

# History

## of the Church of God

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### Chapter VII

## THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES. — THE GOSPELS AND THE EPISTLES.

**T**HE shades of night recede before the approach of morning light; moon and stars fade away when the bright luminary of day gilds the eastern horizon; and thus, when the Sun of Righteousness arose upon the world, the shadows, types, symbols and metaphors of the Mosaic dispensation were fulfilled and had to pass away.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:1-3, 14, 17).

In the days of Herod the Great, king of Judea, the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin<sup>[1]</sup> espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; “and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt

conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus.<sup>ii</sup>[2] He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 26-33).

And, in the fulfillment of this prediction made to Mary by the angel, as well as of all those made by the prophets, under the legal dispensation, touching that event, it is written that, in obedience to a decree made by Caesar Augustus, taxing the Roman world, Joseph and his espoused wife "went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house of lineage of David), to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2: 1-13). The shepherds went in search of the child and found him in a manger, and his mother and Joseph, and then returned "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." At the expiration of eight days, the child was circumcised, and "his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord" (Luke 2: 16-22).

The precise time of our Savior's birth, for some wise purpose, seems to have been lost sight of by chronologists. But it may be set down as having most probably occurred a few months before the death of Herod the Great, four years before the common Christian era, in the year of Rome 750, and in the year of the world 4000. Learned men have investigated this point, but,

with all their researches, have not been able to fix precisely either the year or the day of His birth. The early Christians were divided on this subject, and of course it must be a matter of uncertainty to all succeeding generations. In view of this uncertainty, not even the exact year, much less the exact month being known, how groundless and puerile appears the custom of the Romish and English, as well as other communions, in holding sacred the twenty-fifth day of December (new style) as the day of Christ's nativity, and adorning their houses of worship with flowers and evergreens as part of their religious devotion on that day!

But the precise year, month or day in which the Sun of Righteousness arose is immaterial to the church of God. She knows that He has arisen—has shone upon the world, has warmed and animated the hearts of His people, who have enjoyed the direction and influence of His vital and salutary beams. He came at the precise time and moment predetermined by the Most High God, without variation or disappointment. "*When the fullness of the time was come*, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4, 5).

The words and deeds of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ have been recorded by four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, holy men of old, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and to their testimony we must refer for all genuine information as to the advent and mission of the Son of God while tenementing in clay. They inform us that He was taken early by His reputed father into Egypt to escape Herod's cruelty, and that at the age of twelve years He was found conversing in the temple with the learned doctors of the law concerning the sublime truths of religion.

Profane history, and not that of the evangelists, notifies us that, at the period of the birth of the Prince of Peace, there was peace throughout the Roman empire, which continued for about twelve years, and, as a sign of universal peace, the temple of Janus at Rome was closed, which, before the reign of Augustus Caesar, had not been the case since 241 B.C.

"The external condition and surroundings of the youth of Jesus are in sharp contrast with the amazing result of His public life. He grew up quietly and unnoticed in a retired Galilean mountain village of proverbial insignificance, and in a lowly carpenter-shop, far away from the city of Jerusalem, from schools and libraries, with no means of instruction save

those which seemed open to the humblest Jew—the care of godly parents, the beauties of nature, the services of the synagogue, the secret communion of the soul with God, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which recorded in type and prophecy His own character and mission. All attempts to derive His doctrine from any of the existing schools and sects have utterly failed. He never referred to the traditions of the elders except to oppose them. From the Pharisees and Sadducees He differed alike, and provoked their deadly hostility. With the Essenes He never came in contact. He was independent of human learning and literature, of schools and parties. He taught the world as one who owed nothing to the world. He came down from Heaven and spoke out of the fullness of His personal intercourse with the great Jehovah. Wiser than all sages, He spake as never man spake, and made an impression on His age and on all ages after Him such as no man ever made or can make.”—*P. Schaff*, in *History of Christian Church*. His matchless teaching forms the clear, brief, powerful text of all Christian doctrine. “*His short ministry of three years*,” says Mr. Leckey, the infidel historian of European Morals, “*has produced a more deep and lasting impression on the human race than all the disquisitions of all the philosophers, and all the exhortations of all the moralists that ever lived.*”

“Hillel and Shammai and other eminent ravvins of this period,” says Mr. W.G. Blaikie, in his *Manual of Bible History*, “were probably alive when Christ came into the world; some of them may have been among those with whom the child Jesus conversed in the temple; and they, or their successors, must have exercised influence in His rejection and death. There could not have been a greater contrast than that between their worship of traditions and Christ’s reverence for the Word; between their theory of changing men by an influence from *without*, and Christ’s by a power from *within*; between the vain, trifling inquiries on which their teachings bore, and the grand realities of life and death which Christ’s constantly contemplated; between their pride, formality and contemptuous spirit, and Christ’s humility, simplicity and love.”

From His twelfth to His thirtieth year nothing is said of His history by the evangelists. But when about thirty years of age, the period when the Jewish priests entered the sacred office, they inform us that He came unto John the Baptist to be baptized by him. John at first refused to administer the rite to Him, urging his great inferiority, but the Savior insisted, and John at length yielded and baptized Him in the river Jordan. After being baptized He “went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the Heavens were opened unto

him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and, lo, a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17).

God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was present on that occasion to honor the sacred rite of baptism and set apart the Messiah for the work of the gospel ministry. This office He then took upon Himself, and henceforward proclaimed the principles of the gospel kingdom till the time of His crucifixion. John was the forerunner of Jesus; he was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb—his name came from Heaven, and his authority to baptize came from there also. The evangelists call him "*John the Baptist.*" The Savior, having been baptized by him, was surely a "Baptist," and as He went forth preaching His own gospel He was necessarily a "Baptist preacher," thereby affording an example for all His ministerial followers to the end of the world. And here is where the Baptists came from. An unbaptized person has no Bible right to preach the gospel.

The birth of John was announced to his father by an angel from Heaven, and it was miraculous, because his mother was barren and his father, Zacharias, a Jewish priest, was well stricken in years. To further strengthen his faith in the heavenly promise, he was made dumb until his child was born and named.

It was a custom of eastern princes, in their visits to distant nations, to send heralds or messengers before them to notify the people in advance of their coming. Our Savior, the Prince of Peace, King of kings, and Lord of lords, sent His messenger before His face, both in His birth and ministerial character, six months in advance.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:1-4). He taught the coming of Christ and the setting up of His gospel kingdom on earth. He pointed to Christ, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip being tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch

of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaiasiiii[3] the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:1-6).

Filled with the Holy Ghost from before his birth, what a blessed, unworldly, unselfish and faithful servant of Christ was John the Baptist! He disdained the luxuries and smiles of men; he fearlessly rebuked, not only the Scribes and Pharisees and soldiers, but even king Herod, for their sins; and he pointed men away from himself to Christ as the sin-atonement Lamb of God. The embodiment and culmination of the Old Testament, he labored for a short season, and then "in unrivalled humility he disappeared as the red dawn in the splendor of the rising Sun of the new covenant."

While Christ was to increase, John was to decrease. He was beheaded in prison by the cruel monster Herod, in order to please a dancing damsel and her blood-thirsty mother; and his followers for the most part attached themselves afterwards to Christ and His Apostles.

The followers of the Savior were few in number during His life to what they were soon after His resurrection and ascension to glory. He sent out his twelve Apostles first to preach, and then seventy disciples afterwards, but their success appeared to be very limited as to the acquisition of numbers. The number twelve appears to refer to the twelve patriarchs, and the number seventy to the seventy elders under the Jewish dispensation; and teach that the former were to be superseded by the latter.

Jesus called to Him whomsoever He would, and thus set up His gospel kingdom in the world. From among the number of His adherents, He ordained twelve to attend His ministry in person, to become witnesses of His miracles, of His doctrine and sufferings, and, by occupying twelve thrones as judges of the twelve tribes of Israel, spiritually, to hand down to the latest period of time, to all succeeding generations, the principles of the gospel kingdom that He came to set up.

As Apostles they have had no successors, and therefore all matters of faith and practice must be referred to them; that is, to their inspired writings. They received their instructions from the Savior. He commanded them to teach and baptize the people who believed in Him, and then to teach them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them (Matthew 28:19, 20). As also saith the prophet, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment" (Isa. 32:1). The names of the twelve Apostles were "Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus; Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him" (Matthew 10:2-4).

"During His ministry He had no home, no earthly possessions, no friends among the mighty and the rich. A few pious women from time to time filled his purse; and this purse was in the hands of a thief and a traitor. He associated with publicans and sinners, to raise them up to a higher and nobler life, and began His work among the lower classes which were despised and neglected by the proud hierarchy of the day. He never courted the favor of the great, but incurred their hatred and persecution. He never flattered the prejudices of the age, but rebuked sin and vice among the high and the low, aiming His severest words at the blind leaders of the blind, the self-righteous hypocrites who sat in Moses' seat. He never encouraged the carnal Messianic hopes of the people, but withdrew when they wished to make Him a king, and declared before the representative of the Roman empire that His kingdom was not of this world. He announced to His disciples His own martyrdom, and promised to them in this life only the same baptism of blood. He went about in Palestine, often weary of travel, but never weary of His work of love, doing good to the souls and bodies of men, speaking words of spirit and life, and working miracles of power and mercy. He chose for Himself the humblest of the Messianic titles, 'the Son of Man,' which implies His consciousness that He was originally more than man and is now more than man, having come as man among men in a condition of temporary humiliation, while at the same time the title implies His unique position as the ideal, the perfect, the representative, the archetypal Man. He calls Himself habitually, but no one else, 'the Son of Man,' who 'hath not where to lay His head,' who 'came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many,' who 'hath power to forgive sins,' who 'came to seek and to save that which was lost.' When Peter made the great confession at Caesarea Philippi, Christ accepted it, but immediately

warned him of His approaching suffering and death, from which the disciple shrunk in dismay. And with the certain expectation of His crucifixion, but also of His triumphant resurrection on the third day, He entered in calm and sublime fortitude on His last journey to Jerusalem which 'killeth the prophets,' and nailed Him to the cross as a false Messiah and blasphemer. But in the infinite wisdom and mercy of God the greatest crime in history was turned into the greatest blessing to mankind."—*P. Schaff*.

As says the learned John L. Mosheim: "It is not necessary to enter into a detail of the life and actions of Jesus Christ. All Christians must be perfectly acquainted with them. They must know that, during the space of three years, and amidst the deepest trials of affliction and distress, He instructed the Jewish nation in the will and counsels of the Most High, and omitted nothing in the course of His ministry that could (righteously) contribute to gain the multitude or to charm the wise. Every one knows that His life was a continued scene of perfect sanctity, of the purest and most active virtue, not only without spot, but also beyond the reach of suspicion—the only perfectly wise, perfectly sinless, and perfectly benevolent being that ever walked this earth, according to the unanimous acknowledgment of the human race; and it is also well known that, by miracles of the most stupendous kind, and not more stupendous than salutary and beneficent, He displayed to the universe the truth of that religion which He brought with Him from above, and demonstrated in the most illustrious manner the reality of His Divine commission.

"As this system of religion was to be propagated to the extremities of the earth, it was necessary that Christ should choose a certain number of persons to accompany Him constantly through the whole course of His ministry; that thus they might be faithful and respectable witnesses of the sanctity of His life, and the grandeur of His miracles, to the remotest nations, and also transmit to the latest posterity a genuine account of His sublime doctrines, and of the nature and end of the gospel dispensation. Therefore Jesus chose, out of the multitude that attended His discourses, twelve persons whom He separated from the rest by the name of *Apostles*. These men were illiterate, poor, and of mean extraction; and such alone were truly proper to answer His views. He avoided making use of the ministry of persons endowed with the advantages of fortune and birth, or enriched with the treasures of eloquence and learning, lest the fruits of this embassy and the progress of the gospel should be attributed to human and natural causes (1 Cor. 1:21). These Apostles were sent but once to preach

to the Jews during the life of Christ (Matthew 10: 7). He chose to keep them about His own person, that they might be thoroughly instructed in the affairs of His kingdom. That the multitude, however, might not be destitute of teachers to enlighten them with the knowledge of the truth, Christ appointed seventy disciples to preach the glad tidings of eternal life throughout the whole province of Judea (Luke 10: 1).

“The ministry of Jesus was (principally) confined to the Jews, nor while He remained upon earth did He permit His Apostles or disciples to extend their labors beyond this distinguished nation (Matthew 10: 5, 6; 15: 24). At the same time, if we consider the illustrious acts of mercy and omnipotence that were performed by Christ, it will be natural to conclude that His fame must have been very soon spread abroad in other countries.

“A great number of the Jews, influenced by those illustrious marks of Divine authority and power which shone forth in the ministry and actions of Christ, regarded Him as the Son of God, the true Messiah. The rulers of the people, and more especially the chief priests and Pharisees, whose licentiousness and hypocrisy He censured with a noble and generous freedom, labored with success by the help of their passions to extinguish in their breasts the conviction of His celestial mission, or at least to suppress the effects it was adapted to produce upon their conduct. Fearing also that His ministry might tend to diminish their credit, and to deprive them of the advantages they derived from the impious abuse of their authority in religious matters, they laid snares for His life, which for a considerable time were without effect. They succeeded at last by the infernal treason of an apostate disciple, by the treachery of Judas, who, discovering the retreat which his Divine Master had chosen for the purposes of meditation and repose, delivered Him into the merciless hands of a brutal soldiery.

“In consequence of this, Jesus was produced as a criminal before the Jewish high priest and Sanhedrim, being accused of having violated the law and blasphemed the majesty of God. Dragged thence to the tribunal of Pilate, the Roman praetor, he was charged with seditious enterprises and with treason against Caesar. Both these accusations were so evidently false, and destitute even of every appearance of truth, that they must have been rejected by any judge who acted upon the principles of common equity. But the clamor of an enraged populace, influenced by the impious instigations of their priests and rulers, intimidated Pilate, and engaged him, though with the utmost reluctance, and in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, to

pronounce a capital sentence against Christ. The Redeemer of mankind behaved with inexpressible dignity under this heavy trial. As the end of His mission was to make expiation for the sins of men, so when all things were ready, and when He had finished the work of His glorious ministry, He placidly submitted to the death of the cross, and, with a serene and voluntary resignation, committed His spirit into the hands of the Father.

“After Jesus had remained three days in the sepulchre he resumed that life which He had voluntarily laid down; and, rising from the dead, declared to the universe, by that triumphant act, that the Divine justice was satisfied, and the paths of salvation and immortality were rendered accessible to the human race. He conversed with His disciples during forty days after His resurrection, and employed that time in instructing them more fully with regard to the nature of His kingdom. Many wise and important reasons prevented His showing Himself publicly at Jerusalem to confound the malignity and unbelief of His enemies. He contented Himself by manifesting the certainty of His glorious resurrection to a sufficient number of faithful and credible witnesses, being aware that, if He should appear in public, those malicious unbelievers, who had formerly attributed His miracles to the power of magic would represent His resurrection as a phantom, or vision, produced by the influence of infernal powers. After having remained upon earth during the space of time above mentioned, and given to His disciples a Divine commission to preach the glad tidings of salvation and immortality to the human race, He ascended into Heaven in their presence, and resumed that enjoyment of that glory which He had possessed before the worlds were created.”

The crucifixion of our Lord and Savior was a matter of as much certainty and necessity as His birth. Both were included in the great design to save poor fallen man, and the former as well as the latter, being known and determined by the Almighty from everlasting, was spread upon the pages of Divine revelation thousands of years before its actual fulfillment; as proved by the animal sacrifices offered up by spiritual worshipers for forty centuries before His coming, and by the numerous Messianic prophecies that we have cited at the close of Chapter VI., and by Acts 4:26-28.

It was of *necessity* therefore that this man had somewhat also to offer as the great High Priest of spiritual Israel, made after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron.

Jesus was taken by the Roman soldiers from the judgment-hall of Pontius Pilate and carried to Calvary, or Golgotha, a low, rounded, bare hill outside the north gate of Jerusalem. There was He nailed to the cross and elevated above the earth, as a spectacle to angels and men. The crucifixion took place on Friday, most probably April 6th, A.D. 30. Christ hung upon the cross from 9A.M. to 3P.M., at which hour He died. From the sixth to the ninth hour (which corresponds with our time from 12 noon to 3P.M.) there was darkness over all the land. About the ninth hour (3P.M.) He cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And when He had cried with a loud voice, "It is finished!" "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit," He yielded up the ghost. "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew 27:46-53; John 19:30; Luke 23:46).

The crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was the most memorable and wonderful event in the history of the world. The redemption of countless millions of the human race depended on it, and without it there was salvation for none. Yet the dark deed of judicial murder, instigated by the malignity of the Jews, was rebuked by the absent rays of the bright luminary of Heaven, when darkness covered the earth for three dreary, doleful hours on that memorable day.<sup>iv</sup>[4] He laid down His life as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of His people, and remained a captive to death from Friday, the Jews' preparation day, till Sunday, the first day of the week, being the day succeeding their Sabbath. On Sunday morning He burst the bonds of death, and arose a mighty conqueror over death, hell and the grave, and in about forty days ascended to His Father's right hand, leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men. The same body that was crucified was buried; the same body that was buried arose from the grave; and the same body that arose from the grave was glorified, and is now seated on the mediatorial throne at the right hand of God, in Divine composure until His enemies be made His footstool, and until the consummation of all things, when He shall again come to gather His ransomed people home, and take vengeance on them that know not God.

The object of His mission to earth was to save sinners by the sacrifice of Himself, and to inculcate upon the minds of men the great method of redemption.

If Jesus was, as even infidelity admits, the Sun of Righteousness, then He was what He professed to be, the Son of God. Upon this all-important point infinite reason could not be deceived, and infinite holiness could not deceive others. All hypotheses representing Jesus as a mere man have refuted and destroyed each other. "He learned nothing from human teachers. His wisdom was not of this world. He needed no visions and revelations like the prophets and Apostles. He came directly from His great Father in Heaven, and when He spoke of Heaven, He spoke of His familiar home. He spoke from the fullness of God dwelling in Him. And His words were perfectly verified by His unapproachable deeds."—*P. Schaff, in "History of Christian Church."*

His doctrine comprehended the nature and perfections of God, the Father, and that He and the Father were one—the misery of fallen man—a declaration of His own character as the Son of God and the promised Messiah—the design of His mission into this world, which was to save His people from their sins, who were the gift of the Father to Him—the impossibility of their perishing or being plucked out of His hand—His eternal union with them as their covenant or chosen Head—His giving them repentance and remission of sins—the divinely-given immortality of the soul—the resurrection from the dead—the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments—the necessity of a preached gospel to all nations—His appointment by God Almighty to judge the world in righteousness at the last day, and the certain assurance that the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, shall abide with His church forever.

"Christ's ethical teaching shines most brightly in those points where other systems fail, namely, the truthfulness of inward cleansing, the majesty of lowliness, and the glory of love."—*T.D. Bernard.*

"In His doctrine He rescued the moral law from the false glosses imposed upon it by the Scribes and Pharisees; unfolded its spirituality and extent, as requiring perfect love to God and man; and enforced its indispensable obligation upon all men as the rule of their correspondence with God; declaring that He Himself came not to abrogate or annul one tittle, but to fulfill its utmost requirements by His own obedience and conformity thereunto, and adopting it as the unalterable law of His kingdom, which is to regulate the conduct of His disciples to the end of time."—*W. Jones.*

The judicial, civil, or political law was intended by God for the special government of the ancient Hebrew nation. The ceremonial or Levitical law was a prefiguration of the gospel, in types and shadows, and was completely fulfilled and ended by Christ. The decalogue, or ten commandments, or moral law, was audibly spoken by the voice of God from Mount Sinai, was written by His finger on two tables of stone, and was perpetually preserved in the Ark of the Covenant, the innermost shrine of the tabernacle and temple. It was perfectly kept by Christ for His people both actively and passively, He doing all that the moral law required them to do, and suffering death, the penalty of their violation of the moral law; so that there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. Those who are in Christ Jesus have His Spirit of life and love in them; and they have not only in their minds, but also written in their hearts, the same holy spiritual law that He fulfilled, so that they delight in that law after the inward man, and serve God in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, from a principle, not of bondage, but of love. As they have been made free by the Son of God, and are free indeed—not to sin, but to love—and, as where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, the perfect moral law of God is to them a perfect law of liberty; and the blessed precepts of the gospel are but the Divine expansion and efflorescence of the same holy law, based upon the powerful new motive of the atoning love of Jesus. The oldest Baptist Articles of Faith declare that the moral law is a compendious “rule of life for the Christian;” so did the ablest and soundest Baptist ministers before the nineteenth century. But in the present century some speakers and writers deny that the moral law is a rule of life, and affirm that the precepts of the gospel only are such a rule; and these people have been stigmatized by others as Antinomians, or opposed to the law. The question as to whether the moral law or the preceptive part of the New Testament is the Christian’s *rule of life* is what Paul calls a “vain and unprofitable strife about words, whereof come envy, railings, and evil surmisings, and which we are to avoid” (Titus 3:9; 1 Tim. 6:4). The law within the heart of Christ (Ps. 40:6-8; Heb. 10:5-7) is not inferior to, but is the same as, the law written in the hearts of His covenant people (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 10:16, 17). A holy, perfect and unchangeable God makes at all times the same moral requirements of His creatures. According to the Scriptures, love—supreme love of God and love of our neighbor as ourselves—was the essence of the Sinaitic moral law, and is the essence of Christianity, so that there is no difference between the Old and New Testament *Divine Moral Standards*. This fact is absolutely demonstrated by the following Scriptures: Exodus 20:6; Leviticus 19:18; Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalms 1:1-3; 37:31; 40:6-8; 102:27; 119:29, 32, 45, 165, 174;

Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Matthew 5:17, 19; 22:36-40; John 15:12; Romans 3:31; 7:12, 14, 16, 22; 13:10; 1 Corinthians 9:21; 13:1-13; James 1:17; 2:8; 1 John 4:21. *Christ was the only man that ever perfectly fulfilled the holy law of God, loving God supremely and His neighbor as Himself; and the entire eternal salvation of His church is based upon His perfect obedience of the Divine law* (Rom. 5:19-21; Gal. 3:13). Yet all the children of God are led by the same Holy Spirit of obedience (Rom 8:14; Gal. 4:6; Ps. 23:3); not able, while in the flesh, to obey the moral law or the gospel precepts perfectly (Rom. 3:20; 1 John 1:8), and reposing all their hope of Heaven upon the perfect obedience of Christ (Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:30; Col. 1:5, 27).

In the teaching and meditation of Christ was laid the foundation of Christianity, the principles of which were to be elucidated and made abundantly manifest by the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, who was to enlighten the understanding of His disciples and bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever that He had said unto them (John 14:26).

Before the crucifixion of Christ He directed His Apostles to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49). Accordingly, they did so, and were found together in one place in Jerusalem, at the end of seven times seven days after His resurrection, and ten days after His ascension, viz., the Apostles and one hundred and twenty disciples, when "suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, sitting upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4). Instantaneously light broke in upon their understandings. Their old apprehension of a natural kingdom being set up in the world by their Lord vanished away; its true spiritual character was immediately revealed to them, and, although ignorant and unlearned, as touching all human sciences, they rose and addressed the vast multitudes that assembled on the occasion from various parts of the world, declaring the wonderful works of God, with great precision, in many different languages of earth!

Such a miraculous display of Divine power brought many thousands together to behold it, and three thousand of them, being quickened into Divine life by the Spirit of God (John 16:7-11) believed the preaching of the Apostles and were added to the number in one day. Thus the mother church

was fairly set up in Jerusalem, from which all others sprang. It was a Baptist church, composed of baptized believers; because all who believed, and made a profession of their faith, were baptized straightway. None others were received into fellowship and communion. And here is where the Baptists came from.

The Apostles and primitive saints were endowed with a holy boldness, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit went in all directions, preaching the gospel of the kingdom. They stood in no fear of man, but feared God, and, at the risk of their lives, determined to serve Him. They planted churches after the pattern of the one at Jerusalem, and they were independent bodies, distinct from each other, though all of the same faith and order. Each was a little "republic" within itself, governed by the rudiments of Christ and not of the world. After the Apostles came pastors and deacons as officers in the churches. Such was the evidence of Divine authority attending the doctrine and labors of the Apostles and early ministers of the gospel that large numbers were added to the churches, and the interest was so great that some concluded they had turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). In this respect it might be inferred that they did greater things than their Master (John 14:12).

The success which attended the first publication of the gospel is very beautifully described in the book of Revelation (6:1,2) by a vision which the Apostle had of the Lamb opening *the first seal*. "And I saw," says he, "and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." The history of the Apostles and first preachers affords a striking comment on these words, at the same time that it illustrates to us an ancient prediction concerning the Messiah (Ps. 110:2, etc.); for now we see the standard of Christ first erected as an ensign to the nations; from hence went forth the rod of His strength, by which he ruled in the midst of His enemies, and (from that time, or) in that day of His power the willing nations submitted to Him cheerfully, and "numerous as drops of morning dew." Here indeed was the kingdom set up, which was to stand forever; as saith the prophet; "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all other kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). And here is where the Baptists came from. On the day of Pentecost three thousand were added to the number of the disciples; and, on the day the cripple who lay at the gate of the temple was healed, five

thousand were numbered among the believers. And all this conquest made by grace was made in direct opposition to earthly powers, both Jew and Gentile.

If the religion of Christ prevailed in its infancy against the wishes and persecutions of the combined powers of earth, why should it not do so now, when it has spread its roots with the growth of eighteen centuries? Is God Almighty more dependent on men *now* than He was *then* to carry on the work of evangelization? Some would have us believe so, who go about begging the unconverted world (which belongs to Satan's kingdom) to give them funds sufficient to break down their master's kingdom and convert the world to God! This is setting up Satan to cast out Satan, thereby dividing his own kingdom, and exalting him *above the Almighty*. How preposterous!

The Apostles for some considerable time executed the different offices of Apostle, Elder and Deacon; the former, or highest office in the Christian church, being evidently considered as including every inferior one. But when murmuring among the Grecians against the Hebrews was heard, because some of their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations, then the Apostles decided to call the church together, and have men chosen whose chief duty it should be to serve tables, and see that none were neglected in the daily ministrations. By donations made to the Apostles for that purpose, a fund had been raised to purchase food for the poor of the church, and there were two classes who received the benefit of it, viz.: first, those Jews, called Hebrews, who lived in Judea and worshiped in the synagogues at Jerusalem and its vicinity, in the use of the Hebrew and Chaldee languages; and secondly, those Jews who lived outside Judea, and who had been accustomed chiefly to the use of the Greek language, into which the Old Testament Scriptures had been translated (the version which we now call the Septuagint), and which had been for some time in common use, previous to the coming of Christ, in all the Jewish synagogues dispersed throughout the cities beyond the limits of Judea. These last were called Hellenists or Grecians; and of them it would appear that many were at that time, in Jerusalem, members of the church. The church came together and chose seven men, full of wisdom and the Holy Ghost, to attend to this matter, and thereby allow the Apostles liberty to devote their time wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word. They chose Stephen and Philip and Prochorus and Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6). Some of them (probably all) were occasionally engaged in preaching the gospel, but this was no part of thier office of Deacons (if this

was the Deaconship), the latter being restricted to the serving of tables or ministering to the wants of the poor.

Stephen was soon stoned to death. When the worshipers of Moses could not cope with him in argument, they could outdo him with stones, and resorted to the ancient and modern custom of killing those whom they could not convince. Stephen was a *heretic* of course in the estimation of these *Solomons*, and therefore he must not be *rejected*, as Paul afterward advised in the case of heretics, but must be *slain* by virtue of a decree of the Jewish Sanhedrim. This servant of God died as did his Master, praying for his murderers, and yielding up his spirit unto God who gave it. Saul of Tarsus was there aiding and abetting in this fanatical fury. He held the clothes of the young men who stoned Stephen; and this so whetted his appetite for blood that he persecuted the faithful followers of Jesus in all directions, dragging them to prison and to death, both men and women. The field of his cruelty seemed to expand as his business prospered, and he persecuted them in cities remote from Jerusalem. In the meanwhile the disciples, in obedience to the command of their Lord and Master, yielded to the storm, and dispersed themselves among the cities of Judea and Samaria. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ among the inhabitants with great success. The second church was formed there. He also preached to an Ethiopian eunuch on his way home from Jerusalem, and baptized him upon a profession of his faith in Christ. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, while the eunuch went on his way rejoicing; thereby fulfilling the prediction of the Psalmist, "Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God" (Ps. 68:31). Saul of Tarsus was of Jewish parents, both father and mother. His father was of the tribe of Benjamin, and a freeman of Rome. He was liberally educated. The rudiments he received in his native city, which was a rival of Athens and Alexandria in learning; and he then completed his studies in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a noted doctor of the law of Moses and the traditions of the Elders.

The three highest elements of human nobility met in Saul—Roman citizenship, Grecian culture, and Hebrew religion. He had, even by nature, a mind of the highest order, and a spirit of extraordinary mold. As Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians, so Paul was learned in the wisdom of the Greeks; being one of the "not many wise men called" to the service of Christ (1 Cor. 1:26). And a wonderful energy, resolution, zeal, fearlessness, sincerity, morality and devotion to the Mosaic law characterized him. Next to the fall of man and the crucifixion of Christ, no incident occupies so much

space in the Scriptures as the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Besides being referred to several times in Paul's epistles, it is related three times in the Acts of the Apostles (chapters 9, 12 and 26); first by Luke, the historian, then by Paul to the Jews, and then by Paul to the Gentiles; and, next to the sin of Adam and the death of Christ, no other event in human history is so full of spiritual instruction. If no other conversion had been described in the Bible, and if no explicit statement of doctrine had been made, the simple record of the Divine and instantaneous and total transformation of the bitterest enemy to the most devoted servant of Christ on earth would have perfectly demonstrated, and written, as it were, upon the Heavens, in letters of living light, the sovereignty, the almightiness and irresistibility of the grace of God in the conviction and conversion of the sinner. By the operation of this efficacious grace, the persecuting Pharisee, *who was all the while a chosen vessel unto God*, became the lifelong martyr of Jesus of Nazareth; and, next to incarnate Deity, Paul became—far more truly than Julius Caesar—“the foremost man of all this world”—the most richly endowed with the Spirit of God to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ to all the coming generations of the human race, the great Apostle of the Gentile world, the humblest as well as the most learned of the Apostles, the unselfish moral hero of humanity, the dauntless champion of Divine sovereignty and spiritual religion, the greatest laborer and sufferer and witness for Christ that ever appeared in the annals of time, not only preaching but living Christ “as the source and end of his whole being,” and surpassing all other men (excepting John) in the heights of spirituality and holiness to which he attained. About two-thirds of the Acts of the Apostles are devoted to his career; and he himself wrote nearly one-third of the New Testament. All the greatness of Paul was due to the efficacious grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10); and one of the most striking effects of that grace was to make him feel to be “*the least of the Apostles*” (1 Cor. 15:9); and, later in life, instead of feeling that he was getting better, he uses a still stronger expression of humility, and calls himself “*less than the least of all saints*” (Eph. 3:8); and, still later in life, he felt constrained to confess himself “*the chief of sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:15). Like John the Baptist, he could say of Christ, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Abandoning the name *Saul* (meaning in Hebrew *asked*, and in Greek *conceited*), the proudest name in the tribe of Benjamin, he wears the Roman or Gentile name *Paul* (meaning *little*); and he continued, all his life long, to grow less in his own esteem, while Christ, the hope of glory, grew greater within him. The *humblest* in the kingdom of Heaven is the *greatest*, said our Lord (Matthew 18:4); and we know that no one was ever more meek and lowly, or ever

more great than He (Matthew 11:39; Philip. 2:6-11). *Poverty of spirit* is the first beatitude (Matthew 5:3); and there is no richer or lovelier sign of grace (Num. 12:3; Job 42:6; Ps. 8:2; 34:18; 51:17; Isa. 57:15; 61:1; 66:2; Jer. 31:9, 18-20; Dan. 5:21, 22; Micah 6:8; Matthew 11:25; Luke 4:18; 18:9-14; James 1:10; 2:5; 4:9, 10).

The reality of the life and conversion of Paul, and the genuineness of his leading epistles, are unavoidably and frankly acknowledged by the most destructive and infidel historical critics of Germany. While those rationalists *futilely* attempt to prove that our canonical Gospels were all written in the second century of the Christian era, and are only corrupted copies of the originals, they admit that Paul's epistles, especially those to the Romans, the Corinthians and Galatians (containing all the most important truths of Christianity), were certainly written by Paul in the first century; and that Paul himself was suddenly converted from a persecutor to a preacher of the Christian religion. Nothing but the feeblest credulity can believe that this great change in such a mind as Paul's was produced by a flash of lightning and his imagination.

We will now notice the circumstances of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and of Cornelius the Roman centurion, the first described in the ninth and the second in the tenth chapter of Acts, as these are good examples of what are called the two classes of Christian conversion.

Saul was making havoc of the church (*elumaineto*, a term used nowhere else in the New Testament, and employed in the Septuagint and in classical Greek to describe the ravages of wild beasts), endeavoring, with all his might, to exterminate the last vestige of the Christian religion from the earth, not even sparing the helplessness and tenderness of the female sex (Acts 8:3), and doing all this in the name of religion, than which a more heinous crime cannot be imagined; and yet filled with Satanic malignity against God and His people, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, he voluntarily applied to the high priest for letters addressed to the synagogues of Damascus (where were many Jews and some Christians), authorizing him to arrest and bring bound to Jerusalem every Christian man and woman, for the purpose of trial and execution. It was a journey of nearly 140 miles, and usually occupied six days. Saul was accompanied by several attendants. As they neared Damascus, one of the most beautiful and ancient cities in the world, the sun attained high noon; and suddenly there shone from heaven a brighter light

than even the meridian splendor of a Syrian sun—the Shekinah, or excellent glory of the Divine presence. The whole company saw the light, and were prostrated to the ground; and all heard an awful sound, but Saul, alone understood the words, because they were specially intended for him. Saul also saw in the Heavens the ascended and glorified Redeemer (Acts 9:17, 27; 22:14; 26:16; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8), who said to him in the Hebrew tongue, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goads.” The name of Saul was repeated to denote special solemnity, as in the case of Abraham (Gen. 22:11), Moses (Ex. 3:4), Martha (Luke 10:41), Simon (Luke 22:31), and Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37). In Paul’s first spiritual lesson, Christ identifies Himself with His poor persecuted people (Matthew 25:40, 45; 1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:30; Col. 2:19); and Christ reminds him that, while all his measures for crushing the church of God are vain, still, like a stupid ox, he is, by his stubborn fury, continually injuring himself. The moment Saul heard the voice of the Son of God he lived (John 5:25); from his death in trespasses and sins he was quickened by the Holy Spirit into spiritual life (Eph. 2:1; John 6:63); he was a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17); his stony heart was replaced by a fleshly heart (Ezek. 36:26, 27), his carnal mindedness by spiritual mindedness (Rom. 8:6); and every thought was brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. x. 5). In an instant and forever Saul was converted to God (John 17:3). “Out of the noonday God had struck him into darkness, only that He might kindle a noon in the midnight of his heart.” “It pleased God, who separated him from his mother’s womb, and called him by His grace, to reveal His Son in him” (Gal. 1:15, 16). “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,” soon “shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). “Trembling and astonished, Saul said, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” From that moment obedience to Christ became the ruling principle of Paul’s life. His falling to the ground represented the fall of his pride and rebellion against God; his physical blindness denoted the utter spiritual blindness of his natural mind, notwithstanding his fine education, morality and legalism. Christ directed him to arise and go into the city, and it should be told him what he must do. This he did, being led by the hand in astonishment by his companions, who were themselves witnesses of the marvelous light and sound, though they understood nothing of the meaning. It was all done at noonday, when there could be no deception, and to the utter amazement of all. And the strong-minded, educated, practical, truthful Apostle of the Gentiles knew, as well as he knew his own existence, that he had seen and conversed with the Lord Jesus Christ in glory. His whole future blameless, devoted, suffering,

unworldly life is an unanswerable attestation of this fact. Though an angel from Heaven preached a different gospel—which was not a gospel—from his, it was false; for he had his gospel directly from the Son of God (Gal. 1:8, 12). And Paul was never ashamed of the gospel of Christ, nor of his experience of its saving power (Rom. 1:18), relating that experience even before governors and kings (Acts 26).

For three days Saul neither saw nor ate nor drank. Then to a certain disciple in Damascus named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, and of good report among the Jews, the Lord appeared in a vision, and said, "Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." And to Ananias's objection the Lord answered that Saul was a chosen vessel unto Him, to bear His name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel; for "I will shew him," said He, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized" (Acts 9). Thus the Lord revealed His will to each of His servants in a vision (Acts 2:17, 18); there was a perfect agreement in the two revelations; Saul was at once pointedly directed to the church, and commanded to enter it by baptism, which he did. In regard to Ananias's putting his hands on Saul, by the command of God, we observe the highly important fact that, not only was it done *before* Saul's *baptism*, but it was done by a man who was *not an Apostle*, nor a successor of an Apostle (if such a thing as succession to the Apostleship were at all scriptural or possible), for the Apostles were all then living; and thus the case of the great Apostle of the Gentiles totally undermines the Episcopal doctrine of the necessity of the confirmation of every believer, *after* baptism, either by an Apostle or the successor of an Apostle. Upon Cornelius and his company, it is distinctly asserted, in the tenth chapter of Acts, that the Holy Ghost, both in His converting and miracle-working power, was poured out, *before* they were *baptized*; and no mention is made of Peter's putting his hands on the company at all. The apostolic imposition of hands after baptism (except for ordination) is mentioned in only two instances in the New Testament (Acts 8:17; 19:6); and in both cases it was certainly used, as we know from the context (Acts

8:7, 18; 19:6), to represent the bestowal of the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost. Christ put His hands upon unbaptized infants and blessed them (Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15, 16). As for Hebrews 6:1, 2, in which these six principles of the doctrine of Christ are mentioned—repentance, faith, baptism, laying on of hands, resurrection and judgment, we observe that nothing is said of an Apostle or a successor of an Apostle; it is not said upon whom or for what purpose hands are to be laid; but, if we are to infer from the order, that laying on of hands should follow every baptism, so we are compelled to infer that *every baptism must follow repentance from dead works, and faith toward God; and this inevitable corollary of "confirmation," as deduced from this passage, utterly sweeps away the foundation of infant baptism, a chief corner-stone of hierarchism.* The ordination to the Deaconship or Eldership by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery is scriptural (Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 1 Peter 5:1; 2 John 1). So Moses ordained Joshua by laying his hands upon him (Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9).

Saul, before his conversion, "verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). His sincerity by no means proved that he was right or acceptable with God; because it was the sincerity of a carnal and darkened mind. The Hindu is sincere in immolating himself under the car of Juggernaut; but such immolation is suicide.

While a Pharisee, Saul had no doubt uttered long and numerous forms of prayer, but he never truly prayed until quickened into spiritual life by the voice of the Son of God and the power of the Holy Ghost (Acts 9:11; John 5:25; Eph. 2:1; John 6:63).

Paul, after his conversion, immediately preached in the synagogues at Damascus, confounding the Jews, and proving that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. Then, as we learn from Galatians 1:17, 18, he retired for about three years into Arabia, most probably the Sinaitic peninsula (Gal. 4:25; Heb. 12:18-21), for the purpose, it would seem, of searching the Holy Scriptures, and, afar from the haunts of men, like Moses, in the backside of the desert (Exodus 3:1, etc.), to commune alone with God on that holy ground where the bush "had glowed in unconsuming fire, and the granite crags had trembled at the voice which uttered the fiery law." The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who had communed there with Moses 1,500 years before, met His chosen and honored servant, and taught him

the momentous lesson that he was to bear in his earthen vessel to the unborn generations of the people of God—the *spirituality of the Mosaic law* and *his own carnality*, that thus, *through the law, he might be dead to the law, and so might live unto God* (Acts 22:14; Rom. 7:14; Gal. 2:19; 2 Cor. 4:7). *While alive to the law*, hoping for salvation by obeying it, and dreading condemnation by disobeying it, *he was dead unto God*; and it was only when he learned from God (Isa. 54:13; John 6:45) how spiritual the law was, demanding perfect sinlessness of *thought* as well as of *word* and *deed*, and how carnal he was, sold under sin, and having *no good thing* dwelling in him, did he become dead to the law and all legal dependence, divorced from the legal covenant, delivered from the curse of the law, and truly alive unto God, united to Christ, crucified with Jesus to the sinful and perishing vanities of the world, and yet living, or rather Christ living in him, and he living the life that he now lived in the flesh by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him (Gal. 2:19, 20).

The outward miracle of the light and sound was a sign of the inward miracle wrought upon the heart of Saul by the Holy Spirit “delivering him from the power of darkness, and translating him into the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1:13); and he who denies that the conversion of the sinner is a miracle (that is, supernatural) point-blank denies the authority of inspiration (2 Cor. 4:6; Gen. 1:3; 2 Cor. 5:17, 18; Eph. 2:1-10; John 5:25; Acts 9:1-22). If creation and resurrection are not miraculous or supernatural, then surely nothing can be; and such atheistic philosophy would thrust God out of both His natural and His spiritual universe.

In view of Saul’s conversion, and the Scriptures just cited, it is no wonder that even *Mr. John Wesley* wrote: “It may be allowed, that God acts as sovereign in convincing some souls of sin, arresting them in their mad career by His resistless power. It seems, also, that at the moment of our conversion, He acts irresistably” (Wesley’s Works, vol. vi., p. 136, as quoted in Watson’s Theological Institutes, vol. ii., p. 444).

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus illustrates the saying of God quoted by Paul from Isaiah (Isa. 45:1; Rom. 10:20: “*I am found of them that sought me not; I am made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*” The case of Cornelius, the Roman centurion (Acts 10), illustrates what has been called the other class of conversions, which fulfill the promise: “*Ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29:13). This language of the Lord by Jeremiah was addressed to *the chosen people*

*of God* then in Babylonian captivity, and it was a most comforting prediction to them: "For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. And I will be found of you, saith the Lord: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord: and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive" (Jer. 29:10-14). *These were the chosen people of God all the time, and it was certain, from this Divine prediction, that in the fullness of time they would call upon and seek the Lord with their whole heart, and be found of Him, and be delivered from their captivity.*

The conversion of Cornelius, like that of Saul, occupies a large space in the Acts (chapters ten and eleven), far more space than that devoted to the conversion of thousands in Jerusalem. It was the opening of the door of faith to the uncircumcised Gentiles, without their passing through the intermediate state of Judaism. The disciples scattered abroad by the persecution after Stephen's death went everywhere preaching the word, and Philip had preached and baptized believers in Samaria, as well as the Ethiopian eunuch. But there was to be a Gentile Pentecost at Caesarea, as there had been a Jewish Pentecost at Jerusalem, and the Apostle of the circumcision was, by the plainest indication of the Divine will, to admit Gentile converts into the church. By visions, or Divine communications, Cornelius and Peter were both prepared for the solemn scene (Acts 2:17; 10:3, 10-17), Cornelius being assured of God's merciful purpose towards him, and being directed to send for Peter; and Peter being informed of the breaking down of the old partition between Jews and Gentiles, and directed to go with the men sent to him by Cornelius. As Peter was entering the house of Cornelius, where the latter had assembled his kinsmen and near friends, Cornelius met him, and, with a deep feeling of reverence for the personage whom God had sent him, such as John felt for the Angel (Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9), he prostrated himself at Peter's feet; but Peter at once raised him up and said to him, "I myself also am a man." Those who falsely claim to be the successors of Peter totally differ from him in allowing and requiring such homage (contrast 1 Peter 5:1-6, with 2 Thess. 2:6). After Peter and Cornelius had told each other their visions, Peter said, in the

beginning of his discourse: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him." By saying that God is no respecter of persons, Peter means, as is proved by the original Greek, and by the thirty-fifth verse, and by 2 Chronicles 19:7, Ephesians 6:9 and James 2:1-9, that God does not regard external distinctions; or, as Samuel says, "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 21:7). Other Scriptures inform us that God does have especial respect for His lowly, spiritual, covenant people (Gen. 4:4; Exodus 2:25; Lev. 26:9; 2 Kings 13:23; Psalm 138:6). "Fearing God" and "working righteousness" are the most usual Old Testament descriptions of the true spiritual worshipers of God; and these are not the meritorious conditions or prerequisites of Divine grace, but the fruits and evidences of that grace already in the heart, proving that these characters are God's covenant people (Jer. 32:38-41; Heb. 12:28; Ps. 25:14; 32:18; 103:13-17; 147:11; Isaiah 45:24; 54:17; 61:3, 10, 11; Jer. 23:6; 33:16; Ps. 23:3; 24:5; Rom. 5:19; Gal. 2:21; 1 John 2:29; John 3:3-8). According to the testimony of Luke, the historian, and of the Angel, and of Peter (Acts 10:2, 4, 34, 35), Cornelius was already, before Peter came, a God-fearing, righteous, benevolent, praying man, accepted with God; and Peter was only to instruct him more fully in the way of God. God had already cleansed him, as He had shown Peter in the vision (Acts 10:15). The very fact of his having the spirit of prayer, like Saul of Tarsus, after he was divinely arrested, proved that he was a child of grace (Jer. 31:1-9; 50:4-20; Zech. 12:10; Rom. 8:15, 16, 26, 27; Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). Even the Anglican "Speaker's Commentary," which will not be suspected of undue spirituality, admits that Cornelius not only "had the honest and good heart for the reception of the good seed," but also a genuine though "limited faith, which was the basis of prayer and almsgiving." While Peter was preaching Jesus to Cornelius and his company, the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost, as well as His internal efficacy, fell upon the hearers, and they spoke with various tongues and magnified God, just as the Jewish disciples had done on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 4; x. 44-46). They were thus partakers of God's eternal salvation (1 Peter 1:1-5; John 1:12, 13; 1 John 5:4, 5) even before they were baptized in water; and Peter then appropriately asked, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" Only after they become spiritual believers in Christ does Peter think of baptizing them in water; and such is the case with *every baptism in the New Testament—spiritual belief in Christ first, and then the burial in water; first the thing signified, and afterwards the sign, which, under such*

*circumstances only, is not a mockery and a delusion.* Though the believer should be baptized, in obedience to Christ, and for the answer of a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21), yet Christ, and not water, is his only God and Savior (Isa. 45:21, 22; Acts 4:12).

“The saving grace of God teaches men to worship Him with reverence and godly fear, to serve Him conscientiously, to unite justice and charity, and to pray with constancy and perseverance. It leads men to order their households in the fear of God; and commonly they become instrumental to the good of those around them. The excellent and devout Roman soldier, no less than Saul the persecutor, the converted jailor, and the thief upon the cross, was saved only by the atonement of Christ; that no flesh should glory in the presence of God (1 Cor. 1:29).” “Should the Lord create an humble, teachable and inquiring disposition in the heart of an inhabitant of China, Japan or the unexplored parts of Africa, He would sooner send an angel from Heaven, or a minister from the uttermost part of the earth, to show him the way of salvation, than leave him destitute of that knowledge, for which he longs and prays without ceasing. The alms and supplications of such persons spring from right principles and motives, and go up as a memorial before God, not to merit His favor, but to plead with Him to fulfill His gracious promises.” “The sublime subjects which pertain to redemption through the blood of the Son of God seem more proper for the tongues of angels to proclaim than for us poor worms of the earth. Doubtless, in many respects, they could preach them unspeakably better; yet our humiliating and thankful experience may balance something on the other side. In that case, however, it would not be so evident that the excellency of the power, which makes the word successful, is wholly of God; nor would their presence and language be so suited to man’s weakness, or so conducive to his comfort.”—*T. Scott.*

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” say both David and Solomon (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 9:10); “the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever, ” says David (Ps. 19:9); “unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings,” says the Lord by Malachi (4:2). These precious declarations are precisely equivalent to the comforting assurance of the Apostle Paul, “that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform (*epiteleo, bring to an end, accomplish, perfect*) it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6)—not only the day when He is manifested as the Sun of Righteousness and the Divine Savior of the trembling sinner, but, as shown by the fourth verse below (Phil. 1:10), and by 1 Thessalonians 5:2, and 2 Peter 3:10, the day at the close of this dispensation, when Christ shall

come in final judgment. This one verse (Phil. 1:6), like Hebrews 12:2, in which Jesus is called both "the Author and Finisher of our faith," and like Isaiah 35:10, in which it is declared that "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads," and like many other verses of Scripture, cuts up the system of conditional salvation by the roots, and incontestably and eternally establishes the system of salvation by sovereign grace, beginning and consummating the good work in the sinner's heart, so that all the glory, without the slightest reservation, shall be given by the saved sinner to God (Ps. 107:1-32; 120:1; Ex. 15:1-19; Rev. 5:9, 10; 15:3; Rom. 3:27, 28). Every system of conditionalism represents the *sinner* as doing that which *insures* his salvation, and which should, therefore, entitle *him* to the *chief* glory. As for good works, they are, as we have shown by abundant scriptural quotations, but the *fruit of Divine grace* implanted in the heart.

I now condense, *mainly* from the writing of *T.D. Bernard* and *P. Schaff*, some excellent remarks upon the books of the New Testament, especially the *epistles*.

"In the Gospels Christ is manifested as man and as God; in the Acts He is preached to the world; in the epistles he is received by His indwelling Spirit in the hearts of believers; and in Revelation He is, in His mystical body, the church, after great tribulation, translated to glory. In the Gospels we see the Divine temple building; in the Acts we see the doors thrown open and Jews and Gentiles fleeing into it as a refuge; in the epistles we become inmates of the temple ourselves, and behold its internal, spiritual and assimilating glory; in the Revelation the temple, with all its inmates, after passing through manifold fiery trials, is perfected and elevated into the immediate, beatific and eternal presence of God."

Some general and comparative remarks in reference to the Four Gospels have been given in the Introduction to this work.

The book entitles the Acts of the Apostles "forms the bridge between the Gospels and the epistles. It is a direct continuation of the third Gospel, by the same author, Luke, and is addressed to the same Theophilus ('friend of God'), probably a Christian convert of distinguished social position. In the Gospel Luke repeats what he heard and read; in the Acts what he heard and saw. The Gospel records the life and work of Christ; the Acts the work of the Holy Spirit, who is recognized at every step. The word Spirit, or Holy Spirit,

occurs more frequently in the Acts than in any other book of the New Testament. It might properly be called 'the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.' The Acts is a cheerful and encouraging book, like the third Gospel. It represents the progress of Christianity from Jerusalem, the capital of Judaism, to Rome, the capital of heathenism. It is a history of the planting of the church among the Jews by Peter, and among the Gentiles by Paul. More than three-fifths of it are devoted to Paul, and especially to his later labors and journeys, in which the author could speak from personal knowledge. Luke was in the company of Paul, including some interruptions, at least twelve years. He was again with Paul in his last captivity, shortly before Paul's martyrdom, his most faithful and devoted companion (2 Tim. 4:11). He probably began the book of Acts or a preliminary diary while with Paul at Philippi, continuing it at Caesarea during Paul's two years' imprisonment there, and finishing it soon after Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, before the terrible persecution in the summer of A.D. 64, which he could hardly have left unnoticed. The Acts and epistles supplement and confirm each other by a series of coincidences in all essential points. Paley's examination of these numerous and undesigned coincidences in his *Horae Paulinae*, and James Smith's *Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, furnish to readers of sound common sense and unbiased judgment unanswerable arguments for the credibility of the Acts. No ancient work affords so many tests of veracity as the Acts, because no other has such numerous points of contact in all directions with contemporary history, politics and topography, whether Jewish, or Greek, or Roman. No other history of thirty years has ever been written so truthful and impartial, so important and interesting, so healthy in tone and hopeful in spirit, so aggressive and yet so genial, so cheering and inspiring, so replete with lessons of wisdom and encouragement for work in spreading the glad tidings of salvation, and yet withal so simple and modest, as the Acts of the Apostles.

"The epistles are addressed to baptized believers, and aim to strengthen them in their faith, and, by brotherly instruction, exhortation, rebuke and consolation, to build up the church in all Christian graces on the historical foundation of the teaching and example of Christ. The prophets of the Old Testament delivered Divine oracles to the people with 'Thus saith the Lord;' the Apostles of the New Testament wrote letters to the brethren, who shared with them the same faith and hope as members of Christ—a more open, equal and hearty mode of communication, suited to the gospel day, showing rather companionship than dictation, reasoning out of the Old Testament Scriptures and teaching the brethren how so to reason, giving the individual

experience of the writer, yet bearing lofty, authoritative, unwavering, sure testimony to the truth, and sometimes making definite additions to former revelations. The epistles are the voice of the Spirit within the church to those who are within the church. The essential thought is 'Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus.' God is represented as the immediate and the still continuous author of our existence in Christ. In the epistles, we know, as Christ promised (John 14:20), that He is in His Father, as well as His Father is in Him, and that we are in Him and He in us. Believers are in Christ, and so are partakers in all that He does and has and is—they died in Him, rose with Him, and live with Him; when the eye of God looks on them, they are found in Christ, and there is no condemnation to them; they are righteous in His righteousness, and loved with the love that rests on Him, and are sons of God in His Sonship, and heirs with Him in His inheritance, and are soon to be glorified with Him in His glory; and this relationship was contemplated in eternal counsels, and predestined before the foundation of the world. So Christ is in those who believe by His indwelling Spirit, leading them to God and giving them the earnest of their eternal inheritance. Thus, by intertwined relations, the life of the believer is constituted a life in Christ and a life in God. This idea underlies all the epistles, both their doctrine and their exhortation. It is a new world of thought—a new element. All their relations and actions are in Christ. And, finally, this character of existence is not changed by that which changes all besides—they die in the Lord, and sleep in Jesus, and, when He shall appear, they will appear; when He comes God shall bring them with Him, and they shall reign in life by Him. Men bid us live in truth and duty, in purity and love—they do well; but the gospel does better, calling and enabling us to live in Christ, and find in Him the enjoyment of all that we would possess, and the realization of all that we would become.

"The epistles of the New Testament are without a parallel in ancient literature, and yield in importance only to the Gospels, which stand higher, as Christ Himself rises above the Apostles. They presuppose throughout the Gospel history, and often allude to the death and resurrection of Christ as the foundation of the church and the Christian hope. They compress more ideas in fewer words than any other writings, human or Divine, excepting the Gospels. They discuss the highest possible themes—God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin and redemption, incarnation, regeneration, repentance, faith and good works, holy living and dying, the conversion of the world, the general judgment, eternal glory. They are of more real value to the church than all the systems of theology and all the confessions of faith.

"The appointed epistolary teachers of the church were Peter and John, the two chief of the original twelve Apostles; James and Jude, the brethren of the Lord; and Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who wrote five times as much as all the other four together.

"The seven epistles of James, First and Second Peter, First, Second and Third John, and Jude, usually follow, in the old manuscripts, the Acts of the Apostles, and precede the Pauline epistles, perhaps as being the works of the older Apostles; they are now placed last, probably because they are supplementary and confirmatory to the more elaborate writings of Paul. The epistle of James was probably written before A.D. 50 (some think as early as A.D. 44), and is thought to be the oldest book in the New Testament; First Peter (probably also Second Peter and Jude) is believed to have been written before A.D. 67; and the epistles of John between A.D. 90 and 100. Of the epistles of Paul, those to the Thessalonians were written first, A.D. 52 or 53; then Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans between 56 and 58; then the four epistles of the captivity, Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon and Philippians, between 61 and 63; last, the pastoral epistles, but their date is uncertain, except that the second epistle to Timothy is his farewell letter on the eve of his martyrdom. The epistle to the Hebrews was probably written about A.D. 63. Its author is unknown; but it has been generally thought that Paul was its author; on account of its uncertified authorship, it was placed after Paul's other epistles. From the fourth to the eighteenth century the Pauline authorship was the prevailing opinion; this was based upon the unanimous tradition of the Eastern church—the mention of Timothy and the reference to a release from captivity (13:23)—and the agreement of the epistle with Paul's system of doctrine, the tone of apostolic authority, and the depth and unction of the epistle. The non-Pauline authorship is argued on the following grounds: the decided opposition to the Pauline authorship by Western tradition, both Roman and North African, down to the time of Augustine (about 350 A.D.); the absence of the customary name and salutation; the phraseology in Hebrews 2:3, seeming to distinguish the author from the Apostles, and very different from the language of Paul in the first chapter of Galatians; the difference from Paul's writings, not in substance, but in the form and method of teaching and arguing; the superior purity, correctness and rhetorical finish of style; the difference in the quotations from the Old Testament, the author always following the Septuagint, while Paul often quotes the Hebrew. As to the real author, five of Paul's fellow-laborers have been proposed, either as sole or as joint authors with Paul—Barnabas, Luke, Clement, Apollos and Silas. The arguments for and the objections against

them are equally strong, and we have no data to decide between them. Whoever may have been the writer, the inspiration and leading ideas are those of Paul.

“The following suggestive doctrinal arrangement of Paul’s undoubted epistles has been made: 1. Anthropological and Soteriological—Galatians and Romans. 2. Ethical and Ecclesiastical—1st and 2nd Corinthians. 3. Christological—Colossians and Philippians. 4. Ecclesiological—Ephesians (in part also Corinthians). 5. Eschatological—Thessalonians. 6. Pastoral—Timothy and Titus. 7. Social and Personal—Philemon.

“As Matthew is the fit beginning of the Gospels, linking the New with the Old Testament, so the epistle to the Romans is the fit beginning to the epistles, giving the genealogy of the doctrine of Christ through the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul, in this epistle, firmly holds his ground in the prophetic and historic line of the Old Covenant, and from that standing point opens the dispensation of the Spirit. The Acts left him in Rome; the succeeding epistle is addressed to the Romans. It stands justly at the head of the Pauline epistles. It is the most comprehensive and systematic statement of Paul’s theology, both theoretical and practical, for which he lived and died. It gives the clearest and fullest exposition of a vital and fundamental subject, salvation by free grace, the need, nature and effects of gospel justification for individual souls, vindicated by the witness of the Law and the Prophets. Luther calls Romans ‘the chief book of the New Testament, and the purest gospel;’ Coleridge styles it ‘the profoundest book in existence;’ Meyer, ‘the greatest and richest of all the apostolic works;’ and Godet denominated it ‘the cathedral of the Christian faith.’

“The epistles to the Corinthians are addressed to the Greeks who seek after wisdom; and these epistles condemn a spirit of self-confident freedom both in thought and conduct—in other words, the essential spirit of the world, and they assert the Divine and indefeasible authority of the gospel, which claims the subjection of the mind and the regulation of the life of the church. These epistles abound in variety of topics, and show the extraordinary versatility of the mind of the writer, and his inspired practical wisdom in dealing with delicate and complicated questions and unscrupulous opponents. For every aberration he has a word of severe censure, for every danger a word of warning, for every weakness a word of cheer and sympathy, for every returning offender a word of pardon and encouragement. The first epistle contains the unrivaled description of the

chief Christian grace, Charity or Love; the second epistle gives us almost an autobiography of the Apostle, and is a mine of pastoral wisdom.

“The epistle to the Galatians encounters, not the spirit of presumptuous freedom (as those to the Corinthians), but the spirit of a willful bondage, which returns, after its own stubborn and insensate fashion, to the elements of the world and of the flesh; and this epistle asserts the direct revelation from Christ of the apostolic doctrine which shines out more clearly as a dispensation of the Spirit and of liberty. It was directed against those Judaizing teachers who undermined Paul’s apostolical authority, and misled the Galatian churches into an apostasy from the gospel of free grace to a false gospel of legal bondage. The epistle to the Galatians treats of the same subject as that to the Romans—the preparativeness and subordination of the law to the gospel. It is a remarkable fact that the two races represented by the original readers of these epistles—the Celtic and the Latin—have far departed from the doctrines taught in them, and gone back from gospel freedom to legal bondage—thus repeating the apostasy of the fickle-minded Galatians. The Pauline gospel was for centuries ignored, misunderstood, and (in spite of Augustine) cast out at last by Rome, as Christianity itself was cast out by Jerusalem of old. But these two epistles, more than any other books of the New Testament, inspired the Reformation of the sixteenth century, and are to this day the Gibraltar of evangelical Protestantism.

“The succeeding epistles of Paul address those whose minds are now cleared, settled, and secured. The Apostle ascends to a more calm and lofty stage of thought in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, wherein, no longer in collision with human error, he expatiates in the view of the eternal purposes of God, and of the ideal perfections of the church in Christ; if inspiration was asserted in the other epistles, here it is felt; yet, in both epistles, this high strain passes by the most natural transition into the plainest counsels; and, in the epistles to the Philippians and Philemon, the voice is that, not only of a prophet, but of an affectionate brother and friend. These four epistles were written in captivity, probably during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome. He glorified in being a ‘prisoner of Christ.’ He experienced the blessedness of persecution for righteousness’ sake (Matthew 5:10), and ‘the peace of God which passeth all understanding’ (Phil. 4:7). He was thus divinely enabled to turn the prison into a pulpit, to send comfort and joy to his distant churches, and render a greater service to future ages than he could have done by active labor. Chained day and night by his right arm to the left arm of a Roman soldier, he preached the gospel to his

keepers, and many in the praetorian guard and in Caesar's household believed. The epistle to the Colossians is the most Christly of Paul's epistles, the Christology approaching very closely to that of John; and the Epistle to the Ephesians is the most churchly book of the New Testament—the very reverse, however, of *churchy*, as nothing can be further removed from the genius of Paul than that narrow, mechanical and pedantic *churchiness* which sticks to the shell of outward forms and ceremonies, and mistakes them for the kernel within. The churchliness of the epistle to the Ephesians is rooted and grounded in Christliness and has no sense whatever if separated from this root. A 'church' without Christ would be at best, a prayer-saying corpse (and there are such so-called 'churches'). Paul emphasizes the person of Christ in Colossians, and the person and work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesians. Ephesians is, in some respects, the most profound and difficult, as it is certainly the most spiritual and devout of Paul's epistles. It is the Epistle of the Heavens, an ode to Christ and His spotless bride, the Song of Songs in the New Testament. Philippi was the first place in Europe where the gospel was preached. Here Paul was severely persecuted and marvelously delivered. Here were his most devoted brethren; for them he felt the strongest personal attachment; from them alone would he receive contributions for his support. The epistle to the Philippians is like Paul's midnight hymn of praise in the dungeon of Philippi. Its key-note is thankful joy. He had no doctrinal error or practical vice to rebuke, as in Galatians and Corinthians. The epistle to Philemon was written and transmitted at the same time as that to the Colossians, and may be regarded as a personal postscript to it. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, had, on account of some offense, probably theft, run away from his master, who was a zealous Christian at Colosse, and had experienced a hope in Christ under Paul's preaching at Rome, and now desired to return, as a penitent, in company with Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle to the Colossians. Paul accordingly sent back Onesimus to his master, yet under a new character, no more a contemptible thief and runaway, but a regenerate man and a beloved brother, with the touching request that Philemon might receive him as kindly as he would the Apostle himself. The epistle reveals Paul to us as an unsurpassed Christian gentleman; it is a model of courtesy, delicacy, and tenderness of feeling.

"The Thessalonian epistles complete Paul's addresses to seven churches, and, though first in composition, are properly the last in the canon as they are distinguished by the eschatological element, and sustain the conflict of faith by the preaching of that blessed hope and the glorious appearing and

coming of the day of God. Paul wrote these two letters from Corinth, during his first sojourn in that city; and it seems to have been a chief object of the Apostle to correct a misapprehension into which the Thessalonians had fallen in regard to the speedy coming of Christ. He taught them that the Lord would not come so soon as they expected, but that first there must be a falling away, and the man of sin, the son of perdition, must be revealed; that they could not make a mathematical calculation of the time when Christ would come; and that in no case should the expectation check industry and zeal, but rather stimulate them.

“To this rich body of doctrine the pastoral epistles add their suggestive words on the principles and spirit of the ministerial office, which has the care of the church and the stewardship of the truth. There is a very marked difference between the ecclesiastical constitution of the pastoral epistles and that of the second century. There is not a word said about the Divine origin of episcopacy; not a trace of a congregational episcopate, such as we find in the Ignatian epistles, still less of a diocesan episcopate of the time of Irenaeus and Tertullian. Bishops and presbyters (or Elders) are still identical as they are in the Acts (20: 17, 28), and in the epistle to the Philippians (1: 1). Even Timothy and Titus appear simply as delegates of the Apostle for a specific mission. These epistles agree with Paul’s doctrinal system in clearly tracing salvation to Divine grace alone; they are illuminated with flashes of his genius; they bear the marks of his intense personality; they contain rare gems of inspired truth, and most wholesome admonition and advice, which makes them to-day far more valuable than any number of works on pastoral theology and church government. They contain several passages which, for doctrine or practice, are equal to the best Paul ever wrote, and are deeply lodged in the experience and affection of Christians. Nothing could be a more fitting, a more sublime and beautiful, finale of such a hero of faith than the sixth, seventh and eighth verses of the last chapter of his last epistle (2 Tim.), written in the very face of martyrdom.

“The epistle to the Hebrews presents to the perplexed Hebrew-Christian mind the correct divinely-intended relation and subordination of the Old Covenant to the New. The internal evidence is that it was written from Italy between A.D. 60 and 70, before Paul’s martyrdom. The author was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and gifted with a tongue of fire. He had the grace of exhortation and consolation in the highest degree. The epistle is a profound argument for the superiority of Christ over the angels, over Moses, and over the Levitical priesthood, and for the finality of the second covenant.

It unfolds far more fully than any other book the great idea of the eternal priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, offered once and forever for human redemption, as distinct from the national and transient character of the Mosaic priesthood and the ever-repeated sacrifices of the tabernacle and the temple. He shows from the Old Testament itself that God had designed the latter as but the temporary shadow, type and prophecy of Christianity, the abiding substance. The epistle is, like Colossians and Philipians, eminently Christological, and forms a stepping-stone to the Christology of John. The object of the author was to warn the conservative Christians in Jerusalem of the danger of apostatizing to Judaism. His arguments were providentially emphasized soon after by the destruction of the city and temple. The language of the epistle is the purest Greek of the New Testament. The opening sentence is a rich and elegant period of classic construction. The description of the heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter is one of the most eloquent and sublime in the entire range of religious literature.

"The seven epistles following Hebrews in the canon are sometimes called Catholic or General; but his designation properly applies to only five of them: James, First and Second Peter, First John, and Jude; the second and third epistles of John are addressed to individuals. These writers do not enter into theological discussions like those of Paul, but give simpler statements of truth, supplementing and confirming Paul's doctrine.

"James was not an Apostle, but the brother of the Lord, and the first pastor of the church in Jerusalem, where he died a martyr. He was a man of the most exemplary piety, being called even by the Jews 'the Just,' and he enjoyed almost apostolic authority, especially in Judea and among Jewish Christians. He had high regard for the Mosaic law. His epistle is addressed to 'the twelve tribes scattered abroad,' and is directed against a one-sided, speculative, dead, Antinomian faith, and shows the practical ethical side of the doctrine of Christ. James exhorts his readers to good works of faith, warns them against a merely nominal orthodoxy, covetousness, pride and worldliness, and comforts them in view of present and future trials and persecutions. Though meager in doctrine, it is rich in comfort and lessons of holy living based on faith in Jesus Christ, 'the Lord of glory.' It is a commentary upon Christ's sermon on the mount. James was unwilling to impose the yoke of circumcision upon the Gentiles (Acts 15: 19, 20), and he recognized Paul as the Apostle of the Gentiles, giving him the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:9). There is no real contradiction between James and Paul on the subject of faith and works. James says: 'Faith is dead without works.'

Paul says: 'Works are dead without faith.' Both are right: James in opposition to dead orthodoxy, Paul in opposition to self-righteous legalism. James does not demand works without faith, but works prompted by faith; while Paul, on the other hand, likewise declares a faith worthless which is without love, though it remove mountains. James looks mainly at the fruit, Paul at the root. Paul solves the difficulty in one phrase—'faith working through love' (Gal. 5:6). By 'faith' Paul never means dead faith, but James sometimes does. James maintains the absolute necessity of living faith (James 1:3, 6; 2:1, 5, 18, 22, 23, 26; 5:15); and Paul emphasizes the value of good works as evidencing our faith, profiting others, and glorifying God (Rom. 2:13; 12-16; 1 Cor. 16; 2 Cor. 9; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 2:10; 5, 6; Col. 1:10; 3; 4; Phil. 4; 2 Thess. 2:17; 1 Tim. 2:10; 5:10; 6:18; 2 Tim. 3:17; Titus 2:7-14; 3:8). Paul's life of self-sacrificing labors for Christ speaks more loudly on the importance of works of love than all his writings.

"Peter, writing to the Pauline churches, confirms them in the Pauline faith. In the Gospels, the human nature of Simon appears most prominent; the Acts unfold the Divine mission of Peter in the founding of the church, with a temporary relapse at Antioch (recorded in Gal. 2); in his epistles we see the complete triumph of Divine grace. Deeply humbled and softened, he gives the fruit of a rich spiritual experience. In no other epistles do the language and spirit come more directly home to the personal trials and wants and weaknesses of the Christian life. In his first epistle he warns against hierarchical ambition in prophetic anticipation of the abuse of his name among the Apostles (5:1-4), calling himself simply 'an Elder,' and exhorting his fellow-Elders to 'feed the flock of God, not for filthy lucre but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.' God overruled Peter's very sins and inconsistencies for his humiliation and spiritual progress. Nowhere, except in Christ, do we find a spirit more humble, meek, gentle, tender, loving and lovely. Almost every word and incident in the gospel history connected with Peter left its impress upon his epistles in the way of humble or thankful reminiscence and allusion. Christ having prayed that his faith should not fail, and having looked upon him after his denial, Peter was enabled by Divine grace to weep bitterly and turn again to his Lord, and thus he is still strengthening his brethren. Notwithstanding Paul's sharp rebuke of him before the church at Antioch, Peter, in his second epistle, makes an affectionate allusion to his 'beloved brother Paul' and his profound writings, which he classes with the 'other Scriptures.' Thus he probed how thoroughly the Spirit of Christ had, through experience, trained him to humility, meekness and self-denial.

"The first epistle of John is a postscript to the fourth Gospel. It is a practical application of the lessons of the life of Christ to the wants of the church at the close of the first century. It is a circular letter of the venerable Apostle to his beloved children in Asia Minor, exhorting them to a holy life of faith and love in Christ, and earnestly warning them against the Gnostic 'antichrists,' already existing or to come, who deny the mystery of the incarnation, sunder religion from morality, and run into Antinomian practices. The second and third epistles of John are short private letters, the second to a Christian woman (some suppose to a Christian church), and the third to Gaius (whether in Macedonia, Acts 19:29, or in Corinth, Rom. 16:23, 1 Cor. 1:14, or Derbe, Acts 20:4, is unknown). The second epistle greatly resembles the first, and so does the style of the third. In both the Apostle calls himself 'the Elder.' as Peter had done. True grace produces modesty and meekness.

"Jude was a brother of James, a half-brother of Christ, and not probably an Apostle. Some, however, suppose that both James and Jude, the authors of the epistles, were Apostles. The epistle of Jude strongly resembles the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter. It is a solemn warning against the licentious tendencies of Gnosticism. The allusion to the remarkable Apocryphal book of Enoch gives an inspired sanction only to the truth of the passage quoted, not to the whole book. Jude fitly closes the epistle by exhorting his readers to 'contend earnestly for the holy heavenly faith once delivered to the saints by prophets and Apostles, looking unto Him who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.'

"The epistles of the New Testament were divinely intended for the redeemed, regenerated and spiritual family of God, who inwardly feel their need of Divine mercy and guidance and comfort and preservation; and these precious gifts of the Divine Spirit should be constantly, habitually, familiarly and reverently studied.

"It is most remarkable and confirmatory to notice that the first intimation of every truth revealed to the Apostles by the Spirit, came from the lips of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13). The whole great doctrine of justification by faith elaborated in Paul's epistle to the Romans is involved in Christ's declaration in John 3:16; and the doctrine of Christian liberty in Galatians is comprehended in Christ's language in John 8:36; and the sacrificial doctrine

of the epistle to the Hebrews is fully implied in Christ's words in Matthew 26:28."

The various ecclesiastical traditions, handed down from the second and succeeding centuries, representing that the Apostles labored in different countries outside of the Roman Empire, are strange, uncritical, contradictory and apocryphal.

The system of salvation proclaimed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to His Apostles, and by them orally and in manuscript to contemporaneous and future generations, was all perfect and complete in the outset. Unlike all other systems of religion, science or art, nothing can be added to it or taken from it, to increase its beauty, usefulness or perfection; all attempts in this direction serve to mar rather than add luster to its excellence. And for 1800 years the only way to obtain a perfect knowledge of Christian principles is to consult the original record and to gather a "Thus saith the Lord" for all that His people say and do. If men speak not according to this Word they speak at random, and give evidence that there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20).

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#### **ENDNOTES:**

vi[1] Matthew gives, in his first chapter, the descent of Christ from David and Abraham, according to prophecies made about 1000 and 2000 years before, and he abridges his genealogies, as the Jews frequently did, giving three lists, each containing fourteen names, probably to aid the memory. Luke, in his third chapter, gives the descent of Christ from Adam, or "the seed of the woman," according to the promise made to the first pair in the garden of Eden, 4000 years before. Joseph, as Luke tells us (3:23), was not the real, but only the supposed or reputed father of Jesus. According to Numbers 36:8, Joseph and Mary must have been of the same tribe and family. It is thought that Jacob, the father of Joseph, as mentioned by Matthew, was the brother of Heli or Eli, mentioned, as the father of Joseph, by Luke, and that Mary was the daughter of Eli; so that Joseph and Mary were first cousins, and Joseph was the son-in-law of Eli—son-in-law being called son by the Jews. Thus, while Matthew gives the royal or legal descent of Joseph, it is likely that Luke gives the natural or private descent of Mary. The Jews, in their genealogical tables, reckoned descent wholly by males. The bitterest early enemies of Christ did not deny His descent from David. Many able scholars believe that both Matthew and Luke give the genealogy of Joseph—Mary's descent from David being implied.

vii[2] *Jesus* means *Jehovah Savior*; the reason of the name being given by the angel to Joseph in a dream—"for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

viii[3] *Esaias* is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Isaiah.

ix[4] This darkness could not have been an ordinary eclipse of the sun, which is caused by the coming of the moon between the sun and earth, and never lasts, in its totality, more than eight minutes; because Christ was crucified at the Jewish Passover, which was always when the moon was full, and therefore on the opposite side of the earth from the sun, and the darkness lasted three hours. The darkness at Christ's death was nature's sympathy with her suffering Lord. As the glory of the Lord shone around the scene of His birth (Luke 2:9), so a pall of darkness was fitly spread over His dying scene. Amos (8:9) predicted that the sun would go down at noon, and the earth be darkened in the clear day. The darkness might precede and accompany the earthquake that took place on the same occasion; for darkness almost nocturnal, arising from sulphureous vapors, often precedes an earthquake. Both the darkness and the earthquake at Christ's crucifixion were no doubt supernatural.

x[5] This is the term used by Edward Gibbon, in the famous fifteenth chapter of his "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," to designate each one of the primitive churches. No uninspired historian has ever surpassed Gibbon in *accuracy* of statement.

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