

was not in the attitude of a doctrinal theologian, who, either systematically or without careful arrangements, sets forth his views on all points of religious truth. He is an earnest advocate of a particular truth, fundamental to the right conception of Christianity and to the hopes of the Christian Church in the world. As such, he would follow out the argument for it in all necessary lines, and would guard it on every side, as well as defend it against its strongest enemies. To protect the Roman Christians, or the Christians of any other city or region, against mistaking the true doctrine in regard to this central matter of justification by faith, was of essential importance when he wrote this letter. At this point was the danger for the truth. Had the Judaistic view triumphed in the controversy, the success of the Christian cause might have been imperilled for a generation at least—perhaps for many generations. The Apostle was alive to the issue. With all the enthusiasm of his nature he was committed to the grand idea which had been revealed to him from heaven. He threw himself with the ardor of a soldier into the conflict for its support. He bent every energy of his being to secure for it the victory, which was to his mind the victory of the kingdom of God. Here, and here alone, was the work of the hour and the time. The unfolding of all the details of the Christian system was not now essential. The superstructure could be built up after the foundations had been laid. The Roman Church could well wait to know from his further teaching, when an opportunity for this should offer, the entire doctrine of the origin and progress of sin among the posterity of Adam, or the full truth concerning individual election, or concerning the foreknowledge of God as related to the salvation of particular men, or concerning the perseverance of the saints. It was enough for the moment for it to understand that, as connected with the doctrine of faith, the blessing of salvation was offered as widely as the curse of sin had reached, and that in God's dealings with the chosen people, and the Gentiles also, His selection had been in the line of wonderful mercy, and that the ones whom He foreknew at the beginning would be glorified at the end. These things showed the glory of the faith-system, and thus commended it as the truth. He could not leave them aside as He established the foundation. He sets them forth as they are needed, and He goes no further. What lies beyond is beyond the boundary of His purpose. The advocate leaves the cause when his end is accomplished. When a new cause arises, or the same one under different aspects or with different demands, he is ready to meet the issue. Paul was an advocate. He shows this in every letter and in every argument. How strikingly different he is from the Apostle John on the one side, or from the writer to the Hebrews on the other, in this regard! We fail to comprehend him when we fail to bear this fact in mind.