

But it gives a glimpse into the heart of the writer, better than some more formal epistles. And it is a valuable illustration of the way in which Christianity deals with social problems, slavery and war and such like.

Slavery was an unutterably cruel institution. The man, the woman, the young girl, the child belonged to the master to do what he liked with. This very year of Paul's arrival in Rome the prefect of the city was killed by the slave lover of one of his slave girls. Probably he deserved killing. In revenge for it the whole body of his 400 slaves, men, women and children, were put to death. How did Christianity deal with slavery? Not by stirring up rebellion or rousing slaves to insurrection, but by gradually leavening society with the spirit of that religion which recognized all as brethren and as equal in the sight of the Father of us all. "Onesimus," writes Paul to the master of this young slave, "Onesimus is my friend and a disciple of your Lord and mine. Receive him as a brother." "Masters," he writes in the Ephesian epistle, "be good to your slaves, for their master and yours is in Heaven and there is no respect of persons with him." That is the spirit of the religion of Jesus and when it grew sufficiently strong in the world, slavery was swept away forever.

That too is how wars will be swept away. That is God's method. Not by paralyzing the aggressor or smiting him with fire from heaven, but by gradually permeating life with the religion which makes all men brothers. God's plan is slow, but it is sure, like the incoming of the tide. It is slow because its appeal is to individual wills, and everyone who yields his life to it is hastening that coming day when