

a *Grace Notes* course

History of the Christian Church

By Philip Schaff

VOLUME 1. First Period – Apostolic Christianity¹

Chapter 8: Christian Life in the Apostolic Church

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History of the Christian Church

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VOL 1: Chapter 8. Christian Life in the Apostolic Church

SOURCES

The teaching and example of Christ as exhibited in the *Gospels, and of the apostles in the Acts and Epistles*; compared and contrasted with the rabbinical ethics and the state of Jewish society, and with the Greek systems of philosophy and the moral condition of the Roman empire, as described in the writings of Seneca, Tacitus, the Roman satirists, etc.

LITERATURE

I. The respective sections in the *Histories of the Apost. Church* by NEANDER: I. 229–283 (Germ. ed.); SCHAFF: §§ 109–123 (pp. 433–492); LANGE: II. 495–534; WEIZSÄCKER: 647–698.

II The works on the *Theology of the Apostolic Age*, by SCHMID, REUSS, BAUR, WEISS, etc.

III. The Systems of *Christian Ethics* by SCHLEIERMACHER, ROTHE, NEANDER, SCHMID, WUTTKE, HARLESS, MARTENSEN, Luthardt, and Lecky's *History of European Morals* (1869), vol I. 357 sqq.

IV. A. THOMA (pastor in Mannheim): *Geschichte der christlichen Sittenlehre in der Zeit des Neuen Testamentes*, Haarlem, 1879 (380 pp.). A crowned prize-essay of the Teyler Theol. Society. The first attempt of a separate critical history of N. T. ethics, but written from the negative standpoint of the Tübingen school, and hence very unsatisfactory. It is divided in three parts: I. The Ethics of Jesus; II. The Ethics of Paul; III. The Ethics of the Congregation.

V. Works which treat of Christian life in the post-apostolic age (CAVE, ARNOLD, SCHMIDT, CHASTEL, PRESSENSÉ, etc.) will be noticed in the second period.

1.44 The Power of Christianity

Practical Christianity is the manifestation of a new life; a spiritual (as distinct from intellectual and moral) life; a supernatural (as distinct from natural) life; it is a life of holiness and peace; a life of union and communion with God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; it is eternal life, beginning with regeneration and

culminating in the resurrection. It lays hold of the inmost centre of man's personality, emancipates him from the dominion of sin, and brings him into vital union with God in Christ; from this centre it acts as a purifying, ennobling, and regulating force upon all the faculties of man—the emotions, the will, and the intellect—and transforms even the body into a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Christianity rises far above all other religions in the theory and practice of virtue and piety. It sets forth the highest standard of love to God and to man; and this not merely as an abstract doctrine, or an object of effort and hope, but as a living fact in the person of Jesus Christ, whose life and example have more power and influence than all the maxims and precepts of sages and legislators. Deeds speak louder than words. *Praecepta docent, exempla trahunt.*

The finest systems of moral philosophy have not been able to regenerate and conquer the world. The gospel of Christ has done it and is doing it constantly. The wisest men of Greece and Rome sanctioned slavery, polygamy, concubinage, oppression, revenge, infanticide; or they belied their purer maxims by their conduct. The ethical standard of the Jews was much higher; yet none of their patriarchs, kings, or prophets claimed perfection, and the Bible honestly reports the infirmities and sins, as well as the virtues, of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and Solomon.

But the character of Christ from the manger to the cross is without spot or blemish; he is above reproach or suspicion, and acknowledged by friend and foe to be the purest as well as the wisest being that ever appeared on earth.

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He is the nearest approach which God can make to man, and which man can make to God; he represents the fullest imaginable and attainable harmony of the ideal and real, of the divine and human. The Christian church may degenerate in the hands of sinful men, but the doctrine and life of her founder are a never-failing fountain of purification.

The perfect life of harmony with God and devotion to the welfare of the human race, is to pass from Christ to his followers. Christian life is an imitation of the life of Christ. From his word and spirit, living and ruling in the church, an unbroken stream of redeeming, sanctifying, and glorifying power has been flowing forth upon individuals, families, and nations for these eighteen centuries, and will continue to flow till the world is transformed into the kingdom of heaven, and God becomes all in all.

One of the strongest proofs of the supernatural origin of Christianity, is its elevation above the natural culture and moral standard of its first professors. The most perfect doctrine and life described by unschooled fishermen of Galilee, who never before had been outside of Palestine, and were scarcely able to read and to write! And the profoundest mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, the incarnation, redemption, regeneration, resurrection, taught by the apostles to congregations of poor and illiterate peasants, slaves and freedmen!

For “not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble” were called, “but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong;

and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea, and the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption: that, according as it is written, he that glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

If we compare the moral atmosphere of the apostolic churches with the actual condition of surrounding Judaism and heathenism, the contrast is as startling as that between a green oasis with living fountains and lofty palm trees, and a barren desert of sand and stone. Judaism in its highest judicatory committed the crime of crimes, the crucifixion of the Saviour of the world, and hastened to its doom. Heathenism was fitly represented by such imperial monsters as Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, and Domitian, and exhibited a picture of hopeless corruption and decay, as described in the darkest colors not only by St. Paul, but by his heathen contemporary, the wisest Stoic moralist, the teacher and victim of Nero.

NOTES

The rationalistic author of *Supernatural Religion* (vol. II. 487) makes the following remarkable concession:

“The teaching of Jesus carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity. The influence of his spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of his character. Surpassing in his sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Sâkya Muni, and putting to the blush the sometimes sullied, though

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generally admirable, teaching of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, he presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, so that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence."

LECKY, likewise a rationalistic writer and historian of great ability and fairness, makes this weighty remark in his *History of European Morals* (vol. II. 9);

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has, indeed, been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priest craft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the Church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration."

To this we may add the testimony of the atheistic philosopher, JOHN STUART MILL from his essay on *Theism*, written shortly

before his death (1873), and published, 1874, in *Three Essays on Religion*. (Am. ed., p. 253):

"Above all, the most valuable part of the effect on the character which Christianity has produced, by holding up in a divine person a standard of excellence and a model for imitation, is available even to the absolute unbeliever, and can never more be lost to humanity.

For it is Christ rather than God whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity. It is the God incarnate more than the God of the Jews, or of nature, who, being idealized, has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind. And whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching.

It is of no use to say that Christ, as exhibited in the Gospels, is not historical, and that we know not how much of what is admirable has been super-added by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which he is reputed to have wrought. But who among his disciples, or among their proselytes, was capable of inventing the sayings ascribed to Jesus, or of imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is

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more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source.”

1.45 The Spiritual Gifts

The apostolic church was endowed from the day of Pentecost with all the needful spiritual gifts for the moral regeneration of the world. They formed, as it were, her bridal garment and her panoply against Jewish and Gentile opposition. They are called charisms or gifts of grace, as distinguished from, though not opposed to, natural endowments. They are certain special energies and manifestations of the Holy Spirit in believers for the common good. They are supernatural, therefore, in their origin; but they correspond to natural virtues, and in operation they follow all the mental and moral faculties of man, raising them to higher activity, and consecrating them to the service of Christ. They all rest on faith, that “gift of gifts.”

The spiritual gifts may be divided into three classes:

First, intellectual gifts of knowledge, mainly theoretical in their character, and concerned primarily with doctrine and theology;

Secondly, emotional gifts of feeling, appearing chiefly in divine worship and for immediate edification; and

Thirdly, practical gifts of will, devoted to the organization, government, and discipline of the church.

They are not, however, abstractly separate, but work together harmoniously for the common purpose of edifying the body of Christ. In the New Testament ten charisms are specially mentioned; the first four have to do

chiefly, though not exclusively, with doctrine, the next two with worship, and the remaining four with government and practical affairs.

1. The gift of **WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE**, or of deep insight into the nature and system of the divine word and the doctrines of the Christian salvation.

2. The gift of **TEACHING**, or of practically applying the gift of knowledge; the power of clearly expounding the Scriptures for the instruction and edification of the people.

3. The gift of **PROPHECY**, akin to the two preceding, but addressed rather to pious feeling than to speculative reflection, and employing commonly the language of higher inspiration, rather than that of logical exposition and demonstration. It is by no means confined to the prediction of future events, but consists in disclosing the hidden counsel of God, the deeper sense of the Scriptures, the secret state of the heart, the abyss of sin, and the glory of redeeming grace. It appears particularly in creative periods, times of mighty revival; while the gift of teaching suits better a quiet state of natural growth in the church. Both act not only in the sphere of doctrine and theology, but also in worship, and might in this view be reckoned also among the gifts of feeling.

4. The gift of **DISCERNING SPIRITS**, serves mainly as a guide to the third gift, by discriminating between true prophets and false, between divine inspiration and a merely human or satanic enthusiasm. In a wider sense it is a deep discernment in separating truth and error, and in judging of moral and religious character; a holy criticism still ever necessary to the purity of Christian doctrine and the

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administration of the discipline of the church.

5. The gift of **TONGUES**, or of an utterance proceeding from a state of unconscious ecstasy in the speaker, and unintelligible to the hearer unless interpreted—thus differing from prophecy, which requires a self-conscious though highly elevated state of feeling, serves directly to profit the congregation, and is therefore preferred by Paul.

The speaking with tongues is an involuntary psalm-like prayer or song, uttered from a spiritual trance, and in a peculiar language inspired by the Holy Spirit. The soul is almost entirely passive, an instrument on which the Spirit plays his heavenly melodies. This gift has, therefore, properly, nothing to do with the spread of the church among foreign peoples and in foreign languages, but is purely an act of worship, for the edification primarily of the speaker himself, and indirectly, through interpretation, for the hearers. It appeared, first, indeed, on the day of Pentecost, but *before* Peter's address to the people, which was the proper mission-sermon; and we meet with it afterwards in the house of Cornelius and in the Corinthian congregation, as a means of edification for believers, and not, at least not directly, for unbelieving hearers, although it served to them as a significant sign, arresting their attention to the supernatural power in the church.

6. The gift of **INTERPRETATION** is the supplement of the glossolalia, and makes that gift profitable to the congregation by translating the prayers and songs from the language of the spirit and of ecstasy into that of the understanding and of sober self-consciousness. The

preponderance of reflection here puts this gift as properly in the first class as in the second.

7. The gift of **MINISTRY AND HELP**, that is, of special qualification primarily for the office of deacon and deaconess, or for the regular ecclesiastical care of the poor and the sick, and, in the wide sense, for all labors of Christian charity and philanthropy.

8. The gift of church **GOVERNMENT AND THE CARE OF SOULS**, indispensable to all pastors and rulers of the church, above all to the apostles and apostolic men, in proportion to the extent of their respective fields of labor. Peter warns his co-presbyters against the temptation to hierarchical arrogance and tyranny over conscience, of which so many priests, bishops, patriarchs, and popes have since been guilty; and points them to the sublime example of the great Shepherd and Archbishop, who, in infinite love, laid down his life for the sheep.⁷

9. The gift of **MIRACLES** is the power possessed by the apostles and apostolic men, like Stephen, to heal all sorts of physical maladies, to cast out demons, to raise the dead, and perform other similar works, in virtue of an extraordinary energy or faith, by word, prayer, and the laying on of hands in the name of Jesus, and for his glory. These miracles were outward credentials and seals of the divine mission of the apostles in a time and among a people which required such sensible helps to faith. But as Christianity became established in the world, it could point to its continued moral effects as the best evidence of its truth, and the necessity for outward physical miracles ceased.

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10. Finally, the gift of **LOVE**, the greatest, most precious, most useful, most needful, and most enduring of all, described and extolled by St. Paul in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians with the pen of an angel in the vision and enjoyment of the God of infinite love himself. Love is natural kindness and affection sanctified and raised to the spiritual sphere, or rather a new heavenly affection created in the soul by the experience of the saving love of God in Christ.

As faith lies at the bottom of all charisms, so love is not properly a separate gift, but the soul of all the gifts, guarding them from abuse for selfish and ambitious purposes, making them available for the common good, ruling, uniting, and completing them. It alone gives them their true value, and without love even the speaking with tongues of angels, and a faith which removes mountains, are nothing before God. It holds heaven and earth in its embrace. It "believeth all things," and when faith fails, it "hopeth all things," and when hope fails, it "endureth all things," but it "never fails." As love is the most needful of all the gifts on earth, so it will also outlast all the others and be the ornament and joy of the saints in heaven. For love is the inmost essence, the heart, as it were, of God, the ground of all his attributes, and the motive of all his works. It is the beginning and the end of creation, redemption, and sanctification—the link which unites us with the triune God, the cardinal virtue of Christianity, the fulfilling of the law, the bond of perfectness, and the fountain of bliss.

1.46 Christianity in Individuals

The transforming spiritual power of Christianity appears first in the lives of individuals. The apostles and primitive

Christians rose to a morality and piety far above that of the heroes of heathen virtue and even that of the Jewish saints. Their daily walk was a living union with Christ, ever seeking the glory of God and the salvation of men. Many of the cardinal virtues, humility, for example, and love for enemies, were unknown before the Christian day.

Peter, Paul, and John represent the various leading forms or types of Christian piety, as well as of theology. They were not without defect, indeed they themselves acknowledged only one sinless being, their Lord and Master, and they confessed their own shortcomings; yet they were as nearly perfect as it is possible to be in a sinful world; and the moral influence of their lives and writings on all generations of the church is absolutely immeasurable. Each exhibits the spirit and life of Christ in a peculiar way.

The gospel does not destroy, but redeems and sanctifies the natural talents and tempers of men. It consecrates the fire of a Peter, the energy of a Paul, and the pensiveness of a John to the same service of God. It most strikingly displays its new creating power in the sudden conversion of the apostle of the Gentiles from a most dangerous foe to a most efficient friend of the church. Upon Paul the Spirit of God came as an overwhelming storm; upon John, as a gentle, refreshing breeze. But in all dwelt the same new, supernatural, divine principle of life. All are living apologies for Christianity, whose force no truth-loving heart can resist.

Notice, too, the moral effects of the gospel in the female characters of the New Testament. Christianity raises woman from the slavish position which she held

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both in Judaism and in heathendom, to her true moral dignity and importance; makes her an heir of the same salvation with man, and opens to her a field for the noblest and loveliest virtues, without thrusting her, after the manner of modern pseudo-philanthropic schemes of emancipation, out of her appropriate sphere of private, domestic life, and thus stripping her of her fairest ornament and peculiar charm.

The Virgin Mary marks the turning point in the history of the female sex. As the mother of Christ, the second Adam, she corresponds to Eve, and is, in a spiritual sense, the mother of all living. In her, the "blessed among women," the whole sex was blessed, and the curse removed which had hung over the era of the fall. She was not, indeed, free from actual and native sin, as is now, taught, without the slightest ground in Scripture, by the Roman church since the 8th of December, 1854.

On the contrary, as a daughter of Adam, she needed, like all men, redemption and sanctification through Christ, the sole author of sinless holiness, and she herself expressly calls God her Saviour. But in the mother and educator of the Saviour of the world we no doubt may and should revere, though not worship, the model of female Christian virtue, of purity, tenderness, simplicity, humility, perfect obedience to God, and unreserved surrender to Christ.

Next to her we have a lovely group of female disciples and friends around the Lord: Mary, the wife of Clopas; Salome, the mother of James and John; Mary of Bethany, who sat at Jesus' feet; her busy and hospitable sister, Martha; Mary of Magdala, whom the Lord healed of a

demoniacal possession; the sinner, who washed his feet with her tears of penitence and wiped them with her hair; and all the noble women, who ministered to the Son of man in his earthly poverty with the gifts of their love,⁴ lingered last around his cross, and were the first at his open sepulcher on the, morning of the resurrection.

Henceforth we find woman no longer a slave of man and tool of lust, but the pride and joy of her husband, the fond mother training her children to virtue and godliness, the ornament and treasure of the family, the faithful sister, the zealous servant of the congregation in every work of Christian charity, the sister of mercy, the martyr with superhuman courage, the guardian angel of peace, the example of purity, humility, gentleness, patience, love, and fidelity unto death. Such women were unknown before. The heathen Libanius, the enthusiastic eulogist of old Grecian culture, pronounced an involuntary eulogy on Christianity when he exclaimed, as he looked at the mother of Chrysostom: "What women the Christians have!"

1.47 Christianity and the Family

H. GREGOIRE: *De l'influence du christianisme sur la condition des femmes*. Paris, 1821.

F. MÜNTER: *Die Christin im heidnischen Hause vor den Zeiten Constantin's des Grossen*. Kopenhagen, 1828.

JULIA KAVANAGH: *Women of Christianity, Exemplary for Acts of Piety and Charity*. Lond., 1851; N. York, 1866.

Thus raising the female sex to its true freedom and dignity, Christianity transforms and sanctifies the entire family life. It abolishes polygamy, and makes monogamy the proper form of marriage; it condemns concubinage with all forms of unchastity and impurity. It

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presents the mutual duties of husband and wife, and of parents and children, in their true light, and exhibits marriage as a copy of the mystical union of Christ with his bride, the church; thus imparting to it a holy character and a heavenly end.

Henceforth the family, though still rooted, as before, in the soil of nature, in the mystery of sexual love, is spiritualized and becomes a nursery of the purest and noblest virtues, a miniature church, where the father, as shepherd, daily leads his household into the pastures of the divine word, and, as priest, offers to the Lord the sacrifice of their common petition, intercession, thanksgiving, and praise.

With the married state, the single also, as an exception to the rule, is consecrated by the gospel to the service of the kingdom of God; as we see in a Paul, a Barnabas, and a John, and in the history of MISSIONS and of ascetic piety. The enthusiasm for celibacy, which spread so soon throughout the ancient church, must be regarded as a one-sided, though natural and, upon the whole, beneficial reaction against the rotten condition and misery of family life among the heathen.

1.48 Christianity and Slavery

LITERATURE

H. WALLON (Prof. of Modern History in Paris): *Histoire de l'esclavage dans l'antiquité*, Par. 1879, 3 vols., treats very thoroughly of Slavery in the Orient, among the Greeks and the Romans, with an Introduction on modern negro slavery in the Colonies.

AUGUSTIN COCHIN (ancien maire et conseiller municipal de la Ville de Paris): *L'abolition de l'esclavage*, Paris, 1862, 2 vols. This work treats not only of the modern abolition of slavery, but includes in vol. II., p. 348-470, an able discussion of the relation of Christianity and slavery.

MÖHLER (R. C., d. 1848): *Bruchstücke aus der Geschichte der Aufhebung der Sklaverei*, 1834. ("Vermischte Schriften," vol. II., p. 54.)

H. WISKEMANN: *Die Sklaverei*. Leiden, 1866. A crowned prize-essay.

P. ALLARD: *Les esclaves chrétiens depuis les premiers temps de l'église jusqu' à la fin de la domination romaine en Occident* Paris, 1876 (480 pp.).

G. V. LECHLER: *Sklaverei und Christenthum*. Leipz. 1877-78.

PH. SCHAFF: *Slavery and the Bible*, in his "Christ and Christianity," N. York and London, 1885, pp. 184-212.

Compare the Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to Philemon, especially BRAUNE, AND LIGHTFOOT (in *Colossians and Philemon*, 1875).

The numerous American works on slavery by Channing, Parker, Hodge, Barnes, Wilson, Cheever, Bledsoe, and others, relate to the question of negro slavery, now providentially abolished by the civil war of 1861-65.

To Christianity we owe the gradual extinction of slavery.

This evil has rested as a curse on all nations, and at the time of Christ the greater part of the existing race was bound in beastly degradation—even in civilized Greece and Rome the slaves being more numerous than the free-born and the freedmen. The greatest philosophers of antiquity vindicated slavery as a natural and necessary institution; and Aristotle declared all barbarians to be slaves by birth, fit for nothing but obedience.

According to the Roman law, "slaves had no head in the State, no name, no title, no register;" they had no rights of matrimony, and no protection against adultery; they could be bought and sold, or given away, as personal property; they might be tortured for evidence, or even put to death, at the discretion of their master. In the language of a distinguished writer on civil law, the slaves in the

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Roman empire “were in a much worse state than any cattle whatsoever.”

Cato the elder expelled his old and sick slaves out of house and home. Hadrian, one of the most humane of the emperors, willfully destroyed the eye of one of his slaves with a pencil. Roman ladies punished their maids with sharp iron instruments for the most trifling offences, while attending half-naked, on their toilet. Such legal degradation and cruel treatment had the worst effect upon the character of the slaves. They are described by the ancient writers as mean, cowardly, abject, false, voracious, intemperate, voluptuous, also as hard and cruel when placed over others.

A proverb prevailed in the Roman empire: “As many slaves, so many enemies.” Hence the constant danger of servile insurrections, which more than once brought the republic to the brink of ruin, and seemed to justify the severest measures in self-defense.

Judaism, indeed, stood on higher ground than this; yet it tolerated slavery, though with wise precautions against maltreatment, and with the significant ordinance, that in the year of jubilee, which prefigured the renovation of the theocracy, all Hebrew slaves should go free.

This system of permanent oppression and moral degradation the gospel opposes rather by its whole spirit than by any special law. It nowhere recommends outward violence and revolutionary measures, which in those times would have been worse than useless, but provides an internal radical cure, which first mitigates the evil, takes away its sting, and effects at last its entire abolition.

Christianity aims, first of all, to redeem man, without regard to rank or condition, from that worst bondage, the curse of sin, and to give him true spiritual freedom; it confirms the original unity of all men in the image of God, and teaches the common redemption and spiritual equality of all before God in Christ; it insists on love as the highest duty and virtue, which itself inwardly levels social distinctions; and it addresses the comfort and consolation of the gospel particularly to all the poor, the persecuted, and the oppressed.

Paul sent back to his earthly master the fugitive slave, Onesimus, whom he had converted to Christ and to his duty, that he might restore his character where he had lost it; but he expressly charged Philemon to receive and treat the bondman hereafter as a beloved brother in Christ, yea, as the apostle’s own heart. It is impossible to conceive of a more radical cure of the evil in those times and within the limits of established laws and customs. And it is impossible to find in ancient literature a parallel to the little Epistle to Philemon for gentlemanly courtesy and delicacy, as well as for tender sympathy with a poor slave.

This Christian spirit of love, humanity, justice, and freedom, as it pervades the whole New Testament, has also, in fact, gradually abolished the institution of slavery in almost all civilized nations, and will not rest till all the chains of sin and misery are broken, till the personal and eternal dignity of man redeemed by Christ is universally acknowledged, and the evangelical freedom and brotherhood of men are perfectly attained.

NOTE ON THE NUMBER AND CONDITION OF SLAVES IN GREECE AND ROME

Attica numbered, according to Ctesicles, under the governorship of Demetrius the Phalerian (309 B.C.), 400,000 slaves, 10,000 foreigners, and only 21,000 free citizens. In Sparta the disproportion was still greater.

As to the Roman empire, Gibbon estimates the number of slaves under the reign of Claudius at no less than one half of the entire population, *i.e.*, about sixty millions (I. 52, ed. Milman, N. Y., 1850). According to Robertson there were twice as many slaves as free citizens, and Blair (in his work on Roman slavery, Edinb. 1833, p. 15) estimates over three slaves to one freeman between the conquest of Greece (146 B.C.) and the reign of Alexander Severus (A.D. 222–235).

The proportion was of course very different in the cities and in the rural districts. The majority of the *plebs urbana* were poor and unable to keep slaves; and the support of slaves in the city was much more expensive than in the country. Marquardt assumes the proportion of slaves to freemen in Rome to have been three to two. Friedländer (*Sittengeschichte Roms*. I. 55, fourth ed.) thinks it impossible to make a correct general estimate, as we do not know the number of wealthy families. But we know that Rome A.D. 24 was thrown into consternation by the fear of a slave insurrection (Tacit. *Ann.* IV. 27).

Athenaeus, as quoted by Gibbon (I. 51) boldly asserts that he knew very many (πάμπολλοι) Romans who possessed, not for use, but ostentation, ten and even twenty thousand slaves. In a single palace at Rome, that of Pedanius Secundus, then prefect of the city, four hundred slaves

were maintained, and were all executed for not preventing their master's murder (Tacit. *Ann.* XIV. 42, 43).

The legal condition of the slaves is thus described by Taylor on *Civil Law*, as quoted in Cooper's *Justinian*, p. 411: "Slaves were held *pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedibus*; nay, were in a much worse state than any cattle whatsoever. They had no head in the state, no name, no title, or register; they were not capable of being injured; nor could they take by purchase or descent; they had no heirs, and therefore could make no will; they were not entitled to the rights and considerations of matrimony, and therefore had no relief in case of adultery; nor were they proper objects of cognation or affinity, but of quasi-cognation only; they could be sold, transferred, or pawned, as goods or personal estate, for goods they were, and as such they were esteemed; they might be tortured for evidence, punished at the discretion of their lord, and even put to death by his authority; together with many other civil incapacities which I have no room to enumerate."

Gibbon (I. 48) thinks that "against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction, the most severe regulations and the most cruel treatment seemed almost justifiable by the great law of self-preservation."

The individual treatment of slaves depended on the character of the master. As a rule it was harsh and cruel. The bloody spectacles of the amphitheatre stupefied the finer sensibilities even in women. Juvenal describes a Roman mistress who ordered her female slaves

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to be unmercifully lashed in her presence till the whippers were worn out; Ovid warns the ladies not to scratch the face or stick needles into the naked arms of the servants who adorned them; and before Hadrian a mistress could condemn a slave to the death of crucifixion without assigning a reason.

It is but just to remark that the philosophers of the first and second century, Seneca, Pliny, and Plutarch, entertained much milder views on this subject than the older writers, and commend a humane treatment of the slaves; also that the Antonines improved their condition to some extent, and took the oft abused jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves out of private hands and vested it in the magistrates. But at that time Christian principles and sentiments already freely circulated throughout the empire, and exerted a silent influence even over the educated heathen. This unconscious atmospheric influence, so to speak, is continually exerted by Christianity over the surrounding world, which without this would be far worse than it actually is.

1.49 Christianity and Society

Christianity enters with its leaven-like virtue the whole civil and social life of a people, and leads it on the path of progress in all genuine civilization. It nowhere prescribes, indeed, a particular form of government, and carefully abstains from all improper interference with political and secular affairs.

It accommodates itself to monarchical and republican institutions, and can flourish even under oppression and persecution from the State, as the history of the first three centuries sufficiently shows. But it teaches the true nature and

aim of all government, and the duties of rulers and subjects; it promotes the abolition of bad laws and institutions, and the establishment of good; it is in principle opposed alike to despotism and anarchy; it tends, under every form of government, towards order, propriety, justice, humanity, and peace; it fills the ruler with a sense of responsibility to the supreme king and judge, and the ruled with the spirit of loyalty, virtue, and piety.

Finally, the Gospel reforms the international relations by breaking down the partition walls of prejudice and hatred among the different nations and races. It unites in brotherly fellowship and harmony around the same communion table even the Jews and the Gentiles, once so bitterly separate and hostile.

The spirit of Christianity, truly catholic or universal, rises above all national distinctions. Like the congregation at Jerusalem, the whole apostolic church was of "one heart and of one soul." It had its occasional troubles, indeed, temporary collisions between a Peter and a Paul, between Jewish and Gentile Christians; but instead of wondering at these, we must admire the constant victory of the spirit of harmony and love over the remaining forces of the old nature and of a former state of things.

The poor Gentile Christians of Paul's churches in Greece sent their charities to the poor Jewish Christians in Palestine, and thus proved their gratitude for the gospel and its fellowship, which they had received from that mother church.² The Christians all felt themselves to be "brethren," were constantly impressed with their common origin and their common destiny, and considered it their

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sacred duty to “keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” While the Jews, in their spiritual pride and “*odium generis humani*” abhorred all Gentiles; while the Greeks despised all barbarians as only half men; and while the Romans, with all their might and policy, could bring their conquered nations only into a mechanical conglomeration, a giant body without a soul; Christianity, by purely moral means founded a universal spiritual empire and a communion of saints, which stands unshaken to this day, and will spread till it embraces all the nations of the earth as its living members, and reconciles all to God.

1.50 Spiritual Condition of the Congregations

We must not suppose that the high standard of holiness set up in doctrine and example by the evangelists and apostles was fully realized in their congregations. The dream of the spotless purity and perfection of the apostolic church finds no support in the apostolic writings, except as an ideal which is constantly held up before our vision to stimulate our energies. If the inspired apostles themselves disclaimed perfection, much less can we expect it from their converts, who had just come from the errors and corruptions of Jewish and heathen society, and could not be transformed at once without a miracle in violation of the ordinary laws of moral growth.

We find, in fact, that every Epistle meets some particular difficulty and danger. No letter of Paul can be understood without the admission of the actual imperfection of his congregations. He found it necessary to warn them even against the vulgar sins of the flesh as well as against

the refined sins of the spirit. He cheerfully and thankfully commended their virtues, and as frankly and fearlessly condemned their errors and vices.

The same is true of the churches addressed in the Catholic Epistles, and in the Revelation of John.

The seven Epistles in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse give us a glimpse of the church in its light and shade in the last stage of the apostolic age—primarily in Asia Minor, but through it also in other lands. These letters are all very much alike in their plan, and present a beautiful order, which has been well pointed out by Bengel.

They contain (1) a command of Christ to write to the “angel” of the congregation. (2) A designation of Jesus by some imposing title, which generally refers to his majestic appearance (Rev. 1:13 sqq.), and serves as the basis and warrant of the subsequent promises and threatenings. (3) The address to the angel, or the responsible head of the congregation, be it a single bishop or the college of pastors and teachers. The angels are, at all events, the representatives of the people committed to their charge, and what was said to them applies at the same time to the churches.

This address, or the epistle proper, consists always of (a) a short sketch of the present moral condition of the congregation—both its virtues and defects—with commendation or censure as the case may be; (b) an exhortation either to repentance or to faithfulness and patience, according to the prevailing character of the church addressed; (c) a promise to him who overcomes, together with the admonition: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the

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churches,” or the same in the reverse order, as in the first three epistles.

This latter variation divides the seven churches into two groups, one comprising the first three, the other the remaining four, just as the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials are divided. The ever-recurring admonition: “He that hath an ear,” etc., consists of ten words. This is no unmeaning play, but an application of the Old Testament system of symbolical numbers, in which three was the symbol of the Godhead; four of the world or humanity; the indivisible number seven, the sum of three and four (as also twelve, their product), the symbol of the indissoluble covenant between God and man; and ten (seven and three), the round number, the symbol of fullness and completion.

As to their moral and religious condition, the churches and the representatives fall, according to the Epistles, into three classes:

1. Those which were *predominantly good and pure*, viz., those of Smyrna and Philadelphia. Hence, in the messages to these two churches we find no exhortation to repentance in the strict sense of the word, but only an encouragement to be steadfast, patient, and joyful under suffering.

The church of Smyrna (a very ancient, still flourishing commercial city in Ionia, beautifully located on the bay of Smyrna) was externally poor and persecuted, and had still greater tribulation in view, but is cheered with the prospect of the crown of life. It was in the second century ruled by Polycarp, a pupil of John, and a faithful martyr.

Philadelphia (a city built by king Attalus Philadelphus, and named after him, now

Ala-Schär), in the province of Lydia, a rich wine region, but subject to earthquakes, was the seat of a church likewise poor and small outwardly, but very faithful and spiritually flourishing—a church which was to have all the tribulations and hostility it met with on earth abundantly rewarded in heaven.

2. Churches which were in a predominantly *evil and critical condition*, viz., those of Sardis and Laodicea. Here accordingly we find severe censure and earnest exhortation to repentance.

The church at Sardis (till the time of Croesus the flourishing capital of the Lydian empire, but now a miserable hamlet of shepherds) had indeed the name and outward form of Christianity, but not its inward power of faith and life. Hence it was on the brink of spiritual death. Yet Rev. 3:4 sq., distinguishes from the corrupt mass a few souls which had kept their walk undefiled, without, however, breaking away from the congregation as separatists, and setting up an opposition sect for themselves.

The church of Laodicea (a wealthy commercial city of Phrygia, not far from Colossae and Hierapolis, where now stands only a desolate village by the name of Eski-Hissar) proudly fancied itself spiritually rich and faultless, but was in truth poor and blind and naked, and in that most dangerous state of indifference and lukewarmness from which it is more difficult to return to the former decision and ardor, than it was to pass at first from the natural coldness to faith. Hence the fearful threatening: “I will spew thee out of my mouth.” (Lukewarm water produces vomiting.) Yet even the Laodiceans are not driven to despair. The Lord, in love, knocks at their door and

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promises them, on condition of thorough repentance, a part in the marriage-supper of the lamb (3:20).

3. Churches of a *mixed* character, viz., those of Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira. In these cases commendation and censure, promise and threatening are united.

Ephesus, then the metropolis of the Asian church, had withstood, indeed, the Gnostic errorists predicted by Paul, and faithfully maintained the purity of the doctrine delivered to it; but it had lost the ardor of its first love, and it is, therefore, earnestly exhorted to repent. It thus represents to us that state of dead, petrified orthodoxy, into which various churches oftentimes fall. Zeal for pure doctrine is, indeed, of the highest importance, but worthless without living piety and active love. The Epistle to the angel of the church of Ephesus is peculiarly applicable to the later Greek church as a whole.

Pergamum in Mysia (the northernmost of these seven cities, formerly the residence of the kings of Asia of the Attalian dynasty, and renowned for its large library of 200,000 volumes and the manufacture of parchment; hence the name *charta Pergamena*;—now Bergamo, a village inhabited by Turks, Greeks, and Armenians) was the seat of a church, which under trying circumstances had shown great fidelity, but tolerated in her bosom those who held dangerous Gnostic errors. For this want of rigid discipline she also is called on to repent.

The church of Thyatira (a flourishing manufacturing and commercial city in Lydia, on the site of which now stands a considerable Turkish town called Ak-Hissar, or “the White Castle,” with nine

mosques and one Greek church) was very favorably distinguished for self-denying, active love and patience, but was likewise too indulgent towards errors which corrupted Christianity with heathen principles and practices.

The last two churches, especially that of Thyatira, form thus the exact counterpart to that of Ephesus, and are the representatives of a zealous practical piety in union with theoretical latitudinarianism. As doctrine always has more or less influence on practice, this also is a dangerous state. That church alone is truly sound and flourishing in which purity of doctrine and purity of life, theoretical orthodoxy and practical piety are harmoniously united and promote one another.

With good reason have theologians in all ages regarded these, seven churches of Asia Minor as a miniature of the whole Christian church. “There is no condition, good, bad, or mixed, of which these epistles do not present a sample, and for which they do not give suitable and wholesome direction.” Here, as everywhere, the word of God and the history of the apostolic church evince their applicability to all times and circumstances, and their inexhaustible fullness of instruction, warning, and encouragement for all states and stages of religious life.