

ABBOTT, is undoubtedly John. It was natural, therefore, to infer that 'the other disciple' who knew the high priest, and who is brought into close connexion with Peter, was also John.

But observe the phrase 'known unto the high priest.' Is 'known' an adequate rendering? The Greek word, as applied to persons, is extremely rare. In the New Testament it occurs only here and in other two passages. In one of these the parents of Jesus are described as searching for Him among their kindred and 'acquaintance.' In the other we are told that all His 'acquaintance' stood afar off round the cross. Now, the same Greek word is used in the Septuagint at Ps 55¹³, and it is translated 'acquaintance' in the Authorized Version. The Revisers, however, felt that 'acquaintance' was not sufficient, and rendered the word by 'familiar friend.' This, says Dr. ABBOTT, and nothing less than this, is its meaning in the Septuagint and the New Testament—'intimate friend,' a person 'in one's bosom' or 'in one's counsels.'

What is said, therefore, about 'the other disciple' here is that he was the 'intimate partaker of the high priest's counsels.' Could that be said of John? The verse immediately follows that in which we are reminded that 'Caiaphas was he that gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.' 'Is it likely,' asks Dr. ABBOTT, 'that a Gospel written in the name of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" should say, in effect, that that disciple was "in the counsels of" the High Priest who was plotting the

death of Jesus—and this on the very eve of His crucifixion?'

It is true that John is often brought into relation with Peter. But so, once at least, is Judas Iscariot. The first Johannine mention of Judas Iscariot follows the Confession of Simon Peter. Is it not possible that St. John is bringing him into relation with Peter here and calling him 'the other disciple,' not to suggest identity, as has been assumed, but contrast? 'How could you suppose—he might perhaps say to us, complaining of our dulness of comprehension—that I intended you to identify another disciple who was the bosom friend of Caiaphas, the murderer of Jesus, with the other disciple whom Jesus loved?'

Again, it is clear to Dr. ABBOTT that Peter was led into the high priest's palace on this occasion to be tempted of the devil. Christ had warned him that it was Satan's desire to have him that he might sift him as wheat. The sifting is at hand, and Judas is the instrument. Peter had come up to the door that he might learn the earliest tidings of the result of the trial and carry it to the rest. Judas is within. He comes out, finds Peter and brings him in, with the disastrous consequences we know of. An early interpreter of the incident, the poet Nonnus, says that he 'took him by the hand, and brought him in,' as if Peter were unwilling to run the risk. Be that as it may, it is clear to Dr. ABBOTT that 'if the friend of the High Priest had not taken Peter into the High Priest's hall, Peter—humanly speaking—would not have denied his Master.'

The Epistle to the Colossians and its Christology.

BY THE REV. JAMES IVERACH, D.D., PRINCIPAL OF THE UNITED FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

It is acknowledged on all hands that the Epistles of the Captivity have a distinctive place in the literature of the New Testament, and that, if they are Pauline, they have a peculiar place in the

Pauline literature. So distinctive is their peculiarity that it has formed the ground for a denial of the Pauline authorship. In many ways they indicate a development of conceptions familiar

to the reader of earlier Pauline Epistles. The doctrine of the Person of Christ, of His place, and of His work is set forth with a greater fulness, and with more detailed reference to God, to man, and to the world than in the former Epistles. May this fuller development be regarded as the work of the Apostle himself, or is it to be reckoned the work of a school of disciples? This is not the place for a full discussion of the theology of St. Paul, or for an inquiry into the various influences that moulded his thought and guided his life. What we wish to deal with are the Epistles of the Captivity, and their significance for the student of Pauline doctrine. It may be asked, however, whether there is anything in these Epistles inconsistent with the thought and doctrine contained in the Apostle's acknowledged writings.

Whether we have regard to the accounts of St. Paul's activity as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, or to the statements of his acknowledged Epistles, there is one consistent outcome of such a study of his life and activity. It is one gospel he has to preach, one testimony he has to give. In this gospel he knows no change. The burden of it, in its simplicity, independence, and exclusiveness, is the fact that Jesus Christ is the witness and the bearer of the historical revelation of God to the world. God has revealed Himself in Christ, and has in Christ made provision for the need of the world. In the earliest accounts of the activity of the Apostle, as in the latest, this is the centre of his teaching. From it he always starts, to it he always returns. But the unfolding of this fundamental thought proceeds along lines of development which can be traced. Sometimes it is developed (shall we say?) out of the meditation and the reflexion of the Apostle, as he strives to make clear to himself the implications of the fundamental thought of the fact of Christ, and His significance for the world. On this endeavour we may conceive him exhausting all the stores of his knowledge, ransacking all the resources of his reading to find fitting expression for the meaning of the great fact which had taken possession of his mind, to wit, that Christ was the final revelation of God to the world. How far this speculative satisfaction impelled the Apostle we may not say; for it was ruled by his own practical need, and the needs of the churches he had founded. What aspects of the fulness of Christ were to be set forth at any moment were determined by questions

which emerged in the course of his work. In the course of his missionary activity, while he always preached Jesus Christ, the aspect he set forth varied. Yet all the aspects were aspects of the one Christ. Thus, he set forth Christ as Him who delivered men from the coming wrath, as we find it in the Thessalonian Epistles. Other aspects were presented in relation to the polemic against his Judaistic opponents. But in every case we gain the impression that Christ is more, and means more, than that aspect of His person and His work which St. Paul laid stress on at the time of writing. For every question which arises, whether doctrinal or practical, is answered by a reference to the mind of Christ, or to the person of Christ, or to His example. One part of the work of the Apostle was to set forth Christ so as to commend to the heathen the gospel of the living God and the redemption that was in Christ, in order that they might be set free from false notions of God, inadequate thoughts of how man was to be made just with God, the false conceptions of the ideal of human life. In the polemic against Judaism he had occasion to set forth Christ as the rule and meaning of the O.T. dispensation, and to show how believers in Him were delivered from the self-righteousness of the Jews, and from the false notions of the mystic conceptions of religion current among this people in Corinth and elsewhere. In the course of his apostolic activity new questions arose and new circumstances emerged which called for a fuller statement of the contents of the gospel entrusted to him. He had to set forth the reality of it, to free it from unclearness, from misrepresentation, and from misunderstandings, and to come to a clear understanding of the meaning of the gospel, its place in the Divine economy, and its sphere in the history of humanity and in the evolution of the Divine purpose of love. Already in the Epistles to the Romans and to the Corinthians there are significant lines of thought, which indicate that the gospel had a universal meaning, that it was the meaning and the goal of the Divine purpose, and the culmination of God's way of salvation for men. Many of these lines of thought indicate clearly the way in which the Apostle was walking, and point towards the goal of his thought, but the goal itself is not yet in sight. In the Epistles of the Captivity we find these undeveloped thoughts taken up again, worked out afresh, and brought to their legitimate

conclusion. Especially is this the case with the doctrine of the Person of Christ, the doctrine of the Church, and the new significance given to the doctrine of redemption in opposition to the incipient Gnosticism of Colossæ.

It is not necessary to spend time on questions of introduction. The evidence for the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Colossians is ample, and need not be repeated here. Nor shall we raise any question as to the precise time in the Roman captivity when the Epistle was written. It is generally acknowledged that it is Pauline, that it was written during the Apostle's captivity at Rome, that it is a whole, free from interpolation, and that it represents the mind of St. Paul at the period when it was written. Here we shall confine our attention to the contents of the Epistle, and the relation of its teaching to the earlier Pauline Epistles. We shall have occasion to inquire into the circumstances which called forth this new exposition of the doctrine of Christ, what led to this development of the doctrine of the Church, and the new description of the fact and meaning of redemption. It is to be remembered that, along with the letter addressed to the Church at Colossæ, St. Paul had sent a letter to Philemon, in which he had discussed matters personal to Philemon. The personal matter had, indeed, given occasion to the setting forth of principles of world-wide interest and application — principles which were to have abiding results in all the ages of men. It is of interest to observe that one of the Epistles of the Captivity was addressed to an individual, another to the Church at Colossæ, while a third, now known as the Epistle to the Ephesians, seems to have been addressed to all the churches of the valley of the Lycus. This appears to be the most probable view, and that which best fits all the facts.

Three of the churches in the valley of the Lycus are mentioned in our Epistle. Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis appear together as churches where Epaphras had laboured, and for which he had had a special care and affection (Col 4¹³). But the connexion between Colossæ and Laodicea was closer than the bond which united the three. Similar conditions appear to have existed in Laodicea and Colossæ, and they seem to have been liable to similar dangers. For, when the Apostle passes from the more general statements to special conditions, he couples the two churches

in a remarkable way: 'For I would have you know how greatly I strive for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh' (2¹). Again he conjoins them in the injunction that 'when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea' (4¹⁶).

What the conditions common to Colossæ and Laodicea were may be gathered from the fresh development of the doctrine of the person, place, and work of Christ, which in this Epistle attains to a fulness not exhibited previously in any Pauline Epistle. It may be gathered also from an examination of the specific errors in doctrine and practice against which the Apostle warns his readers. These two things, however, are closely connected. As each fresh difficulty emerged, and as each new danger arose, St. Paul thought of Him in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. In dealing with the practical errors of the Corinthians, or with their speculative difficulties regarding the Resurrection, the Apostle found the answer to both questions in a fresh unfolding of the significance of Christ. The advance in his exposition of the person and work of Christ and the added fulness of his exposition arose out of his further reflexion on Him, and this reflexion was called forth by the pressing nature of the situation, as disclosed to him by Epaphras, regarding the speculations and the practice of the Church at Colossæ. As remarked above, the thought of St. Paul with regard to Christ was really one, from the first Epistle to the last. But that thought and its contents became clearer to him as the years passed, and more particularly that clearness was attained under the pressure of the need of the time, and the necessity of finding principles of guidance for the thought and action of the churches. Nor can we forget the influence of the growing experience of fellowship with Christ, of the experience in particular of the grace of Christ flowing in on him in all the critical situations of his life, and of the constant help received from Christ in all these emergencies. Through all his life Christ was the ruler of his thought, the guide of his conduct, the centre, source, and goal of all his striving, and daily he had fresh experience of the infinite resources of Christ and of His ability to meet his intellectual, moral, and spiritual needs. His knowledge of Christ was always a

growing one, even if his felt dependence was absolute throughout.

Thus we should expect that the particular exposition of the doctrine of Christ set forth in the first chapter of the Epistle should be directed towards the special circumstances of the Church at Colossæ, and that the errors indicated in the second chapter were such as needed the special unfolding of the riches of Christ. The two hang together.

The doctrine set forth is such as to meet the situation, and the errors are such as needed that form of exposition. Underlying both is the persuasion of the Apostle that Christ is sufficient to meet all difficulties, whether speculative or practical, and that if men could only learn Christ and know Him, they would be safe from every danger, and secure in every situation.

(To be continued.)

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF ACTS.

ACTS v. 31.

Him did God exalt with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins.

It is interesting to trace the rapid development which took place in St. Peter after the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost. He stood out at once as the foremost of the Apostles, not only with a new courage of faith, but also with gifts of speech hitherto latent. His first sermon showed how clearly he had grasped the gospel, and how firm was his conviction of its truth. But from this start he made remarkable progress in fulness of Christian knowledge, in strength of assurance, and in courage of spirit.

1. There is a progress in his view of Jesus Christ. In his first sermon he spoke of Him as a man approved of God, and closed by saying, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified.' In his address to the people at Solomon's porch, he spoke of Jesus Christ as the Holy and Righteous One, and as the Author of life. Now he advances still further and declares that He is exalted by God to be a Prince and a Saviour. St. Peter's belief in Jesus Christ expanded and took in new elements through the inspiration of the Spirit.

2. There is also a growing assurance. From the first he did not hesitate in his avowal of faith in the risen Redeemer; but as his thoughts of Jesus Christ were heightened and enlarged, his conviction gained strength, which no authority of

Sanhedrin, or tradition of the fathers, could shake or disturb.

3. With growing assurance his courage also grew. It was strengthened partly by opposition and partly by the manifest help and interposition of God. He fearlessly addressed the assembled multitude who listened eagerly to his words; but afterwards, when brought before the Sanhedrin, and again, on his release from prison, he said boldly, 'We must obey God rather than men.' Thus he justified the name which His Master had given him, and proved himself to be the rock-like disciple.

How can we grow in faith? It begins very simply, when we believe in God's existence, but it develops on all sides, till it embraces the following splendid elements:—

Assurance of God's pardon and love;
 Unfailing confidence in His providential wisdom;
 Perfect assurance that He answers our prayers;
 Utter repose in His guardianship to all Eternity;
 The disappearance of fear;
 The ability to do all 'in God.'

'There is the same glow,' says the great philologist, Max Müller, 'about the setting sun as there is about the rising sun; but there lies between the two a whole world, a journey through the whole sky and over the whole earth.' The child's faith is the rising sun; the faith of the dying saint is the setting sun.¹

I.

THE EXALTATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

'Him did God exalt.'

In our text the Apostle reaches the highest note he has yet struck, and says, 'Him did God exalt

¹ J. A. Clapperton, *Culture of the Christian Heart*, 46.