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*BROWNING AND THE BIBLE.

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It is safe to say that no other book has had the influence upon the literature of the world that the Bible has, and it is also safe to say that no other literature shows this influence to the same great degree that our English literature does. From Anglo-Saxon times to our day, English writers have been using the Bible as a treasury of material to an extent that is astonishing. My purpose, however, this evening does not allow me to give a roll of these writers, interesting though that would be. To particularize would be well-nigh endless, for the sense of duty toward man and God is the bone and flesh of English books in their age. My object is merely to study the influence of the Bible in the work of one poet.

As time goes on it is becoming evident that Browning has a message for our generation not to be found in the pages of any of his contemporaries, and that he has a special claim on our gratitude and reverence as the most virile and spiritually awakening mind in modern English poetry. But Browning is more than that. He is the great Christian poet of modern times. He has caught the inner spirit of the Christian faith as perhaps no

*An address delivered in the Presbyterian Church at Davidson College at the annual Bible Society meeting, 1915. In preparing the address for publication, no attempt has been made to remove the traces of preparation for oral delivery.

THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN.

A Book Study of Philippians by REV. EUGENE CALDWELL,
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Before we enter upon an exposition of the Epistle itself, we should have clearly in mind certain general facts concerning the book as a whole.

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS.

1. *Place and Date.*

It was written by the Apostle Paul (1:1) some time during his first Roman imprisonment 61-63 A. D. Paul also wrote Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians at this time. Hence these four—Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians—are known as the “prison” epistles. They fall into two groups: (1) Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians, which were sent to Asia Minor by Tychicus, who was accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:7; Phile. 10, 12; Eph. 6:21-22). (2) Philippians, which was sent to Philippi by Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25). Perhaps Colossians, Philemon and Ephesians were written in 61-62 A. D. and Philippians later in 63 A. D. The evidence, however, is not conclusive as to the order in time of the prison epistles. In Rome Paul was allowed the privilege of his own hired house, but was always chained to a soldier. Some great men in Rome at the time were Nero, the Emperor, Burrhus, the prefect of the imperial regiments, and the philosophers, Seneca and Epictetus. How our imaginations are stirred at the sound of these famous and infamous names! We wonder if the great apostle ever knew them personally!

2. *Destination.*

This beautiful letter was written to the church at Philippi (1:1) in Macedonia, the first Christian church on European soil. Paul caught his vision of the man of Macedonia, calling,

“Come over . . . and help us,” and crossed from Asia to Europe. On that missionary journey he went first to Philippi with Silas, Luke and Timothy as his companions, and founded the Philippian church. Lydia was the first convert. Acts, chapter 16, gives a thrilling account of it all. The Philippians loved Paul; they never questioned his apostolic authority, and he loved them in return. He was willing to pour out his blood for them (2:17; 4:1). It was the best church he had.

3. *Occasion.*

The immediate occasion was a contribution of money brought by Epaphroditus from the members of the Philippian church (2:25; 4:18). They had sent him similar tokens of their love before this, twice to Thessalonica and once to Corinth (4:15-16; cf. 2 Cor. 11:9). But for a long time they had not an opportunity to repeat their gifts (4:10). Epaphroditus fell sick in Rome (2:27, 30). On his recovery he was troubled lest the Philippians should worry about him, and was eager to return to relieve their fears. Paul, therefore, sent him back, and by him sent this letter (2:25, 28).

4. *Purpose.*

This is to show forth the ideal Christian as one who manifests a character like Christ's, who in His humility and self-denial gave Himself for others.

II. THEME: THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN.

It is stated for us by Paul himself in 1:27, “Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” A life worthy of the gospel of Christ! What a sublime theme! And what a glorious Christian to handle it! Dr. Henry G. Weston, late President of Crozer Theological Seminary, said that the four prison epistles present four great ideals of Christianity. Colossians, The Ideal Saviour; Ephesians, The Ideal Church; Philippians, The Ideal Christian; and Philemon, The Ideal Brother.

III. ANALYSIS AND EXPOSITION.

SALUTATION (1:1-2).

1. *The Writers* are Paul and Timothy, who were associated together in the founding of the Philippian church. They are "servants" belonging to Christ Jesus. This is the only place where Paul uses "servants" simply. No need in the case of the Philippians for him to assert his apostolic authority. They loved him and obeyed.

2. *The Readers* are the officers and members of the church. They are all "saints," their spiritual habitation is "in Christ Jesus," their physical habitation—"at Philippi."

3. *The Greeting*—Grace and Peace. Christ is put on same plane with God as the source of grace and peace. His deity is thus clearly taught.

OPENING PRAYER (1:3-11).

In no less than eleven of his thirteen epistles Paul opens with a prayer (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3, 16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philemon 4). Thanksgiving always comes *first*. There is no opening prayer in Galatians and Titus. Paul cannot thank God for the Galatians. They had departed from the grace of Christ unto a different gospel (Gal. 1:6). The opening prayer in Philippians has two parts:

1. *Thanksgiving* (1:3-8).

"I thank" (1:3). Paul thanks God for what the Philippians had already achieved in the Ideal Christian Life. They were fellow-workers with him. They had had "fellowship" with him in the furtherance of the gospel from the hour of their conversion until the present. No wonder Paul loved them! What this "fellowship" is comes out clearly in 4:15: . . . "when I departed from Macedonia, no church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving but ye only." That is how Paul speaks of those who give money to Christian work—"fellowship in furtherance of the gospel."

2. *Petition* (1:9-11).

Paul never cries "Enough." He is never satisfied with the present attainments of his converts. It is "more and more" (1:9). So he prays that the Philippians may go on until they reach the loftiest ideal of the Christian Life. This loftiest ideal consists of: (1) Ever growing mutual love that is intelligent and discriminating. Such love is bound to issue in (1:9); (2) the approval of that which is supremely good (1:10a); (3) a blameless life of unsullied purity (1:10b); (4) abounding fruitfulness (1:11a); (5) all made possible only through Jesus Christ and issuing finally in the glory and praise of God. What an ideal for a pastor to have for his people! (1:11b.)

THE IDEAL CHRISTIAN (1:12-4:1).

1:1-11 is introductory. The body of the Epistle begins with 1:12, and extends through 4:1. In this section (1:12-4:1) we have set forth three great facts about the Ideal Christian. Every life must have: (1) Aim; (2) Motive; (3) Final Issue.

A. The Supreme **Aim** of the Ideal Christian is the **Service** of Christ (1:12-30).

1. Paul gives a sketch of his life at Rome to show that always and everywhere his one aim and purpose was to *serve Christ* (1:12-26). 1:21, "To me to live is Christ," is the key verse and climax. Even though a prisoner in Rome and chained to a Roman soldier, Paul could serve Christ. What were the results? Those soldiers were changed every three or four hours. Paul chained to a new man every three hours! He spent those hours telling that soldier of Christ. Quickly the gospel spread through the ten thousand picked soldiers who formed the imperial guard and on also to the rest of Rome (1:13); so that in closing Paul could say, "All the saints salute you, especially they that are of Caesar's household" (4:22). Truly, "an ambassador in bonds." A further result was that other preachers in Rome who had been timid began to preach the word of God with "abundant boldness." If we make the service of Christ

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our constant aim, we can always find an opportunity to serve Him, no matter how unlikely the time or place may seem to be. Bishop Ridley was confined over a year in jail before he was burnt at the stake. He led Edmund Irish, the jail-keeper, and his wife, Margaret, to Christ before his death. A little girl, who was a cripple, blind and a leper, was sent out to the leper colony in the Pacific. Within a year she had brought one hundred persons to a saving knowledge of Christ.

2. Paul pleads with the Philippians to make the service of Christ the aim of their lives (1:27-30). In 1:27a he pleads with them to let their manner of living be worthy of the gospel of Christ. In 1:27b-30 he describes that manner of life: (a) Maintain unity—"stand fast in one spirit" (1:27). (b) Have one purpose—"with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel" (1:27). (c) Manifest courage—"in nothing afrighted" (1:28). (d) Share in suffering—"to suffer in his behalf" (1:29-30).

B. The Supreme Inspiration (Motive) of the Ideal Christian is the Mind of Christ (2:1-30). Key Verse 2:5.

1. Paul pleads that the Philippians may have the *unselfish* mind, even the mind of Christ (2:1-11). If they only have this mind all faction, vain-glory and self-seeking will disappear, love will rule, and Paul's joy will overflow (2:1-4). In a passage of surpassing beauty and power Paul describes the mind of Christ (2:5-11).

(a) It was an unselfish mind (2:6).

The supreme example of unselfishness is Christ's leaving heaven's glory for the shame of earth. "Even Christ pleased not Himself" (Rom. 15:3). "Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor" (2 Cor. 8:9). Cf. John 13:3.

(b) It was a serving mind.

He took "the form of a servant" (2:7). He said, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). That sums up His whole life. Peter's summary of His life was, "Who went about doing good" (Acts 10:38).

(c) It was a humble mind.

“He humbled Himself” (2:8). He brought His will in loving subjection to His Father’s will. “I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me” (John 6:38). “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me” (John 4:34). “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). “I am come to do thy will” (Heb. 10:9).

(d) It was an obedient mind.

“Becoming obedient even unto death” (2:8). “I do always the things that are pleasing to Him,” said Christ (John 8:29). And the writer of Hebrews says of Him: “Though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb. 5:8).

And because He was unselfish, and serving, and humble, and obedient, God raised Him to a pre-eminent height and gave Him a title and dignity far above all others. “Wherefore, God also highly exalted Him” (2:9). Here are the four steps that lead to high position and usefulness in God’s kingdom: Selflessness, Service, Humility, and Obedience.

2. Once more the Philippians are urged to continue to strive to develop in them the mind of Christ (2:12-18).

(a) Obedience. “Ye have always obeyed” (2:12). They must be obedient even unto death if need be. “If I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy” (2:17).

(b) Unselfishness. “Do all things without murmurings and questionings” (2:14).

(c) Service. “Ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life” (2:15-16).

3. The mind of Christ as exhibited in Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30).

Others seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. Not so with Timothy. He served with me in furtherance of the gospel (2:19-24). And as for Epaphroditus, he was my fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need (2:25). In the service of Christ he came nigh unto death, hazarding his very life (2:30).

The mind of Christ in us is the supreme inspiration to His service. It was the mind of Christ in Livingstone that made him say, “I place no value on anything I have or may possess.

except in relation to the kingdom of Christ"; that sent him into the jungles of Africa to die there alone upon his knees with the prayer, "May God's rich blessings come down on every one who will help to heal this open sore of the world." It was the mind of Christ in David Brainerd that thrust him out in the depths of the American forests and made him spend whole nights in the deep snow praying so earnestly for the conversion of the Indians, that when morning came his body was bathed in perspiration. It was the mind of Christ in His first great missionary that made him say, "I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 12:10).

C. The Supreme **Aspiration** of the Ideal Christian is the **Perfection** of Christ (3:1-4:1).

This great section forms the climax of Philippians. The key verse is 3:14, "I press on." Like a racer with every muscle and nerve strained the apostle pursues the full perfection of life in Christ's kingdom. In this section we have the pictures of two men.

1. The man who aspires after the flesh (3:1-6). This man glories in fleshly attainments, such as circumcision, Israelitish descent, tribal standing, pure Hebrew origin, Phariseeism, zeal, and legalism. These are wonderful advantages in themselves, but one may have them without any true loyalty to God. The highest attainments of the life estranged from Christ belong to the realm of the flesh, to human nature as it exists and acts apart from the influence of the Spirit.

2. The man who aspires after Christ and His perfection (3:7-16). This man glories in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh. "What things were 'gains' (plural in the Greek) to me, these have I counted loss (singular number) for Christ" (2:7). The man who aspires after the flesh counts up these fleshly attainments one by one, even as a miser counts over his gold and silver coins, and sets them down to his credit. The man who aspires after Christ lumps them all together as one mass under one general head of "loss," and then throws the whole rotten mass away as one would throw slop to the

dogs. "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse (literally, 'slop to the dogs'), that I may gain Christ." "A flock of sheep seen against a background of dirty road may appear pure and clean; seen against a background of newly fallen snow, they appear defiled. A little hill may appear stupendous to one who has never seen a mountain; to a man who is familiar with the uplifted splendors of the Himalayas, it appears but a mole hill on the plain. Glass may be considered invaluable until we have seen the fascinating radiance of a diamond. When Paul regarded his aristocratic possessions as great gains, he had never seen the Lord; but when the glory of the Lord blazed upon his wondering eyes, these things faded away into shadow and eclipse."

This perfection of life in Christ includes four things:

(a) "The power of His Resurrection" (3:10). To Paul the resurrection of Christ was the supremest manifestation of God's power (Rom. 1:4; Eph. 1:19-20). He longed to be clothed with that power. "That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." All things he counted loss for the excellency of that power. There was nothing he desired more than that power. He saw that in the resurrection of Christ amazing forces were at work, and his one over-mastering passion was to come within the sweep of their tremendous current.

(b) "Out-resurrection out from among the dead" (3:11). This word, "out-resurrection," does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It reveals the intense yearning of Paul's heart to be utterly separated from all weakness and sin and lifted to a new and glorified life. "If only he could become one with the Man who snapped the bars of death and walked out of the tomb, then no grave should ever hold him, no matter whether the bondage be of moral or material corruption."

(c) The accomplishment of the work to which his glorified Lord had called him. "That I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus" (3:12). Christ had said of him: "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name

before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:15-16). And Paul had said: "I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24). At the end he wanted to be able to tell Christ: "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do."

(d) Constant growth and struggle. "I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14). It is "higher yet and higher."

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll."

3. Paul pleads with the Philippians to aspire after him even as he aspires after Christ and His perfection (3:17-4:1).

CONCLUSION (4:1-23).

Paul closes his beautiful letter with various exhortations. There is no one thought running through this section and tying it together. However, there are many verses of striking beauty. But Paul not only wrote beautiful words to the Philippians. He had lived the beautiful *life* before them, even this Ideal Christian Life. So he could say to them: "The things which ye both learned, and received, and heard, and saw in me, these things do" (4:9). He practiced what he preached. The secret of such a life is revealed in his great declaration: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me" (4:13).