

The Letters of Paul

Summaries by CliffNotes

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Introduction: The Pauline Letters

Approximately one-third of the New Testament consists of letters, or epistles, written by the apostle Paul and addressed to the Christian churches of his day. Because these letters are older than any of the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, they constitute the most reliable source that we have today for information concerning the early history of the Christian movement. With few exceptions, these letters were written in response to conditions that existed in the particular churches with which Paul was associated. Not until some time passed after Paul's death were these letters circulated among the churches and read along with the Old Testament Scriptures as a part of regular worship services. Still later, they came to be regarded as inspired writings comparable to the sacred Scriptures of Judaism.

To understand the contents of these letters, it is necessary to know something about the man who wrote them, as well as about the particular circumstances under which they were written. Fortunately for us, considerable information along these lines is available within the letters themselves and can be supplemented by biographical accounts written by Luke, who was a companion of Paul, and included in the Book of Acts.

Paul was a native of Tarsus, a city of considerable importance in the Greco-Roman world. He was a descendant of the Hebrew tribe of Benjamin and originally was named Saul, after Israel's first king. Raised in a Jewish home, he was taught the Old Testament Scriptures and brought up in strict accordance with the beliefs and practices of the Pharisee sect. As he grew older, he was sent to the city of Jerusalem, where he studied under Gamaliel, one of the leading Jewish rabbis of that day. Later, he returned to Tarsus and probably attended the Greek university located in that city, although we have no direct information about this.

A crucial turning point in Paul's career came after he returned to Jerusalem and began studies in preparation for becoming a rabbi. As a devoted and loyal Jew of the Pharisee sect, his attention was given primarily to a detailed analysis of the requirements set forth in the Mosaic Law. He became familiar not only with the Law itself but with the explanations and commentaries made by the leading rabbis of the Jewish faith. In harmony with one of the basic doctrines of Judaism, he believed that salvation could be obtained only by obedience to all of the laws that God had given to his people. But as Paul pursued his studies, he became conscious of the fact that a mere knowledge concerning what one ought to do does not produce the desire to do it. Furthermore, he realized that desires give rise to actions, but the Law is unable to give one the desires that are necessary to meet its requirements. In fact, the situation is even worse than that, for the knowledge that one ought not to do certain things often acts as a stimulus creating the desire to do it. This conflict between duty and desire became an intolerable situation for Paul; because of it, he gave up his plans for becoming a rabbi. To compensate for his failure to carry out his original plans, he was anxious to find something of real merit that he might do, which he believed he found in the need for suppressing a new religious movement that he regarded as both dangerous and heretical — Christianity.

This new religious movement was promulgated by a group of people who claimed to be followers of Jesus, a man who had been crucified but who, they now believed, had risen from the dead,

ascended to heaven, and would return to earth in power and great glory. Putting an end to this movement was what Paul now devoted himself to with the utmost zeal. He hunted down the members of this group, had them committed to prison, and threatened them with death. But as he did so, he could not help but be impressed by the way in which the Christians met the persecutions inflicted upon them.

The stoning of Stephen was one of these incidents. With perfect calm and an inner peace of mind, Stephen knelt down and prayed that those who were casting the stones might be forgiven. It was perfectly evident that these Christians possessed that which Paul desired more than anything else: the peace of mind that comes with a clear conscience and a deep conviction that they are living in harmony with the will of God. Paul came to realize that there must be some connection between these persons' faith in Jesus and their manner of living. No doubt this conviction was growing upon him for some time, but the climactic turning point in his career came while he was journeying to Damascus. Convinced now that Jesus was a righteous man and that his death on the cross was not the just punishment of a criminal but rather that of a martyr who died for a noble cause, Paul was ready to give himself to that same cause, which was more alive than it had been before Jesus' crucifixion and which pointed the way to a salvation that could not be achieved by obedience to a set of laws that were contrary to human desires.

Paul's decision to cast his lot with the members of the Christian community did not make him a missionary all at once, for about fourteen years passed before his work as a leader in the movement received any general recognition. During this time, Paul had ample opportunity to rethink his religious conceptions, systematize his understanding of the meaning of Jesus' career on earth, and formulate plans for spreading Christianity throughout the world. Eventually, he was invited by Barnabas to come to the church at Antioch and assist in the work being done there. After serving this church for a brief period, Paul began a series of missionary journeys to spread the news of salvation offered through Jesus' physical death. While engaged in these missionary activities, he wrote the letters that are preserved in the New Testament.

Summary and Analysis Galatians

Summary

The occasion for this letter was a controversy that developed among the churches in Galatia, and especially the one in Antioch, concerning the matter of requiring Gentile Christians to obey the Mosaic Law. One law very much in question concerned circumcision, a religious rite that meant for Jews much the same thing as baptism came to mean for Christians of a later period. The Christians whose background had been in Judaism could see no reason why this rite should not be required of all Christians, as it was for Jews. As they understood it, the laws given by God through Moses were binding for all time and could never be set aside by human beings or by any set of circumstances that might arise.

When people with a Gentile background became followers of Jesus and sought admission to the Christian churches, they saw no particular value in the observance of the rite of circumcision and wanted to be excused from it. Paul, invited to work with the Gentile element in the church, was sympathetic to their position. The experiences that he encountered with the Mosaic Law prior to his conversion convinced him that no one could ever be saved by mere obedience to a set of external laws. His own conversion to the Christian faith was brought about by the conviction that the spirit manifested in the life of Jesus took possession of the hearts and minds of individuals and enabled them to be saved. Accordingly, if Gentile Christians were possessed by this spirit, which for Paul was the true meaning of faith, it made little or no difference at all whether they conformed to the letter of the Mosaic Law. So long as Paul remained with these churches, the Jewish and Gentile elements seemed to get along without any serious trouble, each group following the dictates of its individual conscience. But after Paul left on one of his missionary tours, trouble began when prominent officials of the church in Jerusalem visited the newly established churches in Galatia.

These church visitors insisted that the law concerning circumcision, as well as the other requirements of the Mosaic Law, was binding on all Christians, including those coming from a Gentile background. Furthermore, they launched a vicious attack on Paul because of his attitude about this matter. They even went so far as to charge that he was an impostor and was guilty of misleading the membership of the churches. In response to these charges, Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians.

At the beginning of the letter, Paul expresses astonishment at what has taken place during his absence from the Galatians. Surprised at the attitude taken by the so-called leaders of the Jerusalem church, he is deeply disappointed when the people among whom he labored are persuaded by these visiting brethren to turn from the message that he proclaimed and accept as obligatory the requirements characteristic of Jewish legalism. Replying to the accusation that he is not a qualified leader of the Christian community, Paul defends his apostleship by declaring that Jesus Christ — not men — called him to that office. In support of this claim, he reviews the experiences that led to his conversion and the circumstances under which he carried on his work among the churches. He describes his relationship with the so-called "pillars of the church" at Jerusalem, explaining both the purpose and the outcome of his conferences with them. Although he did not receive from them any directive concerning the content of the message he was to proclaim, they were fully informed about the work he was doing and gave their approval to it, specifying in particular that he should devote his main efforts toward working with people entering the church from a Gentile background.

Following this introduction, Paul proceeds to the main point of the letter: to explain and clarify his position concerning the Law, which he does by detailing both its uses and its limitations as a

means of obtaining salvation. The Law, he maintains, lays bare the defects in a person's character. In this respect, its function is like that of a looking-glass, which reveals blemishes but does not remove them. He writes, "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith." When this goal has been reached, the Law is no longer necessary: "Clearly no one is justified before God by the law." Only by faith in Christ are people justified. By faith, Paul means something more than a mere intellectual assent to a number of facts in connection with the earthly life of Jesus. He means a commitment on the part of an individual to the way of life exemplified in the person of Jesus. A person possessed by the same spirit present in Jesus will be saved from sin and the spiritual death that sin brings. That person's desires and whole nature will be so transformed that he will do what is right because he wants to act that way rather than because he thinks it is a duty to be performed in order to obtain a reward.

Paul presents a series of arguments in support of his position regarding the Law. For example, he refers to Abraham as the father of the faithful and insists that Abraham's righteousness could not have been obtained by obedience to Mosaic laws because those laws were not given until centuries after Abraham died. Hence, Abraham must have obtained righteousness by faith. But if Abraham's righteousness was achieved by faith, the same must be true for all of his spiritual descendants. When God made his great promise to Abraham, all of Abraham's descendants were included. Christians are, according to Paul, of Abraham's seed, for it is said, "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." This same point is elaborated somewhat further in the allegory of Abraham's two sons. One son, Ishmael, was born of a slave woman, but the other son, Isaac, was born of a free woman. Ishmael represents people who are under bondage to the Law, and Isaac represents people who are free in Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

The Epistle to the Galatians concludes with a description of the kind of life that a person will live who is filled with the Spirit of God, a life that sharply contrasts to the kind of life a person will live who has carnal desires. The quality of living is determined by whether or not an individual is possessed by the Spirit of Christ.

Analysis

Galatians is important for several reasons. First of all, it is among the earliest, if not the earliest, of all the writings in the New Testament. The letter gives us an insight into the problems that arose in the Christian churches of the first century after Jesus' physical death, and most important of all, it reveals one of the most essential elements in Paul's conception of Christianity. The letter has sometimes been called "Paul's declaration of independence," a designation that means freedom from bondage to laws of any kind, whether human laws or divine laws. On this particular point, Paul made a definite break not only with Judaism but with those Christians of Jewish descent who thought of the new religion in terms of obedience both to the Mosaic Law and the laws enunciated by Jesus.

These two competing conceptions of Christianity generally were held respectively by the Jewish and the Gentile elements in the membership of the Christian church. Those with a Jewish background held what may be called a legalistic conception of religion; the Gentile element under the leadership of Paul believed in a mystical conception. According to the latter view, salvation can never be achieved by trying to obey the requirements of the Law. Human nature is so constituted that a person necessarily follows the desires of the heart, and so long as these desires are contrary to the requirements of the Law, the result will be disobedience and a sense of guilt.

When Paul speaks of salvation by faith, he means the situation in which desires have been changed so that what one wants to do will coincide with what one ought to do, a transformation

that humanity cannot bring about by itself alone but that can take place only when the Spirit of God in Christ takes possession of hearts and minds. Salvation, the very essence of Christian mysticism, means a union, or oneness, of the individual and God. In other words, God dwells within the life of the individual, whose nature is thereby changed from that which is prone to do evil to that prone to do good. The earthly career of Jesus is significant because it illustrates what can happen to any human being who allows the Spirit of God to take full possession of him, an idea clearly expressed by Paul when he says, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

Paul's argument did not convince all members of the Christian community. Many members, especially those of a Jewish background and understanding, still held to the legalistic view. The conflict between the legalistic and the mystical interpretations of religion can be traced through all of the successive periods of Christian history and is still one of the vital issues in contemporary theology.

Summary and Analysis 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Summary

Two letters that Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica are preserved in the New Testament. The first letter — 1 Thessalonians — was written to a community of believers who had been Christians for only a short period of time, probably no more than a few months. We learn from the Book of Acts that during Paul's stay in the city of Thessalonica, he preached in a Jewish synagogue on three successive Sabbath days. He evidently stayed in the city for some time thereafter and continued his work among the Gentiles. Although his ministry was successful to the extent that he won converts to Christianity from both Jews and Gentiles, he did encounter opposition, especially from Jews who resented very much that he was able to win Jewish followers. Because of this opposition, Paul wisely left the city for fear that the newly formed Christian community would be persecuted as he had been. He regretted that he must leave the Christians before they were well established in the faith, but he hoped that he might visit them again in the near future. When sickness prevented him from returning, he sent his colleague Timothy to strengthen the group and then report back to Paul on the progress that had been made. When Timothy returned to Paul with the good news that the members of the church were standing firm in their new faith, Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Paul congratulates the Thessalonians on their fidelity to the gospel that he had proclaimed while among them and urges them to remain steadfast in the faith. He warns them against sensuality and various forms of self-seeking, which are contrary to the spirit of the Christian way of life. But the main purpose of Paul's letter is to deal with a special problem that developed after Paul left the city. Paul shared with the Christians at Thessalonica his belief that the end of the age would come in the very near future. In part an inheritance from Jewish apocalypticism, this belief held that the messianic kingdom would be ushered in by a sudden catastrophic event, at which time the heavenly Messiah would descend on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. When the first Christians accepted the idea that the man who had died on the cross was the real Messiah, they were convinced that he must return to earth to complete the work that he had begun. The manner of his second coming was conceived in accordance with the apocalyptic conceptions. This belief was common among the early Christians, and Paul accepted it along with the rest. Although the Christians were quite insistent that no one knew the exact time when this second coming would take place, they felt sure that it would occur during the lifetime of those who were then members of the Christian community.

After Paul left Thessalonica, some of the people who belonged to the church died. Because Jesus had not returned, serious doubts arose in the minds of those Thessalonians who were still living, for they had been led to believe that Jesus the Messiah would return before any of them died. As they saw it, Paul was mistaken on this point, which then caused them to wonder whether he might also be mistaken on other points as well. Obviously, an explanation of some kind was in order, and this situation, more than any other single factor, prompted the writing of Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

In his statement regarding Jesus' second coming, Paul says that he has in no way abandoned his faith that the return of Jesus to this earth will take place in the near future. Concerning those who died or who might die before Jesus returns, he states that they will be raised from the dead and will share equally with those who are still living at that time: "For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." To this statement, Paul adds, "After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." The letter closes with a reminder that the Day of the Lord

will come as a thief in the night. No one knows just when it will come, but all are admonished to live in such a way that they will be ready for it at any moment.

Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians is in one sense a follow-up to the first letter. Evidently, the first letter was well received. People were satisfied with Paul's explanation concerning those who died and were ready and willing to suffer persecution if need be in order to remain true to the gospel that Paul preached. However, some members of the Christian community were so overly zealous about Paul's teaching that the end of the age was near at hand that they stopped making any plans for the future. Indeed, some of them stopped doing any work at all, believing that in this way they were demonstrating their faith in the nearness of the great event. Those who did not work were a burden to those who did work, and this situation constituted a new problem. Paul addresses this concern in his second letter.

After commending the Thessalonians for their loyalty and assuring them that God will deal justly with their persecutors, Paul proceeds to the main point of the letter. Although the coming Day of the Lord is near, it is not as close as some people think. Concerning a report that had circulated among the people stating that the day had already come, Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be deceived on this matter, for the Day of the Lord will not arrive until after certain events have taken place, and these events have not occurred yet. The specific events to which Paul refers concern the coming of an Antichrist, someone in whom the power of Satan has become incarnate and who will establish himself in the Temple at Jerusalem, working with signs and wonders to deceive people. The basis for Paul's statement along this line is found in the Jewish apocalyptic writings, which were fairly well known to him. Concerning the coming of this lawless Antichrist, Paul says that the Antichrist's activities are already in operation and would be carried out more fully except that he is now being restrained. (Presumably, Paul means that the Roman government is restraining the Antichrist.) In due time, the Antichrist will be revealed, and "the Lord Jesus will overthrow [the Antichrist] with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming." The letter closes with an admonition to the Thessalonians to continue their regular lines of work and not to wait in idleness for the return of Jesus.

Analysis

The two letters to the Thessalonians are of interest from a historical point of view because they reveal conditions that existed in the newly formed Christian communities. They are also of value in that they indicate something of the extent to which the early church was influenced by Jewish apocalypticism in its beliefs concerning the second coming of Christ and the setting up of the messianic kingdom. Jewish apocalypses taught that there would be a resurrection of the dead in connection with other events that would usher in the new age. Paul was able to make use of these apocalyptic conceptions in answering the questions that so troubled the Christians in Thessalonica.

Both of Paul's letters to the Thessalonians were addressed to this one church and were occasioned by the problems associated with that particular group of church members. It is quite unlikely that Paul anticipated any further use to be made of his letters. Little if anything in them throws much light on the theological issues involved in Paul's interpretation of Christianity. The letters do, however, indicate the type of instruction that Paul gave to newcomers in the Christian movement.

Summary and Analysis 1 and 2 Corinthians

Summary

Paul wrote at least four different letters to the church at Corinth, three of which are included in the New Testament. In what is now called 1 Corinthians, there is a reference to a former letter in which instruction was given concerning the type of conduct that should not be tolerated in a Christian church. 2 Corinthians is made up of two different letters. Chapters 1–9 are written in a conciliatory tone that indicates that they were composed after Chapters 10–13 were received and accepted by the members of the church. Chapters 10–13 belong to what is often referred to as the "painful letter," in which Paul replies to the many false charges made concerning him and his work. The largest part of Paul's correspondence was with the church at Corinth, for the problems that he encountered in this place were more numerous than he had found in other cities, and if his message could be successful in Corinth, there was good reason to believe that it could have results that would be equally as good in any other place.

Corinth was an important city in Paul's day. Generally known as a city devoted to pleasure-seeking, it was a center for Greek culture and a busy commercial city with a cosmopolitan atmosphere that brought together people and customs from different parts of the world. Pagan religions with sexual rites and ceremonies existed, and both materialism and immorality were the accepted order of the day. In view of these conditions, no wonder Paul said he began his Corinthian mission with fear. However, his work was successful from the beginning. He was especially anxious to guide new Christian converts with reference to the many perplexing problems that were bound to arise. In other places, the Jewish element, with its legalistic tendencies, created difficulties, but in Corinth, the moral problem caused the greater anxiety. The Corinthian church's membership was composed of people from many different quarters, including those whose training and environment were foreign to the Hebrew standards of morality. Paul was deeply concerned that the Christian church in Corinth should make no compromise with the morality — or immorality — customary in a pagan society.

The longest of the letters written to the church at Corinth is known in the New Testament as 1 Corinthians. Containing sixteen chapters dealing with a wide variety of topics, the first topic mentioned is that of divisions within the church. Four distinct factions correspond to the four individuals whose teachings were followed by the respective groups: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ. Reportedly, the household of Chloe informed Paul that serious quarrels had taken place among these factions. The spirit of independent thinking emphasized so strongly by the Greeks evidently was influencing the Corinthian Christians. Paul's manner of dealing with the problem is noteworthy. He does not insist that all members of the community should think alike on every subject, nor does he advocate that someone with authority should tell others what to believe. What he does insist on is a unity of spirit and purpose that will allow each group to learn from the others.

On the subject of immorality within the membership of the church, Paul is very explicit. Any type of immoral conduct must not be tolerated among the believers. If any of their number persist in following the low moral standards of the pagans, they should be excluded from membership. Association with evildoers cannot be avoided so long as church members live in a wicked city, but it need not be permitted within the group that is called Christian. The function of the church is to set a high standard for the society in which it exists, which cannot be done by permitting low standards among their own members: "Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are."

Disputes arising among members of the Christian community should be settled peaceably without going to a civil court: "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged?" Paul refers to a popular Jewish belief that saints are to have a part in the judgment of the world. Certainly the Corinthians are not qualified to have a part in the judgment of the world if they are unable to settle difficulties among themselves.

Sexual morality was a real problem in the church at Corinth. Neither monogamy nor chastity was regarded as obligatory in the pagan society in which many of the church members were reared before becoming Christians. Paul's instruction regarding marriage must be considered in accordance with his belief concerning the imminence of the second coming of Christ, as well as with his desire to have the church at Corinth exemplify a high standard of living. The same can be said about his advice concerning the impropriety of women speaking in church. In the city of Corinth, prostitutes customarily spoke in public, and to protect the reputation of the women in the Christian church, Paul thought it would be wise for them to remain silent. He explains, however, that this is merely his personal opinion; he has received no direct revelation to this effect.

Regarding the eating of meat that has been obtained from animals sacrificed to idols, everyone should follow the dictates of their own consciences, the only condition being that each person should have respect for the conscience of the person who does not agree with him. One should refrain from needlessly offending another person, even though by doing so it is necessary to curb one's own appetite.

The Christian churches customarily commemorated the events associated with Jesus' death and resurrection by partaking of a common meal together. Some of the people at Corinth failed to see the significance of this meal and made it an occasion for feasting. Paul explains that the purpose of this meal is not for the enjoyment of eating and drinking together but rather for a renewed dedication to the spirit made manifest in the life and death of Jesus. In other words, each individual should examine his own heart and life and bring them into harmony with the Spirit of Christ. Any grievances that people have with one another should be set aside in preparation for the eating of the meal together.

Spiritual gifts among the various members of the church is another topic treated at some length in 1 Corinthians. Using the analogy of the human body, in which each organ has its special function to perform and no one of them can be regarded as more vital than another, the same principle applies within the church, which is the body of Christ. Some members have the gift of prophecy, others that of teaching, and still others that of offering help in carrying forward the work of the church. Those who are apostles or prophets are not to think of themselves as superior to those who exercise other gifts, for all gifts are necessary, and the church would not be complete if any of them were missing. To those who boast that they have the gift of tongues and are therefore in a position to exercise lordship over others, Paul writes that this particular gift, like all of the others, should be evaluated in terms of its usefulness in promoting the Christian way of life. He does not condemn this gift for those who might find it useful, but he says that so far as he is concerned, it is better to speak a few words that will be understood by others than to speak at great length in an unknown tongue that is quite unintelligible to those who might hear it.

Following the discussion of spiritual gifts is Paul's immortal hymn to Christian love, which is one of the great classics of Christian literature. The hymn makes love the foundation for all Christian conduct. What wisdom was for the Greeks, love is for Christians: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

After the discourse on love, Paul discusses resurrection. For him, the subject is of primary importance, for he considers resurrection the basis upon which the whole structure of Christianity

rests. If Christ is not risen, then our hope is in vain. Christ's resurrection is attested to by a large number of witnesses, of whom Paul counts himself one of the last. The significance of the resurrection, more than a vindication of the Messiahship of Jesus, assures us that what happened in the case of Jesus can and will happen to all those who believe in him. The resurrection of the righteous will be associated with the second coming of Christ: "For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.'" The letter closes with an appeal for a contribution to help provide for the poor among the Christians in Jerusalem. Paul will stop at Corinth on his way to Jerusalem and take the gift with him.

The so-called "painful letter," which is found in Chapters 10–13 of 2 Corinthians, contains Paul's defense of himself and of his work to the charges made against him by his enemies, including the Jewish legalists who said that Paul was an impostor who had not been authorized by the proper authorities to work among the churches. The legalists supported their charge by pointing out that Paul had a "thorn in [his] flesh," some physical defect that, according to ancient Jewish regulations, would have barred a man from the priesthood. They further maintained that Paul supported himself by doing manual labor rather than by accepting support from the members of the church. This labor, in their judgment, was an admission on his part that he was not qualified to be supported in the way that was customary for duly authorized missionaries. The legalists also accused Paul of cowardice on the grounds that he was bold so long as he was writing letters, but he was very mild when present with the legalists in person. Other charges of a similar nature were made in an all-out attempt to discredit the religious work that Paul was doing.

To all of these charges, Paul makes a vigorous reply. He shows wherein the charges are false, and he recounts for the people at Corinth the many trials and hardships that he suffered for their sake and for the sake of the gospel. Although he apologizes for seeming to boast of his own attainments, he explains the necessity for doing so. He indicates further that his greatest disappointment lies not in the fact that charges of this sort have been made against him but that the members of the Corinthian church have apparently been persuaded by them.

The first nine chapters of what is now called 2 Corinthians are a letter that appears to have been written some time after the "painful letter" was received and accepted by the church. This letter contains an expression of gratitude for the change that has taken place among the Corinthian believers. Paul rejoices that they are now on the right track again, and he summarizes for them the essential meaning of the gospel that he first proclaimed to them. Using the language of the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, Paul tells them that the Christian gospel is none other than the New Covenant, written "not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts." Toward the close of the letter, he again reminds them of the collection to be taken for the poor in Jerusalem.

Analysis

Although the Corinthian letters were addressed to a single church and were concerned primarily with local problems existing at that time, they are of special interest to readers of the New Testament. One reason for this interest is that the letters were written at an early date; therefore, they throw considerable light on the character of the Christian movement prior to the writing of any gospel account of Jesus' life. Paul's statements concerning the resurrection of Jesus constitute the earliest preserved record of that event. The same is true of his account of the institution of the Lord's Supper. His remarks concerning the gift of tongues, along with the other gifts of the spirit, help us to understand the way in which these manifestations were viewed by the early church. Finally, the many problems discussed in 1 Corinthians tell us a great deal about the conditions that prevailed at that time.

Paul's account of the resurrection enables us to see how his view differed from those of the ancient Greeks and also from the view found in certain portions of the Old Testament. The Greeks believed in the doctrine of the soul's immortality. According to this doctrine, souls do not have a beginning or an end. They are eternal realities capable of existing apart from the bodies in which they were incarnated. This view was contrary to the Hebrew conception, which viewed man as a single unit including body, soul, and spirit; the soul was not something that existed apart from the body. After death, all went down to Sheol, a cavern below the earth, but no memory or consciousness of any kind attended this state of existence.

In contrast to these views, Paul believed in a genuine resurrection from physical death in which a person's individuality and moral worth would be preserved. But this preservation was not to be a reanimation of the corpse and a continuation of life as it had been before. Flesh and blood, Paul tells us, will not inherit God's kingdom. The body that is raised will not be the natural body but rather a spiritual body. Paul does not tell us what this spiritual body will be like, but he is sure that it will be a body of some kind, for the personality includes body, soul, and spirit, and salvation is not achieved until all three have been transformed together. The Gnostics of Paul's day, who believed that only spirit is good and that all matter is evil, taught that Jesus did not possess a physical body but only appeared to do so. For Paul, this position was untenable: Unless Jesus possessed a body in common with other human beings, his triumph over evil would have no significance for humans. Jesus' resurrection means a triumph of the entire personality over the forces of evil; what it means for Jesus it also means for all those who put their trust in him.

Summary and Analysis Romans

Summary

Paul promised the church members at Corinth that he would visit them again as soon as he had the opportunity, and it was not long after sending his last letter to them that the opportunity came and he was able to spend several months with them. During this time, probably the latter part of the year 57 A.D., he wrote a letter to the church at Rome, the most ambitious of all his letters and the only one in which he presents a systematic account of his understanding of the gospel. Because he had not visited the church at Rome and was unfamiliar with their local problems, the letter is not written in the form that he used in his earlier correspondence with the other churches. Instead, it is a carefully prepared statement of what he regarded as the essential elements of the Christian religion. Paul wanted the gospel proclaimed throughout the then-known world, and it seemed most appropriate that he should not only visit the church at Rome but gain its full support for the missionary program that he envisioned. We do not know how the church at Rome was started, but it existed during Paul's life, and there were good reasons for believing that it would soon become one of the leading Christian churches of the world. Paul wanted the Roman church to have a firsthand knowledge of the gospel that he preached, but unable personally to visit its members in the immediate future, he set forth his convictions in a letter addressed to the Romans.

Parts of the sixteen chapters in the Epistle to the Romans are so detailed that a full explanation of Paul's meaning would require a large volume of Analysis. The main substance of the letter can be summarized briefly by stating the answers given to a number of pertinent questions: What is the gospel? Who needs it? Why is it needed? What is the nature of salvation? How is it achieved? What difference does salvation make in an individual's life? What difference does it make with reference to society as a whole? Many other points are discussed in Romans, but these questions are sufficient to indicate the letter's general character.

The gospel, we are told, is the power of God unto salvation, for in it the "righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith." Man is a sinful creature who follows his own heart's desires and is powerless to change these desires by himself alone. Only through the power of God, working in cooperation with the human spirit, can these desires be changed and brought into harmony with the divine will. Jesus' life illustrates the way in which the power of God can work in and through a human life, thus enabling a person to overcome evil temptations, which are always present in the world. The same power that enabled Jesus to overcome temptations is also available to all those who have faith in him. The faith by which God's righteousness is revealed involves beliefs but also includes something that grips the entire personality and finds expression not only in what one thinks but in feelings, attitudes, and actions. The salvation of which Paul writes is salvation from the power of evil that entices man to sin against himself and God. Salvation means a transformation of one's nature so that what one wants to do will coincide with what ought to be done.

This salvation is needed by everyone, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Salvation is just as necessary for the Jew as it is for the Gentile, and necessary even for those people who feel that they do not need it, for they may be the ones who need it most. How well people think of themselves is determined by the standard that they use in judging themselves. Anyone who measures himself by the righteousness of God will know that he falls short and is in need of improvement. The salvation of which Paul speaks is not something that will automatically make a person's character equal to the righteousness of God, but it will move the person in that direction and keep bringing him ever nearer to that goal. But, again, it is important to know that this salvation is available only to those who recognize their need for it and who are receptive to the divine power that is constantly being offered to them.

In his discussion of the way in which salvation is to be achieved, Paul presents the same arguments that he used in his Epistle to the Galatians. He emphasizes that salvation is not brought about by efforts on the part of the individual to observe the requirements of the Law. It makes no difference so far as this point is concerned whether the laws are human or divine in their origin. Laws of any kind are powerless to make people good, evidence of which can be seen in the state of society as it existed in Rome during Paul's life. The Romans boasted of the superior quality of their system of laws. Although their laws were among the best that the nations of the world had known up to that time, Roman society had become notoriously corrupt. The state of this corruption is indicated in the closing verses of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Concerning corruption, Paul argues that Jews are not better off than the Romans. The Romans have had their human laws, and Jews have had divine laws, but in neither case have the laws changed the desires of humans or transformed their natures from that which is evil into that which is good. Only by faith can a transformation of this kind occur. In this connection, Paul writes about justification by faith. Having pointed out that "no one will be justified in [God's] sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin," he goes on to say that everyone is "justified freely by [God's] grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ." And again, he says, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law." People are in need of justification because they are estranged from God. They are not living in harmony with their own best interests, which is equivalent to saying that they are not in harmony with the divine will. Justification is that which overcomes the estrangement and puts people on the right track, a process that happens when the Spirit of God takes possession of one's heart and life. A person's desires are changed, and a "new creature" emerges, which is what Paul means by salvation.

Having developed his argument concerning the means of salvation, Paul supports his position by referring to Abraham, as he did in his letter to the Galatians. Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness"; by faith, those who are his spiritual descendants can be saved. Jesus is the supreme example of faith in that he was a human being in whom the Spirit of God was manifested more completely than in any other person. In this respect, Paul thinks of Jesus as the ideal man in the same way that Adam was regarded as the symbol of the human race. Just as in Adam we all died, so in Christ are we all made alive. Adam's disobedience illustrates what happens in the lives of all human beings, and Jesus' triumph over the forces of evil illustrates what can happen when the Spirit takes possession of a person's entire nature. This point, Paul insists, is the true meaning of Christian baptism and symbolizes the death and burial of one's sinful nature and a resurrection into a new quality of living.

Paul's own experience with the Law when he was studying to become a rabbi is described at some length to demonstrate again the impotence of the Law in contrast with the power of faith to transform one's nature. Trying to achieve salvation through obedience to the Law was indeed a miserable type of existence, comparable to having a dead person strapped to one's own body. In this state of affairs, a person is a slave to sin, as Paul notes: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do." And again, "Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it." Under these conditions, Paul cries out in the name of humanity, "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?" The answer is that deliverance comes through faith in Jesus Christ: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

The effects of salvation will be manifest first in the changed life of the individual and then, as this salvation takes place in increasing numbers, in society. The life of the Spirit that frees one from bondage to the Law does not give one the license to sin, nor can laws legitimately be violated just because they conflict with one's immediate desires. The Christian will be a law-abiding citizen

whose freedom consists in the fact that he no longer wants to act contrary to laws. He will do what is right because he desires to act that way, not because he does it from a pure sense of duty or as a means of gaining a reward.

With reference to the future of the Jewish people, Paul expresses the hope that they, too, will be included with those who are saved through the gospel. Since the gospel is of divine origin and the great heroes of Israel achieved righteousness through faith, that the Jews would reject the gospel seems strange. When they refused to accept it, the opportunity was extended to the Gentiles. But Paul does not envision a complete break between Judaism and Christianity. He believes that the Jews eventually will come to accept the gospel since God is not willing that any person should perish but that all might be saved.

The closing part of Paul's Epistle to the Romans contains instruction in the manner of living. Paul tells the Christians in Rome to have respect for the civil government: "The authorities that exist have been established by God." He does not mean that Christians should obey the civil laws when these laws conflict with the laws of God but rather that Christians should not attempt to hide their conduct from the rulers nor escape the punishment that the state inflicts. Earthly governments are not perfect, and some laws are bound to be unjust. Nevertheless, laws preserve order in society, and Christians should abide by them. As in the other letters to different churches, Paul asks the Christians at Rome to contribute to the fund that he is gathering for the relief of the poor in Jerusalem.

Analysis

In no portion of the New Testament is the dynamic and universal character of Christianity set forth more clearly than in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, evidence of which can be seen in the fact that so many of the revival and reform movements in the course of Christian history have been started and promulgated by a restudy of this portion of the New Testament. For example, in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther's commentary on Romans was an important factor in the promotion of the Protestant Reformation, and in the twentieth century, when Karl Barth published his analysis of Romans, a new era was introduced in the contemporary interpretations of Christianity. Paul's letter to the church in Rome is without question one of the great documents in Christian literature. It has furnished the inspiration and guidance for many of the important developments that have taken place in the life of the church during the past and in all likelihood will continue to do so in the future.

The dynamic character of the gospel as Paul understands it is illustrated in the introductory portions of his letter, where Paul refers to the gospel as something that is powerful: "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." The gospel is more than the acceptance of a set of speculative ideas, even though these are not necessarily excluded; it is the righteousness of God, an active force operating in the lives of people who are ready and willing to receive it. Available to all those who recognize their need for it regardless of their religious backgrounds, the gospel does for those persons who are willing to accept it something that they are wholly unable to do for themselves: produce within them a changed nature so that the desires of their hearts will coincide with what they ought to do.

The universality of the gospel is exemplified in the way in which it completely transcends all distinctions between Jew and Gentile. Among the early Christians, as well as in other communities, certain people believed that salvation was only for the Jews. Paul's letter to the Romans addresses a church whose membership is composed of people from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds, and he wants to set forth the meaning of the gospel in terms that will be intelligible to all of them. Because he is familiar with both Judaism and Hellenistic culture, he uses concepts drawn from each of these sources to communicate his version of Christianity. Thus we

find him using the terminology of Jewish eschatology and apocalypticism, as well as the language of the mystery cults and other forms of Gentile religion, to explain his conception of the real significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His use of terms drawn from such different sources was not without its dangers: His readers might very well interpret these terms in a manner that was other than he intended. He did not want to convey the idea that the use of these terms in connection with the Christian religion was exactly like what either the Jews or the Gentiles had been taught. Rather, he used them to distinguish similarities that would aid in their proper understanding.

Salvation, as this term was used by the Jews of Paul's day, primarily refers to a future event when the kingdoms of this earth will be brought to an end and the new age identified as the kingdom of God will be established. The saved will be those who are not destroyed at that time but who will be permitted to live under the new order of things. Although Paul does not reject this view entirely, he couples with it the idea that salvation is something to be achieved here and now, as well as in the future. Being saved from yielding to evil temptations is achieved not by conformity or obedience to laws but by faith in the righteousness of God, manifested in the life of Jesus the Christ. In support of this conviction, Paul quotes the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk, who said that "the righteous will live by his faith." Paul's use of the word "faith" is somewhat different from that of the ancient prophet, for Habakkuk was speaking about his belief concerning the future that was in store for those who lived in obedience to the Law, or commands, of God; Paul is discussing a salvation that is apart from the Law. Thus we see how Paul uses a familiar Hebrew term to communicate to his readers a concept that was in some respects new to them.

In his discussion of the need for salvation, Paul implies what has often been called the doctrine of original sin. The Adam of the Genesis story is generally interpreted as a reference to all humanity. The same tendency toward evil present in Adam is also present in every human being. Yielding to these temptations brings about an estrangement between an individual and God. To explain the way in which this estrangement can be overcome, Paul draws analogies from customary court procedures and from concepts used in the mystery cults. He shows how all humans are guilty before God, and in this connection he speaks of justification and redemption. When the sinner acknowledges his guilt, he is accepted by God, and past sins are no longer held against him. Justified in the sense that the estrangement has been overcome, the former sinner is now in accord with the divine will, which does not mean that he will never sin again, but he will continually be aware of his need for improvement and will seek divine aid for its accomplishment. To explain the change that takes place in life when a person experiences justification and possesses the same spirit present in Jesus, Paul uses the language of the mystery cults. Just as the heroic redeemer of these cults experienced a death, burial, and resurrection, so Christian baptism means a death of one's old nature, a burial, and a resurrection in which one walks in a newness of life.

Summary and Analysis Letters Written in Captivity

Summary

When Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he expressed hope that he would visit the church in that city as soon as arrangements could be made following his journey to the city of Jerusalem. The visit to Rome was delayed for about three years, but when he finally reached the city, he arrived as a prisoner awaiting trial before the court of the emperor. While in Jerusalem, he was arrested on the charge of causing a riot in the Temple. After being held in prison in Caesarea for about two years, he was transferred to Rome at his own request to be tried. After spending about three years as a prisoner in Rome, he was tried and convicted.

Seven letters in the New Testament initially were credited to Paul on the assumption that he wrote them while a prisoner in Rome. However, three of these letters — 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus — now are generally recognized as belonging to a period somewhat later than Paul's death, and many New Testament scholars believe the same is true of the Epistle to the Ephesians, but the authorship question is in no way a completely settled issue. However, in all four of these letters, Paul's influence is recognizable; possibly they were written by disciples of Paul who wrote in accordance with the instruction that they believed he would have given. Three other letters — Philippians, Philemon, and Colossians — are still regarded as genuine letters of Paul, although some question remains about where they were written, for no conclusive evidence indicates whether it was Rome or Ephesus, in both of which Paul was a prisoner.

Philippians

The Epistle to the Philippians is an informal correspondence that Paul sent in response to a gift he received from the church at Philippi. Knowing that Paul was in prison and probably in need of material benefits, the Philippian church sent one of its members, Epaphroditus, with a gift of money and the intention of staying with Paul to assist him in any way that Epaphroditus could. However, Epaphroditus became ill and was forced to return home, and Paul sent this letter to the church of Philippi with him.

The letter begins with an expression of thanks for the gift and a prayer for the well-being of the church. With reference to his own personal experience, Paul says that his only desire is to be free from prison so that he might be of greater service to the church. Regarding it a great privilege to be counted worthy to suffer for the cause of Christ, he writes a famous hymn concerning Jesus, "who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." Paul commends this spirit of humility and service to the church at Philippi, urging that its members be of the same mind as that which was manifest in Jesus.

Paul tells the church members that Timothy will visit them in the near future and asks that they receive him with kindness. Interrupting the main course of his letter to warn against the propaganda being circulated by Jewish legalists, he reviews his own experiences with Judaism and his conversion to the Christian faith. With a few practical admonitions and a prayer for God's blessing on the Philippian church, Paul closes the letter.

Philemon

The Epistle to Philemon, a very short letter dealing with only one topic, certainly was written by Paul. Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, had in some way contacted Paul and come under the influence of the Christian gospel. For Paul, the situation was in some respects threatening: For a slave to desert his master was considered a very serious offense legally punishable by death, and anyone who apprehended a runaway slave was to return the slave immediately to the slave's

master. How long Paul knew about Onesimus we are not told, but evidently it was long enough for Onesimus to receive instruction concerning the meaning of the gospel. Once Onesimus accepted the Christian gospel, Paul insisted that the slave return to his master.

Paul's purpose in writing this letter is to request that Philemon not only take back Onesimus as his slave but that he treat him as a brother in Christ. The letter is written in a most tactful manner, for Paul knows that Philemon has a legal right to put Onesimus to death. Paul therefore appeals to Philemon's conscience as a Christian brother to recognize that Onesimus is not only a slave but also a child of God. In the eyes of the Roman government, Onesimus is a criminal deserving of death, but as Christians, both he and his master are brothers in Christ.

Colossians

The Epistle to the Colossians is addressed to a church that Paul did not visit. Epaphras, a visitor from Colossae, came to see Paul and brought news and greetings from the Christians in that city. Following a series of conversations with this visitor, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian church. One of the main purposes of the letter is to warn the church members about a certain dangerous philosophy that was making inroads in that community. The particular doctrine that Paul apparently had in mind was a form of Gnosticism, a mixture of both philosophical and religious ideas. Believing that matter is evil and only spirit is good, the Gnostics held that the physical world was not created by a supreme being because a perfect deity would not have direct contact with an evil world. The world came into existence through the action of a series of intermediary beings whose worship was a necessary means toward human salvation. Paul writes that in Jesus there dwells all the fullness of the Godhead; there is no need for the worship of these intermediary powers. Furthermore, he rejects the asceticism and the sensual indulgence associated with the Gnostic conceptions of salvation.

Analysis

The letters that Paul wrote while a prisoner either in Ephesus or in Rome are the latest writings of his that are preserved in the New Testament. They represent his most mature thought concerning the meaning of Christianity and are of special value for that reason. Although he has some things to say with reference to particular problems in local churches, he mainly discusses the significance of Jesus' life in relation to both the salvation of human beings and its place in the scheme of the universe as a whole. The letters are also of interest because they reveal the changes that took place in Paul's own thinking during the years following his conversion to Christianity. Perhaps the most significant change that can be noted in these later writings lies in the fact that Paul no longer talks about the end of the age in terms of Jewish apocalypticism. His teaching emphasizes the quality of living that is made possible when a person's life is transformed by the indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ.

Some critics maintain that in Paul's later years, he speaks less about the historic Jesus and more about the cosmic Christ. This criticism can be misleading if it suggests that, for Paul, the earthly life of Jesus was unimportant or did not provide the foundation on which Christianity is built. On the other hand, in Paul's judgment, the power of the one and only God of the universe, working in Jesus, makes Jesus' life significant and thus brings to all humanity an opportunity to see how the redemption of humanity can be achieved.

Summary and Analysis The Pastoral Letters

Summary

Three short letters in the New Testament are addressed to Christian pastors. Traditionally, these letters were attributed to Paul on the assumption that he wrote them while he was a prisoner in Rome. Two are addressed to Timothy, a young man whose parents became Christians prior to the time when Paul visited them in the town of Lystra, in Asia Minor. Timothy joined Paul in his missionary activities and continued to minister to the churches after Paul became a prisoner in Rome. The third letter is addressed to Titus, a young man born of Gentile parents who became a Christian and who was one of the delegates sent by the church at Antioch to accompany Paul and Barnabas when they went to Jerusalem for a meeting of the council. Nothing is said in either of the letters to Timothy about the occasion for writing, but the Epistle to Titus mentions that Paul is in prison.

New Testament scholars generally do not agree whether or not these letters, at least in their present form, were written by Paul. The reasons for not believing that Paul is the author are based partly on the letters' style and vocabulary, which are quite different from what we find in the older letters that Paul wrote. The theological conceptions that Paul used so frequently are absent, but the major reason why some scholars believe that Paul did not write these letters is that the ecclesiastical order that these letters presuppose did not exist in Paul's day. Perhaps the letters were written by someone who was an admirer of Paul and who wrote the kind of instruction of which he believed Paul would approve.

1 Timothy

1 Timothy was written to give instructions in worship and in church administration, and to warn against false teachings in the churches. Certain forms of worship should be observed, and certain types of conduct should be strictly avoided. Because both bishops and deacons were necessarily appointed in the churches, it was highly important that these offices be respected and that careful attention be given to the selection of men to fill them. The bishop must be above reproach, temperate, dignified, of a peaceful disposition, and not a lover of money. The deacons, too, must be men of serious mind, free from greed, and conscientious in all of their activities. They should be tested first, and only those who are blameless should be permitted to serve in that office.

The letter contains a special warning against the false beliefs and practices that were associated with Gnosticism. For example, the author specifies the asceticism that was advocated by some Gnostics in their efforts to overcome the demands of the physical body, and the opposite method that was urged by others who taught that indulgence in various forms of sensuality would accomplish the same purpose. Both asceticism and over-indulgence were based on the Gnostic conception that matter is evil; only that which is spirit is good. Christians are also warned against being misled by the godless myths that formed a part of the special kind of knowledge that Gnostics regarded as essential for salvation. The letter expresses reproof toward those who try to make a profit out of religion, and it contains instructions concerning the attitude that Christians should hold in their dealings with widows, presbyters, and slaves.

2 Timothy

Written by an experienced missionary, 2 Timothy urges Timothy to recognize that endurance is one of the main qualities essential for a successful preacher of the gospel. Evidently, situations developed within the churches that were especially difficult for Christian pastors. Timothy must stand firm and rekindle the gift of God that is within him. He must be willing to bear hardships when necessary and to conduct himself as a good soldier for God. He needs both courage and

humility to perform the tasks that have been assigned to him. In combating false doctrine, he must refrain from all that is ignoble and must show that he can differentiate words of truth from false doctrine. He can draw help and inspiration from the example of Paul, who is now at the end of his career and about to receive a crown of righteousness. The letter closes with personal greetings to the members of the church.

Titus

The Epistle to Titus contains three chapters. Similar in content to 1 Timothy, it specifies the qualifications for the office of bishop and gives instruction for the appointment of church elders. Because the bishop is God's steward, he must be blameless, hospitable, and able to control his temper, and he must not be arrogant, self-indulgent, or intemperate. He must have a firm grasp of the word of God and give instruction in sound doctrine. In dealing with the men and women who are members of the church, the bishop or elder in charge must train the congregation to be serious, temperate, sensible, and sound in faith, love, and steadfastness. Women are to be instructed to love their husbands and children. Younger men are to be taught to control themselves. Slaves should be taught obedience to their masters, and Christians must avoid hatred and wrangling. They should be encouraged to manifest meekness, gentleness, and courtesy, which are made possible by God's mercy in Christ.

Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians can scarcely be called a pastoral letter since it was not addressed to a particular church leader. We have no proof that Paul wrote the letter, although it was supposed for a long time that he did. The evidence contained in the letter itself suggests very strongly that the letter was written after Paul's death, probably by one of his disciples who may have wanted it to appear that Paul wrote the letter because of the added prestige that his authorship would give to it. Although Paul was with the church in Ephesus for a period of about three years and would certainly have formed some close personal friendships, the letter does not contain personal greetings to particular individuals.

No mention is made of the Jewish controversy over legalism, which is found in nearly all of Paul's letters. The most convincing argument of all that Paul did not write the letter is the fact that reference is made to the apostles and prophets as the foundation of the church; Paul always insisted that the church had no foundation other than Jesus Christ. The letter was evidently written for the churches at a time when church organization had proceeded quite beyond the point it reached while Paul was still living.

Two main themes are expounded in the letter: the unity of all things in Christ and the Christian church as the visible symbol here on earth of that unity. The author of the letter asserts that Jesus' life reveals the divine purpose that has existed since the creation of the world. The centuries-old disunity is due to humanity's sin. The Spirit of God made manifest in the life of Jesus here on this earth has shown how this disunity can be overcome and the original harmony restored.

Overcoming evil in the lives of human beings achieves a unity not only between humans and God but a cosmic unity that unites all things on earth and in heaven. Therefore, there is no need for any worship of powers that are intermediary between heaven and earth, as was taught by Gnostics.

Unity has been achieved between Jews and Gentiles through the person of Christ. The Gentiles, who at one time were separated from the people of God and who were in bondage to the evil powers of the universe, are now offered salvation and have been made one with the children of God through Jesus Christ. A new household of God has been created through the preaching of the apostles and the Christian prophets. The church has been called into being to bear witness to the divine purpose and to knit together people from all races and nations into a single community in

which God dwells through his Spirit. The letter closes with ethical instructions for the members of the church from which this unity may be achieved. Because the church is the visible body of Christ, it must grow strong in the bonds of love as it fulfills its mission in the world.

Analysis

Although the pastoral letters can scarcely be attributed directly to Paul, they do contain passages that have every indication of Pauline authorship. Paul's influence can be seen in certain passages, even though such passages are now combined with other material that seemed appropriate for the conditions that existed in the churches at the time when the letters were written. The letters are especially valuable from a historical point of view since they reveal the beginnings of the type of church organization that, with modifications, has persisted even to this day.

From a religious point of view, the letters are inferior to those written by Paul. The chief difference lies in the fact that the pastoral letters do not show the close connection between Christian faith and Christian living that is so characteristic of Paul's writings. Paul never failed to point out that the fruits of the spirit would always be expressed in the quality of one's daily living. Faith was something that gripped the entire personality, and the results could be seen in one's actions, as well as in one's attitudes and beliefs. The pastoral letters emphasize two duties that are incumbent on all Christians: to believe certain things and to do certain things. However, the way in which these duties are related is not set forth in the manner that Paul so clearly made in his letters to the churches.

Despite this weakness, the letters set forth a high standard for Christian living. They contain practical instruction for meeting the problems that arise in daily life, and their message can be understood even by those who are not theologically inclined.