents Jesus to the Romans as the great *Conqueror*. He is the mighty Conqueror of stormy winds, of demons, of disease, even of death. Nothing could stand before Him.

Another reason that Mark gives no genealogy is that he is presenting Jesus as the *Servant of Jehovah*. Servants do not parade their pedigrees. Service, not name, is what is demanded of them.

Again, in Mark's Gospel there are no accounts of the births of John the Baptist and Jesus, nor announcements of those births. Nothing is said of the childhood of Jesus. In other words, there are no "infancy narratives."

Instead Mark's Gospel, after only a brief introductory mention of the ministry of John the Baptist and the baptism and temptation of Jesus, plunges us immediately into the public ministry of Christ. We have here only 13 verses of introduction before we come to the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. This is in striking contrast to Matthew's Gospel, where we pass over 76 verses before reaching this point; and still more so in the case of Luke's Gospel, where 183 verses of introductory material precede the public ministry. In both Matthew and Luke the account of Jesus' service does not begin until somewhere in the fourth chapter, whereas in Mark it begins early in the first chapter. In reading Mark's Gospel we almost feel the stirring movement of the swift action. It is the Gospel of Jesus the Worker, the Wonder Worker.

If the student will underline the words "straightway" and "immediately" in even the first two chapters of Mark, note how frequently the verses begin with "and," observe the swift changes of scene, and seek to visualize these changes, he will gain a definite impression of the general character of this Gospel, and feel the almost breath-taking rapidity of its movement.

D. A. Hayes calls this "The Gospel of the Strenuous Life." He writes: "Mark alone has recorded the fact

that twice in his ministry neither Jesus nor those who were working with Him had even time to eat. Something is happening all the time in this narrative."[3]

But this fact is matched by a strange supplementary one—that this Gospel calls special attention to the retirements of Jesus from public life. "Mark lays emphasis on the periods of pause and rest which rhythmically intervene between the several great victories achieved by Christ. He came out from his obscure abode in Nazareth; each fresh advance in his public life is preceded by a retirement, and each retirement is followed by a new and greater victory."[4] These retirements are mentioned in 1:12; 3:7; 6:31; 6:46; 7:24; 9:2; 11:1; 14:34. If Jesus needed to retire often for fresh power for service, His followers cannot hope to get along without such periods.

Since 93 percent of the contents of Mark's Gospel is to be found in Matthew or Luke, or both, there is not much distinctive material here to be treated. We shall find more of such material in the other two Synoptics.

3. The Gospel of Matthew

Renan, the famous French critic, is said to have called Matthew's Gospel "the most important book of Christendom—the most important book that has ever been written." It was the most widely used Gospel in the Early Church and still holds first place in the hearts of many.

a. Authorship. Our earliest testimony on this point comes again from Papias, about A.D. 140. He says, as quoted by Eusebius, "Matthew composed the 'logia' in the Hebrew dialect, and each one interpreted them as he was able." Irenaeus, about A.D. 185, says, "Matthew produced a Gospel writing among the Hebrews in their own language while Peter and Paul were in Rome preaching and founding the Church."[5] This tradition is confirmed by later church fathers.

It has been suggested that the "logia" mentioned by Papias may be the missing document Q. The Gospel of

Matthew as we have it does not look like a translated work. However, it is not impossible that Matthew may have written a Gospel in Aramaic (called "Hebrew" here and in the New Testament) and later have rewritten it himself in Greek. A parallel would be found in the fact that Josephus wrote his history in both Greek and Aramaic, since these two languages were in common use in Palestine at the time. Aramaic was the language of the Jews after the Babylonian captivity.

At any rate the tradition of the Early Church associates our first Gospel with Matthew. No other author is suggested.

When we first meet this writer he is called Levi. Jesus found him sitting at the receipt of custom, or, perhaps, at the toll gate on the great road which passed through Capernaum. He followed Jesus, after first preparing a feast in His honor at his own home. Nothing more is told us of this man who was so prompt to leave a good position to follow the Nazarene. But he could not have left the Church a greater legacy than he has given us in his life of Christ.

b. Character. The thing that impresses us most about the Gospel of Matthew is that it was written for the Jews. It presents Jesus as their *Messiah.*

This fact meets us at the very outset. Like other Jewish histories, it begins with a genealogy, and this genealogy opens with the declaration that Jesus is "the son of David, the son of Abraham." The genealogy goes back only as far as Abraham. That would satisfy the Jews. It is the genealogy of the Jewish Messiah.

Another indication of the Jewish character of Matthew's Gospel is to be found in the large place given to quotations from the Old Testament. "In the course of the Gospel there are no less than sixty citations of Old Testament prophecy as fulfilled in Jesus."[6] This, of course, is far more attention to the Old Testament than is

to be found in any of the other Gospels. In fact, "that it might be fulfilled" is one of the key phrases of this Gospel. In that or a similar form it occurs no less than thirteen times in Matthew. No such phrase occurs in Mark or in Luke. "Altogether nineteen Old Testament books . . . are used by Matthew in the composition of his Gospel. The Gospel according to Matthew is a New Testament book, but it is built upon Old Testament foundations throughout."[7]

It is, therefore, very appropriate that Matthew's Gospel should stand first in the New Testament. It forms a connecting link between the old and new convenants.

One more feature should be mentioned in this connection. Matthew does not seek to explain Jewish customs or to give gegraphical data. It is evident that he was writing for Jews in Palestine.

Closely related to this fact of its Jewish nature is the frequent use of the key words "righteous" and "righteousness." These words are found more times in Matthew's Gospel than in the other three combined. While the Greeks worshiped beauty and the Romans courage, the Jews held righteousness to be the highest good. Matthew reflects this Jewish emphasis.

The most promnient phrase in this Gospel is "the kingdom of heaven." "It occurs in the first Gospel thirty-three times, and nowhere else in the New Testament. Both by its uniqueness and its frequency of use it becomes characteristic of this Gospel throughout."[8] Of the fifteen parables of Jesus in Matthew, twelve begin with the words, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto . . ." This is the Gospel of the Kingdom. In fact the word kingdom occurs some fifty-two times in this Gospel.

It is not surprising, then, to find that Jesus is presented by Matthew as the *King*. The genealogy with which he opens his Gospel is offered to prove that Jesus

was Heir to the throne of David. The wise men came asking, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" It is only this Gospel that records the alarm of Herod over news of the birth of a supposed rival king. Eight times in Matthew Jesus is called the son of David.

Matthew records the people's surprise because Jesus spoke with authority,[9] and he gives us the greatest commentary on that statement in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus utters those most significant words, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you." He presumes to set aside the wisdom of the ages and to assert His own authority against all others. This is either the grossest egotism and most blatant insanity, or it is a profound claim to deity. In the light of the history of Christianity, and in view of our own experience of Jesus Christ, we prefer to accept the latter implication. But there is no middle ground. Jesus was either the Son of God, as He claimed to be, or else the greatest egotist and impostor the world has ever seen. If we reject this dilemma we must deny entirely the testimony and historical validity of the New Testament Scriptures.

Another interesting feature of Matthew's Gospel is its mention of the Church. "The word *ecclesia,* 'church,' occurs sixty-eight times in the epistles, twenty-three times in the Book of Acts, twenty times in the Book of Revelation, and only three times in the Gospels; and each of these three occurrences is in the Gospel according to Matthew."[10]

A prominent characteristic of this Gospel is systematic arrangement. Matthew groups together the parables of Jesus on the Kingdom and has more of a clear outline of his contents than do Mark and Luke. "A distinguishing feature of this Gospel is the large place assigned in it to the *words* of Jesus, arranged in a *systematic* form, not broken up into fragments as they are in the other Gos-

pels."[11] But we shall notice this further in our study of the contents of the Gospel.

c. *Contents.* A comparison of the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke is interesting. These are the only two Gospels that give us a genealogy of Jesus and an account of His birth and childhood, the so-called "infancy narratives."

Both of these Gospels record an announcement of Jesus' birth in chapter one and some incidents connected with His birth and childhood in chapter two. Both record His baptism by John the Baptist in chapter three and His temptation by the devil in chapter four. However, the genealogy in Matthew is in chapter one, and in Luke in chapter three.

When we come to compare these infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke we find that they differ greatly. The basic difference is that the account in Matthew is given from the point of view of Joseph, while that in Luke is given from Mary's standpoint. With that key in hand the significance of the differences in the accounts is readily opened to our minds.

We might take the two genealogies first. Since Matthew is writing for Jews he begins his genealogy with Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. Luke, writing for the Greeks, carries his genealogy back to Adam, "which was the son of God." The Greeks liked to think that they were descended from the gods.

The two genealogies agree for the space between Abraham and David. But Matthew traces the line through Solomon, while Luke follows the line through Nathan, another son of David.

The difference in the two genealogies has occasioned a great deal of discussion. Without entering into the details of the problem we might suggest that the simplest solution, and one that is accepted by many of the best New Testament scholars, is that Luke gives us the actual

blood descent of Jesus through His mother, Mary, while Matthew gives us His official, male genealogy through His foster father, Joseph. The latter would give Him legal title to the throne of David. This solution agrees with the basic difference in the infancy narratives.

Sometimes we see on Christmas cards pictures of shepherds gazing at a brilliant star and wise men kneeling at a manger. Both portrayals are directly contrary to the scripture accounts. Suppose we look at them for a moment.

Luke begins with the announcements of the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus and then goes on to record the births themselves. But, whereas Luke records the announcement to Mary, Matthew gives the announcement to Joseph. Then Luke tells of the birth of Jesus in a manger at Bethlehem, where shepherds from a nearby hillside, instructed by angels, found Him and worshiped Him the very night He was born.

But if one reads carefully the account in Matthew he will find a different story. Here wise men following a star came to Jerusalem inquiring for the newborn King of the Jews. Sent to Bethlehem, they found, not a Babe in a manger, but a Child in a house. Probably the star appeared to them at the time of Jesus' birth and some months had elapsed before they found the young Child in the house. The fact that Herod killed all the male children in Bethlehem under two years of age "according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men,"[12] would imply that Jesus may have been several months old at the time. He was certainly not in any stable manger when the wise men visited Him!

But to continue our comparison of the infancy narratives, we note that Matthew records, beside the visit of the wise men, the flight into Egypt, the slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem, and the return to Nazareth. Luke, going into more detail in the childhood, records,

beside the visit of the shepherds, the circumcision of Jesus, His presentation in the Temple when forty days old, and His visit to the Temple at the age of twelve. Matthew gives the things that interested Joseph, and Luke those that interested Mary.

So much for the infancy narratives. Now let us look further at the contents of Matthew's Gospel.

One of the outstanding sections in Matthew is the Sermon on the Mount, found in chapters five, six, and seven. The theme of this sermon is true, inward righteousness, as opposed to the outward, ceremonial righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Someone has suggested that we have here the constitution and bylaws of the kingdom of Heaven.

In chapter thirteen we find another grouping of Jesus' teachings, the seven parables of the Kingdom. In chapters eight and nine we find ten consecutive miracles, or half the number recorded in the entire Gospel.

Matthew's preference for grouping together the sayings and doings of Jesus in a sort of topical arrangement is very marked. It makes possible the outlining of this Gospel, whereas Mark is largely a continuous historical narrative.

There are five great discourses in Matthew, each of which is followed by the formula, "and when Jesus had finished these sayings": *first,* the Sermon on the Mount, chapters five to seven; *second,* the instruction to the twelve apostles, chapter ten; *third,* the parables of the Kingdom, chapter thirteen; *fourth,* the constitution of the Church, chapter eighteen; *fifth,* the Olivet discourse, chapters twenty-four and twenty-five. "The five discourses set forth the new law, the new apostolate, the new kingdom, the new church, the consummation of all things."[13]

We have in Matthew the story of the Messiah-King. We see the King born of the seed of David, worshiped by

wise men from afar, presented to the nation publicly by John the Baptist, proclaiming the laws of His kingdom, working miracles to demonstrate the supremacy of His kingdom, describing the nature of His kingdom, rejected as King by the Jewish nation and put to death, but rising as King of life and Conqueror of death, to establish His eternal kingdom in the hearts of all men who will accept Him. Truly, the story of Matthew's Gospel is one to move and stir the heart of every reader.

There is one other feature which we wish to notice in closing our study of this Gospel. That is the element of climax, which makes the book "immeasurably effective." It is a great tragedy, beyond anything written by Shakespeare. Farrar has suggested that it is a heavenly drama, in five acts—the Infancy, the Prelude, the Ministry of Words and Deeds, the Doom, and the Triumph.[14]

This moving drama is described by Farrar in words we cannot equal. So we quote: "From the cradle to the Resurrection the action never pauses. Side by side in overwhelming scenes the teaching advances in depth and clearness, the power in mercy and miracle. Side by side there is an increasing vehemence of hatred and an intensified adoration of love and trust. Louder and louder roll over the maddened Pharisees the terrible thunders of His rebuke; softer and more softly are breathed to His disciples the promises of His infinite consolation. . . . Then the pillars of the kingdom of heaven seem to be shattered to the lowest foundations, as its King descends, amid the derision of raging and triumphant enemies, through shame and anguish, to the Valley of Death. But, lo! when all seems lost . . . suddenly, as with a flash of lightning out of the blue sky, the cross becomes the throne, and the sepulchre the portal of immortality; and shattering the gates of brass, and smiting the bars of iron in sunder, He rises from death to life, from earth to heaven, and sends forth His twelve poor chosen ones, armed

with the implement of a malefactor's torture, and with 'the irresistible might of weakness,' to shake, to conquer, to evangelize, to enlighten, to rule the world."[15]

4. The Gospel of Luke

a. Authorship. This Gospel, which Renan declared to be "the most beautiful book ever written," is said by tradition to have been composed by Luke. Irenaeus, about 185, wrote: "And Luke, the follower of Paul, put in a book the gospel that was preached by him."[16] The Muratorian Fragment says that the third Gospel was written by Luke the physician, the companion of Paul. The tradition of the Early Church is unanimous in attributing this Gospel to Luke.

There is an interesting point in the testimony of Irenaeus. He says that it is Paul's preaching which Luke has recorded in his Gospel. The connection is probably not as close as in the case of Mark's Gospel and Peter, but it places apostolic authority back of this Gospel also.

The authorship of the third Gospel is bound up inseparably with that of the Book of Acts. One of the most universally accepted facts in modern criticism is that these two books were written by the same man. "Luke-Acts" is a term which is used very widely today by New Testament scholars.

So leaving any further discussion of the question of authorship until our study of Acts, we shall now take a glimpse at the author himself.

Luke is mentioned by name only three times in the New Testament. In Philemon 24, Paul calls him a fellow worker. In Col. 4:14 he calls him "the beloved physician." In II Tim. 4:11 he writes, "Only Luke is with me."

The most certain thing we know about Luke is that he was a companion of Paul. Besides the references given above, the so-called "we-sections" of Acts—which we

shall note in our study of that book—indicate that Luke traveled with Paul a great deal.

The friendship of Paul and Luke, though we do not know very much about it, must have been an unusually beautiful one. It is easy to conjecture that Paul enjoyed closer fellowship with Luke than with any other companion. "They must have liked each other, because they were like spirits. They were both educated men, with scholarly habits and with literary and cultured tastes. They were great-hearted, liberal-minded, broad-spirited."[17] Paul thought a great deal of his "son" Timothy. But he doubtless had closer fellowship with Luke, who was apparently of about his own age.

It is interesting to conjecture that in their younger days Paul and Luke may have been students together at the University of Tarsus. This is not at all impossible; for this university, which was one of the three best of that time and which was located in Paul's home town, possessed the best medical school in that period. And Luke was a physician.

One of the reasons why Paul may have kept Luke close by him in his later years was that he needed an attending physician. Also Luke's presence was evidently a great comfort to him.

Luke was not only a physician, but a poet. This is indicated by the fact that he has preserved for us five little poems in his Gospel. Hayes calls him "the father and founder of Christian hymnology."[18]

One interesting fact about Luke is that he was apparently a Greek. If so, he is the only Gentile author of a book of the Bible. There are several reasons for believing that Luke was a Greek. His name is Greek. His style is Greek, rather than Jewish. And the list of Paul's companions in Col. 4:10-14 would seem to indicate that Luke was not "of the circumcision."

There seems every reason to believe that if we had more information about Luke we would find him to be one of the most beautiful Christian characters mentioned in the New Testament.

b. Character. Luke's Gospel is the longest one of the four. It is also the most literary, as befitting a cultured, educated Greek. It is evidently written for Gentiles, as it gives explanations not needed by a Jew.

We have already noted that Luke's Gospel (and no other) is characterized by poetry. Some beautiful little poems are to be found in the first two chapters. Three of them—the *Benedictus,* the *Magnificat,* and the *Nunc Dimittis*—are, or were, used regularly in the Anglican service. Two others—*Ave Maria* and *Gloria in Excelsis* —are used by the Roman church. It would seem that Hayes is justified in speaking of Luke as the father of Christian hymnology.

Another feature of Luke's Gospel is the great prominence given to prayer in its pages. Luke alone tells how at six different times during Christ's ministry He prayed —at His baptism, after cleansing the leper, before calling the twelve apostles, at His transfiguration, and twice on the cross. Luke alone gives us the two striking parables on prayer—that of the friend at midnight and that of the unjust judge. "Thus the Gospel of eucharistic hymns is also specially the Gospel of unceasing prayers."[19]

Grace is another idea prominent in this Gospel. The word occurs eight times in Luke. The verb "to evangelize" occurs ten times. It is the Gospel of salvation by grace.

The universality of the gospel is stressed here as in none of the other Gospels. Such statements as, "All flesh shall see the salvation of God," are found only in Luke's Gospel. The point of view here is not Jewish but Gentile.

Luke has given us the Gospel of infancy and of womanhood. This is in keeping with Luke's profession as

a physician and his beautiful character. Larger space is given to women in his Gospel than in any other.

Luke's is also the Gospel of the poor. The shepherds are the first to see the baby Jesus. A widowed woman greets the Infant in the Temple. Luke alone gives us the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and that of the rich fool.

This is also the Gospel of the sinner, of the prodigal and the publican, of Zacchaeus and the dying thief.

In short, Jesus is presented in Luke's Gospel as the compassionate Saviour. This is shown in some of the parables which are found only in this Gospel, especially that of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and the Pharisee and the publican. Of the twenty-seven parables in Luke, eighteen are found only in that Gospel.

The special presentation of Jesus which is made in Luke is that of the Son of Man. Where Matthew speaks of "a certain king," Luke calls him "a certain man." Jesus is shown as the perfect Man, the Friend of sinners.

c. Contents. As we turn to a study of the contents of Luke's Gospel we find that it begins with a literary preface. This preface, which covers the first four verses, is written in the best classical Greek to be found in the New Testament. In fact, the New Testament is not written in classical Greek, but in Koine, or common Greek, the everyday language of the common people in the time of Christ. Probably most of the writers of the New Testament would have been incapable of writing classical Greek. The presence of this gem of beautiful, classical Greek at the beginning of his Gospel demonstrates clearly the fact that Luke was a man of superior education and culture.

We have already quoted this preface in full. We would simply call attention again to the fact that it reveals Luke's methods of research. He tells us that he was careful to consult previous written documents of the life

of Christ, as well as eyewitnesses who knew Him. On the basis of this thorough investigation, he has sought to produce an authentic and orderly account of the life of Jesus.

This leads us to the observation that Luke was not only a physician and a poet, but also an outstanding historian. In fact, the late Sir William Ramsay asserted that Luke deserved to rank beside the greatest Greek historians as a master in this field of literature.

The historical interest of Luke is indicated also by his insertions of chronological data, a feature not found in the other Gospels. Luke was probably a great reader of history, and he writes as a scientific historian.

He begins his Gospel proper (v. 5) with the words, "There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea." The second chapter starts out with a definite historical statement regarding the census ordered by Caesar Augustus, an enrollment which was made "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." The third chapter begins by fixing the time of the beginning of John the Baptist's ministry in noting the political setup in force right then. Luke tells us:

Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.

No one but a historian would write like that. These references will suffice to demonstrate the fact that Luke was at home in the field of historical writing.

There are two topics in Jesus' teaching which are given more prominence in Luke's Gospel than in the others. One is prayer. The best teaching on prayer anywhere in the Gospels will be found in Luke, chapters eleven and eighteen. Humility is another topic empha-

sized by Luke, as in chapter fourteen and in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (chapter eighteen). This is in keeping with the spirit of this Gospel.

One of the outstanding chapters in Luke's Gospel is the fifteenth, which gives the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (the prodigal son). This is in line with Luke's emphasis on salvation. It has been suggested that the first of these parables relates especially to the ministry of Christ, the second to that of the Holy Spirit, and the third to that of the Father.

In this connection it might be well to note that the key verse of Luke's Gospel is found in 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." This idea of lostness receives further emphasis in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, in chapter sixteen. Here we find one of the most vivid pictures of future punishment to be found anywhere in the pages of the New Testament.

One of the favorite arguments of liberal critics of Christianity is that we ought to get back to the simple teachings of Jesus. But these same critics scorn the very idea of a "hell," forgetting that the most terrible revelation of hell is to be found, not in the theology of Paul or John, but in those supposedly simple, ethical teachings of Jesus.

One other feature of Luke's Gospel should be noted. Whereas John's Gospel gives primarily the Judean ministry of Jesus, and Matthew and Mark His Galilean ministry, Luke alone gives us His Perean ministry, which came near the close of His public life. The material found in chapters ten to eighteen of Luke is largely peculiar to that Gospel.

To sum up our study of the three Synoptics we might say that Mark was written for the Romans to pre-

sent Jesus as Servant, Matthew was written to the Jews to present Jesus as King, Luke was written to the Greeks to present Jesus as the Son of Man. And we might add that John was written to Christians to present Jesus as the Son of God. So in the four Gospels we have the opposites of office—Servant and King—and the opposites of nature—Son of Man and Son of God. Jesus combined all of these in His matchless personality and ministry.

Discussion Topics

1. The oral tradition theory as a solution of the Synoptic problem. (See Westcott's *Introduction to the Four Gospels.*)
2. What is the meaning of "kingdom of heaven" in Matthew's Gospel?
3. The Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament which are mentioned by Matthew.
4. The prayer life of Jesus as recorded by Luke.
5. The deity of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

III

ACTS

1. Authorship

We have already noted that it is held universally by New Testament scholars that Luke and Acts were both written by the same author. They are both addressed to the same person, Theophilus. In the first verse of Acts the writer mentions his "former treatise," which is unmistakably the third Gospel.

Theophilus is addressed in Luke 1:3 as "most excellent." This indicates that he was of high rank in Roman society. Theophilus, which means "lover of God," may have been his baptismal name. It has been suggested that this man was perhaps a wealthy patron of Luke, and may have paid for the publication of his two volumes. It was the custom of that day for an author to dedicate his books to his patron.

We have also noted that the writer of Acts was a companion of Paul. This is indicated by the "we-sections" of Acts. The larger part of the book is written in the third person, as objective history. But certain sections of it are written in the first person plural.

The use of "we" would indicate that the author participated in the events of the book at that point. And so we learn that the writer of Acts joined the Pauline missionary party at Troas, as it left for Europe (Acts 16:10). He traveled with the party to Philippi and was associated with Paul and his companions during their early ministry there.

But when the missionaries left Philippi to go to Thessalonica the author of Acts evidently remained at the former place, for the use of the third person is resumed (17:1).

The first person plural occurs again in 20:5 ("us"). In 20:6 we read: "We sailed away from Philippi." Apparently the writer had stayed at Philippi in the interim between Paul's visit there on his second journey and his visit there on his third journey. The indications are that he stayed with Paul most of the time after that, for he went with him on his final return to Jerusalem and sailed with him to Rome (chapter 27).

There is also some evidence in Luke's Gospel and Acts that the author was a physician. This evidence consists of the frequent use of medical terms. For instance, when Matthew and Mark quote Jesus' statement about a camel going through the eye of a needle, they use the common term for a sewing needle. But Luke, in the same connection, uses the word for a surgeon's needle. Also Luke uses more technical medical language than the other Synoptists in describing some of the healings performed by Jesus. While the argument based on the use of medical terms was certainly overstated by Hobart in his book on the subject,[1] yet there is a residuum of evidence on that point which cannot be ignored. All such evidence confirms the Lukan authorship of the third Gospel and Acts, since Paul refers to Luke as "the beloved physician."

The final step in the internal evidence of authorship is that of the companions of Paul mentioned by him in his Epistles only two are not named in Acts. These two are Luke and Titus. When it comes to a choice between these two we may let the external evidence (Early Church tradition) settle it unquestionably in favor of Luke.

It would appear, then, that Luke joined Paul's party at Troas on the second journey; that he sailed with it to Philippi; that he remained there as pastor of the church for about six years, until Paul's return to the city on his third journey; that he then remained with Paul as his

closest companion and attending physician until the close of the great apostle's life.

2. Date

The date of Acts, as already indicated, seems to be suggested by the fact that the book closes with the statement that Paul spent two years as a prisoner at Rome. Many of the best New Testament scholars feel that this is fairly conclusive evidence that the book was written at that time. It is difficult to understand why the author would fail to mention the martyrdom of Paul and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) if those events had already taken place.

The end of Paul's two years' imprisonment at Rome would be at about A.D. 61, his death probably occurring in A.D. 67 or 68. This date for Acts is very important because it affects our dating of the Synoptic Gospels, for it is very clear that Luke's Gospel was written before Acts, and it is held almost universally that Mark was written before, and Matthew at about the same time as, Luke. In view of the uncertainties involved, we cannot know the exact dates. But we can be sure that the writers of these Gospels had plenty of reliable material linked to the life of Jesus.

3. Importance

The importance of anything can best be measured by asking how we should get along without it. Guided by this principle, we should have to rate Acts as one of the most important books in the New Testament. It would be impossible to understand the radical change in the status of Christianity between the Gospels and the Epistles if we did not have the Book of Acts to cover this period of rapid development. Says Hayes: "If the curtain had been drawn upon the crucifixion of Jesus and lifted again only after the death of Paul, we never could have understood how the Christian faith had burst its Jewish bonds and

taken its flight over all the Mediterranean lands and established itself as the inevitable conqueror of all the modern world."[2]

The Book of Acts is not only the first manual of church history; it is also "the best manual on revivals ever written." "The Book of Acts has all the abiding secrets of success in revival work: prayer, plain gospel preaching, the faithful presentation of the fundamentals of the faith, directness of aim, persistence of effort, the baptism of the Holy Spirit."[3]

4. Historical Accuracy

No other books in the New Testament have been subjected to such vigorous attacks from the standpoint of historical accuracy as have the two volumes from Luke's pen. The German critics of the nineteenth century assailed Luke as a pseudo-historian, unworthy of any credence; but the most careful scholarship of this century, influenced partly by archeological discoveries, has very largely reversed that opinion. Even liberal critics have been compelled by the new data to accept the credibility of Luke as a historian.

The most outstanding authority at the beginning of the century on the history and geography of the lands in which Paul journeyed was Sir William Ramsay, an Englishman. Starting out as a disciple of the radical German school, Ramsay decided to investigate for himself the historical background of the Book of Acts. The more he searched, the more he found Luke confirmed at every step, until Ramsay came to have the very highest respect for Luke as an accurate historian.

Let us look at one example. There were two types of provinces in the Roman Empire of Paul's day: the senatorial and the imperial.[4] The governor of the provinces under the control of the senate was called a proconsul. The governor of the provinces directly under the rule

of the emperor was called a propraetor. Critics claimed that Luke made a serious blunder when he called Sergius Paulus "proconsul" (Acts 13:8, 12). They said that secular history indicated that Cyprus was an imperial province, and the governor would be a propraetor.

But, as in a number of such instances, archeological discoveries have confirmed the Biblical account, for there has been discovered a carved inscription on the north coast of Cyprus which is dated "in the proconsulship of Paulus." So here we have not only a confirmation of Luke's use of proconsul, but mention of the very person who held the office.

We might note one more example. Luke calls the rulers of Thessalonica "politarchs." This title was not used for city magistrates by any classical Greek author; so the critics laughed at Luke for his ignorance. "But now seventeen inscriptions have been found that use the title, thirteen of them in Macedonia and five in Thessalonica. One of the inscriptions spans an arch in Thessalonica and has the title politarch with the names of some of Paul's converts there (Sosipater, Gaius, Secundus)."[5]

And so Robertson concludes: "It is not too much to say that Luke has come out magnificently as the result of archeological research. Ramsay's researches have proved that Luke in Acts reflects the nomenclature and the geography of the first century A.D. The discoveries have vindicated him at every turn."[6]

5. Contents

The Book of Acts is one of the easiest books of the New Testament to master thoroughly. Its outline is clear and plain, and the historical narrative is easy to follow.

The key verse is Acts 1:8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." This verse gives us not only the power, but

also the program, of the Early Church: the power—the Holy Spirit; the program—world evangelism. This verse also furnishes us with an outline of the book. Acts is an account of the spread of Christianity: (1) In Jerusalem, chapters 1—7; (2) In all Judea and Samaria, chapters 8—12; (3) In all the world, chapters 13—28.

The most obvious division of the book is at the end of chapter 12. In the first twelve chapters Peter is the most conspicuous figure. In chapters 13—28 Paul is the prominent character. So we have a two-part biographical outline. We might say that in the first twelve chapters we have a record of home missions, while the remainder of the book deals with foreign missions.

A table of contents of the book, by chapters, will aid the student in turning quickly to almost any incident in the book.

1. *a.* The Ascension
   b. Choice of Matthias
2. *a.* Pentecost
   b. Peter's first sermon
3. *a.* Healing of lame man
   b. Peter's second sermon
4. *a.* First persecution
   b. Prayer meeting
5. *a.* Ananias and Sapphira
   b. Second persecution
6. *a.* Appointment of the seven
   b. Stephen's arrest
7. *a.* Stephen's defense
   b. Stephen's death
8. *a.* Philip in Samaria
   b. Philip and the eunuch
9. *a.* Saul's conversion
   b. Peter at Lydda and Joppa
10. *a.* Peter's vision
    b. Peter at Cornelius' house

11. *a.* Peter's defense
    b. Christians in Antioch
12. *a.* Peter's deliverance
    b. Herod's death

Paul in:

13. Cyprus and Pisidian Antioch
14. Iconium, Lystra, Derbe
15. Jerusalem
16. Philippi
17. Thessalonica, Berea, Athens
18. Corinth
19. Ephesus
20. Troas and Miletus
21. Jerusalem

Paul's speech before:

22. The Jews
23. The Sanhedrin
24. Felix
25. Festus
26. Agrippa
27. Paul's voyage and shipwreck
28. Paul at Rome

Let us notice now some of the outstanding events in the first part of the book. (The student should have his Bible open before him as he reads. Our study of Acts may serve as a sample of how one may study a book of the New Testament.)

It is instructive to notice the opening words of this book: "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Note the word "began."

The Book of Acts, then, is to give an account of what Jesus *continued* to do and teach through His disciples, as they were empowered and instructed by the Holy Spirit. This book is a record, not only of the "Acts of the

Apostles," but also of the acts of Jesus through His apostles, or the acts of the Holy Spirit. Any of those names is allowable, although the last is probably the best. Some early Greek manuscripts have simply "The Acts" as title.

The account of Jesus' ascension given in Acts 1 is very similar to that given in Luke 24. In both is stressed the command to tarry at Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Luke picks up here where he left off in his Gospel.

The election of Matthias is a curious example of how men may put God in a predicament. Impulsive Peter thought they ought to fill the place in the apostolic circle left vacant by the suicide of Judas Iscariot. So they appointed two men, and then asked God to choose between the two. But suppose God did not want either one to succeed Judas? Suppose God had His plan for reserving that place for Paul, the greatest of the apostles?

These men had literally tied God's hands in this affair. They cast lots, and God was to see that the lot fell on the right one of these two. There was no way left for God to indicate some other choice that He might have. They should have consulted God on the nominating ballot, instead of waiting until the election. Probably Peter would have done better to have deferred all action until after Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit could have given more definite divine guidance. It should be a warning to all of us not to get ahead of God in the work of the church. Poor Matthias, man's choice, is never heard of again. Paul, God's choice, has sent an echo ringing down through nineteen centuries from his deeds and his writings.

Pentecost is undoubtedly the most important event in the Book of Acts. Without it, the book would never have been written, for Acts is a record of the working of the Holy Spirit in and through the Early Church.

It is sometimes argued that it was the resurrection of Jesus which changed the disciples from fearful cowards into faithful conquerors. But a careful study of the interval between the Resurrection and Pentecost will prove the falsity of this completely. We have no record, then, of Peter's preaching fearlessly on the street corner and having three thousand converts. Instead we see him going fishing and catching nothing. But after Pentecost there is no more fruitless fishing. At last Peter becomes what Jesus said he would be, a fisher of men. It was Pentecost that made Peter the powerful preacher of the Early Church at Jerusalem.

The central thing in Pentecost was that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The speaking in tongues was a means of getting the new gospel message straight to the hearts of the people by giving it to them in their native tongues. Some fifteen different nationalities thus heard the story of Jesus Christ and His salvation. (The "Jews and proselytes" would be two divisions of the entire group. Proselytes were Gentiles who had accepted Judaism.)

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost is an interesting one. After quoting the prophecy of Joel as an introduction, he discusses Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and exaltation. His conclusion is that this Jesus is Lord and Messiah (Christ). The Jews had been guilty of crucifying their Messiah. The effect of the sermon was profound. Conviction fell on the crowd and three thousand were converted.

The healing of the lame man (c. 3) drew a crowd, and Peter seized the opportunity to preach another sermon. Here he carried his charge of the murder of the Messiah still further, and urged the people to repent and be saved.

But before Peter could give the altar call he and his colleagues were arrested by the enraged Jewish leaders

and put in prison. In spite of this, a large number evidently were saved as a result of Peter's message, for we read that at this point the total male membership of the Church became about five thousand.

Soon Peter found himself facing, not a listening crowd, but a semicircle of scowling judges. The Sanhedrin was in session and Peter was in the prisoner's cage. His conduct before this august assemblage of the rulers of the Jews was in striking contrast to his cowardice in the presence of the accusing maid at Jesus' trial.

When the apostles had been threatened and released, they held a prayer meeting of the Church. Far from asking for personal protection of their lives, they asked God to grant them power to go on preaching the Word. Their prayer was fully answered, with the result that, having received a fresh empowering of the Holy Spirit, they proclaimed the gospel boldly.

At the end of chapter four there is given an interesting picture of the community of goods practiced for a while by the Early Church. It should be noted, however, that the narrative, in the Greek, indicates that people sold their properties from time to time as needs arose in the Church and that thus distribution was being made constantly as anyone had a need. It should also be noted that this very plan of community of goods was the cause of the first trouble rising in the Church, as we shall see in chapter six.

But first, in chapter five, we notice the case of Ananias and Sapphira. These two conspired deliberately to deceive the Church. But they found that, ultimately, the real superintendent of the Church was not Peter but the Holy Spirit. They were dealing with the all-knowing, all-seeing One. Their death was a warning to others not to play with sacred fire. It served to keep the Church pure from hypocrisy, and yet we are told that "believers

were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (5:14).

Again the Jewish rulers were maddened by the popularity and progress of the Church. The same thing that had caused the death of Jesus, jealousy, now caused the persecution of His followers.

When Peter again faced the Sanhedrin he was even bolder than before. He charged these rulers with the murder of Jesus. This enraged them and they now plotted the death of the apostles.

At this stage Gamaliel stepped in. This was the rabbi under whom Paul had studied. He advocated tolerance toward the new faith, lest they be guilty of fighting against God. His influence was so weighty that the Sanhedrin dismissed the apostles, after first having taken its spite out on them with a beating.

In the sixth chapter we come to the first serious problem that arose within the Church, which by this time was becoming very large at Jerusalem. There were two main groups in the Church: the Hellenistic (Grecian) Jews, who had been greatly influenced by Greek culture; and the strict Palestinian Jews. It is not surprising that some misunderstanding arose between these two groups.

Soon there was a murmuring noise going on beneath the surface, like the buzzing of bees. As soon as the apostles heard it, they immediately called a church meeting to take care of the matter. They told the assembled disciples that they could not afford to leave their spiritual ministry to feed the Grecian widows. They further made the recommendation that seven men be chosen for this task.

The Church showed great tact and wisdom in choosing seven men who were Grecians. (At least, they all had Greek names.) These seven "deacons," as we call them, took such good care of their work that no more

murmuring was heard. Thus the Early Church in Jerusalem was saved from a serious split.

Stephen was the outstanding one on this board of deacons. He soon overflowed the limits of his assigned task and began to serve spiritual food as well. His preaching brought him into conflict with the Jews in some of the synagogues, with the result that he was arrested and brought before the dreaded Sanhedrin. Stephen had not only grace, but glory. His face shone like that of an angel, transfigured by the sight of the living Christ, reflecting the glory of his glorified Lord. But the members of the Sanhedrin were in no mood to be blessed by such a scene. They demanded that he answer the charge of blasphemy brought against him by false witnesses.

Chapter seven contains a rather lengthy discourse delivered by Stephen as his defense. It consists of a historical summary of God's dealings with the patriarchs and with Israel to the time of Solomon. A comparison of this sermon with Paul's first recorded sermon in chapter thirteen, at Antioch of Pisidia, reveals some very striking similarities. Both are historical narratives and have much the same outline. Evidently young Saul was profoundly impressed by this sermon of Stephen.

But Stephen's preaching was cut short. The religious leaders of Israel "gnashed on him with their teeth," like a pack of hungry wolves. Stephen was cast out of the city and stoned to death.

The result of Stephen's death was an outbreak of great persecution against the followers of Christ. Saul became the ringleader of this persecuting campaign. He "made havock of the church" (8:3), like a wild boar rooting up a vineyard. But he was not allowed to continue for long.

Philip is the central character in chapter eight. Like Stephen, he was one of the seven appointed to wait on

tables. He became "Philip the evangelist" (21:8). His main evangelistic campaign was held in Samaria. The population here was part Jewish and part Gentile, "half-breeds" despised by the full-blooded Jews. The work in Samaria marked a transition of Christianity from Jews to Gentiles.

Philip "preached Christ," and many were saved. The Jerusalem church then sent Peter and John down to Samaria to check up on this revival. They prayed for the people to receive the Holy Spirit. After the laying on of the hands of the apostles, the Holy Spirit came upon the new converts. Thus the revival had two stages, in which the people were first converted to Christ and then filled with the Spirit. But the Lord had work for Philip elsewhere. The successful evangelist was asked to leave the revival going on in the city and proceed out to a wilderness place.

It was certainly a test of Philip's obedience, but without any hesitation, "he arose and went" (8:27). His prompt obedience resulted in the salvation of the Ethiopian eunuch and the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia by way of the royal court. The present emperor of Ethiopia claims to be a direct descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. "Lion of Judah" is one of his titles. It is significant that the treasurer of the queen then reigning in Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple when he met Philip on his way back home. It is claimed that a Christian church has existed in Ethiopia from apostolic times to the present. How little we know how much may depend upon our obedience to what may seem an insignificant command!

The ninth chapter records the conversion of Saul. This would seem to be the second most important event in the Book of Acts. Paul is certainly the most important character in the book. He was the greatest missionary of the first century, as well as the great theologian of

the Early Church. He has given us thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. His Epistles have been of immense influence on the Church and untold blessing to millions of Christians. It was a great day for the Christian Church when Paul accepted Christ.

Poor Saul, the persecutor of the Christians, was to find that his path was not an easy one. His life threatened at Damascus, he had to escape by night secretly. When he came to Jerusalem the disciples there did not trust him. If it had not been for bighearted Brother Barnabas, Saul might never have gained an entrance into the ranks of the Jerusalem church. As it was, his presence caused such a furore among the Jews that soon he had to leave the city and go home to Tarsus.

The tenth chapter gives an account of the Gentile Pentecost in the house of Cornelius. Here was a man who was not even a half-Jew, but God had salvation for the Gentiles, as well as the Jews. It took a special vision from heaven to reveal this fact to Peter; but once he saw it, he was willing to preach to the Gentiles.

While Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius, the Holy Spirit fell on the group assembled there. As at Pentecost, so here they spoke in tongues. It is probable that it took this phenomenon to convince the Jewish brethren that these Gentiles had actually received the Holy Spirit.

Fortunately, Peter had taken along with him six Jewish Christians. When he returned to Jerusalem he was assailed for his conduct in entering a Gentile home and eating with a group of Gentiles. But Peter could only place the responsibility on God, who had directed him to go, and appeal to the witness of the six brethren who accompanied him.

The next view we have of Peter in Acts is in chapter twelve. Cast into prison, he slept between two soldiers, while the church made unceasing prayer for him. Re-

leased by an angel, he visited the praying group and then went into hiding.

Peter had played the largest part in the founding of the Christian Church among the Jews. But now as Christianity moved out among the Gentiles, his place was to be taken by Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

In the thirteenth chapter of Acts we find the third most important event in the Book of Acts—the inauguration of the foreign missionary enterprise. The importance of this cannot be overestimated. Pentecost and Paul's conversion were both preparatory to this third event, the beginning of the greatest world movement that human history has recorded. God had His man, and this man had the Pentecostal power for facing this most momentous task.

The opening verses of chapter thirteen are very instructive. The foreign missionary enterprise of Christianity was born in a prayer meeting, just as American foreign missions began as the result of the "haystack prayer meeting." As the church was tarrying before God, the Holy Spirit revealed His will. The two best men were needed for the new enterprise: "Separate me Barnabas and Saul." The consecrated church was willing to give her best, and so sent forth the first two foreign missionaries.

It is worthy of note that the church "sent them away" (v. 3) and also that they were "sent forth by the Holy Ghost" (v. 4). Such consecrated cooperation of the church with the Holy Spirit resulted in a fruitful ministry on the part of the new missionaries. The Holy Spirit took the initiative, but the church promptly fell in line and did its part.

At Paphos, on the island of Cyprus, Saul's name was changed to Paul. By this name he was known henceforth in his wide travels over the Roman Empire.

One thing that every Sunday school teacher should

be able to do is to trace Paul's three missionary journeys and give the outstanding events in each. We shall now follow Paul in his travels, stopping only at the more important places to see what happened. To aid in mastering it, we shall put it in outline form. The journeys should be followed on a map.

First Journey

1. Cyprus—evangelization of the island (13:6).
2. Paphos (on Cyprus)—conversion of Sergius Paulus. Saul becomes Paul.
3. Perga—departure of John Mark.
4. Antioch of Pisidia—Paul's first recorded sermon.
5. Iconium.
6. Lystra—worshiped; Paul stoned.
7. Derbe.
8. Return to Antioch.

Second Journey

1. Syria and Cilicia.
2. Lystra—Timothy joins the party.
3. Troas—the Macedonian call.
4. Philippi—conversion of Lydia; Paul and Silas in prison; conversion of jailer.
5. Thessalonica—many Gentiles converted.
6. Berea—many Jews converted, because of searching Scriptures.
7. Athens—sermon before the Areopagus.
8. Corinth—stay of a year and a half; Paul before Gallio.
9. Ephesus—brief call.
10. Jerusalem.
11. Return to Antioch.

Third Journey

1. Ephesus—stay of three years; Ephesian Pentecost; bonfire of books; opposition of Demetrius, the silversmith.

2. Macedonia and Greece.
3. Troas—Paul's all-night sermon; young man falls out of window.
4. Miletus—Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders.
5. Caesarea—Paul warned against going to Jerusalem.
6. Jerusalem—Paul mobbed and arrested.

We shall now make some further observations on the journeys. It will be noted that Paul started from Antioch for all three of his journeys. He also returned to Antioch to report after the first and second journeys, but was prevented from doing so the third time by what befell him at Jerusalem.

A second observation is that it was Paul's regular policy to begin his work in each city in the Jewish synagogue. At a few places, as at Philippi, he found no synagogue. Paul usually preached at the synagogue as long as he was permitted to do so.

This leads to a third observation. One of the most noticeable features in connection with Paul's missionary work was the almost constant opposition from the Jews. At Pisidian Antioch he was driven out of the city at the instigation of the Jews. The same thing happened at the next city, Iconium. Then the Jews of Antioch and Iconium, not content with having driven the missionaries out of their own city, followed them to Lystra, raised a mob against them, and had Paul stoned. We find the same things happening later at Thessalonica and Berea. The jealous Jews hounded Paul's trail around the eastern Mediterranean until they finally caught up with him in Jerusalem and tried to kill him (21:27).

The fickleness of a crowd is seen in the treatment Paul received at Lystra. When he arrived the people tried to worship him. Soon after, they stoned him.

We have noted the three most important events in Acts—Pentecost, Saul's conversion, the beginning of the

foreign missionary enterprise. Now we come to the fourth—the council at Jerusalem, recorded in chapter fifteen. This event, which took place between the first and second journeys of Paul, was fraught with the greatest significance. Paul and Barnabas had been used of God in the conversion of large numbers of Gentiles. On their first journey, because of the opposition from the Jews, they had made the announcement: "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

But soon after Paul and Barnabas returned from this fruitful journey some Judaizers came down from Jerusalem and informed the church there that only those who were circumcised according to the law of Moses could be saved. There were many uncircumcised Christians in the church at Antioch enjoying salvation apart from the Jewish law. This new teaching was very disturbing. So the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusaelm to look into the matter.

The issue at stake in the Jerusalem Council, then, was whether the Gentile Christians should be required to keep the law of Moses. Fortunately, the judgment of the council was in favor of Gentile liberty. The leaders of the Church felt that this was the mind of the Spirit (15:28). In this they certainly were not mistaken.

We can appreciate the importance of this issue only by imagining the result if the decision had been the reverse. That would have made Christianity just a branch of Judaism. It could never have become a world-wide, world-conquering religion. Only as it broke away completely from Judaism could it become a salvation for all mankind, freely offered to all on the simple condition of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

After a while Paul suggested to Barnabas that they revisit the churches they had founded on their first journey and see how the disciples fared. Barnabas wanted to take along John Mark, who had quit them on the

first trip at Perga. Paul disagreed. So finally they agreed to disagree, and the result was too missionary parties instead of one. Barnabas and John Mark sailed for Cyprus. The former is never heard of again. Tradition says he was killed there, while preaching. If so, John Mark somehow escaped.

Paul chose Silas as his companion for the second journey and went north overland through his home town, Tarsus. At Lystra he picked up Timothy, who had been converted under his ministry on his previous visit there. (Paul calls him "my own son in the faith," I Tim. 1:2)

Going on through Asia Minor, Paul sought to preach the gospel in Asia and Bithynia. In both cases the Lord checked him from doing so. Finally he arrived at "land's end," Troas. While tarrying here, waiting for further guidance from the Lord, Paul received his vision of the man of Macedonia calling to him, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." In obedience to this call, he sailed across to Europe. Luke, the author of Acts, joined the party at Troas.

Arriving in Philippi, they found no Jewish synagogue. But a group of praying women by the riverside furnished Paul with his first audience in Europe. His first convert proved to be Lydia, the seller of purple.

Paul had to go to jail to find his "man" of Macedonia, but the irrepressible Paul decided to have a prayer and praise meeting in the inner prison. God's "Amen" rocked the prison doors open and Paul and Silas walked out to save the jailer from suicide and sin. The foundations of the church at Philippi were laid with a few women in a prayer meeting and in the jailer's house, but this became one of Paul's best churches.

Leaving Luke to pastor the young flock, Paul went to Thessalonica. Here the Jews were not receptive to the gospel, but many prominent Gentiles of the city believed. This became essentially a Gentile church.

At Berea the Jews "were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (17:11). (The first Berean Bible class.)

The "these things" referred to are indicated in Paul's preaching to the Jews at Thessalonica. He sought first to show the Jews that their Scriptures (the Old Testament) taught that the Messiah should suffer (Isaiah 53). Then he went on to say that Jesus, who did suffer, was their Messiah (the Christ). The Bereans checked his preaching with the Scriptures, found he was right, and accepted Jesus.

At Athens, Paul had varied experiences. He started out by preaching in the Jewish synagogue there. During the week he held conversations in the marketplace where the people gathered to discuss politics, philosophy, and religion. Soon some of the Epicureans and Stoics became interested in his talk and asked him to speak in the Areopagus. Paul introduced the subject of religion by offering to identify their "Unknown God." He told them about God as Creator. When he got around to Jesus and the Resurrection his audience laughed him out of court.

It was one of the most humiliating experiences that Paul had undergone. He left Athens without founding a church there, the worst defeat he ever suffered in a large city. Doubtless he felt very much downcast as he walked sadly over to the great commercial metropolis, Corinth. The intellectual citadel of the world had turned him down, laughed him out of town. Probably it was harder on Paul than being driven out of town by a mob. He tells us that when he came to Corinth he determined to know nothing among them "save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). Paul seems to have learned a bitter lesson from his experience at Athens: that peo-

ple are saved through the preaching of the simple gospel, and not through merely intellectual wisdom.

Paul spent a year and a half of his busy ministry at Corinth. He realized the strategy of founding a strong church in this busy metropolis, where traffic from all over the known world was coming and going steadily. From here the gospel might be carried by travelers and sailors to the farthest corners of the Roman Empire.

A word might be said about Paul's trial before Gallio at Corinth (18:12-17). It might seem, at first sight, that Gallio was a careless judge. Exactly the opposite is true. Gallio was very careful to preserve justice. At this time Judaism was a legal religion, and Christianity was safe under its shadow. The new religion had not been proscribed by the emperor. Gallio said, in effect (v. 14): "If this were a civil case or a criminal case, I would attend to it. But since you are simply fussing about words and matters of your law, I declare it no case." So he threw the case out, as it had no place in a Roman court. He did the only fair thing.

The main city visited by Paul on his third journey was Ephesus. Here he stayed three years (20:31), the longest he ever stayed in one place, as far as we have record. He founded here one of his strongest churches. And from Ephesus, as a center, the whole province of Asia (in Asia Minor) was evangelized.

The opposition to Paul at Ephesus came from commercial sources. The idol-making trade was being hurt by the new religion, as tobacco and liquor interests will be today wherever there is a revival. At Ephesus and at Philippi the persecution came from Gentiles for commercial reasons. Elsewhere it was regularly from the Jews for religious reasons.

Paul's third journey ended with his being mobbed at Jerusalem. He was rescued by the captain of the Temple guard. Sent to Caesarea for safekeeping, he was

tried before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. Despairing of justice, Paul appealed to the emperor, and was sent to Rome. In spite of shipwreck he arrived there and spent two years a prisoner, but with considerable liberty. And there the story ends.

6. Portrait of Paul

Paul is one of the most fascinating characters anywhere in literature. To get the complete view of him we must study carefully his Epistles. But the Book of Acts does reveal something of his tremendous energies, his untiring zeal, his boundless consecration, his unceasing activity. Paul lived "the strenuous life," as did the Master he served. No other man has given us a greater example of devotion and service. The love of Christ—Christ's love for him, his love for Christ—continually constrained him to give himself in unselfish, unceasing service.

We have often wondered what could be done if in any one generation we could have a thousand men like Paul. Think of all he did, multiply it by a thousand, and we could begin to think of really evangelizing the world in that generation.

We do not have a thousand hearts or lives to give. But we do have one. All that God asks of us is that we shall give that one wholly to Him. May we heed Paul's injunction: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

Discussion Topics

1. The relation of prayer to missions.
2. The importance of the Book of Acts as an aid to the study of the Early Church.
3. The character of Paul.
4. Paul's missionary methods.
5. The place of Barnabas in the Early Church.

IV

THE PAULINE EPISTLES

1. General Introduction

a. Paul's Correspondence. Paul was perhaps the busiest missionary who ever labored on a foreign field. Yet he found, as do all missionaries, that time must be taken from an already full schedule for writing letters.

This necessity for correspondence was even more pressing with Paul than with the average missionary today, for Paul was a sort of general superintendent of all the many churches he had founded throughout Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. The great apostle could not visit all of these churches as frequently as he wished, so he had to write to them. Travel was not as rapid then as now. Often a letter had to take the place of a flying visit that Paul would have liked to make to one of his churches when some situation there needed his attention. In fact, that is explanation for the existence of most of his Epistles.

It is evident that Paul was in the habit of using an amanuensis, or secretary, for writing his letters. This is clearly indicated in Rom. 16:22, where we read: "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord."

But Paul always signed his own name to his Epistles, to authenticate them, for at the end of II Thessalonians (3:17), we find these words: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write." A similar statement will be found in Col. 4:18 and I Cor. 16:21.

There are some hints in the Epistles that Paul had poor eyesight. That would account for the fact that he

dictated his Epistles to an amanuensis, instead of writing them. It would also explain those words at the end of his Epistle to the Galatians (6:11): "Ye see with how large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand." The King James translation of this verse is rather confusing. The word for letters here is not the one that means an epistle, but the one properly meaning a letter of the alphabet. It would appear that Paul felt so greatly concerned for the condition of the Galatian churches that, failing to have an amanuensis at hand, he sat down and wrote this stirring Epistle to them. Great agitation, combined perhaps with poor eyesight, caused him to write with large letters.

So we see Paul sitting in the home of a friendly host or as a prisoner of the Roman government—but probably sometimes pacing up and down the room, back and forth —dictating these powerful letters that have been the greatest moving force in the literature of the ages. It was said of Jesus, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46). It might also be said truly of Paul, "Never man wrote like this man."

A word should be said about the form of these Epistles. We now have large numbers of papyrus letters from this period, so that we know the form in general use. It was the custom for a man to begin a letter by giving his name and his title. Paul begins all of his letters with his name and his title of "apostle," except the Epistles to the Thessalonians and those to Philemon and to the Philippians.

At the beginning of almost all the Greek letters of this period we find a word which means "joy" or "grace." The common Jewish salutation was, "Peace." Paul unites these two terms in the salutations of all his Epistles. The gospel of Christ can meet and satisfy the deepest desires of the human heart, whether Jew or Greek. It brings joy and peace.

Another word should be said about the general outline of Paul's Epistles. He regularly follows the same order: *first,* the greeting; *second,* the thanksgiving; *third,* the doctrinal portion; *fourth,* the practical portion; *fifth,* personal greetings and messages to individuals; *sixth,* his autograph and benediction. It was Paul's usual method to instruct first in doctrine, and then to exhort to practical Christian living.

b. The Four Groups of Epistles. The thirteen Epistles of Paul divide chronologically into four groups. The first group, written on his second journey, includes I and II Thessalonians. The main theme here is eschatology, the doctrine of future things. These Epistles were probably written in A.D. 50 and 51.

The second group, written on his third journey, includes I and II Corinthians, Galatians, and Romans. The main theme of these is soteriology, or the doctrines of salvation. The Epistles of this group were written at about A.D. 55 or 56.

The third group, written from prison at Rome, includes Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. The theme of these Prison Epistles is Christology, the doctrine of the person of Christ. Paul's Roman imprisonment probably was from A.D. 59 to 61.

The fourth group, written between Paul's release from his Roman imprisonment and his death, includes I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy. These are the so-called Pastoral Epistles. Their theme is ecclesiology, the doctrine of the Church. Probably the Pastoral Epistles were written between A.D. 61 and 67. The martyrdom of Paul occurred under Nero, either in A.D. 64, or, as more commonly held, in A.D. 67 or 68.

It may be noticed by some students of the New Testament that the dates just given for the first three groups of Epistles are definitely earlier than those usually assigned them by scholars of a few years ago. The dates

which we have suggested here are those given by Professor Cartledge, in his *Conservative Introduction to the New Testament* (Zondervan, 1938). It may surprise most conservative students to learn that Professor Kirsopp Lake, for many years (until his decease) the leading New Testament scholar at Harvard University, gives even earlier dates (p. 100) in his *Introduction to the New Testament* (Harpers, 1937). The evidence derived from archeological discoveries in recent years has tended definitely toward an earlier dating of the books of the New Testament. The wild guesses of the radical German critics of the last century have in many, if not most, cases been completely controverted. New Testament criticism is coming back to a firmer foundation, and we may thank God for it.

With this brief general introduction to the Pauline Epistles as a whole, we shall now take up a special study of each individual Epistle.

2. First Thessalonians

After covering one hundred miles from Philippi, Paul and his company entered the chief city of Macedonia, a commercial seaport of two hundred thousand population. Here he preached the gospel of Christ, until the Jews drove him out of town. He went on to Berea, but the Jews from Thessalonica followed him and he had to leave this city also.

When Paul arrived in Athens he felt much concerned for his new converts at Thessalonica. He had not had much time to get them established, and he knew that they would be undergoing persecution for their new faith. So he sent young Timothy back to Thessalonica to learn of the welfare of the Christians there.

By the time Timothy returned to Paul the latter was at Corinth. Timothy reported that the Thessalonian Christians were loyal, though still enduring persecution. But some of them were troubled about the fact that

Christians were dying before Christ's return. So Paul sat down and dictated his First Epistle to the Thessalonians. Like most of Paul's letters, it is written out of an overflowing heart and reveals the personal feelings of the great apostle.

It is almost useless to try to outline this Epistle of five chapters. It should be kept in mind that this is a spontaneous letter, not a sermon or a book. Probably most of our personal letters would not bear homiletical analysis.

One of the main purposes for which Paul wrote this Epistle was to comfort and encourage the Thessalonian Christians in their persecution. After mentioning these persecutions in the second chapter, he writes (3:1-3): "Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; and sent Timotheus . . . to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: that no man should be moved by these afflictions."

This passage reveals Paul's great solicitude for his converts everywhere. How many he carried on his heart! In the second chapter (verses 7 and 8), he writes, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." In the eleventh verse he speaks of "how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children." These passages give us a wonderful revelation of the heart of a true pastor. Paul was not only the greatest of missionaries, evangelists, and theologians; he was also a great pastor.

Another purpose for which Paul wrote was to correct a misunderstanding of his teaching concerning the second coming of Christ. He had taught his converts to look for the return of Christ at any time, when they should be glorified with Him.

Evidently some had become disturbed as to what would happen to those Christians who died before Jesus' return. Paul writes to assure them that they will be resurrected and will have a part in the rapture of the saints. I Thess. 4:13-18 is one of the most beautiful passages on the Second Coming in the entire New Testament.

In the fourth chapter of this Epistle, Paul warns the Thessalonian Christians against pagan impurities. The account of the founding of this church (Acts 17:1-9) indicates clearly that the majority of its members were Gentiles, not Jews. In the first chapter of this Epistle (verse 9) Paul speaks of their having "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." This, of course, refers to Gentiles.

It may seem strange to us of twentieth century Christendom that Paul, in a number of his Epistles, should warn the Christians against lying, cheating, stealing, getting drunk, and even against gross immorality. Investigation will show that these warnings are written to such large, wicked, heathen cities as Ephesus, Corinth, and Thessalonica. Only by studying the moral conditions of that period can we understand the necessity for such strange warnings. These converts of Paul had come out of raw paganism, with its exceedingly low moral standards. The Christians still lived in this heathen environment. They must be warned of their danger.

3. Second Thessalonians

a. Relation to First Thessalonians. Not long after he dispatched his first Epistle, Paul wrote a second letter to the church at Thessalonica. It appears that the reason for this was that some of the Thessalonian believers had misconstrued his previous teaching on the Second Coming. Expecting Christ to return at any time, they folded their hands and waited. This idleness was making busybodies (3:11) of some of them, to the great detriment of

the church. Paul charges them to keep working while they waited.

A problem has been raised, in critical discussion, because the treatment of the Second Coming in the second Epistle differs so much from that in the first. In the first Epistle, Paul seems to be expecting Christ's return at any moment. In the second he states carefully that the day of Christ will not come until first there has been a great apostasy and the "man of sin" has been revealed.

The answer would seem to be contained in what we have said above. The teaching in the second Epistle does not contradict that in the first. Rather, it supplements it. It is a matter of difference of emphasis, to meet different needs and situations. Any preacher who is alive and alert will change the emphasis of his messages to suit the changing needs of his hearers. We do not want a consistency that amounts to monotony.

b. Contents. It will be noted that Silas and Timothy are associated with Paul in writing these two Epistles to the Thessalonians. They were his two main companions on the second journey. Incidentally, it shows a very magnanimous spirit on the part of the great apostle to include his younger associates in this way.

The persecutions were still going on at Thessalonica, for Paul writes that he glories "for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (1:4).

The second chapter of this second Epistle contains one of the most unique passages in all of Paul's writings. It is the passage concerning "the man of sin" (2:1-12). Paul here mentions a great apostasy before the return of Christ and states that "the mystery of iniquity doth already work." But the thing that has provoked so much discussion is his teaching of a personal Antichrist, or man of sin. Without trying to solve the problem here

raised, we may say that this passage agrees with Jesus' teaching in the Olivet discourse, where He warned that condtions would become worse at the end of this age.

4. First Corinthians

a. The Corinthian Correspondence. After his unhappy visit to Athens, the Boston of Greece, Paul went to Corinth, its New York. Here he stayed a year and a half, to establish firmly a strong church in this great commercial city. From here he wrote his first two Epistles, those to the church at Thessalonica. From newly discovered inscriptions it would appear that he was in Corinth during A.D. 50 and 51.

What we call I Corinthians is evidently not Paul's first letter to Corinth. For in I Cor. 5:9 he says, "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators." We do not have any further knowledge of this earlier epistle. But it does indicate what should be obvious to every thinking person—that Paul wrote many epistles that have not been preserved to us. The Holy Spirit guided in the selection of just those writings, both Gospels and Epistles, which would be most profitable for us. (It will be remembered that Luke in the preface to his Gospel mentions many lives of Christ as being extant in his day.)

We learn also that the Corinthians had written a letter to Paul, for in 7:1 he says, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me." Add to these the two canonical Epistles to the Corinthians, and it will be evident that probably a considerable correspondence was carried on between Paul and the Corinthian church.

b. Problems Discussed. First Corinthians is one of the easiest of Paul's Epistles to outline, for it is largely a discussion in consecutive order of a series of problems. It is one of the most orderly of Paul's Epistles.

The book naturally divides itself into two main parts. In 1:11 Paul says that he has heard certain things

about the church at Corinth. In 7:1 he says that they have written him about certain problems. So we have: (A) the things concerning which he had heard, chapters 1—6; (B) the things concerning which they had written, chapters 7—16. There are three problems discussed in the first division of the book and six in the second. These problems are as follows: (I) Divisions, chapters 1—4. (II) Immorality, chapter 5. (III) Lawsuits, chapter 6. (IV) Marriage, chapter 7. (V) Things offered to idols, chapters 8—10. (VI) Church customs and conduct, chapter 11. (VII) Spiritual gifts, chapters 12—14. (VIII) The resurrection, chapter 15. (IX) The collection, chapter 16.

Let us take a brief look at each one of these problems. We shall learn from them that the church at Corinth was far from being an ideal Christian community.

It would appear that the besetting sin of the Corinthian Christians was a schismatic spirit. This was due to pride and worldly wisdom, and perhaps also to fanaticism. There were four main parties (1:12) in the church at Corinth, four too many! There was the Pauline party, those who contended that Paul was the founder of the church there. Then there were those who admired the more eloquent preaching of Apollos, and said freely that they liked him best. Thirdly, there was the Petrine party ("of Cephas"), the Judaizers, who charged Paul with being an innovator and a liberal in setting aside the authority of the Jewish law. The fourth party was composed of those who prided themselves on being the real "Christians." They refused any party names, such as Paulinists; but actually with their fanatical spiritual pride they probably did as much to divide the church as anyone else.

Paul declared that this condition showed the Corinthian believers were carnal. They needed a mighty baptism with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love. They

were far from being "made perfect in love." To follow human leaders was a sign they were not sufficiently attached to Christ, the real Head of the Church.

Chapter five records a particularly offensive case of immorality, and that on the part of a church member. For this situation Paul prescribed rigorous measures. They were to exclude the guilty person from the fellowship of the church.

In chapter six we have another situation which was also a reproach to the church. Members of the church were going to law with each other. Paul was so ashamed of their unchristian conduct that he became ironical. "Set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church" (verse 4).

Paul's views concerning marriage, expressed in chapter seven of this Epistle, have aroused considerable comment. Perhaps one or two observations will help somewhat in clarifying the problem.

For one thing, Paul definitely disclaims divine authority for some of the opinions he expresses here. In verse 6 he says, "But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." A little later, in verse 10, he makes a direct claim of divine inspiration: "And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord." Yet in verse 12 he writes, "But to the rest speak I, not the Lord." In verse 25 he says, "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment." And he finishes the chapter by saying, in verse 40, "But she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God."

It is evident, then, that for anyone to quote one of Paul's opinions expressed in this chapter as being of divine authority, because all the Bible is inspired, is to ignore blindly the definite denials of divine inspiration which the apostle is careful to insert.

It would seem logical, on the other hand, to reason that since Paul is so very careful to make it clear in this chapter that he is expressing his own private opinions, we may rightly assume that elsewhere he is conscious of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for what he writes.

Probably the trends of the times caused Paul to feel as he did about the subject of marriage. If he expected fully that Christ would return during his own lifetime, it would be easy to see why he recommended celibacy.

The Corinthians were evidently troubled about the question of eating meats offered to idols. Paul says that idols are nothing. But he takes advantage of the question raised to deliver a wonderful plea for Christian charity. We should enjoy our liberty in Christ, but not cause anyone with a weak conscience to stumble because of our more intelligent liberty. Paul's charity and consecration are revealed in his statement, "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (9:22). Again, the true Christian spirit is set forth in his injunction, "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (10:24).

Paul's ruling, in chapter eleven, that women should keep their heads covered in public worship is based on the fact that it was the prostitutes who made themselves conspicuous at the pagan religious festivals. Paul did not want the Christian women to be criticized for their liberty of conduct in public.

It is interesting to note that Paul claims direct divine revelation for the institution of the Lord's Supper in the Church (11:23). But he warns sternly against unbecoming conduct at the Lord's table.

Chapters 12—14 are among the most important in the book. The Corinthian Christians had an inordinate love for outward demonstration. They prided themselves on the possession and exercise of spiritual gifts. Those

who had the higher gifts, supposedly, looked down on others and considered them unimportant in the church.

The special gift which caused the most trouble was the gift of tongues. This is evident from chapter fourteen. Paul warns carefully against the abuse of this gift, lest it cease to profit anyone. He reminded them that preaching was of far greater value for edification than speaking in tongues.

It would seem that the women in this church had especially allowed their emotions to sweep them off their feet. There was a great deal of confusion in the church services, as several tried to speak in tongues at once, or prophesy. Paul had to admonish the women to keep silent, lest their conduct should bring reproach on the church. The general principle to be followed always in church services was: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40).

We very often read or repeat the beautiful thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians, the great love chapter. But not many realize the setting of this precious gem. It occurs right in the midst of this discussion of the gift of tongues. Paul says that to speak with the tongues of orators or angels means nothing without love. Gifts of prophecy, knowledge, faith are all of no value without love. Love is the greatest thing in the Christian life. When we realize that, we have learned one of the greatest lessons the New Testament seeks to teach us.

The fifteenth chapter, the longest in the Epistle, deals with the resurrection. It is the outstanding chapter on this subject in the Scriptures. One of the most interesting questions discussed in this chapter is stated in verse 35: "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" Paul answers this by using the analogy of sowing a seed. There will be just as much difference between these physical bodies we have now and our spiritual bodies in the next life as there is be-

tween the dry, ugly bulb we plant in the ground and the beautiful, fragrant lily that springs from that bulb (verses 36-38, 44).

Some reader will ask, "Shall we not then be able to recognize our loved ones in heaven?" Why not? We recognize the difference between carrots and beets when we see them growing, even though the plants do not bear any resemblance to the seeds we planted. Why should we not then recognize one another in our spiritual bodies?

The last problem discussed in this Epistle is that of the collection. Paul lays down the principle of regular, systematic, proportionate giving: "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." The best way we know of to obey this is to pay our tithe each week into the church.

5. Second Corinthians

a. Unity. The main critical problem that has been raised regarding this Epistle concerns its unity. There are some who say that our II Corinthians is really a group of letters.

The main argument is based on the references in 2:4 and 7:8 to an epistle which he wrote in much anguish of heart, and which caused them to sorrow and repent. It is claimed by some that this "severe letter" is really our II Corinthians 10—13, which has a stern tone. But it seems to us that this description may very properly be applied to I Corinthians, especially to the first five chapters. Paul was certainly stern there in dealing with the case of immorality.

But the most obvious reason for rejecting this theory of the composite character of II Corinthians is that it has no manuscript support. "Those who wish to split up the epistle can point to no external evidence whatever. No single manuscript or patristic mention gives any justification."[1]

b. Outline. As in the case of I Corinthians, this letter has a very obvious outline. It divides itself into three main sections. Hayes labels them as follows: (I) Chapters 1—7, Personal vindication of his ministry; (II) Chapters 8 and 9, Concerning the collection; (III) Chapters 10—13, "The Great Invective."[2]

c. Contents. This is the most intensely personal of all of Paul's Epistles. In this letter we see the workings, the conflicting thoughts and feelings, of the great apostle's mind and heart. It is the greatest revelation of the humanity of Paul to be found in the New Testament. "Here only he tells us about those two important experiences in his own life, the spiritual ecstasy in which he was rapt into the third heaven, and the spiritual and mental and physical agony in which he learned humility and dependence upon Christ, an experience of paradise and an experience of purgatory."[3]

Let us look for a moment at this purgatorial experience. In 1:8 Paul writes, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." Paul was literally almost crushed to death by some burden.

What was this burden? Apparently it was his deep concern for the state of the Corinthian church. In 2:12-13 he writes: "Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia."

This causes him to launch out on an exposition of God's wonderful care of His own when they are going through deep trials. It is not until we come to the seventh chapter that the historical narrative is resumed. "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without

were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (7:5-6).

This, then, gives us the background of this Epistle. Paul had written I Corinthians from Ephesus, probably near the end of his three years there in A.D. 55. He had dispatched Titus to visit the church at Corinth and ascertain how they were responding to his letter. When driven from Ephesus, Paul went to Troas. Here he had a large opportunity offered him for preaching the gospel. But he felt so restless and so burdened about the conditions at Corinth that the agony of the suspense drove him on to Macedonia. Perhaps he wanted to talk with Luke at Philippi. At any rate, Titus finally arrived with the good news that the Corinthians, as a whole, were loyal to Paul. This comforted the apostle. So he wrote his second Epistle from some Macedonian city, probably early in A.D. 56.

There is no other Epistle that reveals to us so fully the deep feelings of Paul's heart. He was filled with the Spirit; but he was still human. His personality shines clearly through all the pages of this Epistle.

II Corinthians 10—13 is the strongest piece of writing to be found anywhere in Paul's Epistles. It appears that some, perhaps the Judaizers, at Corinth still challenged Paul's authority. Peter was one of Christ's chosen apostles, but not Paul. What right did this newcomer have to assert his authority over the churches?

These chapters constitute Paul's ringing defense of his apostleship and his apostolic authority. We can almost see the tears in Paul's eyes as he plunges on from one point to another, answering their slanders and defending his ministry. Some of these enemies of Paul at Corinth stooped so low as to ridicule his personal appearance and his preaching. "His letters . . . are weighty and

powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (10:10).

One of the most striking passages in this Epistle is found in chapter 11, verses 23-28. He tells us here that he had often been in prison, yet this was before his imprisonments at Caesarea and Rome. Five times he had received thirty-nine stripes from the Jews, and three times he had been beaten with rods. This was before his voyage to Rome, but already he had been shipwrecked three times, and had spent a night and a day drifting on the sea. This record of Paul's experiences is enough to strike shame to the hearts of any of us who complain of our hard lot.

Paul's thorn in the flesh, mentioned in 12:7, has excited a great deal of curiosity. The most common suggestion has been some ailment of his eyes. Ramsay thought it was attacks of chronic malaria. But the important thing is that God gave him grace to bear even that most severe trial. Paul was a living manifestation of the grace of God in a human life.

We close our study of Paul's Corinthian Epistles with a quotation from Hayes, which gives a comparison of the two. He writes: "First Corinthians tells us more about the inside history of the early church, its troubles and its triumphs, its practices and its principles, than we can learn from any other book in the New Testament. II Corinthians tells us more about the heart history and the inmost character of the Apostle Paul than any other source of information we have."[4]

6. Galatians

a. Destination and Date. This Epistle is addressed to "the churches of Galatia," but it is not just clear as to what is meant by Galatia. The word had two uses at the time. There was what was popularly known as Galatia. This was a district in the northern part of central Asia

Minor. It derived its name from the fact that large numbers of Gauls settled there in the third century before Christ. But there was also the Roman province of Galatia, which included not only Galatia proper, but also those southern cities where he founded churches on his first journey—Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe.

So we have the North Galatian theory, which holds that this Epistle was written to the northern part of the province, or ethnic Galatia; and the South Galatian theory, which holds it was written to the cities in the southern part of the province—those named above.

The North Galatianists argue that it is more natural to take the term Galatia in its popular sense. They point to the fact that, in Acts, Luke regularly uses geographical rather than provincial names.

On the other hand, the South Galatianists argue that Paul regularly uses the political names of the provinces. Not one of the cities in Northern Galatia is named in the New Testament. But the main argument in favor of this theory is that, if North Galatia was meant, a late date would have to be held for the writing of the Epistle. That would seem to place it after the worst storm of the Judaistic controversy had passed. But, since this Epistle is written against Judaism, that would not seem reasonable.

The destination of Galatians is a problem which cannot be settled with the present available data. There are outstanding scholars, both liberal and conservative, on both sides. So it will be impossible for us to come to any decision in the matter. We might observe, however, that the weightier arguments seem to be on the side of the South Galatian theory.

The date, of course, depends on the destination, as the South Galatian theory would allow for an earlier date. Gal. 4:13 seems to imply two visits to Galatia before he wrote the Epistle. Paul revisited the southern

cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch on his return; so he could have written this Epistle before his second journey, or near the time of the Jerusalem Council, when the Judaistic controversy was at the fore.

The South Galatian theory would allow a date as early as A.D. 48, although a later date seems preferable. The North Galatian theory would demand a date around 55.

b. Occasion and Purpose. Fortunately, we are on much firmer ground when we come to discuss the occasion and purpose. It is very evident that Paul wrote this Epistle because the Judaizers were ruining his work in the churches of Galatia. The Gentiles who had been converted under Paul's preaching of free grace were now being told that they must keep the law in order to be saved, and that only by strenuous keeping of the law could they be made perfect.

Paul knew very well the blighting effects of Judaism, He had drunk deeply of it, only to find it could not satisfy. He did not want his converts to relapse into bondage to the law, so he sat down and poured out his heart to them in a stirring appeal not to give up their liberty in Christ.

His purpose, then, was to combat the campaign of Judaism in the churches of Galatia. In this Epistle we see Paul the fighter, battling desperately to save his children in the faith from the clutches of Judaism.

c. Outline of Contents. The Epistle to the Galatians has three main divisions. The first two chapters are personal, chapters three and four are doctrinal, chapters five and six are practical.

The first two chapters are filled with interesting autobiographical material. They contain especially a defense of Paul's apostleship and his gospel. In the very first verse Paul asserts the divine authority of his apostleship: "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man,

but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father)." Paul was not elected by man, but ordained by God.

In verses 11 and 12 Paul declares the divine origin of his gospel: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Paul boldly made the claim that he had received his gospel message directly by divine revelation. It was no human religion which he was propagating, no human doctrines which he was promulgating. He was preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel which had been revealed to him by Jesus Christ.

Gal. 2:20 is an outstanding verse in Paul's Epistles. Literally it reads, "I have been crucified with Christ; and no longer do I [the ego] live, but Christ lives in me, . . ." Christ had taken the place of the selfish, carnal ego in Paul's life.

After this defense of the divine origin of his gospel, Paul plunges immediately into a hand-to-hand encounter with Judaism. "O foolish [senseless] Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (3:1.) "Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (3:3.) Paul's feelings were stirred deeply. Only here and in II Corinthians do we see Paul overflowing with righteous indignation. But the cause of Christianity and the souls of his converts were in grave danger. Such emergencies called for strenuous measures.

Paul sets up Abraham as an example of salvation through faith. Abraham was not saved through the keeping of the law, for he lived five hundred years before Moses. It was faith and obedience that saved him. *Justification by faith* is the theme of this Epistle. That is the main note which is sounded through chapters three and four.

The last two chapters, the practical section, contain some especially valuable passages. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

In the last part of chapter five we have two lists: one of the works of the flesh, and one of the fruit of the Spirit. The contrast is tremendous. It is not enough to try to exclude from our lives these works of the flesh. We should seek to grow luxurious gardens of the fragrant fruit of the Spirit. In fact, the only way that we can avoid the works of the flesh is by living the Spirit-filled life.

The Epistle to the Galatians was one of the main factors in producing the Protestant Reformation. Its theme, "Justification by Faith," became the watchcry of that movement. Luther was led out of bondage to the ceremonial legalism of the Roman Catholic church by reading this Epistle, and his commentary on it has recently come out in a new edition, though written four centuries ago.

7. Romans

a. A Theological Epistle. Romans is the most theological of Paul's Epistles. It comes the nearest to being a systematic theology of any book in the New Testament.

The theme of Romans is the same as that of Galatians. In fact, it would seem that after Paul had written his spontaneous Epistle to the Galatians, in which his protest against the Judaizing movement flowed like hot lava from his pen, he sat down and composed with greater leisure and care this more systematic and thorough treatment of the same subject.

Galatians is a blitzkrieg attack on Judaism. Romans is a more reasoned defense and explanation of Christianity. Galatians is a curative to be administered to those who were already suffering from attacks of Juda-

ism. Romans is a preventive to protect those who might be exposed by the growing depredations of the Judaizers.

It will be noted that the doctrinal presentation here is not theoretical, but experiential. The doctrines of Christianity were hammered out on the anvil of Paul's own religious experience. This is shown especially in the seventh chapter.

The Epistle to the Romans has been the main source and foundation for the theology of the Christian Church. It was the guiding star of the Protestant Reformation. Luther called it "the true masterpiece of the New Testament."

b. Outline. The Epistle to the Romans has three main divisions. The first eight chapters are doctrinal; chapters 9—11 are eschatological (prophetical); chapters 12—16 are practical. (Chapter 16 itself is personal.)

The first eight chapters, again, may be divided easily. After an introduction covering the first sixteen verses, we have the doctrine of sin, 1:17—3:20; the doctrine of justification, 3:21—5:21; the doctrine of sanctification, chapters 6—8.

Also, the section dealing with the doctrine of sin may be subdivided. In chapter one we have the sin of the Gentile; in chapter two we have the sin of the Jew; in chapter three we have the sin of the whole world.

Let us look at these first three chapters. In the latter part of chapter one we have an appalling revelation of the sin of the Gentile world of the first century. It would perhaps be hard to believe this picture; but it is corroborated by Roman writers of that day, as well as by the excavations at Pompeii and elsewhere. The two great sins of the Gentiles were idolatry and immorality. The former led to the latter.

This chapter forever settles the question as to which came first, monotheism or polytheism. In this picture we see man on the high plane of knowing God (verse 21),

then descending through the various stages, down to the lowest plane of animal, and worse than animal, living.

The degradation of idolatry is here described. At first men made images of themselves to worship, then images of birds, of four-footed beasts, of creeping things. At first man worshiped the God above; then he worshiped himself; then the things around him; and finally the creeping things beneath him. Snake worship is the cellar of idolatry.

After a picture of the hideous fleshly sins of the pagan Gentiles, Paul describes in chapter two the sins of the Jew—pride and hypocrisy. These are just as obnoxious to God as the fleshly sins of the pagans, whom the Jews despised.

Chapter three declares all the world is guilty before God (verse 19). Both Jews and Greeks need salvation.

Having shown the necessity for salvation in these first three chapters, Paul now goes on to explain the method of salvation. God has provided a righteousness for all who will believe in Jesus Christ (3:22). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28). In chapter four, he uses the example of Abraham, as in Galatians. In chapter five he shows the fruits of justification, and also indicates the necessity for the death of Christ if an atonement was to be made for the sins of men.

Chapters 6—8 deal with the subject of sanctification. In chapter six Paul shows that sanctification is through death to self and sin; in chapter seven, through union with Christ; in chapter eight, through being filled with the Holy Spirit.

The figures used in chapter six—the crucifixion of the old man and the destruction of the body of sin—certainly indicate a crisis in Christian experience, by which we truly become freed from sin. This is the nega-

tive side. Chapter eight gives the positive side, a picture of victory and blessing through walking in the Spirit.

Chapters 9—11 form a strange parenthesis in this book between the doctrinal and practical sections. They deal with the future of Israel and so belong to the realm of eschatology. Paul declared that all Israel would yet be saved.

Chapters 12—14 furnish us with one of the best sections of devotional reading in the New Testament. We have here a discussion of the various relationships of the Christian—his relations to the church, to the civil government, to society. A person who would give himself earnestly and conscientiously to living out the teachings of these chapters would live a truly noble life.

We would suggest that anyone who wants to undertake a real piece of intensive Bible study set himself the task of making an original, detailed outline of the Epistle to the Romans. The present writer once tried it during his student days. He spent ten solid hours on it and found it exceedingly interesting and profitable.

c. *Integrity.* The presence of so many salutations (chapter sixteen) in a letter to a church which Paul had never visited has occasioned some comment as to whether chapter sixteen is a part of the original Epistle to the Romans. Critics have suggested that this chapter would more naturally be written to Ephesus. One or two old manuscripts have the closing benediction at the end of chapter fifteen.

But the arguments advanced against the integrity of this Epistle have all been answered rather fully. Conservative scholars, therefore, see no reason for accepting them.

A rather more significant point is that one manuscript leaves out the word Rome in the salutation of the Epistle. This would suggest that copies of the Epistle

may have been sent to many different churches. It is altogether possible that after Paul had written Galatians he felt the need of indoctrinating the churches as a remedy against Judaism; so he wrote this theological treatise and sent it to Rome, and perhaps to other leading cities.

8. Philemon

a. The Prison Epistles. The Epistle to Philemon belongs to the third group of Paul's letters, commonly called the Prison Epistles. The others in this group are Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians.

There are indications in all of these Epistles that they were written from prison. In the ninth verse of Philemon, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and in the thirteenth verse he mentions his bonds. These same bonds are referred to again in Col. 4:3, 18. In Eph. 3:1 and 4:1 Paul calls himself a prisoner, and in 6:20 he refers to himself as an ambassador in bonds. In Philippians, Paul mentions his bonds three times, in verses 7, 13, and 16 of chapter one.

It has been assumed generally that Paul's imprisonment, referred to so frequently in these Epistles, was in Rome. Some have argued that they were written during his Caesarean imprisonment of two years, but the case for this is very weak. Considerable has been written in recent years in favor of an Ephesian imprisonment as the place of writing. A number of interesting arguments have been produced for this hypothesis. But it seems best, with our present data, to hold to the traditional view that these Epistles were written from Rome.

Paul was sending a letter by Onesimus, the runaway slave, to his master, Philemon. Tychicus was to accompany Onesimus to the city of Colossae; so Paul decided to write a letter to the Colossian church and send it along at the same time. Apparently before they left he wrote a longer and more elaborate Epistle (our Ephesians) as a

circular letter for the churches of Asia Minor. Thus we have this trilogy of Prison Epistles written and sent at the same time, probably in A.D. 59 or 60.

A year or so later, in 61, toward the close of his imprisonment, he wrote a letter to the church at Philippi. Some have preferred to place the Epistle to the Philippians before the other three Prison Epistles. But several facts argue strongly for placing it near the end of his imprisonment, after the other three. Phil. 1:12-18 would seem to indicate that Paul had been in Rome for some time. In 1:25 and 2:23-24, he states that he hopes soon to be released and to visit Philippi again. And the references in 2:25-30 and 4:10 require the lapse of a considerable period of time, sufficient for communication back and forth between Philippi and Rome.

b. Occasion. The occasion for the writing of Philemon is clearly indicated. Onesimus had run away from his master, Philemon. Somehow he had come into contact with Paul in prison and had been converted. Now Paul is sending him back to his master. He gives Onesimus this little personal note—it can hardly be called an epistle—so that his master will receive him back.

c. Value. Some have claimed that this little personal letter has no historical or theological value, and therefore has no rightful place in the New Testament canon. But it does have definite value for us as Christians, in two ways.

First, it gives us a picture of social relationships in the Early Church, as well as a revelation of Paul's great heart. He addresses himself "unto Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer" (verse 1). In verse 4 he writes, "I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers." Again, in verse 7, he says, "We have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the hearts [the Greek word refers to the seat of the affections] of

the saints are refreshed by thee, brother." This is a beautiful picture of Christian love in the Early Church.

In the second place, we have a graphic illustration here of the atonement. Paul says, in verse 17, "Receive him as myself." That is exactly what Jesus says to the Father. Then, in the next verse, Paul writes, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine account." In the same way Jesus assumed the debt of our sins and canceled it for us.

So we see that this little letter does have historical and theological value. But, more than that, it has a very real personal value. The fragrance of it has blessed many a Christian heart through the centuries. We are thankful that it has been preserved for us. Anyone who will meditate his way through its few brief verses will find himself the better and richer for it. Try it.

9. Colossians

a. Colossian Heresies. We have noted that Galatians was written to combat Judaism in the churches of Galatia. It seems that Colossians was written to counteract the rise of Gnosticism in the church at Colossae. It is true that Gnosticism does not appear as a prominent heresy until the second century, when it became one of the worst enemies of orthodox Christianity. But it doubtless existed in incipient form in the time of Paul.

Some of the characteristics of this early type of Gnosticism were a claim to higher knowledge (which gave its name to the heresy), the worship of angels (2:18), the theory that all matter was evil, and the consequent practice of a rigid asceticism (2:20-23).

There is also a hint of Judaistic ritualism in 2:14-23. Probably the heresies at Colossae were a mixture of Judaistic and Gnostic ideas from many sources. Lake calls it "syncretistic paganism."[5]

It is curious to note how frequently a text is taken out of its setting in the Bible and used in exactly the

opposite way to that which was intended. "Touch not; taste not; handle not" (2:21) has been a favorite temperance motto. The context states that Paul is urging us not to be subject to such an ordinance!

b. Paul's Answer. Paul's answer to all of this can be summed up in one word—Christ. Christ is the all-sufficient One. We do not need secret philosophies and elaborate rituals for our salvation. We are saved through simple faith in Christ. He alone is Mediator and Saviour.

One of the greatest Christological passages in the New Testament is to be found in the first chapter of Colossians (verses 15-19). Here Christ is declared to be "the image of the invisible God." In Him we see God. He is also the Creator of all things. In Him all things hold together ("consist," verse 17); that is, He is the "cohesive force" in the universe. He is also the Head of the Church. The description ends with the statement, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." Fulness (pleroma) was a favorite term with the Gnostics. Paul declares that Christ is the divine Pleroma. The Gnostics prided themselves on wisdom. Paul says of Christ, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The message and purpose of Colossians may be summed up in the words of 2:8-10: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him."

10. Ephesians

a. Destination. The words "in Ephesus" in Eph. 1:1 are not found in the two earliest and best Greek manuscripts, Vaticanus and Sinaiticus, nor in the earliest papyrus of this Epistle. Marcion called it the Epistle to the Laodiceans. Origen, the greatest Bible scholar of the third century, omitted the words "in Ephesus."

It is also a surprising fact that there are no personal greetings at the end of this Epistle. This seems doubly strange when we remember that Paul spent three years in Ephesus, longer than in any other place. He certainly had a host of friends there.

These two facts have led scholars to suggest that probably Ephesians was written as a circular letter to the various churches of Asia (the Roman province of Asia in Asia Minor). Since Ephesus was the capital of Asia and the mother church of that province was located there, it is only natural that the copy sent to Ephesus should become the one used for this Epistle and so should give its name to the Epistle. It is not impossible that a blank space may have been left in each copy, so that the name of the church to which it was to go might be inserted in it. We know now that the publishing of books was common in the first century. Of course, there were no printing presses in those days, but a number of copyists would sit in a room taking dictation from a reader. This was the publishing house of that time. References are made in the literature of that period to bookstores, where one could purchase the works of poets and authors.

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives a summary of Paul's mature theology, and it is fitting that it should be circulated as widely as possible.

b. Contents. The Epistle to the Ephesians is the most profound book in the New Testament. Doubtless Paul in prison at Rome must have been tempted to feel disappointed that he was cut off from active service. He had been the busiest missionary, evangelist, pastor, and presiding elder in the Roman world. Now he was spending four consecutive years in captivity.

It must have been one of the greatest trials in Paul's life. But God knew what He was doing. This towering intellectual genius of the Early Church had been so tre-

mendously busy in missionary work that he had had little time for profound thinking. But the richest products of the human mind grow only in the garden of meditation. So God laid Paul aside from active service for four years in order that He might have an opportunity—plenty of time, and quiet—to reveal to him the deeper secrets of eternal truth. If Paul had not spent those years in prison, we would have been deprived of the richest fruits of his pen.

It is in this Epistle that we have a revelation of God's great eternal plan of the ages. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (1:4). "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ" (1:10). "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (2:7). "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:11). These are a few of the passages in this Epistle which show how profound was Paul's understanding of the eternal purposes of God.

To these might be added 1:15-23 and 3:14-21, which contain the two most beautiful prayers in the Bible, excepting Jesus' prayer in John 17. We should like to quote these two prayers in full, but space forbids. Read them now.

Paul does not discuss these profound Christian truths from the standpoint of objective, disinterested philosophy. Rather, he is very vitally interested in God's plan for His children.

The key thought of these first three chapters is well expressed in 1:3 and 2:6. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in

heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This phrase, "in heavenly places [lit., in the heavenlies] in Christ" might be taken as the key phrase of the book. It is the Epistle of the heavenly life.

A sharp change of thought occurs at the end of chapter three, which closes with a benediction. The Epistle is divided right at the middle. The first three chapters are doctrinal; the last three are practical.

The key word of this second half of Ephesians is "walk." It is as though Paul had taken us for an airplane ride and given us a vast panoramic view of God's great eternal plans and purposes. Suddenly he brings us down to earth again and says, "Now, walk in the light of what you have seen."

Five times, in chapters four and five, Paul tells us to walk. "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (4:1). "Walk not as other Gentiles walk" (4:17). "Walk in love" (5:2). "Walk as children of light" (5:8). "Walk circumspectly" (5:15). Chapters 1—3 give us the Christian's worship; chapters 4—6 give us the Christian's walk.

The central interest in this Epistle is the Church, as that of Colossians is Christ. The unity of the Church is stressed here. In fact, a comparison might be drawn between this Epistle and the prayer of Jesus in John 17.

The social relationships of the believer receive attention in chapters five and six. Paul speaks of the duties as Christians of wives and husbands, children and fathers, servants and masters. The same six classes are discussed in the last two chapters of Colossians.

Some of the prominent words in this Epistle are "grace," which occurs thirteen times; "spirit" and "spiritual," thirteen times; "love," nineteen times. The phrase "in Christ" occurs thirty-six times.

Only much meditation upon the pages of this Epistle can give one an appreciation of its value. It has been one

of the most treasured sources of inspiration and blessing to God's saints.

We close our study of it with a quotation from Hayes. He writes: "This epistle has been called 'the epistle of the heavenlies,' 'the third heaven epistle.' Its chapters have been called 'the Alps of the New Testament.' Notice the characteristic words in this epistle—the heavenlies, spiritual, glory, mystery, plenitude, light, love, grace, and peace. These are the stars and suns which illuminate the firmament of Paul's thought here. We need telescopes of spiritual intuition to reach or grasp any clear notion of these realities in Paul's experience and teaching. He is at his highest pitch of inspiration. He is at his best of thinking and writing. Paul sits in his prison cell, but he sits at the same time in the heavenly places with Christ."[6]

11. Philippians

a. Characteristics. The Epistle to the Philippians is most like Philemon of any of Paul's writings in being a spontaneous, personal letter. It is very far from being a treatise or a formal Epistle. There is more personal feeling of love for his readers in this Epistle than in any others. There are several indications that this church held first place in his heart. The church at Philippi seems to have been in excellent condition, for there is no note of censure in this Epistle. This is as we would expect it to be, since Luke had been its pastor. The only hint of any trouble at all is in Paul's admonition to Euodias and Syntyche to be of the same mind (4:2).

This love of Paul for the Philippians was reciprocated by them. "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (4:15-16). Paul's loyal friend, Luke, imparted his generous

spirit to the church he served, and saw to it that Paul's needs were cared for, as far as that church was able.

But not only is this Epistle filled with Paul's overflowing love and gratitude to the Philippians. It also abounds in a deep and constant note of joy. Sixteen times in the four short chapters of this Epistle we find the words "joy" and "rejoice."

This becomes all the more remarkable when we recall where the Epistle was written. Paul had once sung a duet with Silas in prison at Philippi. Now from another prison in faraway Rome he sends this singing Epistle back to Philippi. The blessing still held.

It took grace *and glory* for Paul to sing in prison. "He was a world-missionary, a restless cosmopolite, ranging up and down through the continents with the message of Christ. It was like putting an eagle into a cage to put him into prison. Many eagles mope and die in confinement. Paul was not moping. He was writing this Epistle to the Philippians and saying to them, 'All the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel. . . . Therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.' "[7]

b. Contents. It is practically useless to try to outline this spontaneous letter. We shall note only a few outstanding passages.

The main theological note in this Epistle is found in the so-called *kenosis* passage, 2:5-9. Here we are told that Christ Jesus, although being in the form of God, was willing to become the Servant of humanity. The King James Version says (verse 7) that He "made . . . of no reputation." This entire phrase is one word in the Greek, *ekenosen*, from which we get *kenosis*. It means literally, "he emptied [himself]."

But of what did He empty himself? The teaching of the New Testament is clear that He did not empty him-

self of His divine nature, but only of His heavenly manner of living—what He calls, in John 17:5, "the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ was still the eternal Son of God when upon earth, but His divine glory was veiled by human flesh.

It is worthy of note that this theological passage occurs as an illustration of Paul's admonition to humility. The passage is introduced with the words (verse 5): "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." That is typical of Paul. His theology is always practical. It is a living theology, because always related to life.

One other passage might be noted. The King James translation of Phil. 3:20 is obsolete. It says, "Our conversation is in heaven." The literal translation is, "Our citizenship is in heaven." The thought of the passage is that, while down here in the world, we should live as citizens of heaven.

The fourth chapter of Philippians is the most joyful chapter in the New Testament. This closing note from Paul's prison experience echoes the joy within his own soul, because of the presence of Christ with him.

12. First Timothy

a. The Pastoral Epistles. The Pastoral Epistles—I Timothy, Titus, and II Timothy—claim to be written by Paul. The Early Church tradition assigns them to Paul. In fact, there is abundant external evidence to support their genuineness. Yet many, if not most, liberal critics reject their Pauline authorship. We shall notice some of their objections.

First, the vocabulary of the Pastorals differs considerably from that in Paul's other Epistles. Much is made of this. But certainly a man's vocabulary will change with the years and with his subject. It has been well pointed out that there is no greater change between Paul's other Epistles and the Pastorals with regard to

vocabulary than there is between some of the earlier and later works of Shakespeare or Milton. This argument is not at all conclusive.

Second, it is held that these Epistles indicate a greater advance in the organization of the Church than existed in Paul's day. But the use of "bishop" is far different from what it is in the Letters of Ignatius (about A.D. 115).

The most important argument is that the movements of Paul described in the Pastorals do not fit into the Book of Acts. But this objection disappears if we grant that Paul may have been released from his first Roman imprisonment and have taken some further journeys before his final imprisonment and death. The Muratorian Fragment, Clement of Rome, and Eusebius all furnish testimony to the effect that such was the case.

The evidence gives us ample justification for rendering a verdict in favor of the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles. Their Pauline authorship has been ably defended by a host of leading New Testament scholars.

These Epistles are preeminently ecclesiastical. They are concerned with the organization and worship of the Church. They might be called the first manual of church discipline. The point of view of these Epistles is that of the pastor. They form a handbook of church conduct and policy for the use of a pastor.

It would appear that, having written at length on theology and the Christian life, Paul toward the close of his ministry felt the need of leaving some instructions about the conduct of church affairs. The larger the churches grew, the more care needed to be taken with regard to faith and discipline.

b. Content. Timothy was a young convert and colleague of Paul, whom the apostle put in charge of the important church at Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3). Here he had a large congregation in the midst of a pagan environ-

ment. His task was not an easy one, and he needed Paul's advice and support. So Paul wrote to Timothy, warning him especially against false doctrine and immoral conduct. It is often assumed that there is no necessary connection between doctrine and life. But history demonstrates the fallacy of this theory.

Timothy's various duties as pastor and his relation to the different classes in the church are discussed carefully by Paul. Timothy was young, and for that very reason needed to be especially careful in his social relationships.

The qualifications of bishops and deacons are given in chapter three. These reflect the fact that the Christians were living in a pagan environment with its low morals.

The Pastoral Epistles are definitely not theological in emphasis. But neither are they barren of all doctrine. In 3:16 we find a brief theological statement which may have served as an early creedal formula: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

It is not possible to construct a detailed outline of this Epistle, but it has been suggested that it may be divided at the center. Chapters 1—3 deal with instructions concerning the church and chapters 4—6 with instructions concerning the minister.

13. Titus

Titus had been sent by Paul to Crete (Tit. 1:5). This was not an easy assignment. The Cretans were famous for being lazy liars. That was not very good timber with which to build a church.

The two main emphases of this Epistle are "sound doctrine" (1:9) and "good works" (2:7). Like I Timothy, there is a discussion of church offices and Christian relationships.

14. Second Timothy

This is the last Epistle from the pen and heart of Paul. It exhibits more feeling than the previous two, for Paul realized now that his death was near (4:6). His closing testimony reveals the fact that he was a soldier to the end: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (4:7). Would that all of us might be able to testify thus when our turn comes!

One of the most touching things in this Epistle is Paul's statement in 1:15, "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Even down to the end Paul was to suffer for the sake of the gospel.

Paul charges Timothy to be strong, to keep himself pure, to exercise strict, and if necessary, stern discipline over the church. He is to keep the church pure in doctrine and conduct.

The real length of a man's life is not measured by the number of years he lives in this world, but by how much he lives during those years. Judged by this standard, Paul lived one of the longest lives on record, even though he was martyred probably in his early sixties. In thirty years of service he had done more than anyone else to spread the gospel of Christ and His salvation, and to establish and indoctrinate the Christian Church.

Discussion Topics

1. The relationship of Paul to the churches of his day.
2. The importance of Paul's Epistles in the history of Christianity.
3. Paul and the Judaizers.
4. Paul's sufferings for the sake of the gospel.
5. The development of Paul's theological thinking as revealed in his Epistles.

V

HEBREWS AND THE GENERAL EPISTLES

1. Hebrews

a. Authorship. The title of this book in the King James Version is "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," but it must be remembered that these titles are not a part of the inspired text. They have been added by editors at a later date. The early Greek manuscripts have simply, "To the Hebrews."

As far as the Epistle itself is concerned, it is anonymous. No author's name occurs. This is a very significant point, in view of the fact that Paul begins all of his thirteen Epistles with his name. No satisfactory explanation has ever been given as to why Paul, if he wrote this Epistle, should omit his name. Its beginning is definitely un-Pauline.

The earliest definite evidence that we have on the question of authorship is from Clement of Alexandria, who wrote at the close of the second century. He said that the Epistle was written by Paul in Hebrew (Aramaic) and that Luke translated it. The main objection to this is that the Greek of Hebrews seems too smooth for translation Greek. However, it is worthy of note that the style of Hebrews is rather Lukan. Hebrews is written in the most literary Greek of any book in the New Testament, and we have already seen that Luke was capable of writing such Greek.

Origen, the great scholar of the third century, pointed out that the style was not that of Paul. He goes on to say: "If I were to express my own opinion I should say that the thoughts are the thoughts of the apostle, but the language and the composition that of one who recalled

from memory, and, as it were, made notes of what was said by his master."[1] He records the tradition that either Clement of Rome or Luke wrote it.

It is evident that the Alexandrian church accepted the Pauline authorship of Hebrews in the third century. The Eastern Church, as a whole, followed suit.

This was not true in the West, however. Clement of Rome, writing about A.D. 95, quotes freely from the Epistle, but does not attribute it to Paul. This is very significant.

The Roman presbyter Caius and the Muratorian Canon both list thirteen Epistles of Paul, omitting Hebrews. Tertullian, who lived in north Africa late in the second century, said that Barnabas wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The opinion of Rome and the West (until A.D. 400) is definitely against Pauline authorship. This is doubly significant in view of the fact that the first notice we have of this Epistle is from Clement, bishop of Rome, and that at a very early date, the end of the first century. If Paul had written Hebrews it would certainly seem that the church at Rome in A.D. 95 would have known it.

At the end of the fourth century Jerome and Augustine began to influence the Western Church to accept the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Jerome himself was very doubtful as to who wrote it, but Augustine accepted the view of the Eastern Church and influenced the councils of Carthage, in 398 and 419, to attribute the Epistle to Paul. This became the official view of the Church from that time until the Reformation.

Luther and Calvin, the two leading reformers, rejected the idea of Pauline authorship. Luther thought Apollos wrote it. Certainly the style and subject matter of the Epistle fit him better than any other character described in the New Testament.

It is evident that we shall have to leave this interesting question undecided. If the Church of the first four centuries was so uncertain about the authorship of Hebrews, it is hardly to be expected that we can decide the matter at this late date. To assert positively that Paul wrote it is to shut one's eyes to the record of history. The best we can do is to say that we do not know who wrote it.

Most scholars feel that the internal evidence—style, vocabulary, and certain allusions in the Epistle—is definitely against Pauline authorship. We shall have to rest the case there.

b. Date. We feel a little more certainty in fixing the time of the writing of this Epistle. The fact that it implies definitely that the Temple sacrifices were going on at the time would require a date before A.D. 70, for in that year Jerusalem and its Temple were destroyed by the Roman armies, and the Temple sacrifices came to an end forever. The whole thought of the book is a plea to reject the outward ceremonialism of Judaism in favor of the inward reality of Christianity. This would lose most of its force if the Temple had been destroyed.

c. Destination. Two opposite theories prevail on this point. Some hold that it was written from Rome to Jerusalem. Others hold that it was written from Jerusalem to Rome. The statement in 13:24, "They of Italy salute you," may be interpreted either way. The traditional view of the Church is that it was written to the Christian Jews at Jerusalem.

d. Purpose. The purpose of this Epistle seems obvious. It was written to Jewish Christians to strengthen their faith in Christ by showing the vast superiority of Christianity to Judaism. It warned them against lapsing back into Judaism, because of its impressive history and ritual, and urged them to go forward with Christ to perfection as Christians.

Before leaving these matters of introduction, it might be well to emphasize the fact that the value of the Epistle for us does not depend upon our settling the questions of authorship. We may not know who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, but we do know that it is one of the most important books of the New Testament. "If the authorship of this epistle is uncertain, its inspiration is indisputable. If we do not know from what place it was written, we know that it brings us a message from heaven. If we do not know to whom it was first addressed, we know that it addresses our own hearts and speaks to our own needs. The uncertainties in matters of introduction do not increase the difficulties of interpretation in the least."[2]

e. Character. The Epistle to the Hebrews is the most literary book in the New Testament. It is written in polished Greek and exhibits a superior rhetorical style.

It is interesting to note that while this book ends like an Epistle, it does not begin like one. To add a salutation at the beginning would be to destroy the effect of its impressive opening words.

An outstanding characteristic of this Epistle is the way in which it alternates between theological teaching and practical exhortation, the one following the other in successive sections. This is very different from the method of Paul, who presents his doctrinal teaching in the first part of an Epistle, and the practical section at the end.

f. Contents. A good brief outline of the Epistle is suggested by Cartledge: (I) The finality of Christianity, 1:1-4; (II) The superiority of the Christian Mediator, 1:5—2:18; (III) The superiority of the Christian Founder, chapters 3—4; (IV) The superiority of the Christian priesthood, 5:1—10:18; (V) Concluding exhortations, 10:19—13:25.

The key word of Hebrews is "better." Christ is better than the angels, better than Moses, better than Joshua, better than Aaron. Christianity is a better covenant. It has a better rest, a better priesthood, a better altar, a better sacrifice. Hebrews is the book of "better things."

The significance of this term "better" is suggested in 11:16, where we read: "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly." Christianity is a spiritual, heavenly experience, not an outward, earthly religion.

The opening words of Hebrews strike the keynote of the entire book: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

"God . . . hath . . . spoken"—the fact of a divine revelation! Man needed to hear from heaven, and God has not been silent. He spoke in Old Testament times in various ways, but He has now given His final revelation in His Son. The title of this book might be "The Finality of Jesus Christ."

Verse three of the first chapter contains another striking description of Christ: "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power." Christ is the manifestation of God's glory, the exact reproduction of His person. How could any stronger statement of the deity of Jesus be made?

The language here is very similar to that used in Col. 1:15. We shall find another outstanding Christological passage in the prologue to John's Gospel. It would be well for every Christian to remember the location of these three statements of Christ's deity—in the first chapter of John, of Colossians, and of Hebrews.

In this first chapter of Hebrews, Christ is shown to be better than the angels. The Jews thought that the

angels played a prominent part in the giving of the Jewish law (2:2), but they were not equal to God. Only the Son is addressed as God (1:8). This is a very striking and unique declaration of Christ's full deity. This divine Son of God was the One through whom the new covenant was given (2:3). He is the better Mediator.

Christ is better than Moses. Moses was only a servant. Christ is a Son. Christ is better than Joshua. Joshua led the people into the promised land, but he could not give them that better rest which Jesus alone can give.

The thought of priesthood occupies more space than any other single topic in the Epistle. Christ is called High Priest in 3:1. After a discussion of the rest which is to be found in Him, the continuous and prolonged discourse on the priesthood begins at 4:14. It continues from there to the end of chapter ten. Six out of the thirteen chapters of this book discuss the subject of priesthood.

Connected with this discussion of the priesthood there is a presentation of the better tabernacle (9:11), the better covenant (8:6), the better sacrifice (c. 10). Christ's priesthood can do far more for us than Aaron's could do for the Israelites.

The superiority of salvation by faith to salvation by law is illustrated graphically in the eleventh chapter. Faith is the only thing that can please God (11:6).

One interesting feature of this Epistle is the frequently recurring warnings and encouragements. We might speak of them as red and green lights, or "Stop" and "Go" signs. "Let us" is a frequent expression. "Let us go on unto perfection" is a keynote of the book. A study of these warnings and exhortations is very fruitful.

2. James

a. Authorship. This Epistle begins with the name James, but we are left with the problem as to who this James is, for there are several men by that name in the

New Testament. The tradition of the Church ascribes this Epistle to James the brother of Jesus, the head of the church at Jerusalem. Several references in Acts (12:17; 15:13, 19; 21:18) indicate that James was the acknowledged leader of the Jewish Christians.

b. Date. Many scholars have felt that James was the first book of our New Testament to be written, that it was written as early as A.D. 45. This is argued largely from its Jewish character. At any rate, it would seem that we should place it not later than the sixties, for it was in that decade that James was martyred, according to tradition.

c. Destination. The Epistle is addressed to the Jews of the Dispersion. Curiously, some have argued that this Epistle is not written to Jews at all, but that seems fantastic. The fact that James was head of the Jewish Christian Church would account very naturally for his writing to Jews.

d. Character. The Epistle of James is the most Jewish book of the New Testament. It is much like the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. There is very little reference to Christ, and the word "gospel" is not used at all. It is only here in the New Testament that the word "synagogue" (translated "assembly" in 2:2) is used for the Christian Church. Because of persecution by the Jews, the Gentile Christians studiously avoided the use of that word for their gatherings.

The Epistle is definitely ethical, rather than doctrinal. In fact, it is the most like the Sermon on the Mount of any passage outside the Gospels. This leads us to observe that it is more like a sermon than an epistle. It is filled with practical exhortations to noble conduct.

e. Contents. The teaching of this Epistle resembles not only that of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament—and very strikingly the extracanonical wisdom of

Jesus ben Sirach—but also that of the prophets. It cries out like the prophets of old against hypocrisy, greed, and partiality. It is evident that the writer is saturated with the Old Testament.

f. Relation to Paul's Teaching. The greater emphasis in James on works than on faith has led many to claim that there is a sharp conflict between Paul and James in their theology. We would say, rather, that the Epistle of James was needed as a corrective for any antinomianism in the Early Church that might arise from the idea that we are saved by faith alone, regardless of our works. James says that our works must demonstrate the validity of our profession of faith. And Paul would be the very first to say, "Amen!" to that. His Epistles are filled with frequent injunctions to Christians to be careful to main tain good works.

3. First Peter

a. Authorship. Peter's name occurs at the beginning of this Epistle. While Irenaeus is the first writer, as far as we know, to assign this Epistle definitely to Peter, yet there is abundant evidence from his time on, and no other author is suggested. Irenaeus quotes I Pet. 1:8 and 4:28. In both cases he introduces the quotation with the formula, "Peter says." So we are certainly safe in accepting the Epistle as genuine. It is quoted as early and frequently as almost any short book of the New Testament.

b. Date. First Peter has many passages in it that are so similar to the Epistle to the Romans that scholars feel Peter must have used Paul's Epistle. This would mean that Peter's Epistle was written after Romans, and so probably in the sixties.

As Peter was martyred not later than A.D. 68 (the death of Nero), the Epistle was probably written at about A.D. 64. That is the year of the great fire at Rome, which

Nero used as an excuse for persecuting the Christians at Rome.

c. *Destination.* The first two verses tell us that Peter wrote this Epistle to people scattered throughout the northern part of Asia Minor. Whether these recipients were primarily Jews or Gentiles is a matter of dispute.

The place of writing of this Epistle calls for more comment. In 5:13 Peter indicates that he was writing from Babylon. But what is meant by "Babylon"?

Many have taken this as being the literal city of Babylon, in Mesopotamia. But there seems to be better reason for taking the word allegorically, as referring to Rome. That is the tradition of the Early Church. Tradition also says that Peter and Mark were together in Rome, and Peter mentions Mark in this Epistle as being with him.

d. *Contents.* As righteousness was the prominent idea in James, so hope is the keynote of I Peter. It is hope held out to those who were undergoing severe persecution.

Another major emphasis in this Epistle is on holiness. But it is not a theological discussion of the experience of sanctification, as in Romans 6—8. Peter's emphasis is entirely upon practical holy living. It is holiness of conduct ("conversation," 1:15).

This Epistle is definitely not theological. But it is one of the richest portions for devotional reading to be found in the New Testament. The practice of Christian love shines all through its pages. It gives us a beautiful picture of life in a Christian community where love holds supreme sway. It has some striking similarities to the twelfth chapter of Romans.

We like to think that bighearted, impulsive Peter is giving us here the richest fruit of his mature thought and

experience. He was by this time one of the old saints in the Church, and one who had known Jesus well.

4. Jude

a. Authorship. The author of this Epistle is stated to be "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." There are six Judes named in the New Testament. It seems most natural to take this Jude as the brother of James, the head of the Jerusalem church. That would make Jude, as James, a brother of Jesus.

b. Date. There is nothing to suggest a date for this Epistle, except that it seems to have been written before II Peter. That would place it probably in the early sixties.

c. Relation to II Peter. The Epistle of Jude and the second chapter of II Peter are so very similar in subject and wording that it is felt by scholars that they must be dependent on each other. And most scholars agree that Jude was written first. It is not impossible that they were written at the same time and place.

d. Contents. The Epistle of Jude is composed of only one chapter of twenty-five verses. It is unique in the New Testament in quoting from an apocryphal book by name, the Book of Enoch (v. 14).

The Epistle is apocalyptic in nature; that is, it gives visions of future events and punishments. It has this in common with II Peter and Revelation.

The stated purpose of the Epistle is to exhort the readers to "earnestly contend for the faith." This, with the beautiful closing benediction and verses 20 and 21, is the most valuable part of this brief letter.

5. Second Peter

a. Authorship. It is strange that, while I Peter is one of the best attested books in the New Testament, II Peter has for it the least and latest evidence of any book. The earliest testimony to its authorship is by Origen, in the third century: "Peter left one acknowledged

epistle; let there be also a second, for it is disputed."[8] Eusebius and Jerome, of the fourth century, both record that the Petrine authorship of this Epistle was disputed by many.

The main internal argument against its having been written by Peter is the difference in style between it and I Peter. The Greek of the First Epistle is much superior to that in the second one. There is also a great difference in vocabulary.

The answer to this objection is suggested by the statement in I Pet. 5:12 that Silvanus acted as amanuensis for that Epistle. No mention is made of a secretary for the Second Epistle. If Peter wrote the latter himself, it would account for its inferior Greek style. Incidentally, that also removes one of the main arguments against the Petrine authorship of the First Epistle—that it is written in better Greek than we would expect from an unlettered Galilean fisherman.

There seems to be no sufficient reason for rejecting the genuineness of II Peter. Most liberal scholars do so, even some moderate conservatives. But most conservatives prefer to hold at least tentatively to Petrine authorship.

b. Date. It is obvious that the question of date must depend on that of authorship. Liberal scholars tend to place this Epistle in the second century. But, accepting Peter as author, we must date it before A.D. 68.

c. Contents. There are some beautiful passages in this Epistle, as the addition of Christian virtues in chapter one. The tone of this Epistle is certainly vastly superior to that of any apocryphal book of the New Testament, as anyone can soon find out by procuring a copy of the *New Testament Apocrypha.* The great contrast leads us to accept this Epistle as a genuine apostolic writing.

In this Epistle, Peter refers to his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:16-18). In 3:1 he calls this his second epistle. In 3:2 he classes himself as an apostle. These definite allusions which fit Peter the apostle have been taken by liberal critics as the crude attempts of a forger to give a semblance of genuineness to this Epistle. On the other hand, some critics object to the Petrine authorship of the First Epistle on the basis that it does not contain enough references to Peter's contact with Christ. This is a good example of the inconsistency of negative New Testament criticism.

The devout reader of II Peter will feel that he would not want to be deprived of this Epistle, which has in it so much of beauty and inspiration.

Discussion Topics

1. The place of the Epistle of James in the New Testament.
2. The relative emphasis on doctrine and on Christian conduct in I Peter.
3. The genuineness of II Peter.
4. The apocalyptic element in Jude and II Peter.
5. The relation of Paul and James.

VI

THE JOHANNINE LITERATURE

1. The Life of the Apostle John

a. Place in the Apostolic Circle. Jesus chose twelve apostles to be with Him in His public ministry. Out of these twelve He chose three to be with Him on three special occasions—at the deathbed of Jairus' daughter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But there was one who was even closer than the rest of the twelve, or of the three. This was the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who loved Jesus, the one who leaned on His bosom at the table. His name was John. He had the central place in the apostolic circle, not because of any partiality on the part of Jesus, but simply because he loved Jesus more and instinctively drew nearer to Him. He alone of the disciples was in the room when Jesus was tried before the Sanhedrin. He stood near the cross and received the mother of Jesus as his charge. He was the first man to believe in the resurrection of Jesus.

b. Position in the Early Church. The Book of Acts indicates that John was associated closely with Peter for a while after Pentecost, but he always played second part. Peter was leader and spokesman. It was only after Peter was gone that John came to his own.

c. Long Residence at Ephesus. Tradition tells us that John stayed in Jerusalem until the death of Jesus' mother, Mary, about A.D. 48. Irenaeus and a number of other church fathers state that John later took up his residence in Ephesus. It would appear that he remained there most of the time during the last third of the first century.

d. The Aged Patriarch. John lived the longest of any of the apostles. Probably none of them survived long after A.D. 70, if any were still alive then. But tradition claims that John lived to see the dawn of the second century.

Several stories are told of John in his old age. The most beautiful comes to us from Jerome. It tells us how, when he was no longer able to walk, he was carried to church. Not able now to preach, he simply repeated one constant admonition, "Little children, love one another." When asked if he had anything further to say, he answered that this was the Lord's command and if this only were done it would be sufficient.

The son of thunder in earlier days had now become the great apostle of love. With his long years of familiarity with Christianity, with his rich, mature experience and thought, John was prepared to give us the climax of revelation. "At last he was prepared to write the consummation of the New Testament revelation, the final residuum of the first century's experience in the origin and the development of Christian truth. What Jesus had taught in the first third of the century and what Peter and Paul had preached in the second third of the century John meditated upon through the last third of the century, and in this period he wrote the epistles, the Apocalypse, and the Gospel. They represent the highest reach of apostolic inspiration."[1]

2. General Introduction

a. Authorship. The question of the authorship of the Johannine literature, especially the fourth Gospel, has been and is one of the fiercest battlegrounds in the field of New Testament criticism. The issues are not all settled yet, by any means, but it is encouraging to know that recent discoveries are helping materially to confirm the traditional view of Johannine authorship. The sub-

ject is a very complicated one. We shall note only the main points.

Ignatius and Polycarp, in the second decade of the second century, show a knowledge of John's Gospel. But no one mentions John as author until about A.D. 180, when Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, quotes John 1:1 and attributes it to John. About A.D. 190 Irenaeus states that John, the beloved disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast, published his Gospel while residing at Ephesus. He quotes the Gospel of John one hundred times. Clement of Alexandria says that John composed a "spiritual gospel." He and Tertullian, both at the end of the second century, quote the Gospel hundreds of times.

An abundance of external evidence can be cited for the Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel. There really seems to be no valid reason for rejecting it.

There is also considerable early evidence that John wrote the Book of Revelation. The evidence for the First Epistle is strong and indicates that the Early Church had no doubt about its Johannine authorship. The same cannot be said for the Second and Third Epistles. Origen (third century) notes that their genuineness was questioned in his day, while Eusebius (fourth century) places them in his list of "disputed" books of the New Testament. The question about them probably arose in part from their extreme brevity and their lack of theological content.

b. Dates. Early Church tradition is unanimous to the effect that the Gospel of John was the last of the four to be written. Irenaeus states that John lived until the time of Trajan, who became emperor in A.D. 98. It is generally held that he wrote his Gospel at around A.D. 95.

In fact, we can well place all the Johannine literature at about that date, for the First Epistle is closely related to the Gospel. As regards Revelation we have the testimony of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen to

the effect that it was written in the last years of Domitian, who reigned from 81 to 96.

3. The Gospel of John

a. Comparison with the Synoptics. No better comparison of John's Gospel with the Synoptics has probably been made than the observation of Clement of Alexandria, who wrote: "John, the last, having noticed that the bodily things were recorded in the Gospels, at the instigation of the men of note, and moved by the Spirit, composed a spiritual gospel."[2] The Synoptics are historical narratives of the life and ministry of Jesus. John's Gospel is a spiritual interpretation of His person.

Farrar gives a good summary of the main differences between the Synoptics and John's Gospel. "The first three dwell mainly and almost exclusively on Christ's ministry in Galilee; the fourth on His ministry in Judea. The first three only narrate at length one of His visits to Jerusalem—the one which ended in the crucifixion; St. John gives us the incidents of four such visits previous to the one in which He was put to death. The first three are occupied mainly and almost exclusively with His miracles, parables, and addresses to the multitude; St. John, with the higher, deeper, more abstract, more esoteric—and in one or two important instances, more individual discourses. The first three are . . . more objective; the fourth, more subjective. The first three deal more with action; St. John with contemplation."[3]

b. Purpose. We do not have to do any guessing as to the purpose of this Gospel. The author has stated it for us in 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

This expressed purpose is clearly apparent throughout the Gospel. The Synoptics use words for miracles which mean literally "wonders," "powerful works." John regularly uses a word which means "sign." (The

King James translation "miracle" is inadequate.) For instance, in John 2:11 we read, "This beginning of *signs* did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him." Again, in the twenty-third verse of the same chapter we read, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the signs which he did."

It is obvious that the miracles recorded in John's Gospel are signs intended to induce belief in Jesus as the Son of God. They might be called "sign miracles."

c. Contents. The Gospel of John is another New Testament book the table of contents of which is easy to remember. As in the case of Acts, we shall list each chapter.

1. John the Baptist and Jesus
2. First miracle at Cana
3. Nicodemus
4. The woman at the well
5. Healing of impotent man
6. The Bread of Life
7. Feast of Tabernacles
8. The Light of the World
9. Healing of the blind man
10. The Good Shepherd
11. Raising of Lazarus
12. Anointing at Bethany
13. Last Supper
14. The Comforter
15. The Vine and the branches
16. Last words to disciples
17. Jesus' prayer
18. Arrest and trials
19. Crucifixion
20. Resurrection
21. Epilogue

John's Gospel begins with a theological prologue. Mark has no introduction, except the opening verse. Matthew begins his Gospel with a genealogy, as that was the first thing the Jews were interested in. Luke has a literary preface. But John's introduction is theological.

The theme of the prologue (1:1-18) is the Logos. This is a Greek term which means (1) "thought" or "concept," and (2) the expression of that thought, and so "word." Jesus is God manifested, or expressed, to man.

The eternity and deity of the Logos are stated definitely in verse 1. Verses 3-5 tell us that He is the only Creator, and the Source of all life. His incarnation (coming in flesh) is declared in verse 14 to be a manifestation of divine glory. Verse 18 states emphatically that the eternal Son has disclosed the unseen God.

John the Baptist predicted the coming of Jesus and then identified Him publicly as the Lamb of God. Some of his disciples then followed Jesus. The last part of chapter one gives us the call of the first disciples.

Chapter two records Jesus' first miracle, the turning of water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. Then we have the first Passover in Jesus' ministry. He performed sign miracles there, with the result that many believed on Him.

Chapter three records Jesus' interview with Nicodemus. This ruler sought Him out at night, probably for privacy as much as secrecy. Jesus cut right across all formalities and informed Nicodemus that he needed to be born again.

It is impossible in this chapter to tell where Jesus' words end and John's comments begin. The change may come at the end of verse 15, 17, or 21. This very fact demonstrates how fully the beloved disciple had caught

the spirit of Jesus. He was so saturated with the mind of Christ that he voiced naturally the thoughts of Christ.

The interview between Jesus and the woman at the well is one of the best examples of personal work to be found anywhere. Jesus started the conversation on the level of common interest—water. He overcame all the woman's objections and evasions, and did not stop until he had clinched the case, and she had accepted Him.

The healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda (c. 5) became the occasion for persecution of Jesus by the Jews on the charge that He had broken the Sabbath. The question of Sabbath observance was one of the main causes of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.

It should be noted that John uses the expression "the Jews" in a definite sense. That term in his Gospel usually refers to the rulers, or religious leaders, of the nation. These are presented by John as opposing Jesus from the very beginning of His ministry (1:18; 5:16). The Synoptics do not give much indication of this conflict until the last year of Jesus' public life.

In the latter part of chapter five Jesus cites four witnesses to prove His deity—John the Baptist, His works, the Father, and the Scriptures (especially Moses' writings). We are justified in finding references to Christ in the Old Testament, for He himself said, "They are they which testify of me" (verse 39).

Chapter six begins with the account of the feeding of the five thousand, the only miracle which is recorded in each of the four Gospels. Jesus used this incident as the illustration for a discourse on himself as the Bread of Life.

In chapter 7 we find the Jews looking for an opportunity to kill Jesus (see also 5:16) at the Feast of Tabernacles. On the last day of the feast Jesus revealed himself as the Water of Life. He offered the woman at the

well a fountain of water in her soul (4:14). Now He declares that those who have the Holy Spirit will have an overflowing experience—not only eough to satisfy themselves eternally, but sufficient to flow out in rivers for the blessing of others (7:38).

The miracles of Jesus as recorded by John are frequently connected with His discourses, as signs of the truth He was teaching. He fed the five thousand in the wilderness, and then offered himself as the Bread of Life. In chapter eight He preached on the text, "I am the light of the world" (verse 12); then in chapter nine He healed the man born blind, as proof and illustration of His sermon.

This healing incident is an interesting story as revealing the incurable hatred of the Jewish leaders for Jesus. It is also a good example of how a man's faith grows as he walks in the light. The healed man first identified his Healer as "a man that is called Jesus" (verse 11). Then he declared He was "a prophet" (verse 17). He stuck to his testimony of what he knew, and finally ended by accepting Jesus as Son of God, and worshiping Him (verse 38).

Chapter ten presents Jesus as the Door of the sheep (verse 7) and as the Good Shepherd (verses 11, 14). The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

The latter part of this chapter records Jesus' clash with the Jewish leaders at the Feast of Dedication. They asked Him to state definitely whether He was the Messiah (Christ). In answer He made perhaps the strongest statement of His deity that we find in the Gospels, "I and my Father are one" (verse 30). And yet we are told that Jesus himself never claimed to be God! The Jews certainly understood Him to mean just exactly that. They took up stones to stone Him, declaring, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (verse 33).

An interesting project in connection with the study of this Gospel is to make a graph with two lines, one showing the progress of belief, and the other the progress of unbelief. Chapter ten, which shows the Jewish leaders rejecting Jesus' claim to deity and trying to kill Him, ends with the statement, "And many believed on him there." The same miracles and teachings resulted in both belief and unbelief.

Chapter eleven gives the crowning miracle recorded in this Gospel as performed by Jesus. While each of the Synoptics records about twenty of Jesus' miracles, John's Gospel gives only seven. John preferred to select just a few outstanding sign miracles and to point out their significance and results.

There are three cases narrated in the Gospels of Jesus raising a dead person—the daughter of Jairus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus. In the first case, the girl had just died. In the second, the young man had been dead just a few hours. Critics like to tell us that these two persons were only apparently dead. But the case of Lazarus is not disposed of so easily. He had been in his grave four days!

The story of the raising of Lazarus is one of the most fascinating in John's Gospel. It will reward careful study. But we must content ourselves here with the observation that it was the love of Jesus for Martha and Mary (verses 5-6) which caused Him to tarry before going to their rescue. He wanted to test their faith so as to make it stronger.

This miracle was the occasion for Jesus' statement, "I am the resurrection, and the life." There are some ten of these "I am's" in John's Gospel. When it is remembered that God revealed himself as "I AM" to Moses at the burning bush (Exod. 3:14), it will be seen that this repeated "I am" is part of Jesus' assertion of His deity.

Chapter twelve records the anointing of Jesus by Mary at her home in Bethany. This was one place where Jesus could find rest and seclusion from His public life. The anointing took place on the Saturday before His crucifixion. It was followed the next day by His so-called triumphal entry.

Chapter thirteen gives the account of the Last Supper and chapters 14—16 the last discourse of Jesus with His disciples. The main theme of this discourse is the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Chapters fourteen and sixteen of John's Gospel constitute the most important passage in the New Testament on the Holy Spirit. The eighth of Romans is the next in importance.

The truths expressed in these chapters would require an entire book for exposition; so we must pass on. The seventeenth chapter gives us the high priestly prayer of Jesus for His own. He prays for their preservation (verse 11), their sanctification (verse 17), and their unification (verse 21). These chapters of John's Gospel form one of the richest pasture grounds for God's people.

The words of Jesus on the cross as given by John are worthy of study. So also are the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection. A comparison will show that they are different from those recorded in the Synoptics. There is a closer touch with His disciples shown in John's account.

John's Gospel begins with a prologue and ends with an epilogue, chapter 21. This chapter was added to the main body of the Gospel to correct a false rumor that was circulating in the Church. Because John was living so long after all the other apostles had died, someone tried to recall having heard that Jesus had predicted that John would not die. John gives the exact statement of Jesus and the incident connected with it. We are glad that he did, because of the reported conversation between Jesus and Peter.

4. First Epistle

a. Relation to the Gospel of John. The First Epistle of John has so many similarities to the fourth Gospel that there is no room for doubting unity of authorship. There is the same style and vocabulary. The prominent words are much the same—love, light, life, witness, truth, believe, know.

But whereas the key word of the Gospel is "believe," that of the First Epistle is "know." The Gospel was written to induce people to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, that thereby they might be saved. The Epistle is written to Christians to give them the assurance of their salvation, that they might not only be saved, but know they were saved (5:13).

Again, the Gospel stresses Jesus' deity more and the Epistle His humanity. The Epistle is written against the Docetic Gnostics, who denied the true humanity of Jesus (I John 4:2-3).

b. Characteristics. This is a loving tract—it does not have an epistolary beginning—written by the aged patriarch, John, to his "little children." The feeling of this old saint for his fellow Christians is tender and beautiful.

Although this book does not have the form of an epistle, yet several times John says, "I write." Constantly he says, "you." So it is properly called an Epistle.

c. Contents. This Epistle opens in much the same way as the Gospel: "That which was from the beginning . . . the Word [Logos] of life." This is the only place outside the prologue to John's Gospel where the term Logos is applied to Christ.

It is of interest to note that two of the major topics of this Epistle are the two main emphases of the Wesleyan movement—assurance of salvation and perfect love. The first is indicated by the oft-repeated "know," and several tests are given whereby we may know we are saved (3:14, 19-21; 4:13).

The idea that we may be made "perfect in love" is emphasized three times in this Epistle (2:5; 4:12; 4:18). In fact, love is the most outstanding thought. It permeates the Epistle throughout.

It is very striking that along with these emphases we find the strongest statement of "sinless perfection" in the New Testament. Those who falsely accuse us of talking a lot about "sinless perfection"—John Wesley says he avoided the term because it was so commonly misconstrued—are yet faced with the not easy task of explaining John's declarations, "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin" (3:6, 9).

5. Second and Third Epistles

a. Persons Addressed. II John is addressed to "the elect lady." The Greek word here may be a proper name, Cyria. So the Epistle may be addressed to Cyria, to some other lady, or to a particular church.

III John is addressed to "the wellbeloved Gaius." We know nothing further as to who he was.

b. Contents. Each of these Epistles contains only one chapter. II John is marked by the same characteristic terms as the First Epistle—love, truth, commandment (compare John 15:12 and II John 5), Antichrist, abide. These affinities are not so apparent in the case of III John.

c. Value. There is not much in the way of theology in these very brief letters. But they are of value as giving us samples of correspondence between Christians in the Early Church.

6. Revelation

a. Apocalyptic Character. The Book of Revelation belongs to a definite class of writings, the apocalypses. Daniel is the outstanding representative of this type in the Old Testament. There are many apocalypses in Jewish and Christian literature outside the Bible.

b. Outline of Contents. Cartledge gives a fairly good brief outline for the Book of Revelation, which we offer with some modifications.

1. Seven letters, chapters 1—3.
2. Seven seals, chapters 4—7.
3. Seven trumpets, chapters 8—11.
4. Miscellaneous visions, chapters 12—14.
5. Seven bowls, chapters 15—16.
6. Miscellaneous visions, chapters 17—20.
7. Vision of heaven, chapters 21—22.

The Book of Revelation has caused so many disputes about interpretation that we hesitate to attempt any exposition of its contents. But we note a few points.

The book opens with the statement that this revelation was "signified" (sign-ified) to John. It is essentially a book of signs and symbols. That is the basic principle of interpretation.

The first chapter gives us a unique vision of the Son of God. It is a very impressive picture. It is also an encouraging one, for it shows Christ in the midst of His Church.

Chapters two and three give the seven letters to the churches of Asia, of which John doubtless had special oversight. The descriptions of these churches may well be weighed carefully by individuals and churches today. They give us a cross section of the Church at any given time. They are also a warning to Christians against carelessness and unfaithfulness.

The apocalyptic character of the book becomes more marked at the beginning of chapter four. Here we have many visions, filled with strange symbols. But the closing vision of heaven has been a great comfort and inspiration to God's people in all ages.

It is evident that this book was written in a period of great persecution for the Church, doubtless in the reign of Domitian. It reflects the feelings of the Chris-

tians toward the Roman government, and at the same time it was written to encourage the Christians to keep true. Christianity would triumph ultimately. That is one of the main messages of the book.

c. Schools of Interpretation. There are three main schools of interpretation of the Book of Revelation. The historical school claims that the events of the book have been fulfilled throughout this Christian age, and will continue to the end.

The futuristic school teaches that all of Revelation beginning with the fourth chapter is yet to be fulfilled at the end of this age, in connection with the second coming of Christ.

The preterist school emphasizes the historical background and ethical teaching of this book. It rules out all idea of prophecy concerning future events.

The best attitude is doubtless to combine these last two schools of interpretation, not neglecting either the ethical emphasis and the condition of the Asian churches, nor losing the predictive values of the book.

d. The Capstone of Revelation. It was fitting that John on the lonely Isle of Patmos should receive the climax of revelation. How much poorer we should be without the closing vision of heaven! It is a fitting scene with which to close the sacred Scriptures, especially with its call to be ready for Christ's coming to take us there. No other book could so appropriately close our volume of Holy Writ.

Discussion Topics

1. A comparison of Pauline and Johannine theology.
2. The Johannine authorship of the fourth Gospel.
3. Leading ideas in Johannine thought.
4. John's picture of Christ.
5. The best method of interpreting the Book of Revelation.

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