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EUGENE C. CALDWELL, *Editor-in-Chief*

F. E. MANNING, *Business Manager*

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F. E. MANNING, Business Manager

J. C. WOOL, Asst. Business Manager

Each contributor is solely responsible for the views expressed in his article.

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## THE CHALLENGE OF SCIENCE.\*

FRAZER HOOD, Ph. D., Litt. D.,  
*Professor of Psychology and Education, Davidson College,  
Davidson, N. C.*

In a recent issue of a national literary weekly my eye was caught by these words: "The present age has little use for logical subtilities, 'facts, not theories,' is its motto. Yet a little dialectic might save civilization. . . . Plato did not know countless things which we know, but had he known them he would have seen to it that something better came of them than the made world in which we live."

This editorial comment was occasioned by the phrase, "the rush of progress, a menace to the world," occurring in an ad-

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\*This article was the first of a series of addresses delivered by Dr. Hood last January in Schauffer Hall, Union Seminary, Richmond, Va.

philosophers, but not rated quite so high by the French themselves. His *Introduction to Metaphysics, Time and Free Will, Memory and Matter* and *Creative Evolution*. The first and last are the best to select. Karl Pearson's *Grammar of Science*, Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, are points of view that are worth while noting. Every one with a slight acquaintance with philosophy should read something of Josiah Royce and James. Dean Inge and Santaryana are pleasing to many. There are many volumes that might be mentioned here and some names of periodicals that ought to be in the library of every self-respecting and diligent student, but space forbids. What is here noted is somewhat random and casual, not intended for the veteran teacher nor for the learned and erudite, but for the average minister who has given only a little attention to such things. This article was requested with such readers in mind.

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## THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO PHILEMON.

### *A Sermonic Meditation.*

BY REV. GEORGE L. PETRIE, D. D., LL. D.,  
*Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Charlottesville, Va.*

This is a very little letter. Its words are very few and very simple. It is purely personal and definitely private, and almost confidential. Why is it in the Bible? What right has it to be so closely related to Paul's great epistle to the Romans, which has been called the noblest product of the human intellect? Why should it be a companion of the four records of the Supreme Life? Is it worthy of its place beside Matthew, Mark, Luke and John? Is it to be mentioned with the great books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Psalms and the Pentateuch? What ever placed it where it is? It is such a little, personal, private, confidential letter, it seems rather an intrusion where it is.

As Jehoiakim with his penknife cut up the scrolls of Scrip-

ture which Jehudi read, and cast them into the fire, may I not with my penknife cut this little letter out of the Book of God? Would the Bible be worth less? Would God's revelation lose anything of its fulness? Would there be any loss to the world, to the Church, to me?

Prudence suggests that there should be first an honest valuation of this little letter. Investigation brings to notice four witnesses to its worth and to its right to be in its little niche in the great temple of divine Truth.

### *It Is a Letter.*

A letter has a specific value, and a great possibility of worth. It has personal and local allusions. It is replete with the interests of its occasion. It abounds in incidents of which the value is often very great, a value frequently increasing with the lapse of time. Old letters are treasures of incidental truth. This is the charm of the third chapter of Macauley's History of England. While not itself a letter, it possesses this charm of a letter. The stately historian for the time passes by the great world events of war, revolution, treaties, diplomacies, political upheavals and the like. He records the every day life of the people in times of peace. He tells what they think about, talk about, what they do, how they live. Perhaps five people read the third chapter for one that reads the other chapters that discuss world problems and national affairs. It is exactly this that enhances the worth of letters. There are so many things of value incidentally mentioned that otherwise would be irrevocably lost.

From Cicero's letters we learn far more of daily life in Rome than we can learn from his eloquent and carefully prepared orations. The world to-day could better spare some of his great speeches, which he delivered with distinguished success, than lose some of the letters he wrote with far less care and with little thought of their value to the world.

This is peculiarly a day of letter writing. Increased facilities have increased their use. More letters are written.

The Postal System, so prominent everywhere today, is a modern institution. Egypt in its days of greatest intellectual development had no post-office. Babylon, the pride of its builder, had no post-office. Nineveh the Great, against which Jonah and Nahum hurled their judgments, had no post-office. Athens, the cultured, the renowned for all arts and accomplishments, many of whose attainments have never been surpassed, if equalled, had no post-office. Rome, the center of the world, the seat of power, had a golden milestone that marked the central terminal of all the world's magnificent highways, but Rome had no post-office.

When a letter was written, a special arrangement had to be made for its transmission. Paul in Corinth wrote his letters to the Romans. How should it be sent? Phebe of Cenchrea was found, who either was going to Rome and was willing to carry the letter; or, though not otherwise expecting to go, was ready to make the special trip in order to deliver the letter to the saints in Rome. She doubtless little thought of what a piece of history she was making as she carried this priceless treasure to its destination.

Three little letters of ancient times have become conspicuous for their beauty and their charm. One is in the Old Testament; one is between the Testaments. One is in the New Testament. Artaxerxes wrote to Ezra a letter authorizing him to draw on all the King's treasurers in the provinces about Jerusalem for all the help he needed to build Jerusalem. The limit he set to his liberality was so generous as to emphasize the magnitude of his purpose. It was a wonderful tribute to Ezra the captive, a tribute worthy to be treasured and preserved.

The second of these three celebrated little letters was written by Horace. A friend asked him for a letter of introduction to the Emperor Augustus. Horace demurred, saying he had no special influence with the Emperor. The friend insisted. Horace, rather than seem to be unwilling to accommodate a friend, yielded and wrote a beautiful letter of introduction; beautiful in the apology he offers for his presumption, and beautiful in the poetic grace of the introduction.

The third little letter of great celebrity is this epistle of Paul to Philemon. Its beauty easily surpasses that of the other two.

*It Is Social.*

Man is social. A Gospel that appeals effectively to man must make an appeal to his social nature. The four pictures of the Christ life are rendered charming by their social touches. Christ loved people. Paul in this resembled Christ. He surely caught this spirit of the Master. He was eminently social. We are indebted to Paul for a very extensive acquaintance with the Christians of his day. To him the chief charm of any place was the Christians living in it. Seven days' delay at Tyre was not too much to cultivate acquaintance with the saints of Tyre. When he wrote letters he sent greetings to the saints by name, and to them also the greetings of the saints by name of the church where he was writing. In this way he introduces to us many groups of Christ's people. We have come to know them and to love them and to claim them as our own. They are no strangers to us. Their names are household words.

There is an interesting picture of Charles Dickens and his characters, the author and the creations of his genius. It is said that these characters were so real to him that he felt a personal bereavement and a conscious criminality when in the interest of the story he put any one of them to death. It would be a great picture if some artist would portray Paul and his friends. With what delight we should look upon it, and in it trace those whom we had come to know and love. Paul represents Christianity in its social touch and gracious fellowship.

This little letter introduces us to a charming group of Christians well worth knowing, whom otherwise we should have no opportunity to know. There is Philemon, a prominent citizen of Colosse, a Christian man who exemplified the Gospel by a beautiful and gracious life. Then there is his wife Apphia, who with all the grace and dignity of a refined Christian woman

dispensed the generous hospitality of the home and presided over its domestic interests, and kept its affairs in Gospel order. There is their son Archippus, born to wealth, reared in affluence, unspoiled by riches, trained to become a Christian, and led by parental faithfulness and earnest prayers into the Christian ministry, becoming pastor of the Laodicean church, and perhaps the angel referred to in the letter to the Laodicean church in the book of Revelation.

In addition to these, there is the servant boy Onesimus, a Roman slave. Slavery, as it was in our Southern States, was probably the mildest form of slavery the world has known. It is gone. None of us would have it back. It had its hardships. Freedom also has its hardships. Life has its hardships. Roman slavery doubtless was the severest form of slavery history records. It was not the enslavement of a race. It was an accident of warfare. Often the slave was more refined, better educated, of nobler type of life than the master whom he served and whose will was his only law. We must not forget that Epictetus, the philosopher, was a slave. Cicero, the foremost of the Romans, apologizes for the grief he felt at the death of a valued slave. Onesimus was a Roman slave.

As we look on this little group of four, we reflect that of all the people of Colosse, a city of no little size and no mean reputation, this little family is now best known and most loved. The greater splendors of the city have faded. The grace of God through this little letter with undimming brightness has kept this picture before the admiring gaze of the church and the world. As Lazarus, Martha and Mary are all that is left of Bethany to the world, so Philemon and his household are all that the world cares for today of the life and glory of Colosse.

Size does not count for everything. In going through the Art Building of the great Centennial Exposition of 1876, the observer saw many large pictures of world-wide fame, but the picture that brought tears, and most touched the heart, and is most vividly recalled, was a little picture that made the observer think of home. Paul painted this unfading picture for

us. It is a little picture in the great gallery of sacred art. But it makes us think of home. It deserves its little place of honor in the company of statelier books and more formal presentations of religious truths. We should as soon take down a family portrait from the home wall as remove this picture from its eminent place.

*It Marks An Occasion.*

Onesimus stole money and ran away. Either he stole money and sought to safeguard himself by running away, or the spirit of adventure possessed him. He longed to see the world, and stole money to help him in his adventurous flight. As all roads led to Rome, it was natural that in due time he reached the central city of the world, the city he had heard so much about and had so often dreamed about and longed to see. He entered into its life, yielded to its allurements, saw its sights and tested its pleasures. Somehow he came in touch with Paul, heard him preach and was converted by the truth. We are reminded of Augustine, the great father of the early church. Finding not soul rest at home, he went to Rome. He found not what he sought—satisfaction in rhetoric and philosophy. He sought not what he found—perfect peace in simple Gospel faith. In this God's way he became a great leader of Christian thought and preacher of Christian truth.

Onesimus sought Paul and confessed his Christian faith, and asked what he ought to do. He had defrauded his master of service and money. What must he do?

I heard Mr. Moody once say that after one of his services a man sought a private interview with him. He confessed his faith in Christ and then told Mr. Moody that he was a criminal, but no one else knew it. If it was known what he had done, he would be subjected to the severest penalty the law could inflict. What should he do about it, now that he had become a Christian? Mr. Moody said he had made it a rule never to give advice that he himself would not follow, circumstances being reversed. Come tomorrow and I will tell you my advice, he said. I must pray over it.



What must Onesimus do, now that he has become a Christian? Paul says go back to your master. How much that meant! What possibilities it involved! Paul told him he would write a letter by him to Philemon. He was about to send a letter to the Colossian church by Tychicus, and Onesimus could go along with Tychicus to Colosse. It was a severe test of genuine conversion. But Onesimus stood the test like a true hero of the gospel faith. The letter was written and the two letter carriers, companions of travel, went on their way.

At Colosse a servant reports to Philemon that Onesimus has come back and brought a letter. Philemon receives the letter and bids Onesimus await his pleasure.

*It Makes a Strong Appeal.*

Philemon reads Paul's letter. It must have been in the privacy of his office. The letter is very tactfully written. Paul wishes to gain Philemon's favorable consideration. An orator must first win the interest of his audience, and then he may sway them at his will. So must it be with the letter writer. Paul first mentions pleasant things—all doubtless true, they are well chosen to win a ready response.

He thanks God for Philemon. He assures him of his prayerful interest. He commends his large generosity and hospitality. He very ingeniously shows how all Philemon's charitable gifts are multiplied by three. There is the value of it to him to whom it is given. There is the equal value of it to the giver. There is the equal value of it to the observer who sees in it the fruit of grace in one who owes to him as spiritual father his life of faith. It is thrice blessed, not only to him who gives and him who takes, but him who observes.

All this is a beautiful introduction to something. What can it be? It is something he might demand. But he will only request it. That is very tactful. We should rather comply with a request than yield to a demand.

With what force shall this request be made? It is made by Paul, the spiritual father of Philemon. It is Paul the aged.

He is only about fifty-nine years old. That does not seem very old. He is prematurely old. He is worn by Christian service. When we read the record of his hardships, we wonder that he lives, to say nothing of premature old age. He is a prisoner in bonds. It is a dreadful sight to see a man in chains. How much more to see in chains a man such as Paul. He asks that Philemon should make his prison life easier, his chains lighter, his bonds gentler. Who would not respond to a call like that?

What does all this mean? What has Paul in mind? What is it that he might demand, yet only asks? Oh! oh! Receive him back! Onesimus! Impossible. He ran away. But God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. He ran away a pagan; he returns a Christian. Paul says he might have kept him. But he has sent him back to Philemon. But he stole money from his master. Somehow that is so hard to forget and to forgive. Paul says put that to his account. Of course Philemon could not do that. But Paul says he means it. He will repay Philemon all that Onesimus stole from him.

Paul says that Philemon should receive Onesimus not as a returning slave, but as a Christian brother! Impossible! Paul adds that he knew Philemon would do all he requested and even more. That was very optimistic! No. It is impossible.

Paul adds one more thought. Prepare a lodging for me. I am coming to you as soon as I am released from prison. To Philemon that changes the whole aspect of the matter. Face to face: that means so much. That is so real. He values Paul's friendship. When he comes, the meeting will be awkward, if his request has been denied. It is hard. But Philemon yields, because Paul is coming. He calls for Onesimus. Not knowing what to expect, Onesimus stands in his master's presence. A moment of intense silence, and of anxious thought, and of tremendous import. Philemon speaks: Onesimus, brother in Christ, welcome home.

In due time there is a ring at Philemon's door. The servant announces an old gentleman at the door. I think he said his name was Paul. Ask him up! No, I myself will go and

receive him. Philemon opened the door, and it was Paul. They embrace each other in the expression of ardent Christian love. It would have been an awkward meeting if Paul's request had been denied. Then Philemon said, Paul, this is our brother Onesimus. Noble triumph of Christian principle—sweet experience of Gospel Grace. Paul was a true prophet when he said, I know you will do all I ask, and even more.

There is one to whom I am largely indebted. He has written to me making request for what He might have made demand. He has asked for my heart, all of it—my life—all of it—my service, all of it. It is hard to do, this full compliance with His request. Would not half do for all He asks? To surrender all is very hard. But He says, I am coming. Prepare a place for me. Shall I? I value His love. It will be an awkward meeting if I refuse to do all He asks. I will comply.

“Love unknown

Has broken every barrier down;  
Now to be Thine and Thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come!”

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock.”

“List! Thy bosom door  
How it knocketh, knocketh, knocketh, knocketh evermore.  
Say not 'tis thy pulse's beating,  
'Tis thy heart of sin:  
'Tis thy Saviour knocketh, saying,  
Rise and let me in.”  
“The Master is come and calleth for thee.”

“Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer,  
Welcome to this heart of mine.  
Lord, I make a full surrender,  
Every thought and power be Thine,  
Thine entirely,  
Through eternal ages Thine.”

How happy the meeting when we have done His will. So I close my penknife and restore it to my pocket. I thank God for the little letter that taught me so much. I have found it bright with all heavenly light, rich with all Gospel Grace, and charged with a divine message to my soul. Its place in the inspired Book is justified. It has also found a lodging place in my grateful heart.

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### THE LEXINGTON ASSEMBLY, 1925.

By REV. WALTER L. LINGLE, D. D., LL. D.,  
*President of The General Assembly's Training School for Lay  
Workers, Richmond, Va.*

This article is not intended to be a connected narrative of all that was said and done at the recent meeting of the General Assembly of our Church at Lexington, Ky. It is rather intended to review and discuss some of the more important matters which came before the Assembly.

#### *Entertainment.*

It has been my privilege to attend a great many meetings of the General Assembly, and I can testify that the Assembly has always been handsomely entertained wherever it has met, but Lexington went a little beyond anything that I ever saw before. It was one round of entertainment after another. All of this was exceedingly delightful and added a great deal to the pleasure of the commissioners, but from the point of view of the work which the Assembly needs to do, there is such a thing as too much entertainment. A good deal of time was spent in the early days of the Assembly in making excursions of one kind or another. The result was a very crowded docket and much hurried work in the last two days. Perhaps the stated clerk and moderator ought to be appointed as a committee to advise beforehand with the church in which the Assembly is to