

S A I N T P A U L

**THE
GREATEST**

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"BLESSED BE HIS NAME"

A Critical Appraisal

by

WILLIAM I. NICHOLS

DEDICATED TO
MY BELOVED FAMILY

Of St. Paul, some said "the Grace of God is within him." Others, who did not throw stones at him, blessed his presence because he made them feel like equals; they who were Gentiles! They were comforted! It's a grand purpose! Yes, Paul's presence gave the divine spark. And no wonder! He made it possible for Christianity to exist and expand. He made it possible for humankind to feel exalted whilst in the midst of poverty and without any of the world's riches. Paul, in so many words, left no doubt where he stood. Advertising and promotion people of today can improve their techniques by following his example. Paul does show the way; there is none better.

The Author.

M A N Y T H A N K S T O . . .

-- Those people who channeled my thoughts of biblical lore and the love of it.

-- The many writers of St. Paul whose publications gave me inspiration.

-- The readings of the New Testament itself; the publication issued by the Society of the Daughters of St. Paul with the Imprimatur of His Excellency, Richard Cardinal Cushing, now deceased, formerly Archbishop of Boston.

-- And, to Taylor Caldwell for "Great Lion of God," a most enjoyable review of St. Paul's life, and to J.W.C. Wand, His Excellency, Archbishop of Australia, one of his many books called "What Paul Really Said" now residing in London, England adjacent to St. Paul's Cathedral.

This has been a writing of joy.

William I. Nichols,

The Author.

P R E F A C E

To fulfill my promise of yesteryear, the creation of this Book is indeed a revelation to the author. Here I am, a young man of 77 years, who suddenly recalled that a Book on St. Paul, the Apostle had to be written.

Sounds corny, but true! From my boyhood I've always admired St. Paul and what he stood for.

Here is the promise and I am sure you will enjoy the Book. As a human being St. Paul made some mistakes, but look what he accomplished!

To my readers, I hand you a labor of love, and my sincere good wishes.

For myself, I have accomplished what I set out to do.

With gratitude and many thanks.

WILLIAM I. NICHOLS

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Chapter 1

How the Story Begins

Into our long history of Christian Civilization did there appear a duplicate of Paul anywhere? Without Paul there would be no Christianity and no Christian Churches such as exist now. Paul's organizing ability set the groundwork of the Church structure and gave it strength while it was wobbly and young. The same can be said for its internal operation--the deacons, presbyters, priests, abbots and bishops, etc.

Here is more than forty years of selfless service dedicated to God and man. Paul was certain God was aware of him and more certain of himself through His Son, Jesus Christ, of whom he was an Apostle.

Blessed be he, blessed be we having had Paul to give us direction unto God's work and the blessings of mankind.

"I, Paul, Apostle of Jesus Christ, Son of God" was the oft-repeated opening quote in his Epistles and in his personal preachments and dissertations to gatherings of people and to his beloved congregations as well. His Epistles have made him famous throughout the civilized world, telling of his hopes and promises for the future. You might conclude that Paul was a kinetic man! People came in droves because of his eloquence. His impressive appearance and his commanding tone of voice plus his constancy for Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, has never been equalled, nor has his value to Christianity ever been properly equated.

With widest respect and greatest admiration, this author pays homage.

As mentioned, St. Paul personally made many, many converts among the Gentile-Pagans. The ritual of prayer was the formula laid down by Paul into every act of Church procedure. The Epistles themselves have

made such a deep impression on the Church hierarchy in later years that thirteen of them were selected and reproduced in the New Testament. Thus St. Paul has created an imperishable monument to his memory; bestowing such honor is certainly perpetuating his greatness.

Paul's dissertations, preachments and epistles were meant to beseech the public, to beg, warn, scold, threaten, scare, arouse, praise and flatter, each in his turn. The people loved it! And who were these people? By association, having grown up amongst Gentiles-Pagans in Tarsus and elsewhere, Paul knew their habits intimately. In his youth, he had a Greek tutor who lived with his family and taught the young Paul the Greek language as well as making him fluent in Latin. For Aramaic and Hebrew, he had another learned teacher. Paul was fortunate to be well educated. You could say this young man would amount to something some day. This was Hebrew culture at its best and would be very useful in time. Paul studied to be a rabbi under Gamaliel, chief rabbi of Jerusalem. In those two years he was chosen by Gamaliel because of his brightness and mental agility in exegesis, the study of the Holy Scrolls and its shades of meanings, and that of a Disputant, master in debating.

It was a busy time in Jerusalem, which was the fountainhead of the then religious sects. Unrest was very evident. People were aggrieved. Rome was the conqueror of sizable territory including all of Judea, Greece, Asia Minor, the Bosphorus, Cilicia, Syria and territory in-between. But the predominance of Hebrew culture existed almost everywhere. Surprising to many contemporary writers was to find Hebrew congregations in these lands. This was Paul's introduction and most useful to him when he did start to preach. Some authors refer to this time as the Diaspora --the scattering of the Hebrew people whose Holy Temple in Jerusalem was

destroyed by the Romans. Because of Paul's secular knowledge and Roman citizenship, he got around and was hospitably received by the Hebrew congregations until he abused the privilege and thus engendered hostility. So let's be mindful in stating facts; hospitality and hostility cannot mean the same thing. He, Paul, made many enemies.

Paul's life from early childhood was dedicated to serving God. There never was any doubt about it, his pious father saw to that. Such service was most worthy and gives an insight into Paul's character. But the father shrewdly taught him a trade, just in case. From it, he was able to earn his daily upkeep.

Paul was and is an inspiration to thinkers and writers. Many things in Christian doctrine were innovated by Paul. He dared to be different. He shows all that in his canonical or pastoral letters to Titus and to Timothy. He never hesitated to say "do it my way."

We need a "look-back" to justify many of Paul's acts. His background and learning were towards the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. He had been brought up as a Pharisee Hebrew--the strictest of the strict--by his parents. What caused him to deviate from this strict upbringing and to become the organizer of the Christian Church? No one has the answer to this riddle. To his dying day, Paul personally prayed as a Hebrew. To Biblical scholars, it is an enigma. So be it!

Let us recall those biblical times. Religion seemed a daily, most important topic. People were more serious; religion was serious; people were simple. They needed a belief; they literally craved it.

According to the Hebrews, a Messiah was coming! When, nobody knew. No date had been set. For hundreds and hundreds of years He had been expected. His Coming was to give the miserable and poor people a chance

for a better life. There were problems. The Messiah is still looked for today, even as a Hope. But today economics is the panacea.

Since the Hope was an established fact, there arose a goodly group of men each year who styled themselves as prophets, saints, and holy men and who travelled over the then civilized world piously proclaiming their kinship with God. These occurrences were so prevalent then that the great body of people became accustomed to such spectacles.

It is recorded that the writings of Jeremiah, who lived six hundred years before Jesus, was the model for Jesus, subject to certain changes. While Jeremiah spoke of the vengeful God who will not pardon your sins unless you repent, it was Jesus who revised this formula and spoke of God who loved and pardoned sinners. Thus, Jesus had the benefit of all prophets and their thinking who had come before Him. God's love of people seemed more agreeable to the general public.

Many of these prophets, self-styled saints and messiahs came and went; they did not last too long. Ridicule, abuse and stoning, which is still popular today, often dispersed them into oblivion. They had no Paul to "put over the message." It's as if "Western Union" came to your door empty-handed, though it isn't likely. Paul was not only "Western Union," but he had the Message and the fortitude to stick with it. He repeated that Message over and over again. He never tired of it.

To this very day the Message is loud and very clear. Jesus was the Christ, the greatest of them all, and no other master, prophet, saint or holy man could approach this Messiah. He was The Messiah--Jesus Christ! He had come! He had been crucified! He had risen! Now a new dawn of redemption was ready for those of the people who believed in Him. It all seemed so simple.

"Truly I have been re-born," spoke Paul, when he was revived from an epileptic fit on the well-traveled road to Damascus. We must retrace our steps to gain the perspective of our story.

Paul was born Saul. That's definite. He was of an orthodox Hebrew family, followers of all the holiness that was akin to the Pharisees in their practice of prayer and the ritual uses of food and water. They can be compared as intense in their religious life. Prayer in such a household is almost a continual procedure, beginning at dawn: a thanksgiving prayer to God for having survived the night, a joyful prayer to God for the day's beginning, a thanksgiving prayer to God upon washing the hands and face, a mid-day prayer to God for the morsels of good eaten and water drunk, and a special one if wine was at the table or whenever guests were present. Came the evening, there were thanksgiving prayers to God for the blessings of life and living. When the stars shone brightly and the firmament above glowed in its heavenly glory, then with this came contentment in his heart for the safety of family and flocks. Came the night, prayers of thanksgiving to God that all was well on Earth and appreciation of these things for which he felt humble and unworthy. Wisdom, gratefulness and patience is well taught by the Old and New Testaments. Prayer was mighty important, then and now. The wonder is that Paul cast all this aside. In his Christian life he refuted the Hebrew rituals and customs, but in actual practice he was a religious Pharisee Hebrew. He saw nothing incongruous about that and we shall see how he really lived in two worlds.

That you will understand what prayer meant in Paul's day, you could say your prayers seven times a day if you were an adult. Boys of five received religious instruction in Hebrew and Aramic. At thirteen they

were considered and had the status of men. They had their turn on the Sabbath reading portions from the Holy Scrolls. They could marry at fourteen. After the thirteenth birthday, they could study further into the Talmud. If scholarly, they could become knowledgeable in Exegesis and become proficient in interpreting passages in the Talmud to ascertain the writers' true intent and explain obscurities. This was considered a mark of respect and wisdom. Not everyone was that educated; Paul was. As a trained Disputant he loved to argue. In today's world, you would call him an excellent debater.

So it was that at age 16 1/2 or 17, Paul was very well grounded in religion. He showed no interest in marriage. Instead, he pursued further studies with Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem for the next two years and became familiar with Hebrew life, customs and the comings and goings of pilgrims and the faithful to the holy of holies, the Temple. It was impressionable on any serious young man. Rabbi Gamaliel was convinced that Paul was his brightest student. Since there were always agitators in Jerusalem, Paul learned a great deal and participated in some. All this time, he practiced his trade of tentmaking and earned enough for his daily living.

Greek culture, the Greek gods and Hellenistic influence existed in all walks of life, although the Romans had conquered all. It was Roman law everywhere. Paul was a Roman and travelled wherever he chose protected by this citizenship. To the extent of his father's wisdom in such a world, he grounded his son to be a tentmaker like himself so that his son would never be in want. It was a business much in demand. People, for the most part, were nomadic. They lived in tents. They could tend their herds of sheep or goats and fold their tents easily to move to

other locations. References in biblical times called attention to these people as shepherds with their flocks. All through his missionary journeys, Paul never accepted gratuities for his churchly labors. His trade as tentmaker made his living and he enjoyed his Independence.

Paul was a restless youth. Probably no more than others. Young blood stirring. From birth he was afflicted with epilepsy. As such, he was always full of visions. He was advised to stay out of the mid-day sun. But when he was normal, he was bouncing to go. A good thing, too. Otherwise we would not have had a Christian Church these two thousand years.

Well, it came to pass that on this certain day, with the sun very high and a purse-full from his father, Paul said farewell to his family and set out by foot, which was the custom, for Jerusalem. He had to go by way of Damascus. Before he arrived, however, the heat of the noon-day sun gave him an epileptic fit. As he recovered from the seizure he proclaimed to one and all that he had been re-born. "I am Paul. I have been re-born," he exclaimed. "I had a vision." Travelers attracted to his plight thought he was a holy man and offered to help. These were the Samaritans of the time--a religious sect. Paul kept repeating, "I am Paul. I am re-born." Upon closer attention he told the story of his vision. "A heavenly light and Jesus appeared and said Paul, why dost thou persecute me? I am the Son of God sent to redeem men's souls. Arise and sin no more."

The first thing he did was to cast aside the stones he carried to annoy the earliest Christians; he was in horror and ashamed of himself for his past misdeeds. Years later, when he himself was stoned, he barely escaped with his life.

Now that he had had this vision of Jesus Christ, and it had changed his whole life from Saul to Paul, he converted himself from a nearby running water fountain, which became his Baptismal Font. To this day, this symbol has never changed. The Baptismal Font is as enduring as Christianity.

Paul refreshed his thirst, washed his hands and said a ritual prayer of thanks to God in Hebrew because he was still a Hebrew and still recited his prayers as a Pharisee. He never forgot that he personally was a Hebrew.

Every act became significant. The impact on Paul was shattering. While trudging along on the high road he did much thinking. He decided he must immerse himself in the history of the life and times of Jesus. Why was Jesus' ministry so short; what did He preach, what did He say in His Sermon on the Mount; what did He do in those few years before He was crucified?

Paul retired to the desert to contemplate, supposedly for nearly two years. He had to retrace the steps of Jesus. What he learned, he believed. And always the vision of Jesus kept repeating its command and gave him the assurance that guided him to his great future. Before this he had been a skeptic and non-believer. Wasn't this vision God's command?

Even when he returned from the desert Paul decided the vision implied God's command to go forward. He had been consecrated to God anyway and wasn't Jesus His only begotten Son? Thus, serving the Son's cause would be serving the Father. This sounded logical to Paul and he was overjoyed at the opportunity. His life was to be dedicated to His service, without cost or money reward, not even for his expenses or maintenance. This was a triumph for Jesus Christ when Paul became the forerunner of evangelists, the spearhead of Christianity. Paul seemingly cast aside all his Pharisaic background and embraced whole-heartedly the Christian religion. For himself,

though, Paul was a Hebrew until the end; the hold of the old was too strong.

He needed authority for such an undertaking, so he journeyed to Jerusalem to the Apostolic Council where he presented his plan. After a stormy two-week session, Paul was appointed both an Apostle and a Saint with missionary work to be done strictly among Gentiles. The other Apostles did not like Paul and showed it, especially Peter, who was quick to remind Paul of his early hostility to the young Christian religion. Paul retracted and asked for forgiveness. Peter grudgingly had to admit Paul was a special emissary and needed by them.

Paul began immediately, while still in Jerusalem. He was greeted by friends at the Holy Temple. Everyone seemed interested in his vision. They were anxious to hear about the Messiah. The Hebrews had been expecting a messiah for a long, long time.

But when Paul told his listeners about the vision of Jesus, who had revealed that He, Jesus, was the Messiah, there was a stony silence of disbelief. It seemed incredulous to them! What they wanted was proof. They yearned for a messiah these many centuries and needed one now. Paul gave them a vision to believe and expected a fast answer. The answer was fast enough: it was an emphatic "No." Why should they trade the reliability of a God who had protected them thus far these thousands of years for an untried entity who said He was the Son of God? Didn't they already have God? And, weren't they all sons?

It was an anomaly and a real puzzler to Paul. The Hebrews kept telling Paul that "In time, God, who is always just, would provide the clue when the Messiah would come."

Paul was not to be denied. He had to continue his forward thrust.

He couldn't retire to ignominy and defeat. He couldn't accept failure. Was not the vision of Jesus a command for the future?

This occasioned a most violent change of policy on Paul's part. Why not, he thought to himself, accept Gentile-Pagans who worshipped idols? Really, why not? He preferred Hebrew converts; they were the most intelligent in their awareness of God. Besides, they were circumcised. If only he could get around the circumcision problem. But how! The answer seemed unanswerable! Paul still persisted in visiting many synagogues hoping to get Hebrew converts, but after many stonings he definitely had to find the answer elsewhere.

The answer, Paul found, was close at hand. The answer was in himself. Faith and Baptism was the answer; he would use Baptism and Immersion in water. It became a fact! How simple! No longer would circumcision be necessary. He would undertake his missionary work among the Gentiles. Faith! This was also a rebuke to the Hebrews who would not join him. Customs then were strong, as they still are today. Even now, several thousand years later as a matter of factual history, circumcision among Hebrews still exists. Today medical skills have replaced the foractitioner; they were generally as good as any surgeon. Usually a newly-born boy was circumcized on his seventh day. Hebrew law says so, to keep him vigorous and healthy. It was done so swiftly the child would feel no pain. He healed quickly. The man who performed the circumcision said a prayer for the future of the youngster followed by a glass of wine and perhaps some cake. Even Paul, as a rabbi, took it upon himself to actually circumcise Timothy, who was a grown man. Just to please Peter, who had sent Timothy to be Paul's assistant, Paul undertook the responsibility. Timothy looked upon Paul as his spiritual father because of that act.

Paul had to say farewell to all this sentiment for his future converts, but he secretly admired circumcision as a way of life. St. Peter believed in it, but St. Paul opposed it, and Paul gained his point.

Christian Churches were scarce enough at the beginning, so private homes were used until regular houses of worship could be built for services. It is interesting to note that many churches were actually designed and built by Paul. They had to be uniquely different from their Hebrew counterparts. Thus were added spires, belfries and the cross. The spire, being tall, was a symbol of reaching into heaven; the belfry usually had a bell tolling, calling the faithful to prayer; the cross indicated that this was a Christian church and was symbolic of the Crucifixion.

It would be useful at this point to digress for a moment and find out what the difference is between a church and a synagogue. None, really. We have already shown how Paul's ideas worked in building churches. He was an innovator. Church and synagogue are both God's houses dedicated to worship. By Paul's command, the church is much more secular, built to express its religion. The Hebrew synagogue is a gathering place for people to recite their daily prayers, a daily school for the young; sort of a parochial school. Free public schools were unknown, but most important, the synagogue was set aside for a continuous study of the Talmud from the Holy Scrolls to ascertain assertions and meanings of what the scribes in those days really had in mind. We are talking about the times of Father Abraham and the Law given to Moses. It was Moses who gave us the Ten Commandments and the Law by which the Hebrews are governed. St. Paul constantly refers to the Law in his preachings, since he was so conversant with it. Roman law was civil law, Hebrew Law was the

religious law of both Hebrews and Christians. Recall, if you will, that there was nothing written down for Paul to follow. He created in these Epistles a "modus operandi" for the existence of the Christian system of ethics, character, honesty, love, charity, faith, hope, wisdom, piety, honor, moral virtues, right thinking and maturity.

In Paul's time, the churches he built were primitive. As time went by, they became grandiose, rich and opulent. In their young enthusiasm the churches grew and prospered, especially after Paul in the centuries that followed. So powerful were they that artisans were engaged full time just serving the Church as sculptors, fresco artists, and those younger in years who created figures and figurines of angels and cherubim into iron gates, doors and porticoes. It was considered a great honor to serve the Church as a career. Thus it would appear that idolatry had returned full cycle--and embraced! Not so with Paul.

Chapter II

The Transformation of Saul into Paul

From birth, like most male youngsters born of Pharisee families, Saul who later became Paul was inured, grounded and trained in the Pharisee tradition. That meant being a strict conformist. At the early age of five he could already recite his daily prayers to God and already knew that his life was to be dedicated to the service of God.

Yet Saul was a precocious and very bright child. He was born in Tarshish, or Tarsus, in Cilicia reasonably close to the border of Turkey, a university town, which was a province of the Roman Empire. Nowadays, the country is called Syria. This was a good distance from Jerusalem, the Holy of Holies, toward which men turned when offering prayers. It was the capital of the Hebrew world. Saul's grandparents, uncles, and cousins lived there. Visits from time to time to these relatives endeared the association of the holy places tied with these visits. All in all, they were strongly memorable to Saul. The impression it made on the lad was quite overwhelming. Jerusalem seemed written on his heart, never to be erased.

Saul was a red-head and fiery, but studious. At the local Hebrew school in Tarshish, the schoolmaster lauded and praised Saul to his father. That pleased the father. To further round out Saul's education, the father procured an experienced Athenian tutor, who became a member of the household. The teacher taught the boy to read and write Greek, which was the current language of the day. Saul got an insight into the outer world and it broadened his views. It was of inestimable value to the young, eager and impressionable Pharisee. He appeared less austere and

was mellowing. It was most satisfying. His parents were very proud. Saul had the best of everything; nothing lacked.

He had the time and the inclination to become a graduate lawyer and ~~be~~ admitted to the Roman Bar, although it is not known that he ever practiced the profession. He did use it in his study of exegesis and as a Disputant later on. His knowledge of law saved his own life on several occasions.

As a child and a youth he was never of a playful nature. His visage was stern and brooding. Unless you were a Pharisee. If you were a Sadducee, you received less tolerance from Saul. It was his world and his world alone. Even applied to his grandparents, uncles and cousins, Saul was none too gracious. These liberals were Sadducees in religion and attributed Saul's secularism to a boyish interlude which would in time pass on. These relatives in Jerusalem were well off financially and had provided Saul's mother with a generous dowry so that he never felt the pinch of hunger.

Be it written to the everlasting glory of his father that Saul had to learn a trade, just in case the need arose. The father's trade was that of tentmaker. As an obedient son, Saul did learn the trade well and did earn his own keep on his missionary journeys instead of living off people who offered their hospitality. He was a rugged individualist, showing his independence that way. Because of it, he made enemies--at least until he explained. Too much hospitality would make him beholden to others. The fear was that too many believers would boast. His enemies would melt, knowing his attitude when he explained; others would adore him.

In time, as predicted, Paul mellowed. The great vision he had on the Damascus high road did it. This was God's call through His only

begotten Son, and a mandate from Yeshua, who was not called Jesus Christ just yet (Paul so identified Him later). It seemed so logical that Paul journeyed into the desert for a spell to think over these crashing events. Paul needed to think, to pause and create a plan. This took several years of meditation and from it came the whole man, the revealing man, the man incomparable--St. Paul. No longer the boy or the youth, but the transformed man complete.

When Paul finally did emerge from the desert, he proceeded to the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem and told his story before them in detail of the remarkable vision he had had and its important impact on him. Whereupon the Apostolic Council, of which St. Peter was the head, listened closely in astonishment but with suspicion.

Hadn't Paul had a change of heart? Wasn't he the one who aided and abetted the stoning of St. Stephen, the first martyr? Wasn't he persecuting other followers of Yeshua by serving Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor who never had any love for the Hebrews, in so many other stonings? This acrimony went on and on for many days. Seemingly it would never end, but it did!

The Apostolic Council, despite its own dislike for Paul and his many acts, pondered and weighed his many statements. They would rather be counted as an ally and friend using his valuable services and inborn gifts in their cause.

Although St. Peter disliked Paul, it was Paul who showed him the greatest respect as an elder and chief. Better a friend than an enemy.

It wasn't too easy for Paul to be accepted by the Council. There was a certain uneasiness over whether they had chosen wisely. After all, Paul had to admit he was a turncoat. But he begged forgiveness and it

was granted.

Immediately there was controversy and dissension. Among the Hebrew congregations Paul was an invited guest. As such, he would spend those few minutes talking about the Messiah and extolling Yeshua as the Divine Being, the only begotten Son of God, who was crucified for man's sins and who had redeemed all mankind. But not all Hebrews would accept Yeshua, or His divinity, nor even that He was the Messiah. The Messiah was truly coming, no one knew where or how, but Yeshua was not he! God would give them a sign ahead of time for the coming of the Messiah.

Those Hebrews who did accept Yeshua did so as part of the Hebrew religion. Wasn't Paul a Pharisee who could claim it, and did?

What made the Hebrews so unique among men? People who believed in it were but a tiny segment of the world's population, but they held to that one belief over the centuries: the divinity of one God and the freedom of man. Paul believed in it and so did the Apostles. When Yeshua preached, He did it as a Hebrew and when He said "I am no divider of men" He meant Hebrew men of the Hebrew world, and all the Apostles believed it. So did Paul.

But when Paul, having gone from one synagogue to another preaching, had such poor results, he and the Apostolic Council decided Paul should find newer fields to avoid further hostilities and injury to himself. It was decided that he go abroad among the Hebrews of the Diaspora--that is, the Hebrews who lived away from Jerusalem.

Paul diligently tried and tried, but success avoided him. The Hebrews outside Jerusalem were just as hostile to him. They wanted nothing to do with theories. The old-fashioned was good enough for them. Religion is hard to throw over, especially when you're brought up to believe in the old.

Paul was up against this and other problems. He determined to recast the whole idea.

He would be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

From the Greek language he coined the name Jesus Christ for the Messiah who was Yeshua; his sect would be called Christians, after the word Christ (the word comes from the Greek word "Krystos," meaning King or Lord).

Heretofore you were a Hebrew Christian observing the circumcision ritual. Paul argued that circumcision would be unnecessary in the future: he concluded that faith alone would be required. The other Apostles rejected the thought as being contrary to Mosaic Law but they permitted it for a short testing period. As Paul had predicted, the results were astounding, and Christianity went on to greater and greater growth and fame.

Chapter III

Justifying the Means

Paul's facile mind dwelt only on his revelation of the vision Jesus. This had come to him, as you know, on the high road to Damascus. He just couldn't possibly shake it. It was irresistible! And constant! He knew he was a Witness; he saw it, no matter that no one else did. To think people would take his word for it and believe in it through Paul's powerful persuasion is the most astonishing achievement of all mankind. All of a sudden, these simple Gentiles had a ready-made God and His Son who would give them salvation, who would be their protector!

Only Paul could identify the vision of Jesus as the Hebrew Messiah, the anointed one among Hebrews, the Messiah they had long awaited. Hundreds of years is a pretty long time to wait. But the Messiah was expected each year. Many of the prophets and messiahs lasted so short a time. They came and went; disappeared forever.

The word "Lord" was Christ in Greek, which was the prevailing classical language. Just as you might say "Sir" or "Master." Lord or Christ had no meaning before then. Paul, however, improvised himself the meaning of Lord and Christ with power, respect, prestige and identity. He gave the word religious significance, much higher than mankind and slightly lower than God.

This Messiah, this Jesus, was different. Hadn't He been crucified on the cross and died for man's sins? Hadn't He redeemed Himself in order to sanctify your life? Here is a Master, a Sir, who is the Son of God, doing something for you for nothing, saving your soul for all eternity, and all for love. You make no sacrifice, just promise to obey a few

simple rules. That's all. Does this justify the means? Here is a pure religion to grasp. And, among the Gentiles, they did grasp eagerly.

To his everlasting glory, Paul improvised. Were we concerned about the Divine Kingdom to come? Did we not all hope for that? A lifetime being too short, it was time therefore to think of the hereafter; the perpetual life that begins after death. Didn't Paul promise a hereafter wrapped up in the glory of Jesus Christ? Of course, there were some vague interludes. Shouldn't you accept faith? This prophet of Nazareth as the Saviour Eternal and Jesus Christ were one. Jesus was outside of time at the beginning and end of history. It was easy thus to put together the trilogy such as "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit." To solidify the connection a believer in Christ; a membership. Everyone can join and be interrelated. A gigantic thought. Here was terrific political power. Paul disdained politics and shunned it. So did the other Apostles. Only hundreds of years later did the Church use this power as a political asset.

Paul was a great believer in himself. He exhorted his converts and his clergy to be humble in spirit, to love thy neighbor, to do good to each other, to be worthy Christians "in Christ" and he points out in his Epistles how important this is. In Titus, Timothy I and II--though dealing with pastoral matters--dwells upon the duties of bishops and their contacts with congregations. He kept referring to harmonious relations between all brothers and internally in families, husband and wife and children. He felt and convinced everyone that to be "in Christ" was life's ideal. And to work toward that end was a must. He was far ahead of his era, as you now surmise.

Love, faith and hope were of the greatest importance to Paul. This was something to conjure, but it had to come from God. It was not something handed out; you had to pray for it to be received. This was part of Paul's humility. Of all, he chose love as the greatest of the three. He wanted it emphatically understood that this was God's own Spirit, through Christ, to live in harmony and eradicate all barriers between men. Through Christ's life of reconciliation and service, it meant that man, through the thoughts and words of believing in these things, received possession of the proper spirit to build on love, faith and hope. To be worthy, you had to be "in Christ." To Gentile-Pagans this was a revelation. They had never heard of a Christ before, so "in Christ" was sensational and that's why they flocked to be converted.

The deeper you study St. Paul, the more you realize what a perceptive brain he had. And, so human! Beset as he was with people's problems of existence and daily living, he was concerned with their grinding poverty and unhappiness. He was no reformer concerned with social or political matters. His world was spiritual; he belonged to God and His Son. For instance, why was man's life so short, so few in years? Was it God's plan? He sought the reason but to no avail. It was a riddle of the universe to him, as it is to modern thinkers today.

Since that riddle was unsolvable, Paul was able to promise perpetuity by guaranteeing a hereafter life. Thus the span of life lengthened only because the Jesus image was strong. Paul could really preach through strength. All you had to do was believe in Jesus Christ. To be "in Christ" you wrote yourself a one-way ticket to the Kingdom of Heaven and foreverness. Just leave it to Christ; He'll wait for you and do everything! Paul scored heavily with such a philosophy. The wisdom is and

must reach into the Infinite! Wasn't this a clever stroke to include faith and hope? The other Apostles, saints and evangelists admired Paul's thinking. Great results were achieved. Others copied it. It was so good Christianity never stopped growing! Here is how Paul did it. Let us quote:

He has chosen you from all eternity to enjoy the blessings of salvation through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit and through loyal acceptance of the truth. To this end he called you by the instrumentality of my preaching of the Gospel to make you sure of ultimately sharing the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was so sure he was loved and accepted that he employed a bit of conceit about his style of preaching and he says he guarantees entrance into heaven to believers in Christ. And, what's more, there will be room for you: don't crowd the gates! Don't forget the brethren--love one another! Not the 'mushy' kind of love, the kind that means helping each other.

Paul is also aware that crime exists in a big way. He is against iniquity of all kinds:

It is not honesty, but only crime, that needs to fear the police. Do you wish to walk undismayed in the sight of authority? Then be honourable. Those who are in Christ are ever watchful to respect the law and the magistrates. We must help each other to eliminate crime. The magistrate is God's agent to uphold the law for your benefit. It is doubly necessary that we carefully watch our behavior to avoid penalty and for the sake of our own conscience. Owe no debt to anyone except that of love.

This was the grim time of Nero, who ruled the Roman Empire sternly. The young Christian religion felt his heavy hand everywhere. He was merciless. Paul was troubled and doubly aware of the problem. Peter, too, found these days trying. Like Paul, he felt that their own days were numbered. They called on the brethren to obey the law and be

circumspect in all things. The Will of God means the obligation of obedience. Those who rebel reject the Law and the Will of God. By so doing, and by their rectitude, people can have the good life to enjoy. It was a time for resolution. Keep strongly on the side of the law and nothing will befall you. Yet, contrawise, Paul delineates a law that refutes previous statements by saying "Moral or ritual obedience is not required to a code of Law but should be inspired by your devotion through Jesus Christ; you yourself are to judge."

How important it is to work. Work is obvious. How else will you earn your living? God demands it, said Paul. Time moves forward, not backward. How else can you share with the less fortunate?

Chapter IV

Paul's Mission

The reader may wonder why Paul was unique. Instead of proclaiming his own holiness, he kept repeating "Jesus, Jesus, the Son of God!" "The Christ, the Redeemer!" Paul did not ask anyone's opinion whether this idea would be acceptable in the eyes of other men or women; it was his own idea. He knew he had to be successful. Hadn't he had a mandate from heaven? Did he not have a vision? This vision clearly told him what to do, and he was doing it with all the zeal at his command. Being a healthy young man, he gave the cause twenty-four hours a day of his efforts. Therefore, all these religious acts given in the name of Jesus were readily believed. There had existed no ministry heretofore and thus Paul had to create such a structure.

People came from far away to hear Paul. They marvelled at his generous spirit and wondered at his beatific expressions and his love of God and his devotion to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Being of Hebrew origin but well versed in Greek, Paul was the first to take a "dead man" and breathe life into the legend "Jesus lives again." When Paul said "Christ Lives, Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, begotten and sanctified by God," he stood as a prophet, as a great holy man, as an Apostle, as a messenger that could be accepted, trusted and respected. It seemed like a sign from heaven.

People had to believe in something. They were ready to believe in Paul. He showed the way. Imagine the imaginations; it takes courage.

It is repetitious but necessary to recall that Paul sincerely believed the Hebrews would come flocking to his standard. But they didn't. At

solemn Sabbath services, Paul brazenly preached about Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, to an unsuspecting and amazed Hebrew congregation who then felt he was defiling their synagogue. He repeated himself too often and they became resentful. This dislike grew and he was even stoned occasionally.

One must here go back into history a bit to give you some background. There was Jeremiah, for example, a prophet who lived about six hundred years before Christ. Jeremiah, too, was well regarded in his time. He might have been the Messiah, he preached negatively, saying, "God is wrathful against sinners and punishes, Repent!" Jeremiah was full of stern warnings, whereas by contrast Jesus preached "God is Love." No fear, just love. Jesus did boldly proclaim that God does love you and you can be redeemed only by salvation and only through Him because He was God's only begotten Son. In other words, Jesus was the Messiah.

Whereas Jeremiah preached only to Hebrews, Paul later enlarged his audiences to include Gentiles. Hordes of people listened attentively to his message and became Christian converts.

The reader will recall that Jesus had a short human life, whereas Paul, by contrast, lived to an old age before he was beheaded for blasphemy. It seems cruel to us, but it was the Roman custom to punish all transgressors of the law with either beheading or crucifixion. Breaking the law then was a more serious business than it is nowadays.

There were many prophets, redeemers, holy men and messiahs before Jesus. They were all against sin and wickedness. These men all gave evidence of their missions, but none lasted. Paul knew all this. The Roman legionnaires and centurions hunted down all blasphemers who violated the law and obliterated them. But they could not get rid of the Jesus

legend because of Paul. He was meticulous about Roman law and respected it. Paul's interest in Jesus and what He stood for kept the spark of Christianity alive. Why was this?

Jesus Christ was a Greek name. Paul, being well grounded in Greek history as well as fluent in the language, planted that language lock, stock and barrel on Jesus. The first church preaching was done in Greek. We must remember that Asia Minor, from whence Paul sprang, became Greece and to this day the Greek Church is the staunchest in the Christian world. Therefore, Gesu (Latin) or Jesus (English) are corruptions of His original Hebrew name of "Yeshua." The use of Christ for the Messiah and Redeemer was later used by all Christianity--these words were Greek.

Believers in Jesus Christ have here the first historical fact of the founding of the Christian Church. It was formulated by Paul through his vision; the uses, the forms, the expressions, the mottoes, the motives, etc. He was a stickler for perfection. Paul was most indefatigable in his determination to make the Church stand for Christianity and Christianity stand for the Church. To him it was unthinkable that it should or could be otherwise. Failure was not even to be considered.

As you read Paul's Epistles the message conveyed is that more and more he was concerned about organization, but emphasis on Jesus Christ was the key theme. His interests were many and manifold and he gave himself to building perpetuation through a hierarchy of people for continuation as well as building churches. There had to be a chain of command. To the world, Paul gave evidence of being a genius. He set aside his time for physically building churches, which he did effectively.

He knew he would have no problem proselytizing the Gentile-Pagans who became faithful and loyal. He was still angered at the Hebrews for

not joining him and converting in a body to Christianity; it would have been a nice feather in his cap. Somehow in his zeal to convert the Hebrews, he had lost the point that the Hebrews needed to have reasons for change, while the Pagans who were changing their religion completely were more receptive to emotion. It hurts the pride of any man to fail.

Striking to some and audacious to others is a form of symbolism in all Paul's Epistles--these letters run the gamut of emotional stress. You cannot read these letters without it. He spoke to simple people. So be prepared for the unusual to affect emphasis and repetition where Paul wanted it. In his day, repetition was common among all public figures who spoke or wrote. Your patience, therefore, in reading these letters or Epistles will be needed for all fourteen of them.

Paul was the right man at the right hour at the right place in the destiny of religion and the world. His mandate from heaven was so earnest to Paul that his only direction was to intensify his efforts, which he did eagerly.

By this time the reader is convinced that Paul is the greatest apostle of all the Apostles and that he is also the author of Christian theology. The Epistles bearing his name are amongst the oldest Apostolical writings; they are older even than the Gospels, of which there are four. So Paul set a precedent. He refers to the Gospels, but they did not exist. They were improvised as he preached and wrote. They did not exist beforehand.

Chapter V

The Relevance of the Old and New

Out of the fullness of time, Christ's life has played a major part in these twenty centuries. Despite all the bickering among Christian sects in these centuries, and the continuous bickering among Christians in the near and very far future, the event that stands out foremost is the legend of Jesus Christ. The world is most comfortable with this legend. It wants no change! The old order stands. It prevails and will prevail.

St. Paul brought this all about. There was none his equal. He was the steward of Christianity; no amount of boasting can do enough glory to his memory. He rooted Christianity and it stayed rooted.

People today (1972) will not give up the story of Christ. Currently we have the Jesus revolution, which in itself is sort of a revival of interest in Christianity; a shaking out of old cobwebs. People love the story of the Virgin Birth, the Child in the manger, the Christmas story, the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Revelation and others, and to what end? Is there a new replacement? What and who is to take its place? Despite the low estate of civilization and its cynicism, interest in Christianity has its uses. It will certainly not diminish, not even in the next century.

It has been said by countless authors that men need religion, no matter what religion. It's in man's makeup. The innate goodness in man will seek it out even if no religion exists or is available. Religion grips people to do the right things. Witness some of events of the past in church history; they ring a sublime note. That's the way

It is today and that's the way it was in the days of St. Paul. Christianity is the same; it has not changed.

It was with the abuses of mankind that St. Paul was most concerned. By reading and re-reading his Epistles, his teachings and hopes, one realizes St. Paul felt that mankind would be better off with a Christian lifestyle. Some of these Epistles are gems. For instance, "Let your mind dwell on such things as truth, holiness, justice, piety, loveliness, honor, and over every kind of excellent merit."

Readers who are surprised that Christianity survived its early confusing times can give thanks to St. Paul, who invoked so many Mosaic laws, with which he had been trained, directly into Christianity. These became basic for immediate and future uses. By so doing, St. Paul instantly became popular and was widely quoted. His Epistles are a major factor in the makeup of the New Testament. Through his knowledge of the Old Testament, law is emphatic and widely invoked.

With the background in Mosaic Law and the innovative ideas of faith in Christianity, you have here the clue to its success. Older generations of bible students thought it a miracle, but later ones see the union of the two and know you cannot have one without the other. That chalks up how shrewd St. Paul was and tells why the other Apostles held him in such high regard. St. Paul had studied and was a proficient and experienced rabbi among the Hebrews. That experience accounted for his efficiency and knowledge among the Christians. When St. Paul quoted, he knew what he was talking about. It was a case of knowing and not knowing!

To emphasize his point and make it more meaningful, he said "Gentiles are judged by natural law; Hebrews must be judged by their own Mosaic Law, but the fact is, sin is universal; both to Gentile and Hebrew alike."

To be a Christian, St. Paul emphasized over and over again, "there must be a personal union with Christ." He explains how this union happens. There have to be 'moral virtues' and 'ecstatic manifestations' to prove it. He says only one ecstatic should be allowed to speak at a time, and then he should be accompanied by someone else who would be able to interpret what he said in words that are intelligible to the congregation. This was the art of exegesis taken from the Hebrews and taught by every rabbi.

St. Paul gives utterance to mankind's wonderful gifts, which are not to be sold for mere money or bartered. These wonderful gifts are attainable by the right kind of thinkers who believed in God as the One Who gave them wisdom, maturity, experience, faith, hope, charity and love. And, says St. Paul, these are best obtainable as a believer in Jesus Christ. Therefore shouldn't St. Paul be remembered? It's a stroke of good fortune.

Confusion reigned in the early Christian Churches and one may wonder what made them flourish. But they did, as St. Paul's Epistles and letters show; they carried a "soft" glove and a "big stick" as persuaders. Every believer was charmed by St. Paul's personal life and the life of Jesus Christ. The story of Christ's resurrection made it a personal event for the listener; it was that closely tied to humanity. And, it's the thing that endears itself to all, even if society should repudiate religion. See how it flourishes and grows over the centuries. There are millions of new Christians yearly.

While St. Paul was unhappy about the social problems of his day, which were as bad as today, and though he sorrowed over them, he never interfered or raised his voice in protest, because he was dedicated to

God. He felt that what belonged to the State should be sacrosanct to the State. Didn't Jesus say "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God which are God's"? So Paul, too, refrained and did not interfere.

"I am no divider of Men. My Kingdom is not of this world" said Jesus. This statement sounded simple enough, but it caused endless quarrels among early Christians, so much so as to rend asunder the early Church. Current newspapers, publications, radio and television dote on evil. The more heinous the news, the greater their glory to prove how virtuous they are. This guilt-by-association keeps daily events constantly stirring. There are some who enjoy, yes, who glory in it. And among the early Christians there were many priests who were bad and found it difficult to obey orders. In his Epistles to St. Timothy and St. Titus, St. Paul states his views, flawlessly and direct. He was kept busy healing the dissension. For this, give cheers to Paul: he was a healer who kept Christianity alive. There were many who tried to destroy it.

Paul was quick to remind his people that they were one by saying "We, who are many are of one body, for we all partake of the same loaf," or he won over dissenters with "The union with Christ effected by Faith and Sacrament means that the Spirit of Christ dwells constantly in you. It is no longer I, who live, but Christ, who lives in me." Very stirring! Can you feel the intimacy of it? Paul understood people. That is a sign of greatness.

Paul's knowledge and understanding of people shows his wonderful disposition, which is expressed in the following brotherly letter to the Philipplians:

Whatsoever things are true,
 Whatsoever things are just,
 Whatsoever things are pure,
 Whatsoever things are lovely,
 Whatsoever things are of good report,
 If there be any virtue and if there be
 any praise, think on these things.

St. Paul reveals his mind. In quite another episode, he explains baptism and what it is that makes it so important to Christians. Baptism, St. Paul declares, "dipped beneath the water we are dead, raised out of it, we step into a new world." So simple and believable!

Paul, though he created Christian Churches, never knew Jesus Christ in person, although he stood nearest in time to Him. Paul never recalls Christ's Virgin Birth or refers to Mary, His mother, nor does he ever recall Jesus' short ministry, nor any episode of Jesus, for that matter. But he does recall the vision he personally had on the high road to Damascus and he loves to repeat it. He is telling what he saw personally. That vision of Christ is immutable, nothing else matters. Christianity was without a Book. But Paul created that Book! His Epistles, ungrammatical though they be, repetitious or contradictory, provide the right teaching necessary. Paul was the right man when the religion was himself. There was no one else around who was as widely quoted or even gifted. Many authors have fumed and found fault with Paul for his grammar or presentation of material, but to his ever-lasting memory we are so grateful for what we got. Modern writers who pick at St. Paul should instead be cultivating his achievements and his courage. How many men today would undertake Paul's work without money, reward or emolument of any sort? No glory post ahead for him but only criticism, envy and ridicule. It is doubtful whether many men today would accept his responsibilities or have his courage and foresight to do so.

Paul met many persons who negated Christianity and otherwise questioned its sincerity by saying "If Jesus has not risen from the dead, then our faith is in vain--and we are, of all men, most miserable."

St. Paul finished his work in Rome. He was a prisoner of the Romans. He had received delegations of personal friends who came to pay their respects while he was in prison. Those who had greater power sought to have him pardoned, but to no avail. They were able, at least, to stay his execution several times. As one Roman Senator, speaking publicly and with emotion in the Senate, said of St. Paul, "His generous and gallant spirit, his selfless courage, his freedom from all guile, his total decency, these were the qualities that gave him such singular leadership and strength." And, he continued, "St. Paul was that man. Outstanding, whose outlook on the whole world was as close to him as any local event, with the flair for foreseeing things to come. His understanding of human beings made of him a superior being." Here was a complete person, a whole person in whom history has given us the range of time and the power of research of St. Paul the Apostle, the greatest. "Blessed be his name."

Even though there were protest demonstrations by hordes of people in defiance of the Roman centurions, it was Nero who commanded and his word was law. He cared not for public opinion, nor what history might write about him. The order had to be carried out. Three trumpets blew. The executioner later spoke of St. Paul's fortitude in these last moments in the prison courtyard. In his last request, St. Paul asked that he face East, toward Jerusalem, and he then reverted to his Hebrew and prayed the age-old chant, "Shami Yisroal, A'donal Elopenu, A'donal Echod." "Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is One." A Hebrew to the last.

With that, the air was filled with the sorrowing crowd's anguished

laments of death. Thus ended St. Paul's mortal life, but his soul lives on forever in Christianity.

The Acts of the Apostles

Editorial

In his missionary journeys, Paul spent several years throughout all of the Near East and east to the Bosphorus, as well as parts of Europe. Wherever the Roman Empire existed Paul was there preaching, teaching, guiding, converting, building churches, training men to be priests, abbots, bishops, novices and presbetyrs, and organizing groups. He was surely a doer! There was no laziness in him.

As a Roman citizen he could move about without restriction. Paul makes the most of that when he's at Orisis or when his life is threatened, which is fairly often.

He also invokes his Hebrew origins as a background when the occasion requires it in disputes, which happen frequently.

In "The Acts" we are presented with the daily doings of Paul and his entourage. You feel you are there beside him. He was a courageous and tireless man. Little did Paul even dream that his "dream vision" would last more than two thousand years.

Commentary

These are the highlights in the Epistle known as "The Acts." Paul frequently reverts to the name of Saul.

"O full of all guile and of all deceit, son of the devil, enemy of all justice, wilt thou not cease to make crooked the straight way of the Lord?"

"Thou wilt not let they Holy One undergo decay."

"Behold you despisers, then wonder and perish."

Dissension at Antioch. He speaks of the Apostles and refers to Peter and James. Paul and Barnabas stayed on to teach. Paul decides to re-visit the brethren in "all the cities where we have preached the word of the Lord" to see how they are doing. A very practical idea. He took Silas, an able disciple, with him.

Paul meets up with Timothy. The churches grow stronger and stronger in faith and increase in members daily.

A "possessed" young girl leads to the arrest of Paul and Silas. Arrested again, Paul, Silas and Timothy too.

While waiting in Athens, Paul discourses "for in him, we live and move and have our being, as indeed some of your own poets . . ."

While in Corinth, Paul has a vision from the Lord. "Do not fear, but speak and do not keep silence because I am with thee."

Paul has his head shaved in Antioch because of a vow.

Evil spirits take over but are routed in Ephesus.

Paul hastens to Jerusalem before Pentecost, aware that arrests await him there.

"Nor do I count my life more precious than myself" -- Paul.

He quotes Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

Paul's arrest. His discourse to the throngs. To be scourged. Unchained. Referring to his antecedents, to his Roman citizenship, the Sanhedrin; confusion at the trial.

Paul's nephew Amos exposes a conspiracy vowed by a group of forty to slay him.

"We have found this man [Paul] a pest and promoter of seditions throughout the world."

And Paul said, "in this I too strive always to have a clear conscience before God and before men."

Said before King Agrippa, "according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee."

"Paul thou art mad" . . . "I am not mad, excellent Festus, but I speak words of sober truth."

Under restraint in Rome, Paul continues to preach the Gospel of Christ.

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the

Romans

Editorial

By no means was this St. Paul's first letter or Epistle. Historians and learned biblical scholars have never agreed which came first. But they all agree that this Epistle is most eloquent, cogent and most worthy. The young Church still had no written doctrine. It was these Epistles by Paul that covers about two-thirds of the New Testament. It should be noted that Paul uses every precept of the human mind to characterize his phraseology to hold his audience steadfast. He can't forget for one second that he's still a Hebrew and he raves and rants that the Hebrews won't join him in a body. They deny him, but many individual Hebrews do join. Paul's appeal was that the true Messiah was Jesus Christ and only Jesus Christ.

Commentary

The subjects covered in this Epistle to the Romans are:

Paul's greetings, Paul's commendations and desire to visit, the humanity of Christ, the salvation, punishment of idolatry; all will be punished or rewarded; the Hebrews and true circumcision, objections answered, faith in Christ; Christ's death assures us salvation, hope and peace; in Adam all have sinned. There are at least 30 more paragraphs revealing in detail the values of the new religion, the glory that will be his. Since there was no Christian doctrine, Paul would call on the Hebrew, which said, "Owe no man anything except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law." "Thou shall not

commit adultery. Thou shall not kill. Thou shall not steal. Thou shall not covet." And if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this: "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself." Love does no evil to a neighbor. Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law.

The First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Corinthians

Editorial

We are all indebted to St. Paul for the powerful and expressive way he addressed himself to the brethren. It pleases us all to observe his strength and how he gives it willingly and selflessly in the cause of making the young Church grow in numbers. He served well and gloriously.

Commentary

These are some pertinent epigrams memorable to this day.

Paul is cosily intimate and brotherly in his greetings. "For Christ did not send me to baptise, but to preach the gospel."

"Let him who takes pride, take pride in the Lord."

"For who among men know the things of a man save the spirit . . ."

"Are you not mere men?" "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you?"

"For although you have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet you have not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, through the gospel, did I beget you; be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."

"Do you not know that the unjust will not possess the kingdom of God?"

"Knowledge puffs up, but charity edifies."

"I have become all things to all men, that I may save some." "For you are the seal set upon my apostleship in the Lord."

"Judge for yourself what I say."

"All things are lawful, but not all things are expedient."

"O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?"

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, act like men, be strong."

The Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Corinthians

Editorial

There is a three-year lapse between his first and second Epistles to the Corinthians. He has been on his missionary journey to other parts when he is informed that his own Christian converts in Corinth have attacked his veracity and doubted his motives: not a happy time for Paul. He was tired and wearied by physical infirmities but he resolved to take a firm stand with those who doubted and those who were laggard in their churchly duties. This is the first time any Apostle or saint used the threat of excommunication from the Church. And it worked. St. Paul innovated the idea, which later was accepted as doctrine by the hierarchy and improved upon. It was so decreed!

Commentary

Cultivate some of these epigrams; St. Paul speaks for all ages.

Paul speaks of Timothy, who is like a son to him, like a deputy.

" . . . a building from God, a house not made by human hands, eternal in the heavens"

His love for the Corinthians. His discourse on marriage. Paul speaks of rewards. He reminds them of the frailty of humans. His sincerity in his labor for God and the saving of souls as a true envoy of the Lord, Jesus. His forgiving nature. His apostolic authority. His ministry of labor and suffering all done without recompense or gain of any kind.

" . . . for I shall be speaking the truth. But I forbear, lest any

man should"

His wind-up is a masterful appeal for a huge collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. He appeals to generosity. Paul stresses the fulfillment of God's purpose in the Church and exhorts Christians to unity.

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Galatians

Editorial

In this city of Galatia, identified as Greece, Paul had made the greatest number of converts. His labors had been heroic: people had been baptised and received the Holy Spirit in vast numbers. After his second visit to the Galatians, St. Paul found evidences of the presence of the spirit in their hearts, and he was pleased. What went wrong? Well, for one thing, there were many recent Hebrew converts, who insisted that circumcision was essential before embracing Christianity, and St. Paul said, "Nay, Faith alone is all you need!" There was a big controversy about it then, but let St. Paul tell it; he is very definite, hence this letter or Epistle. He couldn't afford to have his work undone. He explains God's purpose, plan and power, which is defined as strikingly simple and sufficient.

Commentary

Some of St. Paul's quotes are descriptive and most direct.

"I, Paul, an apostle, sent not from men, nor by man"

". . . other than me preached to you, let him be anathema"

"But I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ!" ". . . that through Faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." "Brethren, I speak after the manner of man" "For if the right to inherit be from the Law it is no longer from a promise." "What then was the Law?" "It was enacted on account of transgressions" ". . . the Faith that was to be revealed." "But now that Faith has come"

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Ephesians

Editorial

St. Paul in this Epistle makes a plea and a request for a congregational prayer. ". . . and for me, that when I open my mouth, utterance may be granted to me fearlessly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that therein I may dare to speak as I ought." There's a strong sense of self-approbation. In this Epistle, Paul hints of power to be derived from the Holy Spirit and insists upon a greater brotherhood amongst brethren. His implication of the fact does lead to a great political force--two thousand years of it, and still growing stronger year by year. Meanwhile, in great numbers new churches are added as new converts join the Christians. Organizing new clergy, new abbotts, new bishops consumes Paul's frantic energies. Among the many congregations Paul is greatly loved and fearless among his enemies.

Commentary

St. Paul is touched with genius as he improvises.

The eternal plan of the Father is realized in the Son, fulfilled through the Holy Ghost. Therefore the Church is one with Christ. How? By prayer! Thus all are brought into Christ's life, and Gentiles and Hebrews are united.

Paul speaks of his preaching assignment and quite modestly says he is the "least of the Apostles." He has done so much in organizing churches and the internal features of good church government that now, two thousand years later, the Catholic Church alone has a membership of over 694,000,000

people who will gladly testify that this Church is still growing. Considering all the wealth it has gathered since the year of its humble beginnings, you can surely say "St. Paul, you were on all counts the greatest Apostle of them all, because you were a Builder."

But St. Paul keeps exhorting the faithful to utter force with a homily, you are no longer children, tossed to and fro . . . and the wickedness of man, in craftiness, according to the wiles of error; change yourself; vices are to be avoided. "Be you children of God, for He loves you."

He proceeds to speak of husband and wife in the Christian home and the duties of children, parents, slaves and masters, and he then concludes with blessing the congregations of all the Ephesians.

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Philipplians

Editorial

From Rome, where he was a prisoner of Caesar, St. Paul wrote a cordial and friendly letter to his brethren in Philippi. They revered and esteemed him. St. Paul looked with fondness at the Philipplians because this was the earliest church he had fashioned and the results were good. And, when they heard of St. Paul's plight in Rome, the Philipplians sent him a body-servant to care for his wants. Timothy, his assistant, will most likely visit the Philipplians soon.

Meanwhile, St. Paul exhorts the faithful to compose their dissensions.

Commentary

St. Paul says ". . . I have you in my heart"

". . . my experiences have turned out rather well"

". . . I am appointed for the defense of the gospel"

". . . I shall stay on and continue" "Only let your lives be worthy" "Do not be terrified"

"If, therefore, there is any comfort in Christ" ". . . fill up my joy by thinking alike" ". . . each one looking not to his own interests" ". . . and every tongue should confess" "Do all things without murmuring" ". . . holding fast the word of life to my glory" ". . . I joy and rejoice with you" ". . . because for the work of Christ he drew near to death" "For the rest, rejoice in the Lord." "Let us then, as many as are perfect, be

of this mind" "Brethren, be imitators of me" "So then my brethren, beloved and longed for" "And may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Colossians

Editorial

Powerful and short, this Epistle has St. Paul concerned lest his evangelical work be destroyed. Epaphras, one of the disciples of St. Paul, journeyed to Rome and called on him to enlist his aid because of dissension and bickering amongst his membership, which includes the neighboring towns of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul cooperates vigorously, evidently getting results. It wouldn't be in the New Testament otherwise. St. Paul's passionate eloquence shines through and is here written down for all to read and gather ecumenical nourishment.

Commentary

" . . . because of the hope that is laid up for you in heaven."

"May you walk worthily of God and please Him in all things"

"He occupies the true position of the firstborn." ". . . In whom we have our redemption, the remission of our sins." "All things have been created . . . and of it I, Paul, have become a minister." "For I am to preach the word of God fully" "These are a shadow of things to come"

"Let no one cheat you who takes pleasure" "The Resurrection, the Mystical Death of Christ, therefore if He has risen" ". . . but Christ is all things and in all." "The Ideal Christian life in the world, practice virtues and renounce vices." Paul favors prayer and prudence in all things. He adds praise to his fellow workers in the kingdom of God.

The First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Thessalonians

Editorial

Very early in his missionary career, St. Paul founded his church among the Thessalonians. These people had been converted in large numbers and, like all people, Christians or not, found things to quarrel about. The Gentile-Pagans, although devout in their belief of Jesus Christ, allowed doubts and petty arguments to stand in their way. When St. Paul visited the city, he was stoned by the Pagan-Gentiles who had not been converted and by the Hebrews who disliked St. Paul because he defiled their houses of worship. So St. Paul, after this kind of reception, fled to Athens where he was warmly welcomed. He asked Timothy, his loyal and devoted colleague, to visit the Thessalonians and "mend fences," which he did well.

Commentary

These are the trenchant remarks gloried in. They bespeak the man St. Paul.

"We know, brethren, beloved of God, how you were chosen." ". . . and to await from Heaven Jesus, his Son" "We had confidence in our God to preach to you the gospel" "God who proves our hearts." "As Apostles of Christ we could have claimed a position of honor" ". . . because you had become most dear to us." "Yes, you are our glory and joy." ". . . and we sent Timothy our brother and servant of God" ". . . lest perhaps the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor might come to naught." ". . . because now we live, if you stand fast in

the Lord." "And may the Lord make you to increase and abound in Charity towards one another" "Strive to live peacefully . . . for this we say to you in the Word of the Lord that we who live . . . be at peace among ourselves" "And we exhort you brethren, reprove the irregular, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient towards all men." "See that no one renders evil for evil to any man, but always strive after good towards one another and towards all men." "But test all things, hold fast that which is good, keep yourselves from every kind of evil."

The Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the
Thessalonians

Editorial

All the sagacity of the Apostle Paul was needed to quiet the Thessalonians, who were clamoring for the second coming of Christ. Timothy by himself, who afterward became the first bishop of this area, was unable to stem the rising tide of why Christ hadn't come. Hence, St. Paul had to meet any surge of contrary opinion, those holding to the belief, "Why work, let's await Christ's coming, which will be soon." St. Paul had to overcome this thinking. The whole purpose of St. Paul was to preach believing, not thinking. Questioning was dangerous. Faith above all else was paramount. St. Paul in this Epistle does correct the views of doubters and quiets the former discontents. This is how he did it:

Commentary

"We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, it is fitting that we should" A subtle form of general flattery. "And because your faith grows, we boast of this in other churches" "To this end we pray for you" "Let no one deceive you . . . for the day of the Lord will not come unless the apostasy comes first" "And then the wicked one will be revealed" ". . . because God has chosen you as first-fruits unto Salvation" "So then, brethren, stand firm, and hold the teachings" "Pray often, pray together" "But the Lord is faithful, who will strengthen you" ". . . you ought to imitate us" "Neither did we eat any man's

bread at his cost, but we worked night and day in labor and toil, so that we might not burden any of you." ". . . that we might make ourselves an example for you to imitate us." ". . . If any man will not work, neither let him eat" "Such will not be regarded as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother." St. Paul signs the letter in person and is content. His persuasiveness is the part that makes St. Paul a super-Christian; his enthusiasm does it!

The First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to

Timothy

Editorial

Tender and affectionate, St. Paul addresses himself to Timothy. Over the years, Timothy responded with his devotion to St. Paul as one does to a father. They had been associated in their pastoral labors these many years, sharing their joys as well as their tribulations and sorrows when the churches were not doing too well. This first Epistle to Timothy, whom he had not seen in some time, was written to encourage him on matters of doctrine and the internal build-up of the churches and their operation. St. Paul was so far-sighted in looking ahead; he knew that faith alone couldn't and wouldn't guarantee continuance of churches unless internally it was secure.

The story goes that St. Peter knew the family of Timothy and his background of piety and took him on as a novice. He then sent him to St. Paul as his assistant. They liked each other and were compatible. To please St. Peter, who clung to the idea of circumcision, Timothy willingly submitted to it. St. Paul, because he was a Hebrew rabbi, performed the ceremony. That bond between Timothy and St. Paul was to last a lifetime. When St. Peter heard of it, he too was well pleased.

St. Paul guards Timothy against false teachers and advises active engagements in organizing the community. From his own experiences, St. Paul cautions against the dangers that are always at hand and always threaten.

Commentary

" . . . and not to study fables and endless genealogies"

"Some going astray from these things have turned aside to vast babbling" "But we know that the Law is good, if a man uses it rightly, knowing that the Law is not made for the just but for the unjust and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for criminals and the defiled, for parricides and matricides, for murderers, for immoral people, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine, according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, which has been committed to my trust." A very vigorous statement and to the point. ". . . but I obtained the mercy of God because I acted ignorantly, in unbelief." "To the king of the ages who is immortal, invisible, the one only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." -- the first time used and very popular. Further instructions to Timothy are how a bishop should conduct himself, the qualities of a deacon, the choice of presbyters, piety and false ascetism, the position of women and widows in the churches, lying teachers, the uses of the rich--a look ahead in getting the young church on its feet. There are enough facts packed in this first Epistle to make Timothy a busy man.

The Second Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to

Timothy

Editorial

Of all the persons he had known, St. Paul drew closest to St. Timothy. He was the "apple" of his eye and he showed his endearment in so many ways. Had not he, St. Paul, been a close companion in evangelizing the Gentile-Pagans and hadn't they built churches together? St. Paul felt that time was rapidly approaching and he was very tired and lonesome. He was most anxious to strengthen the hand of St. Timothy in his administrative and churchly responsibilities. He was in Rome and a prisoner, thus hampered in his movements. With his death close at hand and feeling abandoned by most of his followers, is it any wonder that he craves the companionship of Timothy? He writes and asks him to bring along Luke, the physician. Paul's phraseology is strong and stirring in this second Epistle, written with the loving hand of a father.

Commentary

" . . . I long to see thee, that I may be filled with joy." "I remember that unfeigned faith of thine, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois" "For this reason I admonish thee to stir up the graces of God which is in thee" "He has destroyed death and brought to light life" "Guard the good, trust through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us." There are those who are loyal as well as those who defect. Paul praises Timothy for his devotion to his office. He is opposed to new teachers unless proved worthy. "But thou has't closely followed my doctrine, my conduct, my purpose, my faith" "But do

thou continue in the things thou hast learned and that have been entrusted to thee" ". . . that the Man of God may be perfect" "But do thou be watchful in all things, bear with tribulation patiently, work as a preacher of the gospel, fulfill thy ministry." "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." A beautiful sentence!

"Take Mark and bring him with thee, for he is useful to me for the ministry." "When thou comest, bring with thee the cloak" "At my trial, the first defense no one came to my support, but all forsook me"

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to

Titus

Editorial

St. Titus, though little known throughout the Christian world, was a simple and pious co-evangelist fiercely devoted to Paul and most loyal. Hadn't Paul stood up for him years before at the Council of Jerusalem when they insisted that he submit to circumcision? This time Paul won his point with the Council and said "No, this man by his Holy Faith has proved himself over and over again." Titus never forgot the incident and from it came the love of a son whose devotion made Paul reciprocate like a father. So here is a friendly letter in which Paul as the older and wiser man tells Titus how to get the most out of his efforts. In its context, it generates the warmth of all parties concerned.

Titus has served on the island of Crete for many years and established quite a few churches. As his superior, Paul writes Titus in order to strengthen his knowledge and authority. It's all done with love and kindness. As the first Bishop of Crete, he built many churches and obtained many converts.

Commentary

"For this reason I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set right anything that is defective and shouldst appoint presbyters in every city" "They must be blameless, married but once" "For a bishop must be blameless as being the steward of God--hospitable, gentle, reserved, just, holy, continent" "For the clean all things are clean, but for the defiled and unbelieving nothing is clean"

"They profess to know God, but by their works they disown Him"

"But do thou speak what befits the sound doctrine: that elderly men be reserved, honorable, prudent, sound in faith" ". . . let thy speech be sound" ". . . with all authority, let no one despise thee." "For we were once unwise, unbelieving" ". . . he saved us through the Holy Spirit" "This saying is true, and concerning these things I desire thee to insist" "And let our people also learn to excel"

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to

Philemon

Editorial

Unknown to most of us, the name of Philemon was considered important enough by historians of church doctrine and thus accepted by them to be included into the New Testament. It was hand-written at the time. Wasn't it to show that Paul, exalted though he be, was concerned about a lowly slave? Or, was it included as part of the New Testament to show that being rich and mighty did not matter? It was the principle that mattered. Paul was interceding for a runaway slave. He even asks Philemon to free the slave and restore his rights as a freed man. Thus, writing to his good friend Philemon, a Christian, must have been an agreeable task to Paul. In any event, he pleases all with his letter. Because of it, Philemon is memorialized down through the ages. Though a small favor then, history takes this small favor and makes its impact enormous. It reflects credit on both Philemon and Paul. It's all in this rather short Epistle for you to read and enjoy. The lesson of helping each other has been told so many thousands of times and always proves itself--the good deed is most rewarding.

Commentary

" . . . as I hear of thy charity . . . May the sharing of thy faith be made evident in full knowledge of all the good that is in you"

" . . . I might charge thee in Christ Jesus to do what is fitting"

"I plead with thee for my own son whom I have begotten in prison, for Onesimus." " . . . but I did not want to do anything without thy counsel"

"May I, too, make use of thee in the Lord!"

The Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the

Hebrews

Editorial

It appears that this Epistle was written in Rome, although some dispute this. It was written to the Hebrew Christians of Jerusalem, who were wavering in their faith. Paul had a particular love for Jerusalem; it was his favorite city and he often yearned to return there. As a born and practicing Pharisee, Jerusalem was his alpha and omega. But, in his service to God, there was only one Master to Paul, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who had revealed Himself in a vision. Having dedicated his whole adult life to such a noble aspiration, he had made his calling clarion for all men to join him: hence this letter. But, it seems Paul was astringent to the Hebrews, who could not and would not tolerate his abuse of their hospitality. Since there were only Gentile-Pagans and Hebrews in existence, St. Paul might have been wiser had he proselytized the Gentile-Pagans only and forgot the Hebrews. Originally, these were his orders from the Apostolic Council when he was made an Apostle to the Gentiles. He was to stay away from the Hebrews of Jerusalem or wherever they had houses of worship. He couldn't! Being a devout Hebrew himself, he couldn't resist their association. Having done this so often, Paul unwittingly sowed the seeds of hatred and suspicion between the two. We who have lived in later generations, fortunate to look into history, have noted this serious defect. The Christian finds it quite hard to believe that the Messiah was a Nazarene Hebrew who came to them and for them to redeem them; that was God's promise. To the Hebrews, when a Messiah would come, he was to be heralded in advance with trumpets and

full panoply from the heavens by God. It was to be joyful, not sorrowful. Thus there were too many enigmas for the Hebrews; too much hidden behind the scenes. They wanted more tangible evidence like the Ten Commandments to go on. To them, it was a world of reason; it was not faith alone. Together, reason and faith were fine, but Christianity seemed to be faith alone.

Was this good? Yes, if confined to the Gentile-Pagans, who had no religion. And it was good because we know Christianity has lasted more than two thousand years. By the latest statistics, there are nearly 700,000,000 members--and that's a powerful lot believing in the faith. But, lest we forget, all Christ followers were originally Hebrews and became Christians as a separate body when the Hebrews refused to sublimate their religion to become Christians. It is well to keep this in mind.

This Epistle ranks as one of the best in the New Testament. In it, St. Paul is most eloquent in making his points. Recommended reading is suggested to round out the whole perspective of the world of St. Paul.

Commentary

"Therefore might we the more earnestly to observe the things that we have heard" "Christ suffered for his brethren . . . thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor" "We are that house, if we hold fast our confidence" ". . . do not harden your hearts as in the provocation" "Take heed, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil" "For we have been made partakers of Christ" "For the word of God is living and efficient and keener than any two-edged sword . . . And there is no creature hidden from His

sight." "And this we will do if God permits." ". . . but that which brings forth thorns and thistles is worthless" "But in your case beloved, we are confident of better things" There is his hope of better things and God's promise and Jesus as the forerunner of High Priest forever and forever! This is the time for a New Covenant and Christ supplies it. "Know the Lord, for All shall know Me, from least to greatest" ". . . and above it were the cherubim of glory over-shadowing the mercy seat." ". . . they who have been called may receive eternal inheritance according to the promise." "Behold, I come to do thy Will, O God" "For by one offering he has perfected forever those who are sanctified." ". . . let us draw nigh with a true heart in fulness of faith" "Do not, therefore, lose your confidence, which has a great reward." "For yet a very little while and He who is to come, will come, and will not delay." Recitations of the heroes of faith. "Now all discipline seems for the present to a matter not for joy but for grief" "Strive for peace with all men, and for that holiness without which no man will see God." "Let brotherly love abide in you and do not forget to entertain strangers" "Let your manner of life be without avarice, be content with what you have"

FAREWELL TO GREATNESS

Convincing evidence of St. Paul's leadership in the development of Christianity is everywhere. It abounds. The very growth of the Church these 2,000 years attests to the organizing foresight of his genius.

And now that you have read this book with critical insight into St. Paul's world, you have come to your own conclusions. He didn't have it easy; he had a tough time. In your reading, you may have noted the orderly manner in which St. Paul talks of many things, and the many things he talks about.

Formation of the Church was his pet! The more prolific the churches became, the more he beamed. Celibacy was another. Yes, he was frank, to be sure, and tells why! There were a multitude of subjects he wrote about and these are listed for further use.

Let's take celibacy as an example. Celibacy was much to be desired. St. Paul believed only in dedication to God. And only dedicated people could serve God. Therefore this dedication could only be done by those who thus dedicated themselves. There was room for married men in authority only in a limited way; not as priests, priors or abbots, but as elders. Otherwise loyalty to their families would come first instead of to the Church. St. Paul advocates marriage--but not for himself.

Little is known about his early marriage contemplated as a young man but wisely decided against so that he could serve God and only God. This idea became wide-spread among the people and was adopted by the other apostles. Since two-thirds of the New Testament was written by St. Paul or about him, you can be sure that he was widely copied by his contemporaries.

In the matter of time, this was the beginning of monasteries for men and youths, and convents for girls and women. This was the time of activity for the new Church. Christianity was on a forward march. The rigors of this sort of life established religious orders to a high plane of acceptance by the public, who copied St. Paul and his austerity. His prolific imagination gives him another notch in the realm of being realistic and practical.

St. Paul made people feel good at church services. Everything was prearranged. There were no deviations. If there were any objections, St. Paul would try to pacify with reasonableness, but if you were too persistent, you would get the old 'heave-ho' in the form of excommunication. Thinking was not encouraged: those in authority thought for you.

Families and family life concerned St. Paul. How to be a good husband, father, brother and son, and the duties of each to the other. The conduct of wives to their husbands and vice versa; masters and slaves, etc. There was no room for guessing.

St. Paul noted with sympathy the grinding poverty of the people. It disturbed him. He remembered what Jesus Christ had said, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God which is God's." So Paul resorted to his own charities with which he did much good. He preached love for all men. Thus Church and State had their own grooves and the world was happier.

Memories of church history spanned by two thousand years has stained the purity of Christianity by persecutions in many lands. It needs its own historian in a book of separate authority to detail them.

for us, we have confined ourselves to St. Paul; all his works and what he stood for!

His personal strength was diminishing due to infirmities of old age. By reading and studying Corinthians I and II, we find many rhetorical gems in which St. Paul gives us the richness of his wisdom. He speaks of his strength in weakness. In separate Epistles he draws on a variety of subjects such as "We are saved by faith," "Do not be afraid!"--"Bear one another's burdens"--"The cross is the power of God"--"What is Man?" "Who shall separate us from God's love?"--"Love never ends," "Called to be a Saint," "Led by the Spirit," "Into what were you baptized?" "To an Unknown God," "Light for the Gentiles"--"Keep your eyes on the stars"--"Man in the Image of God."

The Ten Commandments are shown to identify the source from which St. Paul drew his knowledge, converting it to his needs and sermons. St. Paul, as a Pharisee Hebrew brought up as a rabbi, had through this knowledge more to offer than the other Apostles. Need we have more anti-climaxes?

Let's say to St. Paul, "Farewell for now."

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Basic Laws of All Religions

- 1--I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT, OUT OF THE HOUSE OF BONDAGE. YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.
- 2--YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FOR YOURSELF A GRAVEN IMAGE, OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH: YOU SHALL NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM OR SERVE THEM: FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN TO THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH GENERATION OF THOSE WHO HATE ME, BUT SHOWING STEADFAST LOVE TO THOUSANDS OF THOSE WHO LOVE ME AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.
- 3--YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD IN VAIN: FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS WHO TAKES HIS NAME IN VAIN.
- 4--REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. SIX DAYS YOU SHALL LABOR, AND DO ALL YOUR WORK: BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS A SABBATH TO THE LORD YOUR GOD: IN IT YOU SHALL NOT DO ANY WORK, YOU, OR YOUR SON, OR YOUR DAUGHTER, YOUR MANSERVANT, OR YOUR MAIDSERVANT, OR YOUR CATTLE, OR THE SOJOURNER WHO IS WITHIN YOUR GATES: FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY, THEREFORE THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY AND HALLOWED IT.
- 5--HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE LONG IN THE LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD GIVES YOU.

6--YOU SHALL NOT KILL.

7--YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

8--YOU SHALL NOT STEAL.

9--YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST YOUR NEIGHBOR.

10--YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR NEIGHBOR'S HOUSE: YOU SHALL NOT COVET YOUR
NEIGHBOR'S WIFE, OR HIS MANSERVANT, OR HIS MAIDSERVANT, OR HIS OX,
OR HIS ASS, OR ANYTHING THAT IS YOUR NEIGHBOR'S.

THE APOSTLE JESUS NEVER KNEW

Saint Paul never knew the living Jesus. Jesus was not aware of Saul nor when he became Paul. Neither one ever met the other while they were alive. It comes thus to the reader as a startling fact.

Paul did have a tent-maker's shop hard by on the grounds of the Temple's holy of holies whilst he pursued his studies of exegesis and disputing under the favored Rabbi Gamaliel in the Temple. Their timing was just not right. Too bad! Results might be different. Could it be that they had passed each other as boys? Remember, Jesus lived in Nazareth and came to Jerusalem infrequently. If at all, it was only probable even though they were contemporaries in Time. The Temple was a busy place with thousands of pilgrims daily.

A combination of events led to this circumstance. There were twelve Apostles originally. All were close adherents of Jesus. He chose them himself! Didn't Jesus say "one would betray Him?" Jesus didn't bother to choose a replacement, or maybe they didn't have the thought then or the time to do so nor did it seem important enough. Judas Iscariot, the betrayer was replaced by one called Matthias, a little known holy man, recognized for his fidelity. There was nothing distinguished or outstanding about him.

Thus Paul enters the scene of action long after Jesus was crucified; perhaps five years later. He sought out the Apostolic Council to explain his vision and what it meant to him. The vision had been an obsession with him; Paul simply had to know!

Religious fervor really gripped Paul who was a servant of God; he was that dedicated to God. It appears this vision of Jesus to Paul was so real that no power on earth could forgo the zeal of this foreordained mission. By serving Jesus he served God.

That was the gist which clung as a cluster of his devotion. Christ whom he had repudiated as the Messiah suddenly became important.

In reverse cycle the panorama of Paul's devotion to Christ and what he stood for came to full fruition. Didn't Jesus suffer a cruel death to prove it? Paul was willing now, if not eager to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Never mind the stonings! Herod had ordered them, and now Paul had humbled himself to apologize and beg forgiveness. A complete counterpart of the God-complex.

The medly amongst the Apostles was far from harmonious. They got nowhere; they were at loggerheads. At the time Paul appeared before them, they made no headway, not perceptible, that is! True, that Christ had said he came not to start a new religion.

What to do now with Paul. The friction had been terrific. Though a spirit of compromise seeped through the Apostolic Council, Paul led the way. "Let's try him!"

So Paul was granted a trial basis. He tried synagogues. Although at first warmly received he got the old heave-ho and said "there must be a simpler way to make converts." Three weeks in the desert gave him an easy answer.

It was something like a tug-of-war in the Apostles: they could not agree. Peter, closest to Jesus and nominal head of the group prepared on as Jesus had commanded. The intention while good was leading in all directions. And Paul coming on the scene could add no lustre to their internal debate so let their decision hang for awhile. It was a time for close watching. Paul's presence on the scene was a victory for Peter. Although each disliked the other, there was a great respect between them.

Paul's instructions were to visit synagogues which he could since he was a rabbi. There were already 24 sects of Hebrews. Jesus' sect made 25. Not every one believed Jesus was the Messiah. For his trouble Paul was often stoned and accused of blasphemy. Those who disagreed were plenty noisy. Paul retired to think things out. But where to go; the great silence of the desert appealed to him.

After three weeks of the desert, he concluded a new religion of Hebrew Christians based on faith and faith alone would do it. "Love Christ, for He will love you." No more rituals. Just faith. Couldn't be more simple, could it?

So Paul went back to the Apostolic Council where there was much opposition.

Saint Peter was agreeable; hence Paul's missionary journeys were about to begin.