

*Studies in the Scriptures:*  
*Ephesians*

*By R. C. Bell*

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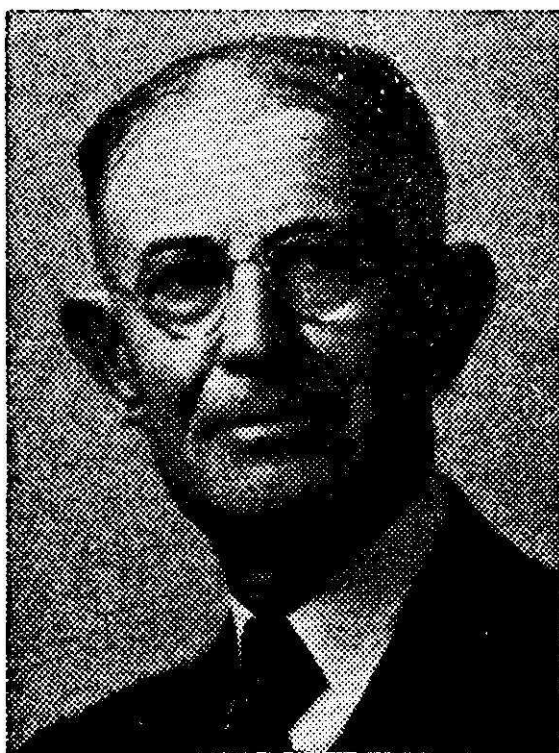
## *Changes in this Edition*

This book has been completely reformatted, with larger font size, better styling, and various corrections being made. Some of the most notable changes are:

1. Any obvious spelling errors have been corrected.
2. Some grammatical errors were corrected (subject/verb agreement).
3. Because of the change in format, the page numbers in this edition will not match up with the page numbers in the original.
4. Some of the verse references were unclear in the original (“v 9”, for instance), and have been changed to make it more obvious which verse is being referenced (“5:9”).

We are sure that you will agree that these changes are all for the better.

Bradley S. Cobb, Editor,  
March, 2015



**R. C. Bell**

# *Autobiography*

Of

R. C. Bell

## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

On a farm near Bell Buckle, Tennessee, I, Robert Clark Bell was born, March 20, 1877. My father, S. A. Bell, Sr., was of Scotch Irish and my mother, Sally Catherine Hoover, of Pennsylvania Dutch descent. I inherited a sound bodily construction and a mind of quiet, studious bent rather than of the quick, brilliant type. As my parents were both faithful members of the church when they were married, I went to church regularly every Sunday from babyhood.

### **Native Religious Temperament**

As indicative of my natively serious autumnal, rather than of gay vernal temperament, the first reading I did of my own choosing was a page, colored by pious thought and feeling, entitled, "Home Reading" in the Gospel Advocate, a paper that came into our home every week. (This page was long since discontinued, but the old man is grateful that the boy had a chance to read it.) I came into the church at fifteen years of age, during a meeting conducted at Fosterville, Tennessee, by E. A. Elam. At the close of this meeting, Brother Elam asked those who had just been baptized if they were so disposed, to promise, by reading three chapters on week days and five on Sundays, to read the entire Bible within a year. I promised, and for three consecutive years read the Bible through yearly, according to this plan.

### **Nashville Bible School**

At the age of eighteen years, I entered the Nashville Bible School, Nashville, Tennessee, to alternate for five years attending this institution and teaching in the rural schools of Tennessee. Under the influence of David Lipscomb and James A. Harding, I soon saw that Paul's description of some who would hold a form of doctrine, but deny its power, fit me. Especially, Brother Harding's living, magnetic, contagious faith in God as a real personal friend matched the wavelength of my spirit. I slowly enough imbibed his enthusiasm for God's fatherly care of individual Christians, for Christ's brotherly sympathy and fellowship with them, and for the empowering Holy

Spirit's residence in them. In other words, for Brother Harding's conception of Christianity as a "divine-human encounter," in which spiritual communion between God and man, the sweetest of human experiences, was enjoyed.

I gradually came to realize, however, that the spiritual power of the church was contingent upon the actual personal presence and working of the triune God in and through Christians. More and more the conviction grew on me that Brother Harding's interpretation of Christianity, which was Paul's too, was needed to save the church from being merely a human organization with a formula to follow, a prayer to recite, and a dull, demagnetized program to render; with professional preachers in her pulpit mechanically saying dead words detached from the living realities of which they spoke, dealing in trite moralizings, threadbare platitudes, and heartless preaching about the heart and passion of Christ. This kind of a church instead of being the divine organism, instinct with the life and power of God, as designed by her Founder! In short, Brother Harding's interpretation was needed to save the church from changing divine dynamics to human mechanics.

### **Potter Bible College**

This fuller understanding of revolutionary Christian truth began to turn my "world upside down," and to open up for me a new world of worship, of work, and of values in general. Consequently, when Brother Harding started another Bible school at Bowling Green, Kentucky, to be known as Potter Bible School and asked me to become one of his teachers for the fall of 1901, I, believing that God was guiding, eagerly accepted. Thus, began my half-century of teaching Bible in our Christian schools. Every member of Brother Harding's faculties was expected to teach at least one class in Bible daily. Four happy years were spent at Potter. Bessie Sparkman of Era, Texas, who had been a classmate at Nashville, became my wife September 24, 1902. As sweethearts at Nashville, we, as only young people can, together accepted the view of Christian life and work that has continued and bound us together as "God's fellow-workers." All these years, we have never doubted God's will for us was being fulfilled and that in such school work we could best serve ourselves, our fellow-men, and our God, the maker of us all. Each of our three daughters is a graduate of a Christian college.

### **Westward**

By the fall of 1905 J. N. Armstrong, R. N. Gardner, and I (three

teachers at Potter), and B. F. Rhodes (a student at Potter from Kansas), were ready, with evangelistic fervor, to open a Bible school west of the Mississippi River at Odessa, Missouri, to be known as Western Bible and Literary College. After four years, Armstrong, Rhodes, and I went to Cordell Christian College, Cordell, Oklahoma. Both of these schools, as such, have long since ceased to operate, but their influence lives on. For instance, how many native Africans will be saved eternally because these unpretentious schools lived, no man can know. The Scotts, the Reeses, the Shorts, and the Lawyers (three of these families have already furnished two generations of workers in Africa), some of our first American missionaries, all came through these schools.

### **Thorp Spring**

My work in Thorp Spring Christian College, Thorp Spring, Texas, began in the autumn of 1911. After five years with this school, I saw that with the constantly rising educational requirements for teachers, my continued teaching in our schools demanded an academic degree recognized as standard by the accrediting agency for colleges. Therefore, I went to Sherman, Texas, to preach for the old Walnut Street church a year and to do enough college work in Austin College to standardize the B.A. degree, received at Potter years before. The next year was spent in Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, working out the M.A. degree. Then, I returned to Thorp Spring for a year's teaching. During this last year at Thorp Spring, I first met, as a member of my freshman English class, Don H. Morris, now president of Abilene Christian College.

### **Abilene**

I became a member of the faculty of Abilene Christian College, Abilene, Texas, in September, 1919. Twenty-five of the thirty-two years intervening between then and now, were spent teaching in this college. Of the remaining seven years, one year was spent in Harper College, Harper, Kansas, two years were spent in Harding College, Morrilton, Arkansas, before it moved to Searcy, and the other four years in David Lipscomb College, Nashville, Tennessee. Fifty years of teaching Bible in eight different schools, located in seven different states is not such a hodgepodge as it may seem at first thought. In the first place, half of the time was spent in Abilene Christian College. More important, the fifty years, in reality, is all of a piece like a tree. Its general purpose, direction, and objective remained unchanged throughout.

## In Retirement

Some old men regret the choice they made in youth of their life work. I am so far from such regret that were a second life to be lived on earth, I should be most happy to have an open door into such work for another long life through. I even like to toy with the fancy of living it all over again just for the privilege—I say, not duty—of teaching God’s word and of making a new generation of Christian friends. I should labor to do the same work, only with purer motives. That is, without personal ambition, without pride of human recognition and position, and without envy of others; and with more diligence, patience, kindness, hope, and love. In brief, with less flesh and more Spirit; with less self and more Christ.

And now that the sail is reefed, I shall take things a bit easier, and, being somewhat lifted o’er the strife of life, shall live the remainder of life’s book as God turns the pages, remembering in grateful thanksgiving and prayer the men and women who helped me as I helped them, and the friends I have made and kept through the years who are still bound to the whirl of the wheel of life. And, since such friends are too good to lose, I shall, in mellow musing, dream of greeting them again in the future life with God, as friends, “lost for a while” recovered; and therefore a little different from the host of stranger-friends from many races, times, and climes whom I shall meet in heaven for the first time. Is it not a great and blessed thing to be able to view the eventide of life here as a resting time, “Ere I be gone once more on my adventure brave and new” in the hereafter, somewhat as the period for tired football players between halves? One life—first half lived on earth and the second half in heaven. “Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift” in Christ.

“Grow old along with me!

The best is yet to be,

The last of life, for which the first was made.

Our times are in his hand

Who saith, ‘A whole I planned’;

Youth shows but half. Trust God; see all, nor be afraid!”

—Robert Browning

*Studies in  
Ephesians*



# *Ephesians Essay No. 1*

After Jerusalem first and Antioch second, Ephesus became the third center of Christianity. Read Acts 19, which is the best account, probably, of Satan's resistance (superhuman from beneath) to Christ's invasion (superhuman from above) of his usurped earthly domain, to learn about the founding of the church in Ephesus; next, read Paul's address to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:18-35), a few years later, with its prophetic warning of danger to the church from without and from within after his death, and its tearful appeal to them "to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood"; then, read Christ's own letter to Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7) some third of a century after the church was planted, in which he is already grieved because despite their loyalty to doctrine, their good works, and their hatred of evil, their personal love for him was waned. His faithful warning that unless they repent of this insidious sin of ingratitude (which was to beset his church till he comes again), they will cease to be his church at all is cause for deep searching of motive by all who would be genuine Christians. These readings are good preparation for the study of Ephesians.

## **Salutation**

The salutation comprising the first two verses, as if to make things doubly sure if possible, contains four sets of doubles. "An apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God" names God and Christ as the double source of authority; in "to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus" is found a duplicate designation for Christians; "grace to you and peace" is double, colossal blessing; and "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" names the double source of this twofold blessing. The salutation, being especially full and rich even for Paul, is in keeping with the marvelous reach, comprehensiveness, and "unsearchable riches" of the entire book.

## **The Calling of the Church**

The second paragraph of Ephesians is one long, massive sentence on the subject of God's redeeming grace. It teaches that God in eternity, before he made the world and time, purposed "in the fullness of the times" to demonstrate his grace through his Son. It seems that

God brought time, spanning the interval between eternity past and eternity future, into existence for a theater in which to work out his grace.

The drama of God's grace is not limited to earth. Inasmuch as discord and rebellion began with angels in heaven and later spread to earth, God's purpose is to restore harmony in both heaven and earth before time ends. Does not "To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Eph. 1:10) involve this? Certainly, it is God's eternal purpose through Christ "to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heaven" (Col. 1:20). Therefore, when Christ overcomes all angelic and human hostility, and when universal peace is restored in heaven and on earth, time with Christ's remedial kingdom having served its purpose may end. Then eternity may go on again as it was before time began. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God . . . that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15 :24-28).

Everything pertaining to the church lay in the mind of God "before the foundation of the world" as an unborn forest lies in the cup of an acorn. Nothing was left to chance. What long, large thoughts here, mind-stretching and heart-captivating! And is it not thrilling to know that God depends on his grace to "create a soul under the ribs of death" and to attain such glorious ends? Christianity has intellectual and emotional "length and height and depth" humanly inscrutable. No wonder Paul exalts, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 2*

Paul's magnificent anthem on God's grace (Eph. 1: 3-14) shows that God exercises his grace in a three-tense program; namely, past purpose, present workings, and future consummation. This mighty song begins in the vast eternity past with God's purpose, proceeds with his purpose throughout time, and enters eternity future with it brought to fruition. No other sentence in all the Bible involves more time, digs more deeply about the very roots of Christianity, or reveals more of the riches of God's wisdom and grace. It sets forth Christianity as the masterpiece of God's combined power, "wisdom and prudence," and goodness. The sentence may be thought of as the first chapter of Paul's spiritual Genesis.

## **The Doctrine of Predestination**

The Bible teaches that God before he created Adam knew that he would sin. Some say that God's foreknowledge deprived Adam of a choice, and therefore he was not responsible for his disobedience. But the Bible teaches that despite God's foreknowing man's sin, man is a responsible, guilty sinner when he disobeys God. Peter on Pentecost, although Christ was "delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts 2:23) convicted the Jews of crime in crucifying him. Neither Peter nor his hearers saw any inconsistency between God's foreknowledge and man's responsibility for his deeds. Foreknowledge is not causation. A farmer's foreknowledge that the wheat he sows will become bread, is not the cause of the bread. The doctrine that divine foreknowledge and human responsibility are consistent, cardinal truths so permeates the Bible throughout that to deny it, is to deny the Bible. Without it, God and man and Bible, as they are, would cease to be.

## **A Fallacious Difficulty Examined**

If the relationship between God's will and man's will, involves intellectual difficulties, what of it? A man who thinks that what is above his reason is of necessity unreasonable is ignorant, proud, and foolish. "Upon what meat doth this Caesar feed, that he has grown so great" as to think he can revise God? Were he consistent, he would not eat bread until he knows all the mystery back of producing bread and of its becoming part of his body. A man who eats bread, mystery

and all, should likewise believe, mystery and all, the revealed truth that God's foreknowledge and man's freedom of will are compatible doctrines. Holy men of God, knowing that omniscience and prescience are essential attributes of deity, even when God goes beyond their understanding, still believe and trust him. Things are not necessarily unreasonable because they transcend human reason. Mystery does not rob them of their merit and utility. Mark Twain said that, not the things in the Bible which he did not understand, but the things which he did understand were what bothered him.

### **Predestination Explained**

This scripture in Ephesians says that God "fore-ordained" before he made the world. But foreordained what? Not that he would arbitrarily save some men and condemn other men, but that according to his prevision he would make provision to save all men by faith in Christ. Christ was "foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) as the Savior of men. It was also foreordained that men in the process of being saved by Christ should become like him. "Whom he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). This shows that "the elect" are men who by faith will to elect God's Christ as their Savior, and the "non-elect" are faithless men who will not to do so. Thus, the great Biblical doctrine of foreordination and predestination is stripped of all divine partiality and all fatalism that have through the centuries grown up around it. The simple truth, practical and practicable and adequate, is that God before time foreknew that sin would invade man's world, and that he already had his mind made up as to how he would deal with it. Tennyson, wrestling with this matter, humbly wrote:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;  
Our wills are ours, to make them thine (Christ's)"

# *Ephesians Essay No. 3*

“...having foreordained us unto adoption of sons through Jesus Christ . . . which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood . . . according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:5-7). In these words Paul makes the transition from God’s grace in purpose, which is the past tense in his three-tense program of redeeming grace, to his grace in bestowment which is the present tense. This present tense, the Christian Dispensation, spans the time between the inauguration of Christ’s remedial kingdom on Pentecost and its “end when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God.”

## **Present Bestowment**

From all eternity God foreknew that, after man was created, he would by sin break fellowship with him. He also knew that man by unaided efforts could never restore this fellowship—that the chasm between them could never be bridged from the earthly side. Consequently when Adam sinned, God promised him a kinsman bridge-builder from the heavenly side. In this prophecy God began to make known the manner in which his timeless purpose to redeem man was to be executed. From this fountainhead of prophecy, revealing that the Redeemer was to be the woman’s seed (Gen. 3:15), an ever-increasing stream of prophecies and types flowed. In due time God disclosed that the kinsman Deliverer was to be a child begotten by the Holy Spirit and brought forth of a human, virgin mother, thus fusing God and man in one person (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:35). In “the fullness of the times,” when God’s clock struck the hour set before time began, the God-man, the kinsman Mediator, “himself man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5) came to earth, according to God’s endlessly unfolding purpose.

Apparently Adam understood this prophecy, for after receiving it, he “called his wife’s name Eve; because she was the mother of all living (life)” (Gen. 3 :20). Most of his posterity, however, have never believed that Christ, the seed of the woman, is man’s only hope, and that “in none other is there salvation.” Instead, they have built their religions on the constitutionally fatal error that sinners can and must do meritorious work to win the favor of an offended god, whereas

Christianity begins with God's doing gracious work to win the favor of helpless sinners. God freely bestows his redemptive grace on dead men, because he actually loves them with a deep, tender, motherly yearning and really rejoices when they accept his eternal program and become fitted for its future glories.

### **Future Consummation**

In the last three verses of this marvelous sentence, Paul makes the transition in God's program from present bestowment to future consummation. By mentioning the pre-Christian distinction between Jew and Gentile, he makes their being "one new man" in Christ, sealed "with the Holy Spirit of promise" strikingly effective. Observe the correlative workings of the Trinity: God's eternal counsel and election made operative in the blood of Christ, and the finished transaction stamped and sealed by the Holy Spirit. In another setting some ten years earlier, Paul, without elaboration, stated the great doctrines of this remarkable sentence: "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 2:13, 14).

The electrifying truth that "every spiritual blessing" we Christians now enjoy is but "an earnest (foretaste and pledge) of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession" is an ever-springing fountain of hope, courage, and joy to Christian pilgrims on their wayfaring way through a world ruled over by the enemy unto their home "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Of course, a risen, deathless body is included . in the redemption of God's people.

As sin ruined the whole triune man, body and soul and spirit, so God's redemption must restore the whole man. Saints, "spirit and soul and body," are to be preserved entire (1 Thess. 5:23), "Unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 4*

Paul had no sooner ended his great sentence about the wonders of God's grace than he began a new one almost as long (Eph. 1:15-23), dealing with human response to grace. With good psychology, Paul, after graciously commending the Ephesians for their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints (essential marks of all Christians), told them of his thanks to God for them and of his ceaseless prayers on their behalf.

## **Prayer**

Paul was a man of prayer. He believed that when God created the universe with all of its marvelous interplay of physical and moral forces, he provided for prayer. Divine energies are released, and channels through which God may act are opened by it; instead of working separately it blends with and works with other forces. Paul knew the mind and method of God too well to be mistaken about prayers. The fact that he, a man of exceptional mental and moral powers, prayed so much is proof that prayer "availeth much in its working." If prayer does not work, what is to be thought of Paul? Sensible, honest men just do not continue to fish a lifetime in water that contains no fish. God designed his world to operate in conjunction with human cooperation. He fuses both the prayers and the deeds of men into the final order of running his whole creation.

Consequently, prayer is not a miraculous or magical substitute for human effort. Paul, Moses, and all other men who pray most work most too. Men who believe the Bible have no doubts, despite mysteries on the human level, about the reality of prayer. When men realize that God can use laws with which they are acquainted, as he used the law of gravity for untold ages before men dreamed of its existence, they pray in faith and learn by experience that prayer works. And is not this enough? Is there a man so foolish as to refuse the benefits of an intricate machine that works because he cannot see how it works?

## **Paul's General Prayer**

That God "may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him (Christ); having the eyes of your heart enlightened . . . (Eph. 1:17, 18). In this prayer Paul is not talking about

the special miraculous knowledge of his day, but about the general spiritual understanding and discernment by which Christians still know Christ to be a real, living person. This intimate, personal acquaintance with Christ himself, which leads into perpetually increasing knowledge, appreciation, and appropriation of him as the very bread and light of life, so that studying the Bible and living the Christian life result in his becoming more and more a wise, practical revelation, is what Paul means by “a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” It is a very different thing, not only from the miraculous gifts of the first century, but also from the prevalent academic knowledge about the Bible and Christ of the twentieth century.

Before a man can acquire this knowledge, the eyes of his heart must be enlightened. Since what the heart “sees” is the urge and ground swell of human activity, what a man loves, more than what he thinks, enters into his making. Christ gives the place of dominant, central power in his kingdom of love, “the vitamin of the soul.” Honest study of the Bible, confiding prayer, intimate communion with God, and, growing out of the moral sympathy and spiritual affinity between Christ and Christians, the rich, energizing emotional experience of being fused with Christ into an organism, animated by his Spirit and instinct with his life is, in Paul’s sense, “the knowledge of him.”

### **Paul’s Specific Prayer**

Paul prays that the Ephesians may know, first, “What is the hope of his calling”; second, “What the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints”; third, “What the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe” (Eph. 1:18, 19). This is Paul’s prayer of the three “whats.”

Because there is no more bracing tonic for the human will than hope, Paul prays that they may consider the substance and worth of their Christian hope, which is to be consummated when they “shall see his face” in eternity. If they but see the contrasting emptiness and hopelessness of life without “Christ . . . the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), they can never, thinks Paul, go back to the Christ-less life.

Leaving the saint’s inheritance in Christ, the prayer moves on to the second “what,” God’s inheritance in the saints. The truth that God has in his church “a people for his own possession,” “a heritage,” which he purchased at a piteous cost, and which is as precious



to him as a goodly pearl of great price, should touch a Christian to the heart, the area in which Christianity works, primarily, and bring to his lips the questions: "What returns is God receiving on his investment in me? The eyes of my heart seeing that in his saints, evermore than in suns and stars, he has a medium through which to manifest his wisdom and goodness, how can I, who profess to be loyal to him and jealous of his honor, ever be false and grieve his great heart by disgracing his church?" With such masterly instruction and exhortation, Paul hopes to wed each Christian to Christ forever.

The Christian standard is so high that some decline the endeavor to be Christians. Others, trying and failing so often, become discouraged and quit. The third "what" of Paul's prayer deals with this situation at some length. Men in Christ have access to God's invincible power and need not suffer defeat and despair. The same "exceeding greatness of power" that raised Christ from the dead, enthroned him in heaven far above every other name, and "gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body," resides in and empowers every member in his body. Men who abide in Christ cannot be defeated unless Christ is. In another connection, Paul distills these verses into, "The Lord hath power to make him stand" (Rom. 14:4). Paul, personally, out of much experience with God's power, witnesses: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). And behold, what a powerful, vital man God's power made of him!

# *Ephesians Essay No. 5*

The first chapter of Ephesians closes with God's having executed his eternal purpose as far as the calling of his church into existence. The second chapter deals with the material he built into his church, and with its construction.

## **"The Prince of This World"**

In Eden, Satan hatched a successful rebellion to obtain the earth, as a revolted province from God, for his own domain. This chapter broadly gives man's state after millenniums under Satan's reign. He is "the prince" of all men who walk "according to the course of this world," for he is "the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (2:2) to motivate and direct them. Twice, Christ calls him "the prince of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30); Paul calls him "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). The majority of men are still "sons of disobedience," and unknown to themselves, tools of Satan. Modern civilization with its scientific-humanism and disposition more and more to discard God as being no longer needed is, in Paul's sense, "this world." Men who repudiate "this world" to accept Christ as Lord constitute the church. Humanity breaks down into these dichotomous groups—the church and the world. That saints may realize the depths from which they have been lifted and the incompatibility of these groups, Paul paints in this chapter an appalling picture of the devil-dominated world. Ephesians has been called, "The alps of the Bible." It does contain a long, lofty mountain range of God's grace, but it also contains a vast deep of Satan's malice.

According to the Bible, Satan is an actual person with superhuman powers and resources, who works underground, achieves great success, and really challenges God. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19); that is, in, "The devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). He is not a discredited legend from an unenlightened past or a modern symbol. He is no myth or clown, but a discreative, mighty adversary to God and a most perilous foe to man. Satan is a bold, unflinching pretender, who even dared the attempt to win over to his side, as he did Eve, Christ, the rightful owner of the earth. Probably, only God himself knows more and does more than Satan knows and does. The modern, mellow, jocular un-

concern toward him pleases him, but it is anti-Christian. “Be . . . the devil . . . walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

### **Judaism and Paganism are Failures**

Being Jew or Gentile is beside the question of condemnation. “We (Jews) were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (Gentiles)” (2:3). “But God, being rich in mercy . . . even when we were dead, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved)” (2:4, 5). The emphasis Paul puts on God’s mercy and grace in human salvation makes sense in relation to the havoc wrought by Satan in man’s personality. Human nature is so distorted and thrown off balance that man cannot right himself. God must redeem him from his sins and from himself by a spiritual birth from above. Those who remain “in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). Men, “Separate from Christ . . . having no hope and without God in the world” (2:2) are not sick but dead. The spirit of a “good moral man” out of Christ is as dead as his buried body. Christ said, “None is good save one, even God” (Luke 18:19). Paul built David’s, “There is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (Rom. 3:12), into his great argument for universal human condemnation. Salvation by character is an impossibility. “For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it (salvation) is the gift of God” (2:8). Man’s obtaining his salvation on the condition of his own faith does not nullify God’s giving it to him by his grace. When Paul mixed with the throngs of Christ-less men in Ephesus or Corinth, he saw them as dead men!

This helps explain his tireless energy and fiery zeal as a missionary to the heathen. God’s creating his church out of such human wreckage glorifies his wisdom, goodness, and power; and shouts aloft “the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness” (2:7).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 6*

Paul teaches that sinners are justified only when in faith they use the way of free grace ordained by God to save them; that he does not accept men who try to earn justification by self-effort (See Eph. 2: 8, 9). Is not spurning a gift an insult to the giver? Sinners are justified by God's graces as the procuring cause plus their faith as the condition on which this cause functions. Man's being justified on this contingency does not militate against God's grace. In fact, justification "is of faith that it may be according to grace" (Rom. 4:16). On any other ground, it could not be "the free gift" of grace. Faith and grace are correlatives, implying each other, whereas merit and grace are antipodes, mutually exclusive. Even Christians are warned that to mix the two is to fall "away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Human merit and gospel grace are so contradictory everywhere that either disallows the other.

After Paul writes "not of (meritorious) works," he names another kind of works that is essential: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). It was in God's original plan to deliver men by his free grace from Satan for his own service. They are not saved by, but unto good works; they must be "zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14). The failure to distinguish between meritorious and Christian works has led to the inexcusable error that there is an inconsistency between Paul and James. James said, "Faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26), meaning that faith in Christ which does not work for him is a dead faith. More inclusive Paul, who agrees perfectly with James about this fruit of faith, adds the basic truth that works apart from faith in Christ are dead, too. In this fuller teaching, he speaks of a kind of works utterly different from James' kind, a kind that deals with, not the fruit, but the root of faith. Not a shadow of inconsistency exists between the apostles.

## **Creation of the Church**

Christians in Ephesus and all Asia Minor, the first readers of the book of Ephesians, were mostly Gentile converts from heathenism.

Using the wretched, hopeless state of heathendom as a background, Paul comes, in the last half of the second chapter, to the thesis of the book—namely, the one, organic, universal church. His teaching is that God's covenant through Moses, which favored Jews above Gentiles, being provisional and having served its purpose in the divine economy, has been superseded, according to God's eternal purpose, by the better Christian covenant, which, abolishing the distinction between Jew and Gentile, creates “of the two, one new man, so making peace; . . . for through him (Christ) we both have access to one Spirit unto the Father” (See 2: 11, 12). Paul having in the first chapter presented the church under the figure of a human body of which Christ is head, here presents it as a temple of which Christ is “chief cornerstone,” and in which God dwells. The magnificent temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world, which stood in their city, would make this figure very realistic and impressive to the Ephesians.

In this scripture, Christ is the maker and preacher of twofold peace. First, he reconciles men to God; second, he reconciles men to men. Christians are all “one new man,” somewhat as Norman and Saxon, after striving vainly to conquer each other three centuries in Britain, finally coalesced into one new people, the English. Since neither Norman nor Saxon conquered the other, but both as such ceased to be, never again could there be feuds between them. Likewise, Jew and Gentile “fitly framed and knit together” in Christ became “one new man,” each saint fused with every other saint into an organism sharing the life of Christ, “a habitation of God in the Spirit”— something never seen among men before. God's creating of Jew and Gentile, with all their fanatic racial pride and exclusiveness, one harmonious church is the masterpiece of his redeeming wisdom, power, and grace. As there was better reason for two churches in Paul's day than there has ever been since, at no time since has there been a reason for two. Every race, culture, and civilization, in God's wonderful spiritual alchemy, may be “one new man,” one body, one building, one church.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 7*

After writing, “For this cause . . .” with which Ephesians 3 opens, Paul breaks off. “For this cause” in verse 14 picks up the connection and introduces another of Paul's great prayers. Apparently the prayer was in Paul's mind when he started the chapter, but thinking of something else that would add value to it, he writes the intervening verses before going on with the prayer. Ample cause existed for the prayer at first, but the long expository parenthesis reinforces it. The cause for the prayer was that God had made all men in his church equal. After enlarging on this cause in the parenthesis, Paul proceeds with his prayer.

## **Paul's Parenthesis**

The parenthesis speaks of, “The mystery (secret until revealed by God) which for ages hath been hid in God,” but “hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to-wit (namely), that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs . . . through the gospel” with the Jews. Since Moses and the prophets foretold that Gentiles would share the blessings of Abraham, and also that Jews would be cast off, these cannot be the secret. But that the law of Moses, which was a barrier between Jew and Gentile, was to be annulled as God worked out his purpose, in order that he in sovereign grace apart from law might “create in himself of the two, one new man, so making peace\* (2:15) seems to be the “mystery,” which, although in God's mind from the beginning, was not made known to men till he revealed it to Christian apostles and prophets. Such a body was and is a new thing on earth—a new order of men, religiously. Before the church existed, all men were either Jews or Gentiles. But as men were called out of Judaism or paganism, respectively, into the church, individually, each was given a new name, Christian; collectively, they constituted the church, a new and third division of humanity. “Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jew or to Gentile, or to the church of God” (1 Cor. 10:32).

When God did reveal that he was annulling the law as a system of religion to make way for the gospel of grace, the Jews, unwilling

for God to have his way, rebelled. In ignorance, arrogance, and prejudice they took Judaism to be God's best and final form of religion, and in blind envy and fury tried to prevent his proceeding with his inevitable program by killing his Son. Even many Jews who came into the church neither really conceded the abrogation of the law nor gave full Christian fellowship to Gentile members. Is it now impossible for Christians to be mistaken, similarly, about the future of Christianity?

### **Men and Angels**

“To make all men see the dispensation of the mystery . . . ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God” (3:9, 10). In these verses we learn that the church which fuses Jew and Gentile into “one new man” by preaching “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” is the medium through which the many-sided wisdom of God is transmitted to both faithful and rebellious men and angels. Is it not illuminating to know that men and angels have a common interest in the marvels of Christianity, and that they together learn of the riches of God's wisdom and grace by seeing them demonstrated in the church? That what concerns us has bearings elsewhere and gears us unto a movement that is older and larger than humanity? What can be more romantic and conducive to saint's believing that “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14) serve them than the angels hovering about at Christ's Nativity, attending him in life and death, announcing his resurrection, and, as he ascended to heaven, foretelling his return to earth? What enlightenment to learn that “angels desire to look into the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow them” (1 Peter 1: 12, 13). Christ's mission to earth created a problem for men and angels. Probably angels still have a problem about Christ's return, as men do; but it is conceivable that they, unwilling to let future events solve it, presumptuously disrupt their fellowship over something they do not know, and about which it is un-necessary to know.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 8*

The long parenthesis with which Paul prefaces his prayer in Ephesians 3 is largely about himself. He knows that the prayer will have more meaning when his readers better understand that he is the chosen of God to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. God's "wisdom and prudence" are shown in his selection of Cosmopolitan Paul for the difficult task of welding Jew and Gentile into "one new man." With his exceptional native endowment plus his Hebrew religion, Greek culture, and Roman citizenship, Paul must have been the best raw material on earth for God to use in forging his instrument to carry Christ to all men. Although Paul is in prison, he, inasmuch as Christians do not fight a losing war, closes this parenthesis on a note of triumph. Can saints write discouraging letters?

## **Paul's "That" Prayer**

Paul's first prayer is built around three "whats" (1:18, 19). This second prayer (3:16-19), built around three "thats," is, if possible, more comprehensive, elevated, and energetic. Paul prays God, "According to the riches of his glory" to grant Ephesian saints three tremendous things. To Paul nothing is too great or too good for God to do. Knowing that he was working with the grain of truth and reality, geared into eternal spiritual forces and verities, articulates with God, and that the whole universe was backing him, Paul, with a child's trust and hope, asks superhuman things of God and expects superhuman answers. If a man can be measured by his prayers, Paul was a superlatively big man.

## **"All the Fullness of God"**

Paul's first prayer stresses "the exceeding greatness" of God's power toward saints. The first "that" in this second prayer—"that ye may be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inward man"—continues the theme. The second "that"—"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith" is the very blood of saintly living. The third "that" is twofold: First, "To the end that ye ... may be strong to apprehend . . . and to know the love of Christ"; second, re-



ally the distillation of the whole prayer, "That ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God." This twofold "that" is related to the former "thats" as fruit to root. They involve it; of necessity it grows too, as they grow. Paul prays that Christians may live Spirit-enabled, Christ-indwelt, and God-filled lives. This prayer does not make sense unless man is a large being capable of holding much. That God in all his power, through Christ, in the Spirit, by faith takes up his fixed abode "in the inward man" to impassion and to enable from within is the great advance Paul's second prayer makes over his first. These prayers are not to be "explained and argued" intellectually; no elucidation is possible or necessary. "There's no other way . . . but to trust and obey."

If Paul in his first prayer feels the inadequacy of language to set forth God's power, and piles up five synonyms in trying to describe it as exhibited in God's raising and setting Christ as "head over all things" (taking a dead man and making him ruler of the universe), he feels it more in this prayer as his words, "to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge" and "filled unto all the fullness of God" stagger under their load. But most of all, he feels it in his doxology: "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church" (3:20, 21). Men may think of ages of blessedness and paradise of bliss, but God can go beyond even all their thinking. Paul is anxious that saints carry all the voltage of God's almighty power they are capacitated to carry.

Men's endless quest for power may cease only when they stop seeking within themselves and seek God's filling. When they do this, God is covenanting to see that they are filled with true power and greatness. God's whole universal, eternal, immutable system, however, turns on their cooperation. Both God's grace, glory and power, and man's sin, emptiness and death are full orb'd in Ephesians. What a God! What an opportunity for man!

# *Ephesians Essay No. 9*

First, Calling of the church (1-3); second, Conduct of the church (4:6-9); third, Conflict of the church (6:10-20) is an alliterative outline of Ephesians. A backward glance at the first division recalls that God in eternity planned the church, and that Christ in time purchased it to be his instrumental body and a temple for God's habitation—a new institution on earth. This exalted creation and use of the church demand correspondingly lofty living on the part of the church. Consequently, Paul begins the second division of the book, “I therefore . . . beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called” (4:1). “Therefore” shows that the “walking” is the effect of the “calling.” Emphasizing this relationship of cause and effect by using “therefore” and “wherefore” eight times in the next two chapters, Paul mightily exhorts Christians unitedly to live in keeping with their high calling.

## **“The Unity of the Spirit”**

But as unity is a prerequisite to the worthy walk of a church, Paul considers it first in his discussion of conduct. By teaching men, praying for them, and pervasively influencing them, the Holy Spirit transforms cooperative men so that they share in his nature; then, he can dwell in them and use their yielded spirits and bodies in doing his work on earth. If Christ needed a body that he might accomplish his part in man's redemption, is it incredible that the Holy Spirit likewise needs human bodies in continuing the same work? Such Spirit-born and Spirit-led men constitute the church. Of course, the church, called, organized, and animated by the Spirit, instinct with his new order of life, possesses a unity derived from the Spirit. Unregenerate men do not have the proper motivation and enabling to attain this unity. “For heavenly tulips on earth, the bulbs must be imported from heaven.” But without this Spirit-given, organic unity, no organization can be God's church. If a church loses this deep, constitutional unity, it ceases to be his church. This is the unity that Paul beseeches the Ephesians “to keep in the bond of peace” (4:3) with diligence.

## Seven Unifying Facts

Since this organic unity given by the Spirit, and by the Spirit only, is essential to the very being of the church, which cost God so much time, grace, and wisdom, Paul in the next three verses describes it by listing the seven unifying facts that comprise it. These unalterable, final facts demand either acceptance or repudiation. No other reaction is possible; a man who rejects even one of them is not to consider himself a Christian at all.

“One body.” The church, the mystical union for which Christ asked his Father in the prayer, “That they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one” (John 17:22, 23). “One Spirit.” The third person in the divine trinity. Power centers in him as suffering does in Christ and grace in God. “One hope.” Many elements enter into the Christian hope, but Paul in his writings, probably stresses “the blessed hope” of Christ's return most of all. Nothing holds men together like a great common hope. “One Lord.” “Christ, as *a* lamb standing in the midst of the throne,” is placed at the center of these seven facts, suggestive of the truth that everything in the entire universe focuses in him. He is the key to all truth; all mysteries are uncoded in him. “The acknowledgement of God in Christ solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it” (Browning). “One faith.” Attitude toward Christ is the same for all—the most learned, the most illiterate, the best, and the worst. A weak hand can take a gift as well as a strong one. Christians are all alike in their absolute commitment to Christ. “One baptism.” Immersion of the body in water is what the Bible means by “baptism” unless a baptism of suffering, of the Holy Spirit, or of some other kind is specified. Sinners are saved “by grace . . . through faith,” but not without water. In Paul's time, there were no unbaptized people in the church. “One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all.” One sovereign person, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable” (1 Tim. 6:16). “A presence . . . and a spirit, that impels all thinking things, all objects of all thought, and rolls through all things” (Wordsworth).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 10*

Our last study closed with the seven facts that constitute the fundamental, common ground of the organic unity of the church. Order and unity are basic in all the work, both physical (Gen. 1:2) and spiritual, of "The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14). Without this inherent unity, derived from the Spirit, there can be no church or Christian fellowship. The Spirit by his teaching, praying, indwelling presence, and supplementary work gives to the church as its birthright this unity, keeps it against perversion, and expects the church to keep its outward manifestation "in the bond of peace" and brotherly love. If it does not do so, the church becomes flagrantly incomplete and ineffective.

## **An Incomplete Local Church**

The church in Corinth was "the church of God" (1 Cor. 1:2); though it lacked the outward bond of peace and harmony, its organic unity was still intact. Since no church in this abortive condition can function properly, the burden of Paul's letters to this church was that it might make its acquired conduct of a piece with its innate unity. And he gives the secret of this complete oneness, on the human side, when he counsels Christians to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, and longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Eph. 4:2). These strange, new Christian graces dig the very ground from beneath human merit, self-importance, envy and strife over position and leadership and the love of fame, "That last infirmity of noble mind" (Milton). Where these graces prevail, the glory of all human pride lies in the dust, dead. And because the lowly minded are the like-minded, disruption of even outward unity among humble brethren, absolute in their commitment to the "one Lord," is impossible. But until pride, "the mother sin," the ruin of angels and of men alike, is slain (and it is slain only at the foot of the cross), saints cannot manifest their constitutional unity in worthy conduct. Where God's "will is done, as in heaven, so on earth" can pride and worldliness remain?

## Christ the Magnificent Giver

Under one central control, man's body is an organic unity, but there is much diversity of ability and work among its members. "So also is Christ" (1 Cor. 12: 12). Immediately after discussing the organic unity of the church, Paul takes up the diversity among its members (Eph. 4:7-16). The importance of understanding the inter-relationship of these two is shown by Paul's discussing the matter in several of his epistles. Because brethren have not always understood it, much discord and unworthy conduct have plagued the church, throughout the centuries until now, to its untold injury. The passage begins: "But unto each one of us (not a soul slighted) was the grace given according to the measure (size) of the gift of Christ." Adam Clark's comment, "Grace may here signify a particular office . . . and the office is according to the free gift, each suited to the other," seems to represent Paul. In this passage Christ is the giver of five kinds of work, each kind accompanied by its corresponding opportunity and enabling "grace." He is said to give the men who fill the offices and do the work, "dividing to each one severally even as he will" (1 Cor. 12:11). How can a brother who believes this envy a brother who may have a gift superior to his? Truly, Christ is a magnificent giver. Christians who say they have no gift, should cease repining and arise to "possess their possessions" (Obad. 17).

In the beginning of the Christian era, Christ gave his church miraculous gifts, as needed. When the miraculously endowed apostles and prophets had finished their appointed task of founding and starting the church on its age-long crusade, a work that need never be repeated, they were discarded. Nevertheless, Christ, without miracles, continued to give his church, each succeeding generation until now, ever needed evangelists, pastors, and teachers. What more can Christ do for his church than he has done and is doing? He, who "according to the riches of his grace" and "unto the praise of his glory," long ago "gave himself for us" (Titus 2:14), and is still giving himself, has ever been and is now desirous of giving more than his people have ever been or are now willing to receive. If we are "miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17), it certainly is not his fault.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 11*

Christ gives his church, evangelist, elders, and teachers “for the perfecting of the saints . . . till we all attain unto the unity of the faith . . . unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12, 13). There is a twofold unity in this chapter. The unity of these verses is not the absolute, organic unity received directly from the Holy Spirit, treated earlier in the chapter, but a relative unity of fellowship, attained progressively by a process of growth. If this lofty goal of Christ-likeness at first thought discourages, let us rather be encouraged by the implied possibilities within our nature to rise to the energizing challenge. In truth, this goal is so high that its perfect attainment awaits Christ's return; but the conduct of the church to be at all worthy of its high calling must show that the church is climbing upward toward this goal now.

Within the realm of organic unity, Christians are one, because all, born of the Spirit, share the divine nature and life; but within the realm of relative unity, they may safely differ, and of necessity do differ. The church has a divine, living, fixed core of fundamental, common truth surrounded by a rich variety of individual differences. Unity in Christ is a symphony of many instruments under the harmonizing direction of the Holy Spirit. Like the unity of a human body or of a tree, it is organic unity in diversity. Conformity and regimentation in secondary matters leave no room for independent study and individual growth, or for mutual edification. Externally enforced uniformity in such things is vicious in its tendencies, for it makes dependent, ignorant slaves to creeds and human authority. Within the Christian brotherhood, saints learn to make decisions of this nature in the light of partial knowledge, to allow for honest differences of judgment, and to give and take without being contentious. Otherwise, truth and unity of fellowship are both jeopardized.

## **Protracted Babyhood**

“That ye may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrines, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error” (Eph. 4:14). In this verse Paul names the malady that retards spiritual growth. In a similar strain, he writes Christians in Corinth that they are still carnal babes, given to child-

ish jealousy and strife. And although the Hebrew brethren have had ample time to be grown up, they are still babes, needing milk. That protracted babyhood was prevalent in the church of the first century, is clear. (Is it less prevalent in our twentieth century?)

But why so much arrested development? According to this Ephesian verse, clever, crafty teachers of error, playing with the souls of men and using their art to seduce Christians and to adulterate Christianity, counteract true teachers. However, in writing to Timothy, Paul makes unstable Christians at least equally responsible with false teachers for lack of progress in the church: "Preach the word . . . for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts (desires); and will turn away their ears from the truth and turn aside to fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). There are those, who "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7)—that is, professed truth seekers, never becoming firmly fixed in the conviction that Christ is "the way and the truth"—are forever looking for something new, even new revelations from God, because they doubt the finality of his revelation in Christ. Such can never grow up, but are doomed to be children perpetually, "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men." These two classes—silly seekers with itching ears and shallow teachers with itching palms and swollen egos—are between them accountable for the many vagaries, fables, and cults in Christendom today. Designing, false preachers and teachers, and double-minded, half-converted members have ever plagued the church of our Lord. "Can the blind guide the blind? Shall they not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 12*

After diagnosing protracted childhood in the church as the fruit of false teachers and fickle Christians, Paul prescribes the remedy: "Speaking truth in love may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ; from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (4:15, 16). Christians in growing up into Christ, become progressively more identified with him, more incorporated with him into one body of which he is both head and heart, and more and more instinct with his life. Such is the heavenly goal to which Christians are called. Surely, we have plenty of room in which to grow.

## **"Speaking Truth in Love"**

Redemptive truth draws a line between the church and the world. Then, brotherly love binds the church into "one flock." When men at Christ's call come out of the world into his church, they receive from him a new and vital oneness with himself. This oneness is so total that he and his people have but one and the same nature. Inevitably, it follows that, "As he is, even so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). That is, as long as Christ is rejected by the world, so are Christians. And as my hand and my foot, because my head with which they are incorporated into one organism correlates and uses them both, trust and aid each other; just so the members of the church, because Christ lives in and through them all, love, trust and help one another. Christianity, which is the masterpiece of God's wisdom, grace, and power, enables Christians to live "knit together ... in the bond of peace"—something fallen humanity has never been able to do by its own efforts. Saints who speak truth in love cannot compromise with the world or disrupt their fellowship over trifles. The church must never lose her direction and goal.

However, with worldliness rampant in the church and with love of brethren deficient, it is to be feared that Christians do not feel the importance of these two cardinal principles of Christianity. Near 125



A.D., Aristides wrote the Emperor, Hadrian: "The Christians know and trust God . . . They love one another ... If anyone among them is needy, and they do not have food to spare, they fast two or three days, that they may supply him with necessary food . . . Because of them there flows forth all the beauty that there is in the world . . . Truly, this is a new people and there is something divine in them."

## **"Something Divine in Them"**

No doubt, the pagan's "something divine in them" explains this "new people" better than he knew. Our verse says that the church is "fitly framed and knit together." That is, each member is rightly placed and mutually related, without deficiency or redundancy; it also says that each member according to his measure contributes to the building up of the church in love. And how does it account for this perfect organization and unique achievement? Each Christian is personally joined to Christ, which "joint supplieth" all needs. This juncture with Christ is the source of everything, "Something divine in them," indeed! Christ's, "I am the vine, ye are the branches . . . apart from me ye can do nothing" is the simplest and best statement of this constitutional, Christian truth. In nature, the union of branch and vine is not superficial; the branch grows out of the very heart of the vine. The church, like the Bible and Christ, combines divine and human elements. Of all the countless weaknesses that have shown up in the church over the centuries, all are attributable to the human element—none to the divine. Since Pentecost, Christ has been "straitened" only in the church. For twenty centuries, nations have risen and fallen, religions have been born and buried, but the church lives on; she has defeated constant attacks from without and repeated betrayals from within—these things all prove her divine element. Is it not passing strange that Christians are foolish and "slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" to teach them that they still need divine, personal help as they did in becoming Christians in the first place?

# *Ephesians Essay No. 13*

After teaching that if Christians are to walk worthily of their calling, to detect false teaching, and to grow up in truth and love, they must humbly and unitedly, welcome Christ as an indwelling person to work out his will in them and through them to others, Paul, in the second half of Ephesians 4, continues his exhortation for worthy Christian living.

## **A Clean Break With the World**

In a paragraph of eight verses (17-24), Paul insists on the utter incompatibility between unregenerate and regenerate men. According to him, they have no fellowship at all, for the former ends when the latter begins; they are mutually exclusive as are darkness and light. Before Jacob finally went back to Bethel (God's house) to dwell, he hid the foreign gods, possessed by his household "under the oak which was by Shechem" (Gen. 35:4). When these Ephesians themselves who practiced magical arts became Christians, they burnt their books of sorcery (Acts 19:10). This paragraph shows that when men accept Christ, many things must be buried or burned. They "put away . . . the old man . . . and put on the new man." Christians being no longer "alienated from the life of God," leave off their ignorance, vanity of mind, darkness of understanding, and hardness of heart. No portion of the Bible draws the contradiction between fleshly and spiritual men more fully, or portrays the depraved, wretched, natural man in more colorful terms than Ephesians does.

## **Man's Nadir**

The last item in this description of humanity without God, "being past feeling gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," descends to the depths. Inasmuch as Christianity has its origin in God's heart and makes its decisive and final appeal to man's heart, when men get "past feeling," they are beyond God's moral reach. All Christians, like Matthias, successor to Judas, are chosen by their hearts (Acts 1:24). The human heart is the arena in which God and Satan continue their world-old struggle for

the ownership of mankind. When Adam sinned, his capacity to feel shame and unworthiness before God was the human ground of God's further dealings with him. When men's hearts become so "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" that they are past feeling, they are indeed hopeless—hopeless as beasts, and more beastly. Because man is more than animal, when the animal in him dominates his higher nature, he is capable of sinking below the animal level. To call the conduct of shameless, reprobate men down through the ages "beastly" is to slander beasts. As long as a man can feel deeply enough for his conscience really to hurt, let him thank God and take courage, because even yet there is hope.

Men of today need to realize that their vaunted education and science can neither present nor correct this appalling waste of human life. With shame for crime and for the breakdown of common decency growing less and less, and the failure of human wisdom to cope with the conflicting interests of the nations becoming more and more manifest, why cannot unchristian men see that they are so "darkened in their understanding" "that their hands cannot perform their enterprise?" (Job 5:12). Why should Americans think they are immune to the destruction that has overtaken all godless civilizations of the past? That men professing themselves to be wise should unconsciously become fools and invite God to take them "in their craftiness" is the grand irony of human history.

Do all Christians see the need of this clean break with the world? If so, why so much worldliness in the church? If so, why do we not pay more attention to Paul's triple exhortation to the Corinthians? "Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers . . . Come out from among them . . . Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). When we do this, God promises to be our Father and to make us his "sons and daughters." Christ advised, not paring the nails of an offending hand, but cutting off the hand.

### **Particular Sins**

Following the foregoing paragraph on general fundamentals of worthy behavior, Paul closes the chapter with a paragraph of equal length dealing with four particular sins, which still vex the church and grieve "The Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. 1:14).

First, falsehood among the brethren, who are all parts of Christ's body, "each for all and all for each," is as dangerous and senseless as

my eye misleading my hand into harm. Second, anger is legitimate sometimes, but since it gives Satan an opportunity and hatches sin when brooded upon, it must be banished before the set of the sun. As fire from flint, it should be hard to kindle and quick to go out. “He who goes to bed angry has the devil for a bedfellow.” Christians therefore should not be angry with others even momentarily, unless they love them. Third, thievery is to be cured by the thief’s cleanly breaking with dishonesty and going to work that he may have to give to others. And fourth, idle, worthless speech is to be crowded out by gracious, edifying speech. Observe that good supplants evil as in the spring new leaves on some trees push off old leaves that have clung to them all winter. Christianity never ends with negatives.

Next comes a moving exhortation not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, who seals us as God’s possession until our redemption in Christ culminates in the resurrection of our bodies at Christ’s coming. Were not the Spirit a person, he could not be grieved. Were he not a person who cares, he would neither be grieved nor pleased with us. The pollution of his temple, our bodies, grieves him.

The chapter closes with a list of six vices—all expressions of ill-temper belonging to the old man— which saints are happy, because they cannot do it by mere self-effort, to let the Spirit, in his own way, push out of their lives to make room for the peculiarly Christian virtues: kindness, tender-heartedness, and forgiveness of each other “even as God also in Christ forgave you.” Could an appeal be more tender and strong? Are we “kind one to another” in heart? If so, it will show up in our words, deeds, and manners.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 14*

In Ephesians 5, Paul continues to insist that what God has been doing for Christians from past eternity puts them, if they are not to be infamous in-grates, under imperative obligation to live in return sober, godly lives.

## **Weakness of Non-Christian Religions**

Many religions teach moral principles, but have no power to get them practiced. Though Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and pagan philosophies preach much morality, they lack provision for its realization. I have read that when the Roman moralist, Seneca, Paul's contemporary, heard that Paul taught noble living, and that Paul actually practiced his teaching, he said: "Ah, if Paul does that, he really has something." And Judaism? It, too, lacks power to get its supreme moral and ethical code obeyed. It cannot be God's final dealing with the problem of sin. His eternal program provides something better to follow.

### **Power of Christianity**

If Paul lived as he taught, and Seneca did not live as he taught, why the difference? Paul answers: "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). Adam knew good and evil after he fell, but in the fall he had lost the power to do good or to avoid evil. By restoring this power to Adam's race in Christianity, God overcomes the fatal weakness of all other religions. "With men this (the power to regulate self) is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). That is, men have never been able to devise a social order with which to conquer their flesh; but with God's order, they may do so. It is as impossible for men to live Christian lives before they are born of the Spirit as it is for them to live fleshly lives before they are born of the flesh.

What is the nature of this Christian power? After God himself in grace had done the groundwork on earth, Christ came to earth that he as suffering man might add to the vital human touch (suffering men do not easily forget those who suffer with them), and finally the Spirit on Pentecost, bringing to a climax all that had preceded, with a

burst of power inaugurated perfected Christianity. And only as a Christian can fallen man gear into God's power and be enabled to live as he thinks he should live. He has two master helps: Gratitude to God for delivering him from condemnation and the indwelling Spirit to enable him to win over the habit and power of racially acquired and individual sin. Not until Christians utilize both of these uniquely Christian aids can they be perfect as God is perfect. These two are not luxuries for favored saints, but necessities for all saints. Christians who are not more spiritual than ancient Jews could be are not using all the power to which they have access. Probably the unused power of the Holy Spirit exceeds the unused power of atomic energy. Only God knows how much this loss of power has crippled and is crippling his church. Saints, independent of this superhuman power, can no more grow up "into the fullness of Christ" than aliens independent of God's power as it applies to them can become Christians. God is an exact economist and gives to both only what is necessary.

Is it not a perversion of the gospel and a falling away from grace for Christians to try to do in the power of the flesh what the Bible teaches must be done in the power of the Spirit? According to Galatians 3:3-5, precisely this, rather than committing odious sins, is "falling from grace." The constitutional promise of the Old Covenant was the coming of the Messiah; the constitutional promise of the New Covenant is the coming of the Spirit to take up residence in the temple of God. In due time God kept both promises. "Because we are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Is it not as great a sin and as big a mistake for a Christian to refuse Christ's Spirit as it is for a sinner to refuse his blood? If it is fatal for an alien to reject God the Son, why is it not as fatal for a Christian to reject God the Spirit? Do not both reject God the Father? Can the gospel produce Christians who are up to God's eternal standard with its climatic power reduced?

## **"In the Power of the Holy Spirit"**

The Bible often personally connects grace with God, suffering with Christ, and power with the Spirit. Christ says to his apostles just before Pentecost: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is

come upon you” (Acts 1:8). Paul tells the Ephesians he is praying that they may be “strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man,” and that they may avail themselves to God's ability to bless them beyond their conceiving, “according to the power that worketh in us” (Eph. 3:16-20). Paul declares that he preaches “in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15: 19). And he prays that the Roman saints “may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15: 13).

The Lord without working miracles “hath power to make him (a weak brother) stand” (Rom. 14:4). As God chooses to work in nature without the miraculous, but not without the mysterious and the supernatural, so he chooses to work in Christianity. “So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth” (Mark 4:26). No more in religion than in nature is God limited to miracles. As the surf-waves along the beach, before they flood the beach, must be backed up by the non-miraculous tide, so fallen man must have the non-miraculous “renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5) before he becomes a Paul.

### **“Imitators of God”**

“Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ loved you” (Eph. 5:1). An exhortation to live as God lives and to love as Christ loves! “It is by no breath, turn of eye, wave of hand” that this exhortation can be realized. The “old man” may be trained to imitate God outwardly in some things, as parrots may be trained to talk as men talk, but such imitation lacks reality and life. Only “beloved children” who are “born anew” with the nature of their Father can climb this lofty peak. The exhortation necessarily implies the truth set forth in this paper. Only Spirit-born and Spirit-enabled men need consider it; it is not intended for others. “Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 15*

The second half of Ephesians is a long exhortation to move Christians to “walk worthily of” their eternal calling. Observe how this half of the book with its “therefores” leans back on the first half. Paul knows that after Christians appreciate “the glory of God’s grace” and “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” exhorting will be effective. To lead saints into deeper understanding and appreciation of the goodness of God, as Ephesians does, is a far better way to keep dancing, drinking, fornication, and such like out of the church today than is melodramatic preaching and writing about these sins.

## **Belial and Mammon**

“But fornication ... or covetousness, let it not be named among you . . . nor filthiness, nor foolish talking or jesting” (Eph. 5:3, 4). The closely allied sins of fornication and covetousness, “the lust of property,” grow out of trying to fulfill life by means of fleshly gratification. In the Bible and in life they are often found together. Milton describes Belial: “Than whom a Spirit more lewd fell not from heaven, or more gross to love vice for itself”; and Mammon: “The least erect Spirit that fell from heaven ... his looks . . . always downward bent, admiring . . . heaven’s (golden) pavement.” Both fornicators and covetous men are idolaters, “whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly . . . who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). Idolatry is possible without images.

“Foolish talking”—senseless prating and frivolous chatter of dull men. “Jesting”—smutty jokes and wanton banter of clever men. Christ’s “idle word” suggests an idle boy sauntering about without direction and purpose. None of this indecency and aimlessness, bred and augmented by idleness and evil company, befit the earnestness and elevation of Christians, who must not “wound modesty.” How few the grains of gold in the sand that streams through our lips; how easy to throw our brains into neutral and let the tongue idle on. “Oft-times the best command of language is silence.”

This passage contains a warning against “empty words.” Wicked men invent false reasons to justify “the works of the flesh.” Knowing



nothing of Christian temperance and moderation, they say such natural propensities as sex and the acquisition of wealth cannot be sinful; they argue, since Christians are under grace, not law, and since God's grace is sufficient to cover all sins, they may continue to sin with impunity. But all such imposing on God's goodness and turning his grace into lasciviousness, Paul blasts with: "Let no man deceive you with empty words; for because of these things (all moral filth) cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience" (5:6).

### **Darkness Becomes Light**

The change that becoming a Christian makes in one's life is again vividly portrayed. It is transition from darkness into light, without twilight. "Be not ye therefore partakers with them; for ye were once darkness, but now are light in the Lord: walk as children of the light (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth) . . . and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them . . ." (5:7-17). When Christians come out of the darkness into the light and, exhibiting the triad, "all goodness and righteousness and truth (sincerity)," live clean lives, they need make little special effort to avoid compromising economical, social, or religious entanglements with those who remain in the darkness, for darkness cannot abide in light. The world, with its life "alienated from the life of God," has no use for Christians who challenge its way of life, and consequently will avoid them rather than the other way round.

Christians cannot be indolent and neutral, merely harmless, but, realizing that to kill time is to injure eternity, they wisely work and are aggressively positive, "redeeming the time." They should never be unemployed nor triflingly employed. And as darkness is overcome by light in the physical realm, so moral darkness, made manifest and shown up in its true colors by the searchlight of Christianity, is recognized for what it is, and is overcome. This scripture characterizes saints and gives them their work and purpose in the world.

### **"Filled With the Spirit"**

From the time of ancient Troy, the inhabitants of Asia Minor had been a lighthearted, convivial race. To Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor, Paul writes: "Be not drunken with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit" (5:18). This sociable people, who had once found excitement and animation in wine and carnal fellowship, are now to find these things in the Holy Spirit and spiritual fellowship. As vegeta-

tion and animals change with altitudes, so coming to Christ lifts men to higher levels where “old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

From the fact that instead of “filled with the Spirit,” a companion verse, Col. 3:16, has, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” some have concluded that the Holy Spirit and the word of Christ are the same thing. Inasmuch as it is impossible for Christians to be filled with the Spirit unless they are full of the word, too, the two expressions mean, practically, the same thing. It does not follow, however, that the Holy Spirit and his sword, which is his word (6:17) are identical any more than a soldier and his sword are identical. As a soldier supplements his sword with other weapons to do things a sword cannot do, so the Holy Spirit, for the same reason, supplements his sword.

Instead of teaching that the Holy Spirit and the word are the same, or even that the Spirit dwells in the word, Eph. 3:16 teaches that the Spirit dwells in saints to strengthen them with power in the inward man. And Rom. 8:26 says: “The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.” The manner of the Holy Spirit's inward working transcends the power of language to describe, for it cannot be put into words at all. Be it known, however, that the Spirit never works in contradiction to, but always in conjunction with his written word. Do men live and die as Paul lived and died, unless they believe a superhuman power that overcomes sin and death works within him? We miss too much when we forget that the power of Christianity, from Pentecost onward, comes to focus “in the power of the Holy Spirit,” as he strengthens the inward man down to subconscious depths. The Bible is not God.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 16*

To Ephesian saints, Paul's contrast between Christianity and heathenism in life and worship must have been very realistic. Their former elaborate, drunken, licentious feasts, honoring heathen gods and goddesses, in which abominable rites were practiced in the name of religion, had been given up for simple, sober, spiritual singing and thanksgiving. Inasmuch as music, a tonic to mind and heart, is so closely allied to behavior, his exhortation, "Be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always" (5:18-20), with divine penetration digs down to the roots of society. Even pagan Plato long before had said that to change the music of a people was to change their morals.

In studying the subject of Christian music, this scripture is pivotal. The Greek Catholic church, which should know Greek, never believing that "psallo" in this passage authorizes instrumental music in worship, has never used it even until now. To use it when the New Testament here, nor elsewhere, authorizes it is to show lack of faith in and respect for God's wisdom and authority. In principle, to use it is to start back through Protestantism and Roman Catholicism to ancient, sensuous heathenism. Christian worship must be spiritual in its nature, not sensuous. God knows how to safeguard his church against worldliness.

## **Subject One to Another**

In the next twenty verses, Paul discusses three phases of "submitting yourselves to one another" (5: 21): wives in subjection to their husbands, children to their parents, and servants to their masters, respectively. Wine makes men boastfully self-important; it fomented licentiousness, discord and strife, and is a troublemaker generally. Operating in reverse to all this, submission reduces the friction of life and promotes peace and comfort. Unnecessary trouble arises when somebody in home, business, or religious life, instead of being subject to others, in non-essential things, contentiously stands upon his own "rights."

## **Two Great Mysteries**

The last paragraph of Ephesians 5 reveals that God's eternal plan for his church begins to take form in the creation and marriage of Eve. It reveals also that Eve is a type of things to come. The mystery of the creation of Adam's wife from his opened side is a prophetic representation of the greater mystery of the creation of Christ's bride (his church) from his pierced side. The similitude of these two mysteries is so complete that Paul in discussing them often steps back and forth from one to the other. His immediate objective is to show the balanced parallel that wives should be subject to their husbands as the church is subject to Christ, and that husbands should love their wives as Christ loves the church.

This is indeed an astonishingly fruitful study that, according to the attention given it, yields more and more treasures. As Adam was lonely and incomplete until God gave him Eve, of his own body, to meet his need, so Christ after sin despoiled heaven and earth had a sense of loss and incompleteness until God gave him "the church, which is his body, the fullness (completeness)" of his instrument "to reconcile all things unto himself . . . whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. 1:20). As "Adam was not beguiled," but chose rather than to give Eve up to suffer and to die with her, so Christ, "who did no sin," chose from all eternity to identify himself with his church in suffering and in glory. The inviolable oneness of Adam and Eve is typical of the mystical, spiritual oneness of Christ and his church. Christians are "added to the Lord" (Acts 5:14) and become his body. Christ from heaven said to Saul, who was persecuting his church, "Saul, why persecutest thou me" (Acts 9:4). When we are tempted to speak or write harshly to or about a Christian, should not the truth that Christ considers it as done to him personally shock us into frozen silence? "If we endure, we shall also reign with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

Yes, God so ordered the mutual relationship between Adam and Eve as to prefigure the mutual relationship between Christ and his bride on earth and in heaven. The language of Tennyson's saint as she meditates upon her eternity with Christ, "One sabbath deep and wide . . . the bridegroom with his bride," puts this beautiful truth into beautiful words. When we think on these things and come to realize what "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) really means for time and eternity, our whole lives will take on new meaning and worth.

## **Idealism Is Realistic**

The true idealist is the only true realist. Paul's Christian idealism and other-worldness is the only feasible way to improve this world. He knows that the way to have better homes is to get husbands and wives to understand the sacred place and honor God gives marriage and home. After this epistle was read in the church at Ephesus would not indifference, un-kindness, bickering, fornication, adultery of the heart, and divorce grow less within its homes? Paul knows too that as the church improves it will spread. The fact that earnest Christian missionaries set a high value on the influence of their own Christian homes in propagating Christianity among heathen peoples today corroborates the wisdom, power, and reality of Paul's teaching and exhorting.

Christian marriage is a threefold mating: biological, mental, and spiritual. And a Christian home is a place for husbands to learn to exercise authority graciously and wives to submit becomingly. It does not behoove two Christians, welded into one for life, as they pledge in their marriage vows, for the purpose of making a Christian home, the most heavenly achievement on earth, for the husband to exercise despotic authority or for the wife to yield slavish submission. When things go wrong in the home of worldlings, they have little recourse but alienation and divorce. If misunderstandings arise, as well they may, in the homes of Christians, they should be thankful for an opportunity to learn humility, patience, forgiveness, and love—all qualities they must learn somewhere, some way, sometime before they enter heaven.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 17*

Imagine the first reading of this epistle in the assembly of the Ephesian church. A letter from their loved and trusted apostle, who was a prisoner in far away Rome, was a memorable event. Tensely, every member listened to every line. As the reader came to the passage naming husbands and wives or parents and children or masters and slaves (likely many were slaves), how agape with interest each respective group drank in every word of its special message! Did some earnest husband speak right out: "Brother, please read that again"?

## **Children and Parents**

Into the discussion of this theme, Paul crowds much truth that is vital to human well-being. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that . . . thou mayest live long on the earth" (6:1-3). This passage takes for granted that Christian parents will have their children obey them as God's representatives (think of that, parents) until they are old enough to obey God directly. Then, says Paul, it is right by the fundamental law of humanity and by the written law of God that children continue to obey their parents "in the Lord." "Remember the sabbath day" and, "Honor thy father and mother"—that is, remember God and parents—the only positive commandments in the Decalogue, are so closely allied that Leviticus 19:3 runs them together: "Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father; and ye shall keep my sabbaths." The Jew who broke either of these commandments paid with his life.

The time may well come when parents no longer want their children to obey them, but Christian children, as Joseph did, will honor their parents, living and dead. Never can their parents say with King Lear: "Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend . . . How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child!" The attitude of children toward their parents is a test of their attitude toward God. Respect for age and reverence for God go together. Observe that Paul quotes with approval God's recipe for longevity,

namely, the honoring of parents. Is it not well to remember, too, that China, with her oldest civilization on earth, has, even without the written law of God, always honored parents?

### **Parents and Children**

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord” (6:4). Men and women who are unwilling to assume “the happy tribulation of parenthood” should not marry. Prolonged willful sterility perverts God's will as expressed in nature and in his word from the beginning. In nothing, at any time or in any place, can his flawless will be circumvented without frustration and loss. Husbands and wives are naturally expected to become parents, and are responsible for nurturing their children.

Since only God knows the biological and social heritage of babies, the psychological process that takes place in the soul of all growing children, and all the abysmal physical, mental, spiritual mysteries that go into the making of men, he only is able to give mankind perfect guidance. Hence, when God offers men the family as the social institution perfectly adapted to their exceedingly intricate needs, they should profoundly appreciate his gracious, infallible help and use it with utmost confidence and diligence. Parents who fail to do so challenge the wisdom and the goodness of God, and perpetrate the deepest possible wrong against their children. When the family is misused, it breaks down.

This verse convicts fathers who shirk their part in the family program and leave it all to mothers. The fixed responsibility of fathers in this program under Moses is continued in Christ. And because they are more likely to resort in haste to the much easier expedient of crushing authority instead of prayerful instruction and prudent discipline than are mothers, fathers are warned against provoking their children to resentment. A faithful mother said she thought the reason God made mother love so strong was that mothers without it could never bear up under the stress and burden of -rearing a family. Indeed being good parents is a most difficult thing. Eli was a good high priest and David was a great king, but both were poor fathers. Mothers, think on Christ's tender appreciation of his mother, and of his solicitous provision for her, even from his cross. True mothers are “in the sight of God of great price” (1 Peter 3:4).

### **Master and Slaves**

This topic concludes Paul's threefold discussion on "Subjection." That Christianity, which levels things and makes all men brothers, and the pagan institution of slavery, which divides men into two antagonistic classes—masters and slaves—are mutually exclusive is self-evident. But as great social changes must begin with thoughts and feelings, the inevitable clash between the two does not take the form of a sudden, violent upheaval; rather, it is a powerful, quiet, inner way of life that comes from God to enlighten and change the nature of men. Christianity lights an unquenchable time fuse among men, which must eventually destroy all the wrongs of earth. It is the only answer for the seething race feuds, the flooding waves of crime, the stubborn struggle between capital and labor, and all the wars—in brief, the only answer for all national and international disorders around the globe. Earth's problems are ever essentially the same, and Christianity is ever the sovereign panacea for them all.

In the meantime, before the complete triumph of Christianity, to the measure that its ameliorating principles spread among men the life of individuals, institutions, and races improve. In the matter of slavery, for instance, let both master and slave but "practice the presence of God," as Paul here teaches they should, and behold the marvelous result: the labor becomes easier to the slave, pleasing to the master and slave, for God determines their treatment of each other. Christianity is not competitive but cooperative. Even leaving eternity out of consideration, when men reject God's way of life in Christ for them, they in one act commit both their greatest sin and their greatest error. God's wishes and man's needs being identical, both are served, or neither is served. How majestically profound and sublime in its simplicity and infinite efficacy is Christianity! Judged by its heavenly fruits, truly it is born of God.



# *Ephesians Essay No. 18*

The calling of the church is God's gracious work, the conduct of the church is man's grateful work, and the conflict of the church is Satan's malicious work. The first eight "Studies in Ephesians" deal with the calling, the next nine with the conduct, and now comes the conflict of the church.

## **"Your Adversary the Devil"**

(1 Peter 5:8)

The devil and Christians are irreconcilable foes. Since he is incorporeal, Christians can know him only as the Bible reveals him. Judging by the fullness of this revelation, students of the Bible conclude God deems it imperative that Christians, who must "resist the devil," know about his existence, purposes, and tactics. Without divine instruction and aid, obviously, God thinks they will be unable to resist him. Indeed, before meeting an enemy in battle, one needs to know his objective, resources, and plans. Consequently the Bible gives Satan's origin, his earthly activities, and his destiny.

### **Satan's Origin**

In pronouncing the doom of the kings of Babylon and Tyre, Isaiah 14:12-20 and Ezekiel 28:11-19, respectively, portray a larger figure than these kings. The world and the being described extend beyond earthly limits and human experiences and capabilities. These passages teach, I think, that God made a mighty angel and gave him a place of dignity and trust in the government of heaven until in pride he broke faith and appropriated his gifts to his own use and self-exaltation. Whereupon God said to the rebel: "Thou hast sinned . . . therefore I have cast thee to the ground." This is the being who later on earth became "the old serpent, he that is called the devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:9). "How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star! . . . how art thou cut down to the ground, that didst lay low the nations!" (Isa. 14:12). Both 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 speak of angels that lost heaven because they sinned. Does not Paul allude to Satan's pride and fall when he writes Timothy not to appoint as elder, "A novice lest being puffed up he fall into condemnation of the devil" (1

Tim. 3: 6) ? Upon the return of the seventy, exulting that demons were subject to them, surely Christ had in mind Satan's fall from heaven when, as a warning against the danger of pride, he said to them: "I behold Satan as lightning fallen from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

According to Biblical usage, godless men, Satan's understudies, are sometimes identified with him much as David is often identified in the Psalms with Christ. In speaking to the twelve, Christ said: "One of you is a devil" (John 6:69). When Peter offered the satanic advice to Christ that he must not die, Christ said to him, "Get thee behind me Satan" (Matt. 16^ 23). When men become tools of Satan, is it not fitting to identify them with him? It little becomes men who are so ignorant of the mysteries of life, especially the life of spirits, to think that mind cannot mix with mind. Who can explain the marvels of animal instinct? The Bible teaches that Satan as well as God permeates human spirits. If it does not explain the method, what difference does it make to men of the faith?

## **Satan's Earthly Aims and Activities**

Is it unreasonable that God created man to take the place left vacant by the fallen angels? Soon after man's creation, in any event, Satan began to render him unfit for that place. His effort in Eden henceforth is the earthly aspect of the earlier feud between him and God in heaven. All the Bible except its first two chapters and its last two, supported by all uninspired history, shows his unbroken success in corrupting the far greater part of the succeeding generations of men. Mark Twain said that anybody who could command such innumerable multitudes of men through the ages must be an interesting personality, and he wanted to meet him.

After Satan as usurper had held sway over the earth for some four thousand years, "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman," to challenge his illegal reign. He knew the issue between him and Christ and tried, using Herod as his understudy, to destroy Christ in the cradle. He, as Christ was readying his rule to restore the world to its rightful owner, did his utmost in the great temptation in the wilderness to beguile Christ as he had done Eve in the beginning. Though utterly defeated, he continued to dog Christ to the cross.

The resurrection completely broke Satan's power and greatly increased God's power. A fantastic metaphor of the early church that

God baited a hook with the flesh of his Son, and that Satan, thinking to be rid of his foe, gobbled the bait down to find that he had swallowed the fatal hook, holds much of the essence of Christian doctrine. Though Satan's power of death has been brought to naught and a suspended sentence hangs over him, he is still permitted for God's allotted time to be "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), and to walk "about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He is still "a terror" and spreads great confusion among men. He makes "the world as a wilderness."

His only adversary is the church. Were it out of the way, his rule would be universal. This is the secret of his bitter, endless conflict with the church. As he knows he cannot win in open, fair war, he resorts to many wiles and artful devices. His chief strategy is deceit. He works best under cover, sows tares in among the wheat while men sleep, and "fashioneth himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). God has so fully revealed him and his many devices and stratagems that there is little excuse for Christians being beguiled by him.

### **Satan's Final Destiny**

Christ's complete, final victory over his wily antagonist, the great pretender, according to Revelation 20:10, is absolutely certain. How much more time God's eternally fixed schedule is to consume in accomplishing this "consummation devoutly to be wished," he has not seen fit to reveal. Is it possible, brethren, that time and detail, because of their secondary importance are purposely left in the background that all emphasis may be thrown upon Christ the person who effects the victory? "Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil . . . , walketh about" (1 Peter 5: 8).

# *Ephesians Essay No. 19*

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6: 10-12).

Probably Paul's experience when he planted the church at Ephesus (Acts 19) is reflected in this scripture. In this city given over to magic, exorcism, and the superstition of Diana, “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul,” an example of which is expelling evil spirits by Paul's handkerchief being taken to men possessed by them. These special miracles were needed to counteract Satan's special activities in this great, unutterably wicked city. If God allows the agents of Satan to work miracles as he did in the case of Pharaoh's magicians, and as he will again (Rev. 13:13-15), indeed he will have his servants work greater miracles to confound their enemies. Certainly, for some reason Paul is more keenly conscious of, and is brought more fact to face with organized, spiritual opposition in a realm inhabited by both men and demons in Ephesians than in any other letter. In this matter he agrees with Christ who also taught that Satan's kingdom possesses order and unity, for, said he, were it divided, it could not stand.

## **“In the Heavenly Places”**

The phrase, “In the heavenly places” is found in Ephesians five times, but not elsewhere in the Bible. From the first three passages in which it occurs, we learn that Christ sits “in the heavenly places” at God's right hand, dispensing “every spiritual blessing” to Christians, who are said to sit with him. The other two passages (3:10 and 6:12), put Christ's adversary with his “hosts of wickedness”; that is, “The prince of this world,” whom Christ said he would “judge and cast out” (Jno. 12:31), also “in the heavenly places.” Paul has already said in 2:2 that men before they become Christians walk “according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of

the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.” The phrase seems to mean, therefore, the battlefield where the forces of Christ and the forces of Satan met and wrestled somewhat as Jacob and an angel wrestled at the Jabbok. It includes, then, the earth and the region of air up to the throne of God. (We need to remember that this matter transcends human searchings, that revelation is our only source of information, and that we should be happy to learn anything God puts into his Book).

The Bible throughout abundantly supports this view. Fallen Satan and at least some fallen angels range the earth and the heavens. According to Job 1:6-19, Satan, after “going to and fro in the earth,” presented himself before God, along with the sons of God, to get permission to “sift” Job. After receiving this permission, he returned to earth to afflict Job. It is revealed in 1 Kings 22:19-23 that God on his throne surrounded by “all the host of heaven” gave “a lying spirit” leave to enter into godless Ahab’s false prophets to lead him to his death in battle. According to 1 Chron. 21:1, “Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David against Israel,” thereby causing the death of seventy thousand Israelites. Of course such things are always Satan’s joy for “he was a murderer from the beginning ... is a liar” (John 8:44), and hence hates life and truth. Zechariah 3:1, 2, is a revealing scripture. It shows Joshua the high priest interceding for Jerusalem before Jehovah “and Satan standing at his right hand to be his adversary” as accuser of Jerusalem. Finally, for an illuminating glimpse of the wrestling between the forces of God and the forces of Satan “in the heavenly places,” and of the interlocking of the work of angels and of men in God’s government of his universe (see Daniel 10). The archangel, Michael, and another angel of high rank take the side of the Jews against two angels called “the prince of Persia” and “the prince of Greece,” respectively, in the international struggles of these three peoples a few centuries B.C.

What could Cyrus the Great and Alexander the Great know about God’s being their generalissimo, and about some angels being for and some against them! Men live in a world of which the most important things can be learned only by faith. Knowing that all “these things were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4), we can better understand our Christian warfare today. By faith we know that God “maketh his angels winds, and ministers a flame of fire,” and uses them as “ministering spirits, sent forth to do services for the sake of them that

shall inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:7, 14). This knowledge gives us patience, comfort, and hope, for no matter what happens among men around the earth, no matter what demons side with Communism or Catholicism, God still reigns to the eventual destruction of all “the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” both angelic and human. Can we be thankful enough for the written word of God? Do we study it enough? How much do we even read it?

### **The Christian Armor**

Paul opens the discussion of this topic by insisting that Christians in their wrestling with Satan will need “the exceeding greatness of his (God's) power to us-ward” (1:19); will need to “be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might”; will need “the whole armor of God.” Then Paul in an extended metaphor names six items of a Roman soldier's armor and tells what they stand for in the armor God furnishes his soldiers. Finally, he names prayer in the spirit, which gives set and effectiveness to the whole armor. No Christian “can please him who enrolled him as a soldier” without constant communion with him and referring everything to him. In the classic wrestling match between Hercules and Antaeus, it was useless for Hercules to throw Antaeus for he always arose from mother earth renewed in strength after a fall. But when he held Antaeus aloft, he easily strangled him. When Christians in their wrestling with Satan allow him to break their union and communion with Christ, they are easily vanquished.

# *Ephesians Essay No. 20*

This final “study” in Ephesians deals mainly with the organic, universal church. As God works out his eternal program, the humanly impossible task of getting Jew and Gentile, who had been dead together in sin, “alive together with Christ ... to sit with him in the heavenly places,” “fitly framed and knit together” for love and life . . ., and “builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit” is a marvelous demonstration of his infinite wisdom, grace, and power to harmonize incongruities, “so making peace.” In this treatise on the one, inter-racial church, Paul rises above the personal and the local. He says nothing about the organization and government of local congregations. As Galatians settles the question of Christian freedom for all time, so Ephesians settles the question of Christian unity for all time. The fact that both of these books (each with its special, cardinal, Christian doctrine) are still needed as much in the twentieth as in the first century is sad evidence of how little Christendom, despite its professed fidelity to the Bible, actually follows it. The spiritual elevation of Ephesians with its loftiest peak, “The riches of his grace,” is hardly equaled elsewhere in the Bible. Its atmosphere is calm and clear, its sky bright and sunny.

## **Christ Creates His Church**

In the prologue of John's gospel, there are two divine creations—a physical and a spiritual. Concerning the former: “All things were made through him (Christ); and without him was not anything made that hath been made” (John 1:3). Concerning the latter: “They that were his (Christ's) own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13). What a privilege to have such unmerited good news to believe! What a calamity if man were so constituted, as some say, that he could not believe!

Man has nothing whatsoever to do with either the planning or the making of these two creations. He had as well try to make a world as

to try to make a church. His part in each is the precious opportunity of accepting what God freely provides, of cooperating in confident faith and strict obedience, and thus of becoming a fellow-worker with God unto the blessed increase. In neither does success depend upon noble blood, nor strong, natural character to will and to run ("the will of the flesh"), nor human organizations and institutions ("the will of man"). Human pedigree, individual intellectual and moral excellencies, and ecclesiastical system and priestly craft all combined cannot give "the right to become children of God."

The church is more than a humanly-wrought association of believers. It is a brotherhood of divinely-regenerated men and women, who by the authority of one Spirit are "all baptized into one body," and are "all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). All such believers are "added to the Lord" (Acts 5: 14). That is, Christ through the Holy Spirit from within, incorporates them with himself into a living organism of which he is head and they are the body. Christ and Christians share the same nature and life, as all parts of the fleshly man share the same blood. These "things . . . entered not into the heart of man," but "God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). Spiritual Christians believe and experience all this, and live in its power. But, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Cor. 2:14). As a man, upon becoming a father, though all arguing beforehand cannot make him know the affections of a father's heart, knows them after his child is born, so the natural man can know spiritual things only by being "born of water and Spirit" unto the realm of spiritual things. Fallen man cannot understand and live the spiritual life until he comes into possession of it by this spiritual birth. If a man can live a Christian life without becoming a Christian, why did Christ come to earth, die, rise, ascend to heaven, and send the Holy Spirit to inaugurate the church on Pentecost?

There is much fundamental, common truth in the three great analogues of the church (body, temple, and bride) in Ephesians, nevertheless, each analogy has its own particular truths. First, "The church, which is his (Christ's) body," shows forth on earth the glories of her head, who is enthroned in heaven. Through her, Christ contracts, speaks to, and acts upon the world spiritually. Second, the



Holy Spirit as the resident, executive member of the godhead, dwells in the church to vivify and employ her as his living, redemptive organ among the children of men around the earth. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (1 Cor. 3:16). Third, the church is "espoused ... as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2), which espousal is to be followed at the Bridegroom's coming by "the marriage of the Lamb and his wife (who) hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7), "that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

For all this present and future to be realized however, the church must reproduce both Christ's crucifixion and resurrection in her life. This twofold life is a risen life in union and communion with her risen Lord and a crucified life in relationship to the world. The church is committed to this living-dying life in her baptism: "We are buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." In their conversion, men are delivered unto a "form (pattern) of teaching" of the dead and risen Christ that molds them into his likeness (Rom. 6:4, 17). This is Paul's "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Cor. 4:10). The church is now identified with Christ in his rejection by the world, but when her marriage is come, she will then be identified with him on his glorious throne, thenceforth "in the ages to come" (Eph. 2:7). No other creatures are so blessed in the present or can be so blessed in the future as are members of the church. Reader, are you "espoused ... as a pure virgin to Christ"? Can you afford not to be?