

himself, as we may say—as he would have appeared and would have expressed his thoughts in an earnest conversation. We can almost see him in the conflict with his adversary, anticipating his objections, refuting his arguments, appealing to his sound judgment, commending to him the evidences for the truth. As in such a conflict on a single great question he would not have arrested or turned aside the conversation to settle the forms and formulas of the Church, but would have followed his opponent steadily to the end at which he aimed, so he directs his course in this living, earnest, victorious letter to the establishment of one comprehensive, yet individual, proposition—the fundamental doctrine of the Christian system.

In the ardor of his feeling and the impetuosity of his defence of his doctrine, his thoughts move faster than the amanuensis can record his words. Hence we find him passing into a new statement before he has given us the link which binds it to the one already made, or losing the grammatical sequence in the logical progress, or introducing a reasoning particle in every clause, or turning off at the suggestion of some single word to a side argument, from which he does not come back to take up the word again, or pouring forth the expressions of his confidence, or his earnestness, in repeated and triumphant questions which admit of but one answer. How far he was from the philosophic calmness of the schools and the teacher who quietly, and without emotion, arranges his system of thought in its divisions and subdivisions! He was a combatant, an advocate, a preacher. He was contending for one grand idea, earnest to prove its truth, on fire in his inmost soul with the love of it, striving from the first word to the last of his whole discussion to persuade his readers to accept it, and to realize in themselves its life-giving power.

I cannot assent to everything which Mr. Beecher says in his interesting, appreciative, and characteristic article; but there is much truth in his remark that "something of Paul is needed to understand Paul," and that his thoughts "cannot be understood or interpreted by the grammar and dictionary alone." The grammar and dictionary, however, are not the worst enemies of right interpretation in the case of the Pauline writings. It is those who have approached these writings, without following in the way pointed out by these useful guides, who have missed most frequently their true meaning. The failure to conceive of the Epistles as letters to individual churches, and the assumption that they must contain all the doctrines of a particular doctrinal system have been the chief sources of erroneous interpretation. If we can have the dictionary and grammar, and the Pauline spirit also, we shall most successfully enter into the thought of the Epistle to the Romans.