

**A COMMENTARY ON
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE
TO THE GALATIANS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649035878

A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians by Joseph Agar Beet

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOSEPH AGAR BEET

**A COMMENTARY ON
ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE
TO THE GALATIANS**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

Commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles.

- 1 ROMANS. *Tenth Edition.* 7s. 6d.
- 2 CORINTHIANS. *Seventh Edition.* 10s. 6d.
- 3 GALATIANS. *Sixth Edition.* 5s.
- 4 EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS,
COLOSSIANS. *Third Edition.* 7s. 6d.

"In Dr. Agar Beet the Wesleyans have now a theologian who takes his place among the best of living expositors; and we may hope that, as the community to which he belongs is beginning to contribute its fair share to general literature, so Dr. Beet is but the first of a line of Methodist divines who shall rival those of the Presbyterians and the Independents; and shall have their weight, as he has, with the scholars of the English Church. It is no small achievement to have carried into its ninth edition a book on so well worked a theme as the Epistle to the Romans. This success is the reward of solid and sober work. The writer has the great merit of knowing his own mind, and of expressing his meaning with lucidity; and his literary skill enables him to give his readers most of the results attained by scholarship without distracting the unlearned by a parade of Greek. But he is more than a commentator; he applies the lessons of the Epistle with impressive earnestness and unflinching good taste."—*The Saturday Review*.

"To criticise a book of which the public has pronounced so unmistakable an appreciation is needless, and would be presumptuous. Professor Beet could himself have given no stronger proof of his esteem of the Epistle to the Romans than by his thorough revision of a commentary which in the public regard already occupied so high a place. . . . It was a wise course to adopt. No labour spent on a work of such importance is labour in vain."—*The British Weekly*.

LONDON: HODDER & STOUGHTON, 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

Commentary on St. Paul's
Epistle to the . . .
Galatians *By*
JOSEPH AGAR BEET, D.D.

SIXTH
EDITION

LONDON HODDER AND
STOUGHTON ● ● 27
PATERNOSTER ROW 1903

MAY 25 1908

Divinity School
(Overland)

P R E F A C E

THIS volume completes my exposition of the second and largest group of St. Paul's Epistles, viz. those of his Third Missionary Journey. Written as they were probably within the space of one year, these Epistles are closely related. And, fortunately, of St. Paul's movements during this year we have a partial narrative from the pen of one who at the close of the year was himself a travelling companion of the Apostle. The combined light shed by these four Epistles and by the Book of Acts makes St. Paul's inner and outer life better known to us during this year than at any other time. We are thus enabled to watch the activity, and even to read the secret springs of action, of the most conspicuous of the Apostles of Christ at the meridian of his course.

This historic light on St. Paul and his surroundings, supported as it is by the united testimony of the writers of the early Church, affords evidence which in all ages has assured all students, even those who have doubted the authorship of other Epistles attributed to him, that at least these four Epistles are from the pen of the Great Apostle. This certainty of authorship gives to these Epistles a special value, even amid the other Epistles bearing St. Paul's name and to those who confidently accept them all as genuine.

In harmony with this mutual relation of the Epistles, the three volumes in which I have annotated them form one complete work. I have endeavoured, by tracing the line of thought of these Epistles and by comparing them each with the others and with the Book of Acts, to reproduce the thought and

the movements and surroundings of the Apostle of the Gentiles at the noonday of his career. This reproduction I hope to supplement by another volume expounding the profound Epistles written during the seclusion of his first long imprisonment, viz. those to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon: by a fifth volume comprising both his two earliest and his three latest extant Epistles, viz. those written during his second missionary tour, to the newly-founded Church at Thessalonica, and those written, as I hope to prove, after his release from his first imprisonment; and to conclude the series by a volume expounding St. Paul's teaching as a whole, comparing it with that of the other writers of the New Testament, and tracing the manifold teaching of these various writers to its one immediate source in the Gospel proclaimed by Christ and to its ultimate source in the Eternal Purpose of God.

This aim will explain some peculiarities of this volume, as of those preceding it. The theological scope of the whole work has led me to compare the teaching of Paul with that of John and James; and the apparent contradiction between Paul and this last writer compelled me to expound an important paragraph of the Epistle of James. I have also still further discussed in a separate Dissertation, as the chief matter of the Epistle to the Galatians, the great doctrine of Justification by Faith. As an aid towards reproducing the surroundings of St. Paul, I have added biographical notes on some other leaders of the early Church. These notes I was the more ready to insert because the historical surroundings of St. Paul are evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the documents embodying or recording his teaching and movements. This value as evidence gives interest even to minute personal details.

The long note on the Sabbath is inserted partly because of the importance of the subject and the unsatisfactory treatment it seems to me to have hitherto received, and in part because I am deeply convinced that the true place of the Lord's Day in the New Covenant can be understood only in the light of the

great principles expounded in this Epistle, of which principles the Christian Day of Rest affords a valuable illustration.

To this note I wish to add that in my view the statement in Gen. ii. 3, taken in connection with the traces, casual and scanty though they are, of a septenary division of time earlier than the Exodus or away from Israel, points towards the institution of the Sabbath at the Creation. This seems to me to be the easiest explanation of all the facts of the case. But the evidence of a single statement in the Bible and that not a categorical assertion of the matter in question, and of a very few and somewhat indistinct references in pagan books or monuments, is not such as can be safely made a ground of confident argument in a matter so important as the Lord's Day. In my note I have endeavoured to show that the Christian Day of Rest bears on its front, in plain letters which every man can read for himself, the mark of its Divine origin and universal purpose. Reliance upon the scanty indications referred to above only obscures this more solid proof. On the other hand, this better proof, when once it is firmly established, receives confirmation even from these casual and scanty indications. For, if the Day of Rest was designed for all mankind, it is easy to believe that it was ordained at the Creation of the World.

It must, I fear, be admitted that the Epistle to the Galatians is not a general favourite. It is intensely doctrinal: and doctrinal theology is not only at first sight void of beauty but seems to belong rather to the college lecture hall than to practical life. Moreover, St. Paul's arguments are difficult to follow: and the matters he discusses pertain apparently to questions which have long ago passed away.

But Christian doctrines are uninteresting and void of beauty only when our view of them is distorted or partial. For they are an attempt to comprehend and to present the Eternal Thought and Purpose of God's Love to Man. And, just as this thought and purpose are the noblest conceivable outflow of the mind of God, so are they the noblest object of human

research and the most fascinating object of human contemplation. Eternal Truth cannot but be beautiful, when seen in its real proportions. The possible unattractiveness of its first partial appearance is but the painful effort of the finite eye of man to adapt itself to the brightness of Infinite Grandeur.

Similarly, the demonstrations of Newton's *Principia* may, when imperfectly understood or when taken singly, seem uninteresting. But, without these demonstrations, the profoundly interesting generalisation of Universal Gravitation could not have been reached and cannot now be fully appreciated.

Moreover, St. Paul's earnestness about the theological matters which in this Epistle he discusses, matters once agitating the Christian communities in Galatia and Antioch and Jerusalem, assures us of their immense importance to the spiritual life of the early Churches. And that which was vital then cannot but be important now. For the great questions of the Christian life belong to all ages. It is also very instructive to see, as in this Epistle, abstract doctrines assuming living form in actual Church life. And that the forms then assumed have passed away and have therefore no abiding interest, is an advantage: for it leaves our mind free to contemplate, without the prejudice evoked by the questions of our own day, broad underlying principles.

In this volume, as in the earlier ones, my chief aids in tracing the Apostle's thought have been a careful grammatical analysis of his words and sentences and a logical analysis of his argument.

The short comparison here given of St. Paul's conception of the Gospel and of Christ with that of other writers of the New Testament is an anticipation of a fuller comparison in my concluding volume. Such comparison is of immense value. For, the conception of the Gospel even by an Apostle was moulded and coloured by his mental and moral constitution and by his history and surroundings. This conception was