

PICTURES

IN THE

BOOK OF ACTS

OR,

THE UNFINISHED WORK OF JESUS.

BY
DAVID ANDERSON-BERRY

M.D., LL.D., F.R.S. (Edin.),

Author of "Seven Sayings," "Seventh Day Adventism,"
"After Death," &c., &c.



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INTRODUCTION.

THE papers which compose this volume were published first in *The Witness* in monthly numbers, and were all read carefully by the Editor before being inserted. But reading piecemeal in monthly parts is a very inefficient way of getting a grasp of such a work so as to enjoy it and profit by it. I am therefore glad that these papers are at last compiled in one volume, in the reading of which I have found fresh delight and profit.

About the time they were first issued, a Christian friend and his wife, who had been travelling in Greece, came across them in *The Witness*, and wrote to inquire if Dr. Anderson-Berry had himself visited these parts and viewed the scenes so picturesquely portrayed, and so true to nature. To them and to many others they seemed rather to be painted than written, so vividly did they present the scenes through which the first heralds of the Cross long ago had passed.

At the request of my much valued friend, the Author, I venture to write these few lines of introduction, hoping that some may be induced thereby to read the book who otherwise might not have done so.

Introduction.

But scattered through its pages there is much more to be gathered than vivid and picturesque description. It is full of accurate Bible information, fresh light being shed on many scriptures hitherto but little understood. Especially is this the case as regards Philippi, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Athens, as well as the labour, testimony, and sufferings of the apostle Paul in connection with these notable places.

Not a few allusions, hidden from the ordinary reader, are brought to light, proving how very accurately and minutely the inspired writers knew the history of their time, the character of the people, and the facts and circumstances peculiar to the towns, countries, and persons referred to.

All such discoveries are of inestimable value in these days when the enemy has assembled the forces of erudition, science, and philosophy to discredit the Scriptures of Truth and to undermine the foundations of the faith.

May the Lord abundantly prosper and bless this little volume, and get glory to His own name through the truth it contains.

J. R. CALDWELL.

P R E F A C E.

TO THE READER, THESE WORDS :

(1) The following pages were first written for *The Witness*, the Editor of which has added one more to the many kindnesses he has bestowed on me by writing an Introduction ; to read which first is my will.

(2) Written as these pages were, I considered that footnotes containing references to authorities would burden the border, without enlightening the reader. Nevertheless, I can honestly declare that no statements forming, as it were, the touches that give life and verisimilitude to these PICTURES are without authority based on two or more references. But as the book was not written as a display of learning, but as a labour of love, I have left the pages as they were—uncumbered by footnotes.

(3) For the translation of the Greek I take all responsibility. But here again nothing will be found for which I cannot point to the printed page elsewhere. The translation may appear *outré*, but if its unwontedness irritate your consciousness or prick you into antagonism it will have accomplished its end. For as the smoothness of the aeroplane's flight

Preface.

seems to abolish the sense of speed, so the even passage of the mind over the Authorised Version, rendered smooth by frequent perusal, often abolishes attention. If the question, "Does it really mean this?" thus raised in your mind send you to your Bible to read the passage more attentively than heretofore, a part of my aim shall be accomplished. You will have bestowed on some of the words of God some of that attention they so richly deserve.

(4) Save where either quotation marks or grammatical construction make it clear to the contrary, I am not conscious of borrowing from other writers. True, I have collected facts from many sources, as the bees do nectar from many flowers; but the use I have made of them is my own.

Finally: the book is a labour of love; and, in so far as the Lord Himself has made it worthy, I lay it at His feet, and humbly ask Him to bless its message: which is, that the Work of JESUS is still unfinished, for as yet no sinner can go to Him only to find that He has ceased to be a Saviour, and has sat down to become a Judge.

DAVID ANDERSON-BERRY.

LONDON.

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THE ACTS.

CHAPTER I.

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach.

Until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen.

To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.”

PICTURES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS;

OR,

THE UNFINISHED WORK OF JESUS.

I.

HIS RESURRECTION.

“It seemed good to me, also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things” (Luke i. 3, 4).

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible witnesses” (Acts i. 1-3).

JESUS lives! The One whom we have seen expire amidst scenes of the most awful significance and under circumstances of the greatest shame and horror.

He died! There was no doubt about that. Pilate knew it, or else he would not have taken upon himself the responsibility of handing over His body to two friends of the dead man for burial.

The rulers of the Jews knew it, or else they would not have parted with the body of their Victim as long as there was life in it.

The centurion and the soldiers of the guard knew it. Accustomed with the signs of death, they passed Him by on their mission of mercy, for they saw He was dead already. Yet to make assurance doubly sure, one of them thrust the point of his spear with true military precision right through His heart. That he hit the mark is seen by the stream of water and of blood which issued from the wound. Nothing could be truer to nature and nothing less likely to be invented than this anatomical and physiological touch—"forthwith came thereout blood and water."

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa knew it, for they gave Him a royal burial. When the great Gamaliel was buried they used eighty pounds of spices, but here these two piled around Him and over Him one hundred pounds in weight. An incredulous critic has said that that was enough to embalm two hundred bodies. Ay, but this was no ordinary body, and so no ordinary quantity would

be deemed sufficient. Truly they knew He was dead, or else they would not have buried Him in twelve hundred ounces of pungent, aromatic spices.

The women knew it. The one who with tender touch wrapped the napkin round that dead face knew that He was dead.

Call them all up out of the misty past—loving women, secret disciples, brutal soldiery, infamous Jews, and time-serving Pilate. See! they stand, and with uplifted hand cry, “He died!”

Yet Jesus lives! If His death be so attested that it must assuredly go to be enrolled amongst these facts of which the world's past, present, and even future are built up, so must the fact that He rose.

Just consider a few reasons why this must be so :

(1) 'Tis verily true that to raise a dead man is beyond the bounds of human possibility, but no reason can be given why it should be beyond the scope of God's power. The statement—a man raises the dead—carries its own refutation. It needs no contradiction although the thought of resur-

rection is always with the human mind. The promise, The dead shall rise! meets the blind craving of the human race, only the ever-present question, How? crushes the budding hope. Say, God can raise the dead, and the only doubt is as to His willingness.

(2) The Lord Jesus Christ came forth from God to reveal God to sinful men. That was His mission. Nay, more; He calmly and continuously and consistently affirmed that He was the Son of God, and that His mission included in its aim the revelation of God as Father. Now, to know God as Father required that he who knows must be a son; for filial love, like parental love, is one of the basal emotions, and can only be known experimentally, not theoretically. Hence the One who came forth from Eternity to teach us to say, "Our Father which art in heaven," had to be the Son of God. No lesser messenger would do, for what He is to God He would have men to be. Herein lies the fundamental and eternal truth of Paul's words, "Ye are all the children [*huios*-son, a relationship based on birth] of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26).

Notice it is in and through union with Christ that we become "sons of God," just as through our union with Adam we are sons of men. All this and much more is entailed by the teaching of the One who is called Jesus in the Gospels. That He who claimed to be the Son of God died—and few deny this—requires an explanation, and the explanation given suffices for all thinking men. He died for others, for the sins of others, for the whole world. But should we be called upon to believe that He remained within the power of death, that His dust is mingled with Syrian earth, a still greater explanation would be required. If such were the case, then what becomes of His mission, of His Sonship, of the Fatherhood of God? Tell me that the sole question lies as to the willingness of God to exercise His power to raise the dead, and I reply that it is impossible for any rational mind to conceive the possibility of God being unwilling to raise His Son, and such a Son—faithful, obedient, perfect—from the dead.

(3) That being so, I enquire as to the

historicity of the occurrence. And I find that not one or two but many witnesses asserted that He rose from the dead. For instance, He was seen of Peter, He was seen of the other disciples, and above all He was seen of over five hundred brethren at one and the same time. Imagine a case being called at one of our courts of justice in which over five hundred witnesses enter the box to attest one fact. The fact would be taken as attested sufficiently long before the first hundred had passed through the witness-box.

(4) The men—there were women too, but as certain doubters suggest that these witnesses are hysterical, we shall not summon them—were well acquainted with our Lord. Take the case of Peter. I noticed the other day that a man had accused himself of having committed a crime for which another man had been tried twice and acquitted. He seemed to know all about the circumstances, but before believing him Scotland Yard sent down the two detectives who had had charge of the case and who knew every minute particular. If the man were accus-

ing himself falsely—as men will sometimes do—then he would soon contradict himself when they talked with him about the hidden secrets of the case which were unknown to the general public. Now, there was a matter which lay between the Lord and Peter. There was more than that; there was a secret, silent look which had broken Peter's stony heart. Think you that if this living man were not the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter would not have known it? Peter had too much on his conscience from which the Saviour alone could free him to be taken in by an impostor, a shade, a phantom, a dream-figure. As with Peter, so with the others. So we pass on to

(5) Notice that the witnesses professed to be dealing in first-hand evidence. Half the tragedies of this life arise from the acceptance of second-hand evidence. These were eye-witnesses of the whole affair. But I have known the senses to deceive—What then? This: There was a poor woman from whom the Saviour had driven seven demons. She had come early to the tomb to anoint His body, but she found it gone—the

tomb empty. True, in the dark grave there shone a great light, and amidst it all sat heavenly messengers, who spoke to this poor, weeping woman comfortable words. But I notice that she pays them and their words but little heed. Now, as she is kneeling there weeping, she hears footsteps behind her, and casting a glance around, she sees one whom she takes to be the gardener come to sweep the walks, tidy the lawn, and trim the flowers. He addresses her courteously, and kindly asks the meaning of her tears and the reason of her distraught, searching glances. To him she replies in broken words: "If thou didst carry off Him, tell me where Him thou didst lay, and I Him will take away." I give it literally, so that you may see for yourselves how often she uses the little word "Him," and at last puts herself and Him together, "I, Him." No thought that the gardener knows Him not. No doubt but that these feeble arms which could not roll the stone away can clasp Him in their pure embrace and lay Him where none can find Him again to do Him harm. This is absolutely true to nature. No literary artist could rise to this

height, or if he could, would bring the painful scene to a glad conclusion by one word, "Says to her Jesus, 'MARY.' That is the reply to "I, Him." The veil is rolled away. Her senses were benumbed, but like a ray of sunshine that word fell upon her spirit and Mary awoke. It was the "Open, Sesame!" and no one could have spoken it but the Risen Jesus. The senses may deceive and be deceived, but that peculiar faculty which in the lower animals we call instinct, and in ourselves intuition, cannot thus be cheated because it deals with things as they are, not as they appear to be.

(6) This incident of Mary reminds me that the apostles were at first so far from being credulous in this matter that it appeared to them, as it has since appeared to many, to be a fiction: "Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had

said; but Him they saw not." And when such were persuaded that He had really risen from the dead, then there was Thomas to be dealt with. Dear, stubborn Thomas, Prince of Doubters, how much we owe to thee! Thy finger had to discover the nail-prints for its very self, and thy hand had to fathom the deep the soldier's spear had dug. Thou wast fast journeying on the way to that no-man's land, the dismal swamp of Unbelief, when Jesus stayed thee, and now thou worshippest Him whom once thou didst doubt. Take Mary, take Thomas, two persons at the very opposite poles psychologically—both say, "Jesus is risen!" What need have we for further witness? Surely none.

(7) These men and women, so diverse in their natures, so different in their temperaments, unitedly and concurrently gave their clear testimony to the fact that the Lord Jesus is risen.

"They spake the Word of God with boldness," and "with great power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Will you please notice the following facts about them:

-
- (a) They were honest and upright persons against whose character their worst enemies could bring no worse accusation than that they stuck to their text : " Jesus Christ is risen from the dead."
- (b) They were persons who preached to and pressed on others the necessity of speaking the truth, acting sincerely, and living righteously, explaining the meanwhile that the wrath of God awaited all liars, workers of unrighteousness, and hypocrites.
- (c) They obtained no profit or honour by declaring this unpalatable truth, that Jesus is risen. The very cause they had so much at heart was hindered as much by their proclamation of His resurrection as by their preaching Him crucified. Instead of profit, it brought them poverty ; instead of honour, the utmost disgrace ; instead of acceptance, imprisonment, torture, death. Yet they steadily went on from year to year, from age to age, preaching a Risen Christ.
- (d) They pledged their troth on a doctrine that could easily have been disproved.

This matter occurred at Jerusalem, the head-quarters of the Jewish nation. Now, the Jews were as famous in those days for their cleverness in unveiling mysteries as for conducting financial operations. If a crime was to be discovered, the best way was to commit its detection to the Jew, for they had a remarkable power of conveying to and obtaining information from the most distant parts of the then known world.

The Apostle Paul writes to the believers in Corinth a letter in which he states the resurrection of Christ to be one of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. Destroy it and we destroy the Gospel. Now, the Higher Critics of the most advanced school are decided that this epistle was written in A.D. 55. I choose them, for if they cannot make the date later we may rest satisfied that by the most modern and mordant methods of historical and philological research they have failed to do so. This means that something like twenty years after the event the statement is openly made that it actually occurred. Not only

so, but the maker of the statement, a Jew, a well-educated man, one who himself had once been a violent antagonist of the Gospel, dares to venture the verity of all he loves, lives for, suffers the loss of everything on account of, on the fact of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Here is the grand opportunity for these Jews who dog his footsteps everywhere to crush both the hated renegade and his hateful gospel. Do they seize it? No! Do they contradict it? No! Nowhere in the New Testament, nowhere in the writings of the men who reach right back to the days of Paul in an unbroken line, nowhere in the profane history of the time, do we discover the least echo of such a contradiction. Various other questions are raised; the most modern cavils against our Lord are but what the old Scotswoman called a sermon re-preached, "cauld kail het again," but there is no attempt at the refutation of the statement that He rose again from the dead.

Well may the writer of this book of the Acts speak of "many infallible proofs." The word translated "infallible proofs" (or simply

“proofs” in the Revised Version) is used by Aristotle in his *Logic* for “demonstrative proof.” It is akin to the word for a “fixed boundary, goal, end.” Thus we see the innate force of the word Luke uses. Nothing more in the way of proof can be given. There is a finality about these proofs that ends argument. They are like the letters at the end of a proposition in Euclid, “*Q.E.D.*” Notice, however, that Luke does not state them. He is occupied with an even grander thought. The king of Sodom once said a wise thing if he never did one, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.” So with Luke, he is more intent on the persons than the proofs. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not risen from the dead there could never have been any Book of Acts. The Book we are, by the grace of God and the wisdom of the Spirit, going to study is one long, clamant testimony to the fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and ascended into the heavens, there to sit at the right hand of God until His enemies be made the footstool of His feet.

In a long gallery in the Vatican at Rome

there are two lines of monumental sculptures. On the one hand there are exhibited the epitaphs to departed pagans, and on the other mementoes of departed believers. Now, as you slowly pace down that gallery, you will be struck by a splendid group of lions leaping on horses, the emblems of destruction, but scarce does your eye take in this cruel group than it is caught by a beautiful sculpture on the other side of the Good Shepherd bearing home in His bosom the little lost lamb. And underneath are graved these words: "Alexander is not dead, but lives beyond the stars."

What stands between these two sculptures so immeasurably apart in feeling and conception? The empty tomb of a Risen Saviour! Take, likewise, the men of the Gospels and the same men in the Acts—they are the poles asunder. Wherefore? The same token marks the boundary line: no Resurrection, no Pentecost!

II.

HIS ASCENSION.

“And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.”
—Luke xxiv. 51.

“And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.”—Acts i. 9.

“**H**E is gone!” and the little company of poor Jews stood gazing into the circumambient air where but a moment ago He was, but now is not. Across the immense azure vault of heaven there slowly floated these argosies of moisture, the fleecy clouds of snowy whiteness. Pointing to one which majestically moved over their heads, casting the dark shadow which, unnoticed, had crept up the hillside and now lay heavily athwart their white, upturned faces, “’Twas that one,” they cry, “that caught Him in its soft embrace and now hides Him from our eyes.”

Gazing they stand, as we should have done, waiting for that cloud to move away and leave their Lord to their vision clear.

Just as when children travelling by train we caught sight of the sparkling waters bearing on their breast the great ships or graceful cutters leaning athwart the tide their snow-white sails filled to repletion with the fresh, salt breeze. Suddenly the train plunges into a dark tunnel, and we possess our little souls in patience waiting until we emerge once more into the light of day to feast our eyes again on the novel and stirring sight. Alas! we forget that we are being borne swiftly away from the scene we admired so much, and, sorely disappointed, we look in vain for the waters we left behind. As we needed comfort (which, perhaps, we never got), so beside these disciples standing staring up into heaven there appeared two men with this message from the Glory: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

Do we ask why these bewildered, bereaved disciples take these two strangers as a matter of course, and, believing their strange words, wend their way back to the city from whence

they had come that morning full of high hopes and deep questions? Surely the reply is to be found in the fact that these heavenly messengers were not strangers. Once before, as the rising sun began to splash the grey sky with rosy tints and shoot glittering golden arrows towards that zenith whither he himself should presently come, some of these very people stood dismayed before a gaping grave. Doubtless, as with searching, piercing glances they had penetrated the darkness of the tomb, and with unsteady and cautious footsteps they had explored the recesses of the empty sepulchre, the ear of the morning caught the whisper, "He is gone!" when lo! as now, "two men stood by them in shining garments" and gently chid them for their lack of memory. How pathetically Luke adds, "And they remembered His words."

As then, so now He had gone before them. As now, so then He proved Himself the great Forerunner to call them to a trysting-place with Himself in some sequestered nook where He and they might hold sweet colloquy together. Then it was "a mountain in

Galilee" (Matt. xxviii. 16), their native land, for the message ran, "Go your way; tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you" (Mark xvi. 7). Now the message came to them in like manner. It was not Galilee whither He had gone before, yet in a higher sense it was to their native land. It was not to a meeting that soon was to be a parting. But it was to meet "the same Jesus." Gone, His departure had robbed earth of all its charm, and left them to be strangers and pilgrims sustained by one hope—His return!

"He is gone—a cloud of light
Has received Him from our sight;
High in heaven, where eye of men
Follows not, nor mortal's ken;
Through the veils of time and space
Passed into the holiest place;
All the toil, the sorrow done,
All the battle fought and won."

Now the Lord Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven as our Representative and our Forerunner, let us, by the help of God the Holy Spirit, consider these two aspects of our Blessed Lord.

I. OUR REPRESENTATIVE.—“God, when we were dead in sins, hath . . . made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. ii. 4-6).

See for a moment how in the first chapter we find the dead Man. Starting from this low place, which the Apostle emphasises in Philippians ii., we follow His course—raised, enthroned, empowered. In one vast sweep we follow Him from the grave to the place which is far above “every name that is named.” Let any name be named, it matters not what that name be, Christ is above it, for God caused Him to sit where the full blaze of Glory is concentrated, even “at His own right hand.”

Here the Apostle breaks off to discover us in our low estate—“dead in trespasses and sins.” But linked on to the heavenly fortunes of our Redeemer, we too ascend the golden stairs, one step after another—Resurrection, Enthronement, Glory—whilst Faith falters, in following our fortunes as they reach the dizzy height where God “hath given us joint seat” with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Beloved, go into thy closet, shut to

the door after thee, sit there in the Presence, and ask thyself, "Do I believe, do I realise, that in Christ Jesus my Lord I have reached a height of bliss and of glory that no being, bear though he may the most glorious title in Time or Eternity, hath attained to or can attain?" If our eyes be opened to see, and our hearts to accept the truth that NOW we sit *in Him* there, as by-and-by we shall sit *with Him*, we shall come forth bearing ourselves as heirs to such a destiny ought to bear themselves, and no longer walk this earth as mean worms whom any circumstances of time can crush. Too often we accept our *rôle* of pilgrims and strangers amidst a world we have loved so dearly as a poor one hardly worth playing; so it would be if it were not for the impulsive power of a new personality that counts Christ all gain, and all else loss.

I say, mark for a moment the steps of our promotion:

(1) God "quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 5).

Sunezōōpoiēsen tō Christō—Sun, "together with"; and *Zōōpoiēin*—"To make alive,"

“to impart life.” For instance—1 Cor. xv. 22: “*Shall all be made alive;*” 2 Cor. iii. 6: “*But the Spirit giveth life.*”

But first He quickens Christ Himself (Eph. i. 20). Why? Because He was dead. Not dead because of any germ of corruption in Himself, but dead because He of His own free will became the Representative of those who were dead. He took our death, our death in and through sin, as His. Our death in all its fulness, our criminal death of guilt contracted and wrath deserved, He endured.

For Israel He died (Isaiah liii.); for the nations He died (John xii. 33 and Matthew xii. 21); for the Church He died (Ephes. v. 25); for the chief of sinners He died (Gal. ii. 20 and 1 Tim. i. 15); and for “all things” He died (Heb. ii. 9 *hyper pantas*, “every thing”).

And the first step in His exaltation is His deliverance from that. As we saw in the last chapter, He arose. Who raised Him? The Holy Trinity. Not only are we told that the Righteous Father raised Him by an act of unparalleled power, but the Obedient Son had power to take again the life He

laid down at the Father's bidding (John x. 17, 18), and that this was "according to the Spirit of Holiness" (Rom. i. 4). Yet mark, this tremendous undoing of the law's sentence is of no summary nature. There is no over-riding of the Eternal Rule of Right on behalf of the mighty Son of God who stooped so low as to become our Representative.

Men might expect some extraordinary favour shown towards this singular Bearer of the criminality and doom of sin. Here the many constructors of Atonement theories, whose name is legion, go wrong. That God the Son should stoop to the likeness of sinful flesh is great, but that He should bear the guilt and the dreadful doom of sin to the uttermost, is beyond their capacity of belief. Like Peter of old, they would cry, "God be favourable to Thee, Lord; in no wise shall be to Thee this." Nay, for they would deny His Divinity to save His Humanity. Hear a popular preacher of to-day say :

"I fail to understand why we should try to read into the consciousness of Christ an amount of supernaturalism of which ordinary humanity has no

experience. To His contemporaries, and indeed to His disciples, He appeared to be a brave, noble, heavenly-minded, praying, suffering man. Say He was this through and through, and all in all, what need is there of some mysterious, metaphysical addition to account for His consciousness that He was one with God as well as one with man. It is by virtue of His perfect manhood that we are compelled to affirm Him God; humanity looks up to Him when it addresses the Father. Now, for this full and true humanity what more natural than that the temporarily triumphant evil which had nailed Him to the cross, the apparent cataclysm in which all His loving hopes were overwhelmed, added to the extreme agony His sensitive nature was undergoing on Calvary, should for a moment have shaken his faith in the presence of the All-Father? . . . I say that all this experience must have been real, intensely real to the August Sufferer, just because He did not know the end from the beginning, but, like ourselves, had to trust in the highest without seeing whither it led."

This may be Mr. Campbell's Saviour—it is not mine. He is talking about one whom I do not know. But for one who denies the existence of the devil, it is distinctly remarkable to talk about "temporarily triumphant evil" nailing him to the cross. It is a specimen of the utterly irrational position in which men finally find themselves who try to construct a saviour out of their own ima-

gination. I once was shown a round stone on which there were two splashes of red paint. This was a god which the Santals gravely worship—a proof to me that their imaginations must be remarkably strong and vivid, yet hardly more so than the imagination of such as pe : descriptions like the foregoing and cry, “These be your saviours, O children of men !”

Beware! Any departure from the simple teaching of the Word of God ends in such a quagmire as this. Towards the Representative of sinful men a just and holy God could show no favour until the sentence was executed and the punishment borne. Then, and then only, does God quicken Christ when He has drunk the cup to the bitter and deadly dregs, and dismissed His Spirit in death.

As our Representative He died upon the cross, therefore can we say, “I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

(2) God raises us up together with Christ (Ephes. ii. 6).

Here is another step, yet does it not strike you as remarkable that the Apostle separates the impartation of life from resurrection? Is he not expanding that wonderful saying of our Lord to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life?" For resurrection is more than life. It is life in conflict with death, and overcoming it. Not only does God remove the *sentence of death* which was recorded against us, but He passes a new sentence, a *sentence of life*. Hence the force of the Apostle's words to the believers at Rome, "Delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."

(3) God has seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

This step is not as the last, "with Christ," but "in Christ Jesus." We have taken the first step in our great ladder of promotion from the dunghill to the throne, and, methinks, our feet are raised to take the next, for, in the fullest sense of the word, we are not yet "raised together with Him," or else "the resurrection" would be "past

already." Still the grave gapes before us and the tomb yawns for its prey. As one has beautifully written :

"Saint after saint on earth
Has lived and loved and died;
And, as they left us one by one,
We laid them side by side.
We laid them down to sleep,
But not in hope forlorn;
We laid them to await the change
Till the last glorious morn :
Come, then, Lord Jesus, come !"

Our eyes are wistfully bent on heaven, whither our Forerunner, even Jesus, hath gone. Yet it is as our Representative He has gone, for it is not more certain that He took our place on the cross than that we shall take His place on the throne.

II. OUR FORERUNNER.—"Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."

In the passage at the close of Hebrews vi., of which these two words form a part, there are two figures combined :

(1) The world a sea ; the bottom of the deep hidden from our sight by the blue, heaving waters which on calm days reflect the vault of heaven, the unseen reality of the heavenly world.

(2) The present life, the outer court of the Temple; the future blessedness, the shrine within the veil. Thus the soul, as a tempest-tossed ship, is held in safety by the anchor: the soul in the outer court of the Temple is fastened by faith to the blessed reality within the veil, where flames the Shekinah glory.

From this the writer passes to an entirely new idea. The word translated "forerunner" is found nowhere else in the New Testament, and means literally one who runs on before, and hence through the word for a light vessel becomes the corresponding term to the Latin *Anchorarius*, one whose business it was to take the anchor when his vessel arrived at low water and drop it within the harbour, so that when the tide rose the boat might be warped into the haven. This, you see, expresses quite a new idea, one never contemplated under the Levitical economy, for the high priest never entered the Holiest as a forerunner, but only as the representative of his people. He entered whither none could follow. He entered within the veil in the people's

stead, never as the people's pioneer. Therefore the thought contained in the word "forerunner" is an advance on that contained in the term "representative." A representative goes where the people he represents cannot follow. No voter is allowed within the bar of the House of Commons. That place is for his representative. Christ was in the fullest sense our representative on the Cross, but there we could not go. But a forerunner is a pledge and proof that where he is there they whom he represents shall soon go. Christ the great Forerunner goes nowhere where His people cannot follow. He beckons man into the haven of God's breast, and He leads His people into full fellowship with the Lord God Almighty. Therefore it is well to notice that the text runs "*a* forerunner," not, as in the Authorised Version, "*the* forerunner"; for literally it runs: "Whither as a Forerunner Jesus entered." Will you notice, then, three aspects in which our Lord Jesus appears in heaven as our Forerunner:

(1) As Forerunner He announced our future arrival there. In the days of the

Romans when a general had won a great victory he sent home to the Senate an honourable officer who was a staunch friend to announce his victory, so that the Senate might grant him a triumph, for a Roman triumph was a great thing. On the day appointed the general, with rouged face, accompanied by his friend and perhaps his children in the chariot, to the wheels of which were fastened with chains the kings, princes, and generals he had overcome and taken captive, preceded by captives, strange animals from the country where he had been fighting Rome's battles, slaves bearing objects of art, and accompanied by his faithful soldiers, rode slowly up the Capitoline Hill, whilst on every hand the crowds of Rome surged high, the human wave breaking in a spray that gave to the topmost towers and pinnacles along the route shouting, yelling, waving atoms of humanity as occupiers of these dizzy heights. On either hand the temples threw their massive brazen doors wide open, so that the heaps of incense smoking on their altars sent out fragrant clouds to greet the conqueror. Be-

hind him in the chariot stood a slave holding over his head a glittering diadem, whilst a troop of infantry brought up the rear with their spears adorned with laurel, shouting "Triumph!" and singing odes of victory. Thus the procession, starting from the Campus Martius, marched through the Porta Triumphalis, the Circus Flaminius, entered the city through the Porta Carmentalis, and passed through the Circus Maximus, Via Sacra, Forum to the Capitol, where a white bull was sacrificed to Jupiter. Paul in his second letter to the saints at Corinth (chapter ii.) refers to this when he speaks of our being led about in triumph—not "causeth to triumph" (verse 14); and as sometimes the captives chained to the victor's chariot wheels were led off to death, therefore the clouds of perfume which exhaled glory, triumph, gladness, success to the victor—a Marius or a Julius Cæsar—and to the lictors, trumpeters, state officials, musicians, priests, and friends of the conqueror, breathed to the captives—a Jugurtha or Vercingetorix—direful death in a dark dungeon, so he goes on to say "a sweet

savour of Christ . . . to the one the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life" (verses 15, 16)

Hence our Lord Jesus Christ is His own Forerunner, just as on the cross He was both Priest and Victim. And as He ascends from Olivet's green height to be received by a crowd of adoring hosts clad in festal attire (may this be the cloud which received Him out of the sight of that band of gazing men and women?), He comes from this dim and distant region where He dwelt, and sorrowed, and suffered awhile. He comes! He comes! they cry, and heaven's hosts pour out to meet Him. Yet He is but come as a Forerunner. His footsteps re-echo in the ever louder tramp of ransomed myriads, and soon all heaven will be aglow with the flush of triumph as up from the gates of the grave and the dim fields of earth's Akeldama the hosts of the redeemed in serried ranks arise to swell the Saviour's triumph "when HE shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

(2) As our Forerunner He takes posses-

sion of heaven's glories on our behalf, for He enters in our nature and in our name. I wish here to emphasise the glorious fact of our Lord Jesus Christ being the Second Adam—the Man out of heaven. Now, what was Adam? The great head of humanity. In him alone the whole human race stands vividly represented at the dawn of this world's history. That grand, solitary figure appearing on the threshold of Time was the human race, for beside him there was no other. As in the acorn there lies latent the giant oak together with that mysterious potency without which all else would be of no avail, so in Adam there lay latent the human race with its potency for good or evil, for growth or decay, for life or death.

With these preliminary remarks, let us study the remarkable passage in Romans v. From verse 12 to verse 21 Paul is engaged in developing by logical statements, by striking contrasts, by crowning comparisons, this wonderful truth that, as Adam was thus the head and representative of humanity, so the Lord Jesus Christ is the Head and Representative of (what for lack

of a less ambiguous name one may call) "Christianity." Remembering that as the link with Adam is natural life, so the link with Christ is eternal life; as the mysterious power which is conveyed to us from Adam, making us grow up in his likeness, physical and moral, is what the Scriptures call "soulish life" governed by the Spirit of Evil, natural men being called in the Word of God "children of the devil," so by regeneration we become possessed of a spiritual nature in which dwells the Holy Spirit, through which nature we grow up into the image and stature of Christ: as the old nature thus derived from Adam cannot but sin, so the new nature derived from Christ cannot sin. The descendants of Adam whose solidarity is marked by the name "humanity" are divided into three classes, Israel, the Nations, and the Church of God. "Christianity" does not properly answer to humanity unless one remembers that in this connection it is used as descriptive of all who in any way share in the benefits of redemption. Keeping this in mind, notice what Paul says:

I. As on account of One Man a sentence of death has passed on all men.	So on account of One Man a sentence of Life has passed upon all (limited*) men (ver. 12).
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Here he establishes the position that all men are condemned on account of Adam. His proof occupies verses 13, 14, and runs as follows :

- (a) The infliction of a penalty implies the transgression of a law, since sin is not imputed where there is no law (ver. 13).
- (b) All mankind is subject to penal evils crowned by physical death; therefore all men are regarded as transgressors of law (ver. 13).
- (c) This law is not the Law of Moses, because multitudes died before that was given (ver. 14).
- (d) Nor is it natural law engraven on the heart (ii. 14), since multitudes die who have never violated such law (ver. 14).

* Mark well that errors have arisen through not seeing how universal terms are sometimes limited in Scripture—universal only within a certain sphere, and in this case that sphere is Christ. The "all in Adam" has its correlative in the "all in Christ."

- (e) **THEREFORE** we must conclude that all mankind is suffering penal evils summed up in the little word death, on account of Adam.

Hence Adam is a type of Christ (v. 14).

II. The **CONTRAST** between Adam and Christ:

- | | |
|---|---|
| (1) By the offence of the one the many die: | MUCH MORE by the righteous act of the One the many live (ver. 15). |
| (2) Condemnation was from ONE offence: | BUT the Justification is from MANY offences (verse 16). |
| (3) The offence of the one brought death: | MUCH MORE the righteous act of the One brings life, grace, and glory (verse 17). |

III. The **COMPARISON** between Adam and Christ:

- | | |
|--|---|
| (1) As on account of one trespass ALL are condemned: | SO on account of one act of righteousness the ALL (limited) are justified (verse 18). |
| (2) As through the disobedience of the one the many are regarded and treated as sinners: | SO through the obedience of the One the many are regarded and treated as righteous (verse 19). |

- (3) As LAW discloses and even aggravates the triumphs of Sin reigning in union with death over the human race: SO the Gospel displays the far more glorious and substantial triumphs of grace in union with our Lord Jesus Christ dead over the heavenly race (verses 20-21)

So Adam passes away and Christ remains as the great and glorious Representative of all those who put their trust in Him.

To me these wonderful thoughts are contained in the fact that our Redeemer has gone in *our nature* and in *our name* to take possession of heaven for us as our Forerunner.

(3) As our Forerunner He is gone to be able to bid His people welcome when they come, and to present them before the Majesty of heaven. We know that He is coming forth to welcome His people (as we shall more fully see in the following chapter), but now as His own are called from this life by death, they go not alone or unattended. Not once only have I seen a bright smile take possession of the poor, wan face, and the saint of God fall on sleep murmuring the name of "JESUS."

And this brings me to my last thought in this connection. We read that "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Then we read also that it is "within the veil" that He is gone. Now modern astronomy has banished the old heaven we thought of when as children we took the stars to be pin-pricks in the glorious floor of heaven to let the glory shine through. As one of our own poets has so pathetically written :

"I remember, I remember
The fir-trees dark and high ;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky ;
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heaven
Than when I was a boy."

When the astronomer points to one of these glittering gems that bejewel the robe of Night and begins to calculate how many hundred years a ray of light travelling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second would take to reach us from that unknown world, the heavens expand into a vast vault from whence comes a cold breath that strikes a chill to our inmost souls.

But a cloud! That is something very much nearer than the nearest stars. How often in climbing some mountain we get above the clouds that anon shadowed our upward path. A veil! That speaks to us of something diaphanous, which a child can lift with his tiny hand. What partition can be thinner or frailer than a veil? It waves in the wind, an accident may rend it, and Time touch it with its mouldering finger.

Heaven far off? Oh, no! for Stephen saw Him, and Paul heard His voice, after He had gone away into heaven. How far off can you recognise a familiar face, and understand what is said in an unfamiliar voice? Just so far off was Jesus then when He appeared to Stephen and spake to Saul who is called Paul.

Heaven lies about us, and so thin is the veil between that a sigh, and 'tis lifted; a pin prick, and you are within. It is not the distance that need trouble us; for the fact that we have never passed that way before; because our Forerunner is waiting to take our hands, and with His warm grasp make us at home before we know that we have

left home. To the believer the words "within the veil" surely are as satisfying as the words "I am the King of France" were to Henry IV. Someone was telling the King what great acquisitions his brother monarch the King of Spain had. "But," replied Henry, "I am King of France." And as all the other monarch's glories were detailed in his hearing—"King of Castile, King of Portugal, King of the Sicilies, King of the new Indies and the great Americas—Henry replied to each, "But I am King of France!" That satisfied him.

So with the believer; there may be many glories, sorrows, joys, adversities, prosperities, partings, meetings, wealth, pelf, poverities, and tears, trials, and sins, here and now—mysteries to which he has not the key. The satisfying answer to all is "within the veil"; for at the door He will meet us, and behind it hangs the key to all puzzles.

After all, the great point is: Are we objects within the attractive power of the new law of gravitation? It was the most natural thing in the universe that our Lord Jesus ascended, was carried up into heaven. Take,

in closing this chapter, the scientific analogy contained in the thought of gravitation. Gravitation is the force with which all bodies attract each other. The tendency of every particle of matter in the universe is toward every other particle. It is this force that causes us to stick on to the surface of the earth as it goes whirling through space. The moon is by it tied to the earth, round which, therefore, it circles once a month. The earth is tied by it to the sun, round which it also circles once a year. The sun is tied by it to the far-off star Alcyone, round which it circles in something like 18 million years, for it takes light travelling at the rate of 186,000 miles a second 537 years to come to us from Alcyone. That distant star Alcyone, it may be, has a centre also to which it is tied and round which it circles, and with it the moon, the earth, the sun with all its thousand satellites. And as Paul in his letter to the Colossian believers says that "all things are held together in HIM" who is our Lord Jesus Christ, I doubt not that all the worlds circling through space are tied to the feet of Jesus, and the central sun round

which they circle, the face of Jesus. He is the centre round which all things revolve. Now, in the old days astronomers thought that all the stars, with the sun, circled round the earth. Their astronomy then was geocentric, or earth-centred. Great were the difficulties this theory created, yet so taken up were the wise men of those days with the greatness of the earth that Galileo narrowly escaped burning because he maintained that the earth went round the sun !

Now, is this not a picture of ourselves ? Once we were self-centred. All things were considered in the light of this relationship, although great were the difficulties our plan of life plunged us into. But by the mercy of God our eyes were opened, and no longer are we self-centred, but Christ-centred. We have come within the sphere of the operation of a new kind of gravitation. We are drawn by an irresistible force towards Him ; we are bound to Him by a new band—the bond of love. As He loves us and we love Him, we can with the apostle bid defiance to everything and every being. And as the path of our earth, were it not for gravitation, would

be a straight one away from the sun into the bottomless depths of space, but this force, exercising its mighty power on it, moment by moment causes it continually to fall towards the sun, and describe a circle round the sun, so, left for a moment to ourselves, we too would become wandering stars; but, blessed be His Name! every moment He is thinking of us, interceding for us, drawing us towards Himself. Finally, when the moment comes, loosened from earth we ascend to glory WHERE HE IS!

“For I am persuaded that—

Neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing

SHALL BE ABLE TO separate us from the love of God which is IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

III.

HIS COMING AGAIN.

"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."—Acts i. 11.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST RETURNETH! The whole world was rolling down the ages in darkness to its doom. Did the hosts of happy beings that people the regions of unsullied light peer over the battlements of heaven and mark with sadness its downward course? Did the glorious beings that flash before the face of Him Who sits upon the throne, and Who is Light, shudder as from that dark world arose groans and curses, sobs and cries, ribald laughter, horrible blasphemy, shouts and yells of licensed massacre from multitudinous battlefields; in fine, that of which Professor Huxley writes, "If our ears were sharp enough to hear all the cries of pain that are uttered in the earth by men and beasts, we should be deafened by one continuous scream"? Any help? Any hope? None! none! for who can stay a

world that has cut itself loose from its God and has bidden an eternal defiance to its Creator ?

And yet, methinks, as they ponder over that insoluble enigma, the Eternal King rises from His throne and, laying aside the sceptre of the universe, the mantled splendour of Deity, steps from star to star until He reaches the door of our dark world over which might truly be written, "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here." As befits His dignity, there shines a light, unearthly in its brilliance, from the band of Heaven's glorious torchbearers ; there sounds a blare of trumpets from the heralds of the court of Glory, the music of the spheres made audible for once ! But for some sleepy shepherds, startled from their midnight watch on the green slopes of Bethlehem's pastures, the light that had ne'er shone on hill and dale before had shined forth unobserved, the cadences that ne'er had floated over the homes and haunts of men before had sounded in vain as far as this world was concerned. And when that door which separates this world of sense and sin from that world of spirit

and glory had swung back for once in all its history INWARDS, the Lord of Glory entered as a little Child swaddled in the poor linen of a toiler's home and cradled in a manger! And this was how the Lord of the Universe came to the dark world He had loved and lost awhile, which He yet loved with a love stronger than death, and, loving, sought amidst the night of Time until He found it.

The scene changes! It is no longer midnight. 'Tis high noon. It is no longer the open courtyard of the Inn of Bethlehem; it is the road that, winding down the slopes of Olivet, climbs to the great gate of the city, the Holy City—Jerusalem. It is no longer a solitary silence broken by the champing of cattle and the faint, low cry of one in pain; it is the meeting of two crowds—the one bearing in its front a young Man in the prime of life riding on a colt, the foal of an ass, and strewing the road with garments and greenery; the other pouring forth from the city's portal, lining the way, and mingling their voices in the great cry of "Hosanna! O Save!"—the

cry that once slaves, captives, subdued rebels, submissive citizens, sent up in the presence of the Conqueror, thereby entreating mercy, but now a mere "Huzzah!" or Semitic "Banzai!" Hark! how the two crowds unite in using the words penned many centuries before by the Psalmist (Psa. cxviii. 26): "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." It is the acclamation of the Coming One. Time on tiptoe all down the ages had been shouting, "He is coming!" "He is coming!" has been the testimony of Prophet, Priest, and King. "He is on the way!" murmurs each gush of steaming blood that flows from every sacrifice. Trumpets caught up the whisper and pealed the glad tidings forth until the listening air, learning the lesson, repeated it in each wave of sound that broke on the encircling, everlasting hills.

And now the whole city is moved, for old men and children, young men and maidens, wives and virgins, vigorous youth and halting old age, are streaming forth from court and alley, from terraced slope and darksome bazaar, and meeting the multi-

tudes from the surrounding villages and hamlets, join their voices in a mighty shout, "Hosanna in the highest!"

We have seen Him come to the Door of the World; now we see Him come to the Gate of the Capital. Again, if men's ears had been trained to catch the strains of heavenly music, they would have heard the Glory Song, the sweet antiphon of the skies: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in . . . Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory!" Had men's eyes been opened, they would have seen the Glory Moses desired to see—the Shekinah that once flamed and glowed behind the veil in the Temple that stood on yonder sacred mount; but it was hidden from their sight, and as the low thunder of the groundswell breaking on the beach borne inland on the wings of the night-wind tells the listener of the coming storm, so the low murmur of "Who is this?" from the learned critics on the outskirts of the throng betokened the coming tempest when from the sea of faces

white with rage breaking around that central weary Figure into a spray of clenched fists there arose that awful cry: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" The same crowd, the same lips, but managed by a malignant genius that knows no tiring—the genius of Persecution. Is it the memory of this that enables James to pour a stream of scorching lava in the form of words over the sins of the tongue? "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing."

Thus unknown the King of Glory rides on His way whilst the multitudes pursue their course; and the frowning portal looks down in stony silence on all this evanescent clamour of many tongues and swallows up the shouting throngs in its Cimmerian Night to emerge another day when He Who rides the cynosure of adoring eyes then shall walk all gory to Golgotha, and they who vie in shouting "Hosanna—O Save!" the loudest shall cry, "Away with Him! Away with Him!"

And all the while He knew and suffered patiently the adulations of fickle men, for it was written, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter

of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee" (Zech. ix. 9). I fear lest we often underrate the love and patience of Him Who said, "Lo, I come (in the volume of the Book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God."

Here, then, we have TWO stages of His Coming to the World. That of which Micah spake, "But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth" (v. 2); and that Entrance to the Capital of His people as prophesied by Zechariah. These two are combined in one in such a passage as "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own (things, possessions, what not), and His own (people) received Him not." But between the two there rolled thirty-three long years. Nay, more, betwixt the two there took place His presentation to Israel.

It is well to remember that during these eventful years He stood at the bar of the Nation and was judged unworthy of the

Nation's trust. What happened during those last dreadful days in Jerusalem could not have happened otherwise, for it was the reflex of what had already happened. Nay, more, in rejecting Him with contumely and crowning the deed with cruelty, they were rejecting themselves. For as in that one act of Adam a character was constructed that led forth a whole world in tears to a destiny of sorrow, so in this act of theirs they fixed a character for the Nation, a destiny of shame which has lasted nigh two thousand years. What they did then is bearing its Dead Sea fruit in what they are suffering now. Hence the wonderful exactitude in our Lord's use of a Greek word which has caused some to stumble. In speaking of the dark destiny of His people He says, "Verily, I say unto you, this GENERATION (genea) shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." Some, believing (without sufficient grounds) that "genea" only means "our Lord's contemporaries," and cannot mean "a race," think that Christ came in A.D. 70 at the Destruction of Jerusalem, or if He did not come then, He

must be held to have broken His solemnly attested promise—"Verily, I say unto you . . ."* Of course this converts all the Scripture referring to our Lord's Second Coming into fulfilled prophecies. It belongs to the school of prophetic study known as the "Preterist." At one blow it removes all our hopes of His Return, and makes us turn to gloomy Death exclaiming, "Be thou our Benefactor!"

I have no anxiety as to the truth of this doctrine. There is one fully attested historical fact upon which the whole theory strikingly goes to pieces as suddenly and completely as the ship Nero had constructed for the drowning of his mother.

It is an incontrovertible fact that the Apostle John lived on the earth long after A.D. 70. Therefore the Apostle John was left behind by the Master Who loved him so dearly. To account for this astounding repudiation and abandonment of John is a critical issue. When it is solved then it will be time to consider the matter further.

* This is a tenet accepted by such as the late Dr. Dale, Dr. Clifford, and F. B. Meyer.

To return: "Genea" does mean generation, or people of an age, but its sense can no more be confined to that one meaning than "hour" can be restricted to the denomination of sixty minutes. For instance, in both classical literature and the Septuagint "genea" possesses the wider meaning of "race." And that our Lord is using it in this larger sense is clear from His words elsewhere in the context, "The blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom YE slew. . . ." The word "genea" is used elsewhere, for example as follows:

Matthew i. 17—"All the *generations* from Abraham to David are fourteen *generations*."

Acts xiv. 16—"Who in times past suffered all *nations* to walk in their own ways."

Ephesians iii. 5—"Which in other *ages* was not made known."

Philippians ii. 15—"In the midst of a crooked and perverse *nation*."

His meaning in using this word is that as far as character goes the men in the last days of their dispensation will be the same as the men in the last days of their opportunity, for that character was bitten into the

nation by the cruel, crowning act of Golgotha, and should be theirs without change working out its evil destiny until (ever blessed be His Name) He returns: until that day in which there shall be "a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." As in the larger environment of Adam's race (as we have seen), so in the inner circle of Israel's race heredity produces homogeneity which transcends the bounds of time and space. The act of which those men were about to be guilty was but the culmination of the acts of generations past, and by that act they were binding upon themselves and their children and children's children a nature, a character, a destiny that should not pass with time, should not be eradicated by centuries of persecution, from which they should not be purged even by the tremendous conflagration of the Great Tribulation, from which they should find no escape by intermarriage amongst the nations, but which instead should itself preserve them amidst all the changes and mutations of time, the rise and fall of empires, the dying of old races,

the springing into existence of new peoples, until their rejected Messiah should come in regal splendour to His own and His own receive Him gladly, smiling through tears of penitence, a nation born in a day.

And I ask, Is not the Jew amongst us still, dwelling apart, worshipping apart, and longing for a return to the Lord and to Zion? Yes, but the character of the men who cried, "Away with Him! Crucify Him! We will not have this Man to reign over us!" is his still. How, then, can we question the last fulfilment of our Lord's words:

"Verily I say unto you, In nowise shall this generation pass away until all these things shall happen; the heaven and the earth shall pass away, but My words shall in nowise pass away."

Now, from the fourth verse of this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew's Gospel to the close of the twenty-fifth chapter our Lord gives His second sermon on the Mount. In his first sermon in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of this same gospel we have the foundations laid, the principles enunciated, and the laws promulgated of His Kingdom

as Son of man, that is "great David's greater Son." But in this second sermon He declares that many things have to take place before this beautiful kingdom sketched by the subtle hand of Love ceases to be ideal and begins to be real. With a master touch He rapidly sketches what must befall the race that rejected the King who was bringing so lovely a kingdom that ever since all men have fallen in love with it at first sight. The keyword of the prophecy is "this generation." To understand the meaning of our Lord's words one must ever bear in mind the moral nature of the Jew who rejected and still rejects the King. Nor must we forget for a moment that the nations were aiders and abettors in the great act of renunciation accomplished on Calvary. His name and His accusation were written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. A trinity of tongues cried out His doom—of Religion, of Rhetoric, of Rule—all three expressing concretely "the lust of the flesh (Roman), the lust of the eyes (Greek), and the pride of life (Hebrew)." We have a parallelism in the two temptations :

Latin : "Lust of the flesh." "The tree was good for food;" "command that this stone be made bread."

Greek : "The lust of the eyes." "It was pleasant to the eyes;" "showed unto Him all the kingdoms of the world" (Luke).

Hebrew : "Pride of life." "A tree to be desired to make one wise;" "cast Thyself down hence . . ."

And in the great cataclysm we have the same threefold thought coming to a head in persons :

(1) The First Beast, or "Prince of the People that shall come," *i.e.*, the Romans, for it was they who destroyed the city and the sanctuary.

(2) The Dragon, or Satan, "gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority"—a triple gift.

(3) The Second Beast, or False Prophet, who rose out of the land and was the Dragon's travesty of the Lamb of God, of whom our Master prophesied that "another shall come in his own name; him ye will receive."

This latter's mission in life is to obtain what the devil so much craves—worship, and for

which he made such a tremendous bid—the kingdoms of the whole world! He does so by means of the wonderful image (of the First Beast), which is the incarnation of Satan, which he made, and to which he gives breath by the power given him by the dragon. Oh, the wonder of it!

Now, the mention of this mystic Image is another of our Lord's keywords. He calls it, in the language of Daniel (the Old Testament Apocalypse), "the abomination of desolation." Here is a dominant phrase which marks the place where Daniel unites with the second sermon on the Mount and the Book of Revelation. I find an illustration of what I mean in the conduct of a vibrating string. Take a string and stretch it tightly betwixt two points, tweak it so as to throw it into rapid vibrations, and you will find on close observation one or more points where the string is at perfect rest, whilst elsewhere it is vibrating rapidly. These are called nodal points. Now, looking upon these three prophecies as divine cords uniting the past with the future, stretched as it were across the dark gulf of

Time, as in the case of a vibrating string my perception of their course may be dim, but here and there I see nodal points. These prophecies in their three courses cross and recross each other, but here at least they coincide, and one of these nodal points of coincidence is where our Lord speaks of "the abomination of desolation," using the same term as Daniel does, nay, even referring to him. And when we ask what may this "abomination of desolation" be, we refer to Paul's words in his second letter to the Thessalonian believers, and to the 13th chapter of the Book of Revelation, and there we find an answer.

Now, it is instructive to notice that on the 19th December, B.C. 168, the action of Antiochus Epiphanes in attempting to force the Jews into complete conformity with Grecian practices, both civil and religious (in which he was strongly seconded by a leading Jew called "Jesus" or "Jason"), culminated in his setting up an image dedicated to Olympian Jove in the Temple, and offering sacrifices to it on a pagan altar placed beside the altar of burnt-offering.

The common notion that Daniel's prophecy of the "abomination of desolation" was fulfilled in this action of Antiochus cannot be correct, for our Lord, speaking nearly two centuries after Antiochus, says: "When ye *shall* see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place. . . ." Nor was it fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, for before Titus could defile the Temple it was destroyed by the hasty, unconsidered action of an unknown soldier. I used to lament over that mad flinging of a blazing torch into the sanctuary filled with combustible materials, and far readier to catch fire than one of our city warehouses. What descriptions the careful Roman would have handed down to us of its greatness and the magnificence of its contents! But now I see it was a part of the wonderful providence of God. The time for "the abomination of desolation" had not yet come, so the glorious house through whose magnificent courts our Lord Jesus walked, the temple He called "His Father's house," must be burned to the ground lest it should be defiled. Thus the alchemy of

the unknown soldier's burning brand converted the Temple to which the Lord came into a memory unalloyed with one thought of a pagan's defiling touch or inquisitive presence in the holy of holies. For this Temple to which Jesus came was not the temple which Antiochus defiled.

Therefore, in order that the words of our Lord Jesus, and those of His servant Paul, may be fulfilled, the Temple must be rebuilt. And for this the Jews must return to Zion, for that would be no temple the foundations of which Gentile hands would lay and of which Gentile brains would provide the plan. Back again must come to Jerusalem the same generation, the Jews in the same moral state in which He addressed them. The nation, the land, the King, is the divine order.

Now, what part have we believers in all this? None whatever! Are we Jews? No. Are we Gentiles? Surely not, for do we not belong to His Body, "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11; Gal. iii. 28). For God has divided

the world under this economy of grace into three parts—"The Jew, the Gentile (margin, Greek), the Church of God." This division into three parts God had kept as a "sacred secret." Read carefully the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers, and note how he repeats this great fact, that from Jews and Gentiles there should be "called out" (the literal meaning of *ecclesia*) an assemblage of men and women, bond and free, Jews and Greeks, barbarians (the rest of the world were barbarians to the Greeks), and Scythians (geographically those from the East, as barbarians were those from the West), and this "assembly (better word than 'church') of God" had been up to the days of Paul a "musterion." Now, what is a "musterion"? The word occurs in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament in use and quoted by our Saviour and His apostles), only in Daniel, and there of the king's secret. It occurs frequently in the apocryphal books, mostly of secrets of State or plans kept by a monarch in his own mind. This use illustrates its meaning in Matthew xiii. 11—

“Mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” The secrets or purposes which God intends to carry into effect in His kingdom. It may be rendered “sacred secret.”

Now, Paul says (Ephesians iii. 9) that this “sacred secret,” this secret or purpose of God, “from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God,” and in order to tell us what he means by this phrase he writes, “Hidden from the ages in God, who all things created by Jesus Christ.” That takes us back before history began, before the existence of those pre-historic beings which it is so fashionable to depict to-day, back to the beginning John wrote of: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Standing there on the threshold of creation, and peering down the ages, one sees an outstanding figure towering above his fellows. It is Paul, who once was called Saul and a persecutor. To him God unburdens His mind of a purpose which He has nursed there all these lone millennia, and committing it to his care, bids him trumpet it abroad, for the hour has come. So he writes to the metro-

politan saints (Romans xvi. 25, 26): "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation (apocalypse) of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets (literally prophetic scriptures, hence not meaning the Old Testament Scriptures), according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen."

Thus Paul had his Apocalypse even as John had his. Thus he speaks here and elsewhere of "my gospel." A great stumbling-block to men who speak of the "Pauline gospel," "the Pauline doctrine of the last things," and demand that we get behind Paul to Christ. All this is very natural, and what more can be said in its condemnation than to say this? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." Why? Because it is "musterion," and "what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit

of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Thus to those who are careless of God's dispensational ways, this word reminds us, all this is hidden and uninteresting. Nay more, this word reminds those who are most in earnest in desiring to know the purposes of God as revealed in the Scriptures, that mere study, however diligent, will be but of little avail apart from the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. For many are apt to suppose that praying for guidance will bring it; that simply sitting down at the Book by oneself, or around the Book in the company of others, and praying the Lord to lead us into the truth, meaning by that the understanding of the Mystery, is all that is required. But and if I am not subject to the Spirit of God at other times, if in my daily life, my daily meditation, my daily prayer, my praise, my adoration, my worship, my service, my speech, I am not consciously under the influence of the Spirit, not listening to the hidden voice of the Spirit in my inner life, not obedient to the distinct command of the Spirit through the

Word, through the providences of life, through the communications of which I am as conscious as of any outward communication through the senses, and which I bring to the test of the written Word, if in all these and many other ways I am not "standing at attention," ready to do whatsoever my Lord the Spirit, as the Representative of the absent Jesus, commands, have I any authority for believing that He will unfold to me these deep purposes of God hidden from all ages, but now revealed not only to His servant Paul, but through him to "him that is spiritual"? for one may be a believer and sure of heaven, as the saying is, but "carnal . . . babes in Christ . . . fed . . . with milk, and not with meat."

Therefore I repeat that as believers we have NO PART in what is addressed to Israel as Israel, to the Jew as Jew, to the Gentile as Gentile, to the nations as nations. God calls me to listen and to learn. There is no portion of the Book of God from which I can learn nothing. All that is in a text-book is not addressed to the student; some of it is illustrative. The best book on medicine I

have yet read is written by a man who is not ashamed to describe some mistakes he has made, for one learns from one's mistakes more than one learns from one's successes. If I may divide this book into two parts, I should say that one part is written to the student of medicine and the other part is written FOR him. To him are given wise and experienced instructions as to the deadly nature of disease and the successful campaign against death; but for him are recorded these instances in which this wise and experienced teacher himself failed to diagnose correctly the nature of the disease, and was conquered by that relentless foe.

This, of course, is not an analogy, for God never makes mistakes; but it illustrates what the Bible is. It is a text-book from which we learn to know God and His grace. He teaches us by addressing us directly, by letting us see how he has dealt and is going to deal with others, by permitting us to see what other men in other ages thought, and felt, and suffered, and conquered, and by thus showing us how the human heart is everywhere and at all times desperately

deceitful yet how He Himself is always the same kind, gracious God, rejecting none who trust in Him, however desperate seems their case, but viewing the proud child of independence afar off, and whilst warning us, encouraging us (as the old Scotch saint said) to "lippen all to Him". How wonderful it all is! Try, reader, to read the whole Bible through in a month or six weeks, and you will be impressed by the wonder of it. Once I read nothing but my Bible for a month, and I read it through in that time. The recollection of that month has never left me. I got such a view of God that sometimes I fell down on my knees in the open fields overcome with the majesty of the sight, and the felt power of His Presence and the nearness of the unseen world. And that was not when reading the New Testament only, or some specially impressive portions in the Old.

There is a beautiful illustration of this in a little book, Adolphe Monod's "Adieux." He was a great invalid. He writes: "During a night in which I suffered much and slept little, about half-past four o'clock I had

settled myself in my bed with the hope of getting a little rest, when I proposed to the student who sat up with me to read a chapter of the Word of God. He offered to read the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. I accepted the offer, only begging him, in order to be able to appreciate more fully the drift of the argument, to begin with the sixth, and even the fifth. We read successively these four chapters—fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth—and I no longer thought of sleeping, so completely were my attention, my interest, my admiration excited. Then we read the ninth and following chapters to the end of the epistle with an equal and unabated interest; and then, to omit nothing and have the whole epistle, we read the four first chapters. About two hours passed in this way, and I thought only of listening to the Word of God, and profiting by it, and the Lord in His mercy made up for the rest I had lacked. The deepest impression we received was one of humiliation, and we said to each other, ‘How is it possible that, having such a treasure near us, we should neglect diligently to search into it?’ We

had spent two hours in heaven; we had been transported into the company of Jesus Christ." Do not we hold so many and diverse doctrines about this great Fact of the Return of our Lord because we have first listened to the voices of men before going to the Word? Thus we go to it as a great storehouse of proof-texts. I remember how I used to go to the Book with the desire to find proofs for various doctrines I held. That, perhaps, was natural in one who had been brought up on "The Shorter Catechism with Proofs." How, in many instances, is the Bible only known because it contains the twenty-third Psalm, or the seventeenth of John, or the eleventh of First Corinthians, or the fifteenth? These are (with many others like the fifty-third of Isaiah) well-known landmarks, but the country which lies between is yet an unexplored region, a desert of Gobi for all we know! I remember once when going to Leominster beloved John M'Vicker quoted from a card which hung in the bedroom he had occupied in my house, "He faileth not." Those who were present will remember that when someone

asked for the reference, none of us could give it, and I think some suggested that I had invented it. It occurs in Zephaniah iii. 5.

Now, it is our failure in knowing the Scriptures impartially, and in being daily filled by the Holy Spirit, that explains the great divergence in belief as to the time and manner of our Lord's return. And when in bringing this chapter to a close I set forth my belief as to what the Scriptures do teach as to the time and manner of our Lord's return, I do it with great humility of spirit and searching of heart. I dare to do it since I believe firmly in its being what the Word means, what it is coming to mean to me with an increasing emphasis every day I study it. I admit that I have sought to give a fair hearing to all the other forms of doctrine concerning this matter of infinite interest. But I do not ask you, my reader, to consider the matter settled for you. If what you have read has stirred your interest in this matter, let it not send you away either complacently with, "Oh, I knew all that!" or antagonistically saying, "It's the old story over again: no perception of the new points!"

It has brought you a fresh responsibility to know your Lord's will. And to attain to this knowledge requires not the searching of commentaries, or the comparison of concordances, or the seeking to ascertain the mind of men; it demands a daily filling with the Spirit, a daily submission to the Lord's will already clearly seen, but perhaps, alas! resolutely disobeyed with or without a pretext, a daily reading of the Scriptures with an open mind, and a daily dependence on the Lord for the fulfilment of His promise that they who are willing to do His will shall know of the teaching.

Firstly, I hold that believers in this dispensation have no time-marks. Have we, I ask, any space-marks? Is there any holy place for us on earth? Surely not. To Israel it was said: "Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His Name there, . . . thither thou shalt come, and thither shall ye bring . . . and there ye shall eat, . . . and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God" (Deut. xii.). And of the Gentiles it is prophesied: "And it shall come to pass that every one that is

left or all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. xiv. 16). A beautiful description of this is to be found in the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah. How different are the words of our Saviour: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father, . . . but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Spirit knows no limits of space. Believers now worship, as that woman came to do, at the feet of Jesus. Within the veil woven of time and space we worship. As with space, so with time—we live in the present, with our eyes fixed on heaven.

The apostle could write, "We shall not ALL sleep," "we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord." Paul and these Corinthian saints have long ago fallen asleep, but that word "all" includes "all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and

ours;" it includes us, and in our case the promise may be fulfilled. This present hope, this state of daily anticipation, is set forth in the Lord's Supper. At our Lord's table we stand betwixt the two events united in One Person—His first coming and His return. Here we with one hand grasp Him dying and with the other we grasp Him coming. On the one side we see Him stumbling, all bruised and gory, up Golgotha to bear our sins in His own body on the tree; on the other we see Him coming, in beauty and glory, to make us, like Himself, all beautiful and glorious. And is not worship the riveting of my soul on Christ, on Christ Himself, on Christ alone, on Christ present in this twofold aspect—Christ dying, Christ coming? In both cases Christ near and present—Christ near and present dying—Christ near and present coming! "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." At this supreme moment there are no limits of space or time. Here is a foretaste of Eternity.

Secondly, I believe that in His return

as in His coming there will be two stages. Between His coming to Bethlehem and this coming to Jerusalem there rolled thirty-three years, during which time He displayed the goodness of God and the naughtiness of men. So between His return to the air (1 Thess. iv. 17) and His return to the earth (Zech. xiv. 4) there will roll a period of some years, during which the believers forming "the Church" shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ (Romans xiv. 10-12; 2 Cor. v. 10), where their acts as bond-slaves of Jesus Christ shall be discriminated, those done from motives of loyalty and love to Him rewarded, those done from motives centred in anyone else than Him forgiven and forgotten; whilst on earth what is so vividly described in the central portion of the Book of Revelation will take place. In other words, the interval known as "the Day of Christ" (Phil. ii. 16) in the air and the "Day of Antichrist" on earth will occur. That it is so is plainly seen from Paul's words to the Thessalonian believers who had become somewhat mixed as to the proper sequence of events (2 Thess. ii.):

"But we request you, brethren,
In behalf of the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ
And our gathering together unto Him,
That ye be not quickly tossed from your mind nor
be put in alarm,
Either by spirit or by discourse or by letter as by us,
As that the Day of the Lord hath set in :
That no one may cheat you in any one respect.
Because that day will not set in—
Except the Revolt come first
And there be revealed
The man of lawlessness,
The son of destruction,
The one who opposeth and exalteth himself on
high
Against every one called God
Or an object of worship ;
So that he within the sanctuary of God shall
take his seat
Showeth himself forth that he is God.

And what now restraineth ye know,
To the end he may be revealed in his own
fitting time ;
For the secret of lawlessness already is inwardly
working itself,
Only until he that restraineth at present shall
be gone out of the midst :
And then shall be revealed the lawless one,
Whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the Spirit
of His mouth,
And paralyse with the forthshining of His
Presence."

Let me remark here that there are many suggestions as to the meaning or import of "what restraineth" in the foregoing passage. Just as "the man of lawlessness" has been identified with Nero, the Pope of Rome, Luther, Mahomet, Caligula, Simon Magus, Titus, and so on; so the "restraining power" is explained as the Roman Empire, the German Empire, the Apostles, the pious Jews living at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, James the Just, and so forth. For several reasons I believe that the Restrainer is the Holy Spirit. On carefully studying the Scriptures you will find a three-fold antagonism. The World is set over against the Father (1 John ii. 15), the Flesh is set over against the Spirit (Gal. v. 17), and Satan is set over against the Son of God (2 Cor. iv. 4; John xiv. 30; Luke xxii. 31, 32). And as we have already seen, these three powers culminate in the Last Days in the First Beast, the Second Beast, and the Dragon. Not only so, but the Dragon energises these great opponents. As the Apostle Paul goes on to say about the Man of Sin:

“ Whose presence shall be according to an inworking of Satan
With all manner of mighty work and signs and wonders of falsehood,
And with all manner of deceit of unrighteousness in them who are destroying themselves,
Because the love of the truth they did not welcome that they might be saved ;
And for this cause God sendeth them an inworking of error,
To the end they should believe in the falsehood.”

Thus the spiritual power of Evil is here seen to be Satan. Under his inworking the “secret of lawlessness already is inwardly working itself”; but what prevents the great outbreak during the past centuries? Surely the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, or representative of the absent Jesus, by whom His unfinished work is being carried on. In this connection we must remember what our Lord said about Him (John xvi. 7-11). When we study carefully His words in regard to the present mission of the Comforter, we cannot help seeing that the Holy Spirit is “He who restraineth until He shall be gone out of the midst.” How expressive of the Holy Spirit’s presence are these last words! Is it not He who is in

the midst during the absence of our adorable Lord? Is He not the "other Comforter," the One who makes strong by His presence? Nay, more, there is a peculiar grammatical construction connected with Him. The word "pneuma"—Spirit—is neuter in Greek, and so takes the neuter article, but is followed by a masculine personal pronoun in such a passage as John xvi. 13. Nay, the masculine pronoun and neuter noun with its neuter article are put as close together as they can be, thus "*ekeinos* (He), *to* (the) *pneuma* (Spirit)." Now, in the Thessalonian passage we have a similarly curious construction: verse 6, "*to katechon*" (neuter), and verse 7, "*ho katechōn*" (masculine), both meaning the same thing, only the neuter compels us to render the former, "that which restrains," and the masculine necessitates the rendering of the latter, "he who restrains." To me that looks like a hidden reference to the ungrammatical structure made compulsory by a neuter noun "*to pneuma*" having to be used as the title of a Living Person, "*ekeinos*," *He*. In other words, Paul re-

minds his Thessalonian friends of what he says, "That while I was yet with you these very things I was telling you," by a hidden mark impressed on the grammatical construction of the passage; just as in his first letter to them he uses a special word in telling them of how we all shall be caught away "to meet" the Lord in the air. The Greek word is used in two other passages only, Matthew xxv. 1 and 6, "Went forth *to meet* the Bridegroom," and Acts xxviii. 15, "They came *to meet* us as far as Appii Forum." The word implies a going forth and a returning with, as when the King visits the city of London the Lord Mayor goes forth to meet him at Temple Bar in order to return with him to the Mansion House. Thus are the saints of this dispensation caught up to meet the Lord in order to accompany Him on His royal progress and return with Him to the earth. So Jude writes, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints," as Zechariah had already written, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee."

Here, then, let me recapitulate: the period

we live in is "Man's Day" (1 Cor. iv. 3), but it is "God's Night" (Rom. xiii. 12). It is so because the Lord Jesus Christ who is "the Light of the World" is absent. During this period God is calling out a people for His Son from amongst both Jews and Gentiles. He gives this called-out people a name which the Greeks gave to the assemblage of all the free-born citizens of a town called together by the sound of a trumpet—Ekklesia. This action on God's part was not revealed until Paul came to be an apostle. To him God revealed it, and therefore it is called a "mystery" or "sacred secret." The "ekklesia" we call "church," a term we get also from the Greek, for over the meeting-places of the believers they wrote "kuriaké," meaning "belonging to the Lord." Hence the German "kirche," the Scotch "kirk," and our "church," but the French retain the proper name in their "eglise," from "ekklesia." This called-out people has several names, such as "Body of Christ," "The Christ," &c. Although its components have many meeting-places on earth, it has only one meeting-place, and that is around

the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we read of "the church in" someone's "house," for wherever believers meet together there is both a church or ecclesia and a meeting-place, because the word "church" does not in the Bible mean the meeting-place, but those who meet there. It is spiritual, not material, and therefore under no limit of space. This is the opposite of the saints under the Old Testament dispensation. With them the meeting-place made the assembly, for God met with them nowhere else—except in grace—than at the tent of meeting. His promise was, "There will I meet with you." The Church (to use the familiar name) has no history. It is a heavenly thing, and its component parts are heavenly citizens. Therefore it is becoming that when the Church meets its Lord it does so not on earth, but "in the air."

The return of the Lord is marked by a prelude, and that prelude the disappearance of all the saints, both dead and living, from the earth. This is followed by the Judgment of Rewards, when all the saints "caught up" stand at the judgment-seat (*bema*) of Christ.

During this time all that leads up to "the Tribulation, the Great One," and "the" tribulation itself takes place on earth. How severe this experience is our Lord Himself indicates by saying that "except those days had been curtailed no flesh had been saved" (Matt. xxiv. 22). And He asks: "Nevertheless though the Son of Man do come, will He after all find the faith on the earth?" The answer He gives in the previously quoted passage: "But for the sake of the elect those days shall be shortened."

The Son of Man comes with His saints, delivers His chosen people, destroys their enemies, and sits down on His earthly throne—the throne of His father David—to judge the living nations, the Gentiles (Matt. xxv. 31-46). The standard of judgment will be their conduct towards His nation, the Jews, during the period just ended.

We began with the promise to the men of Galilee. That promise meant that as the Lord left the Mount of Olives in like manner should He return. I know not whether any of these men of Galilee made pilgrimage to that sacred spot and gazing up into the

blue vault of heaven said, "Is that the cloud in which He is coming?" Yet in the great extremity of those faithful souls (representatives of whom were these men of Galilee) He will appear riding on the clouds of heaven. And, as we asked once before, "Think you, O reader, was that cloud that received Him from their sight the welcoming hosts come forth to meet the Conqueror returning to His native heaven?" so we ask again, "Think you whether the clouds in which He returns will be the clouds of the redeemed caught up from earth to meet Him on His way?"

Have you ever noticed that our Saviour was alone but once? As we have seen, when He came to earth angelic hosts escorted Him; when He was kneeling on the bleak mountainside His Father was with Him; when He returned to heaven He led up these starry heights a multitude of captives; when He returns to earth it will be as the cynosure of a myriad-eyed host of the redeemed; and when once more he walks these sunny fields, darkened no more by the sounds of sighing or the shadows of that

black-winged host, the prince of the power of the air and his myrmidons, it will be as Shepherd of His people Israel to lead them to Life's fountains of water.

No, nevermore shall He be alone as He was in the heart of that darkness when His disciples forsook Him, when His friends left Him, when the kindest of earth's hearts abandoned Him, when the gross darkness grew darker, and from the heart of the mirk there issued a cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Let me ask myself this question, Were there none else to company with Him but myself, should He then be alone on His return to this earth?

There was a little cot by the moor's side. A little old woman lived there by herself. She was bowed with age, her face wrinkled with care, her hair was grey, and down her cheeks the tears had made two long furrows. All day she was busy attending to her little house, which she kept spotlessly clean. But when the night fell she did some curious things. She trimmed a lamp, lit it, and placed it in the deep-set window that looked

across the moor. She placed the door ajar. She spread a simple repast on the table. Then she put on the gathering-peat, and, kneeling down by the hearth, she prayed ever the same prayer: "Lord, send ma lassie hame the nicht." All through the longest night, the stormiest night, the tiny, tiny beacon shone out over the moor, and many a homecomer blessed the poor widow who lit it. The story of the widow's love grew old, but some visitors to the big house beyond the village, coming home late, saw the light and asked what it meant. It was at the dinner table, and amidst the lights and glitter the little tale was told of the poor old woman's faithful love. By-and-by one of the guests, disguised in a dark cloak, hastened along a once well-known road to the cottage. She peered in through the crack of the door. She saw the grey head bowed down beside the hearth. She saw the preparations for the wanderer's return. Her pride was broken, and rushing in she cast herself by her mother's side. She was too late—her mother was dead.

The beacon light that guides thee, poor

soul, to thy Saviour's breast is burning yet. He is still interceding for thee. But what if thy pride keep thee away too long and thou findest that the Saviour has risen up and left the throne of Grace to sit down on the throne of Judgment? Too late, too late!

But I see in that little, imperfectly told tale the preparations of true love beautifully shown forth. Think of the lamp, the re-past, the open door, and the warm fireside, with the tender prayer for the wanderer's return "to-night."

I think if I loved my Saviour in the true way of true love I should show it in somewhat the same way. My day's work would have a reference to the much-longed-for return. My little lamp would be kept trimmed and burning as He has told us. Looking into my heart, He could see the hospitable preparations and the warmth of Love's flame burning on through the night on the hearth of true devotion. And He would hear me cry, "Lord Jesus, come quickly; yea, come quickly. Amen." Aye, I see something in the saddest part of the little tale. Should He from a larger love to

the sheep still straying on the cold uplands delay His return, and his messenger Death come first, will He not be pleased, think ye, that I was found in the attitude of waiting for Him?

IV.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"This Jesus . . . having received of the FATHER the promise of the Holy Ghost" (Acts ii. 32, 33).

"In WHOM . . . ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Ephesians i. 13, R.V.).

EPOCHS are points in the vast expanse of Time from which history hangs the golden chains of years she calls eras. Epochs are marks cut deep into the life of humanity by the hand of God, whilst eras are the spaces left between.

Some epochs are the closing of old accounts, and others are the openings of new ones in the great ledger which men call the providence of God, whilst the eras are the pages (close written over with multitudinous items) which bound together form the books opened

for the last time at the Great Assizes named in Scripture "the great white throne."

Thus man imagined he had closed the account so perfectly balanced that there was nothing to carry over when he crucified the Lord of Glory. True, an account was closed there, but not by man; and the closing left a balance against us that Eternity shall never see discharged, for 'tis calculated in the terms of love—"Who loved me and gave Himself for me." I never thought before of the depth of meaning in that simple injunction to "owe no man anything, but to love one another."

Here, then, in Pentecost we have an epoch. The name is derived from the fact that in Greek the word means "fiftieth." That is to say an era of fifty days extending from the morn of His Resurrection ended on this day now fully come. It was the eighth return of that glorious day when our Conqueror smote Death down under His feet, and through the portals of the grave issued triumphant to die no more. Hence its name with us of Whitsunday, from *huit*, the French for "eight."

Consider, reader, what a world of teaching

lies wrapped up within the limits of that fact. In Scripture "seven" stands for "perfect Divine accomplishment."

The numerical series is really here complete, and the figure "eight" declares that it is complete by marking a new beginning, as in the musical octave. So the eighth day is the commencement of a new week. Circumcision was performed on the eighth day, for it is connected with the new creation, "the putting off the body of the flesh." Hence it was to the Israelite what baptism is to the Christian—a sign of a new covenant, a new life, a new creation.

Seven days are occupied with the consecration of the priests—on the eighth day they enter on their new duties.

On the eighth day (Luke ix. 28) the Transfiguration took place, the picture of the new age that begins with "the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; hence the eighth Psalm speaks of this kingdom.

Therefore, on the eighth day we remember the death of our Lord Jesus in the light of His resurrection which took place on this day. The light that flashes from

the open grave coruscates around the Cross, and splitting up into a myriad glories spans the darkness with a rainbow. The Cross becomes a throne, and encircled by a rainbow yet upraises the same occupant, the Lamb as it had been slain.

And on this eighth return of the eighth or first day we have the descent of the Holy Spirit under a new aspect, in a new relationship. No longer the Spirit of Holiness as in the Old Testament when He came upon men and women in power, but as the Promise of the Father and the Representative of the Son; no longer to be *upon* in temporary power, but to abide *within* the sons and daughters of the Most High. The Lord Jesus Himself said: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water: (but this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was NOT YET, because that Jesus was NOT YET glorified.)"

Consider that, O reader, "not yet, . . . not yet." From the glory of Jesus springs the Holy Spirit as we know Him, so "we

all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as of (or through) the Lord, the Spirit." That is the mission of Him who came on this eighth return of the Resurrection Day.

'Tis said that travellers in the wilds of Africa found the native children playing with large diamonds as our children play with worthless pebbles in our streets. Formed in some tremendous fiery cataclysm of nature, and cooling from some state of great fluidity crystallised into what we call diamonds, these wonderful stones that seem to retain the sparks of fire that gave them birth in some past æon of the earth's age, remained hidden in the dark earth without any hint to the unpractised eye of the latent beauty and worth that was theirs until picked up by children to play with, secured by men to obtain wealth with, they are cut, polished, and set to reflect the light with splendour in kings' palaces. So, dark in the dust of Time, lay the souls of men, disfigured by contact with evil, the plaything and sport of powers that count them of no value, dis-

covered by the Traveller from the far, far country who gave all that He possessed for their purchase, brought into His workshop there to be cut by the tempered steel of circumstances and polished by the irritating dust of each other's imperfections, yet ever under the minute inspection and perfect control of His representative, the Spirit, until passing every test with every facet cut at the exact angle to glorify the light that falls upon it, polished and set they are brought into the palace of the King to shine in the light of God. As I have said, the process is an important one. Think of the Koh-i-noor wrested by the Sultan Ala-ed-din from the Rajah of Malwa in 1304, fabled ever since to bring its possessor ill luck, presented to Queen Victoria in 1849 on the conquest of the Punjab. This wonderful stone ("The Mountain of Light") was greatly diminished in size and value by improper cutting. It is indeed a standing illustration of what ruin may be wrought to a diamond by want of skill and care and attention in cutting and polishing.

The Merchant of our souls has gone away

leaving us (shall I voice the secret cry of many hearts) to be the sport of circumstances. Do I say this great and abiding sorrow has warped my soul, this continual anxiety is dwarfing it, or this wonderful worldly prosperity is acting in it as dry rot? And the Merchant of our souls is gone away. True, but not to leave us alone, the sport of circumstances, in the care of hirelings which men call the laws of nature. No, a thousand times NO!

He promised "another comforter." And although that old English word meant "one who makes strong by his company," yet it is not the exact rendering of the word transliterated as *Paraclete*. The Lord Jesus is our Paraclete, for it is written: "We have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And so the best way of defining Paraclete (an admittedly difficult word to define, so broad is its meaning) is to say that it means when used of the Holy Spirit that He is for the Lord Jesus Christ down here what the Lord Jesus Christ is for us up yonder. There is a phrase that I think sums up very beautifully Paul's teaching in

“Ephesians” as to our place in the heavens: We are *with* Christ *in* Resurrection *before* the Father. And methinks we can reverse this somewhat concerning the place and office of the Holy Spirit down here: Christ is *with* the Holy Spirit *in* us *before* men. So when it is said, “Christ in you the hope of glory,” it is because the Holy Spirit abides in each believer as the Paraclete of Christ.

Hence the scripturalness of the sub-title of this volume, “The Unfinished Work of Jesus.” I have no hesitation in saying that we use the human name of the Lord far too often and far too flippantly. In the Bible I carry everywhere with me is a cutting from a paper, and on this piece of paper is printed the following story, and I give it as it stands: “This is said to be an authentic account of the snub direct administered by His Majesty when Prince of Wales. His Royal Highness was staying with Mr. ——. After dinner one evening the two repaired to the smoking-room, and when whisky and soda was wanted, the host, addressing His Royal Highness, said, ‘Bertie, ring the bell, please.’

This the Prince did, and when the servant entered, the Prince of Wales, in the most matter-of-fact manner, said, 'John, show Mr. — to the door'." A curious cutting to be in a Bible, but it serves to remind me, as perhaps something more sober and less irritating might not, that familiarity must never be allowed to breed what amounts to contempt—that when I address the King of kings, or sing His praises, or try to speak His worth, let me do it with a humble reverence becoming His Person and my position. I know it is possible to impart a deep sense of reverence into the use of the Name that is above every name, and that reverence may be utterly absent though His title "Lord Jesus Christ" be used.

Be that as it may, I cannot conceive of a practice more abhorrent to the reverent mind than the manner in which our Lord is spoken of in the hymns and choruses so popular in these days of a decadent Christianity. It is terrible to one unused to the sound to hear the way an Irishman uses the Holy Name as an expletive, but I dare to say that the thoughtlessness is as great in the one case as

in the other. To view a large audience singing over and over again a chorus in which the sacred Name is combined with such appellatives as dear, lovely, humble, &c.; to see the gusto with which the words are poured forth, the heedlessness with which they are used, the expression of countenance in many a case that shows the phrase is no more to the singer than "Do, re, me!" would be, is a revelation to the thoughtful mind.

More than that, on one occasion an old hymn full of poetic phrases, exquisite turns of reverential expression, of scriptural phrase and adoration, was first sung, then came the hymn and chorus of which I speak. Now, whilst the sound in the first case might be compared with the complaining of the pelican in the wilderness, that of the second might be likened, without exaggeration, to the roaring of the bulls of Bashan. I sought an explanation, and I was told by a man of sound mind that, be the explanation what it may, the fact remains that the old hymns are sung perfunctorily by a few, whilst the new hymns with repetitions *ad nauseam* were sung heartily by the

many. All I can wish with all my heart is that the hymns all sing so lustily were scriptural and reverential, for all I can say is that the majority of them is neither the one nor the other.

Hence it is not yielding to the spirit of the hour that has made me choose for this book such a sub-title. It is because as the Son of man His work is unfinished, and in this Book of the Acts we find the record of how the Representative of the Man Who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High, is carrying on that work. So the words stand written over the threshold of the volume: "All that Jesus began both to do and to teach." To Dean Stanley we owe the words: "God buries His workmen and carries on His work." In this case the heavenly Workman "was taken up" to rest amidst the glories of that Throne upon which He is now seated, and the Holy Spirit was sent down to carry on the work. Is Jesus Lord: so is the Spirit. Is Jesus the Christ: the Spirit is the chrism. Is Jesus the Paraclete: so is the Spirit. Is Jesus throned in glory: so doth the Spirit desire to be throned

in our hearts. Is Jesus our Representative there, so that we may say :

“Near, how very near to God!
Nearer we cannot be;
For in the Person of His Son
We are as near as He!”

then is the Holy Spirit Jesus' Representative, that where He is, Jesus is ; where He is honoured, Jesus is honoured ; where He is grieved, Jesus is grieved ; where He is obeyed, Jesus is obeyed ; and the movement of the Holy Spirit is ever towards Jesus as the water to the ocean, as the dew to the sun, as the spray to the fountain, or the magnet to the pole. And the use of His human name, a humble name He shared with many another Jewish child, apparently with him whom they called Barabbas, emphasises the fact that whilst as Man he occupies the Throne of God, limited by the conditions of His humanity, He requires a Paraclete on the earth He left but to return to at some future time. Now, if “LORD” express His Deity, or be His acquired title as Sovereign Ruler and universal Judge, then CHRIST has a three-fold meaning. It is used of Him as the Son

of God anointed in eternity for service in time and through incarnation. It marks Him out in His Theanthropy as the God-man. It stands for Him as the Head of that Body of which all believers are members—one mystical Christ, having been made so by the chrism of the Holy Spirit. Whilst JESUS, His human name is His as the Son of man. Take as illustrations of these meanings such phrases as "Christ Jesus our Lord"—here the fact expressed by the order, that He existed as Son of God prior to His becoming Son of man, emphasises the other fact that as God He is the Source of all the blessings which flow to us through His work on earth and in time, and become ours because we belong to Him as Sovereign Lord: as "Lord Jesus Christ"—here we are reminded that He who was rich became poor, but did not remain so, for it is in union with Him as now exalted that we become exceeding rich.

Mark, also, the exactness of Scripture: It is written that we are "in Christ," "created in Christ," and members "of Christ." Never are we said to be "in

Jesus," "created in Jesus," or members "of Jesus," for that would imply that we became united with Him in incarnation. It is not so, for it is by faith in "Christ Jesus" that we "become the children of God." One might adduce many other examples from the Scripture, taking care that the order in English follows the order in Greek as in the Revised Version.

Therefore when we speak of the "Unfinished Work of Jesus," by the use of His Name as Son of man we carefully guard against the thought that the work meant is His work of redemption. The work necessary for salvation He Himself declared to be finished. But as during His earthly life, occupied in leading, teaching, exhorting, preaching the Gospel, guiding, preserving, and enlightening His people, the Scriptures apply to Him this name of Jesus, so when He is no more here on earth to carry on such necessary work, He Himself tells us we should be like "orphans," without some one to carry on the work He had begun, and for that reason He would send "another Paraclete" to carry on and finish

what He had left unfinished. Hence the scriptural exactness of the phrase, "The Unfinished Work of Jesus."

v.

STEPHEN.

"Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit.
... Stephen full of faith and power."—Acts vi. 5-8.

THE Cross still stood, and the night wind played with the wooden board hung from its crest, upon which was written with gypsum the accusation of Him lately crucified thereon. The accusation was brief—JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. But the writing thereof took up some space, for it was written thrice over—once in Hebrew, once in Greek, and once in Latin—truly a tri-unity; for the first was the language of the religion of Monotheism as contrasted with the polytheism of the world; the second was the language of Intellectual Unity, for, like French in mediæval times, it was the passport of education all over the then known world; and the third was

the language of Political Unity, for it was the medium of the laws that civilised the world. Thus, when we read the Acts we see how the early missionaries spread all over the Roman world, along the great Roman roads, protected by Roman laws. Take a good map which shows the chief Roman roads, and you will notice two things—first, that all these roads led to Rome; and, second, that the Churches of which we read in the New Testament are scattered along the line of these roads. Nay, more, if we read the Acts in the language in which it was written under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we shall find that it is written in Greek—the common language of that day. Now, we find two classes of people mentioned, in the New Testament called “Greeks” or “Grecians.” For instance, in John xii. 20 we have Greeks coming to Philip, saying: “Sir, we would see Jesus;” whilst in this sixth chapter of the Acts we have a “murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.” To many of us these appear but different words for the same thing; but in the original we find

that *Hellen* is the word rendered Greek, whilst *Hellenistes* is that rendered Grecian. Now, *Hellen* was the appellation of a Greek-speaking Gentile, whilst *Hellenistes* was the appellative of a Greek-speaking Jew. *Hellen* is the antithesis in the New Testament of Jew and Barbarian, and marks a difference of race. *Hellenistes* is the antithesis of Hebrew, and marks a difference in circumstance, mode of life, manner of looking at things, and training. Thus it occurs only thrice in the New Testament—here and in chapter ix. 29; xi. 20.

This fact brings us to the third medium of communication—the Hebrew tongue. It is well to remember that only a moiety of the tribes returned to Jerusalem from the Captivity; a greater number remained behind, and in time, as you may read in history, were scattered up and down the world. They still retained their language, their customs, their loyalty to the Holy City, Jerusalem. Although scattered far and wide—although taken in large numbers and planted in new cities by such conquerors as Alexander the Great, or such city builders

as the Ptolemies, who held them in high esteem as law-abiding, industrious citizens, their attitude of mind was that so bitterly expressed in the 137th Psalm: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." Towards Jerusalem they worshipped; from Jerusalem there gleamed the glittering sign that carried the news to many a land—the New Moon is come! To the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem they looked for legal decisions; and to the Treasury in the Temple at Jerusalem they sent their half-shekels—not to speak of gifts both rare and costly, such as the Magi from the East brought to the Infant Jesus. Not only so, as men and women all over the world to-day are thinking of the white cliffs and green lanes of England, or the towering crags and solitary glens of Scotland, and counting the years, months, weeks, and days when they shall take the road home to see them, so the Jew of that bygone day made great sacrifices to pilgrim to Jerusalem. Thus in its

crowded streets you would find men from east and west, north and south, and off its shady courts and dingy bazaars you would discover synagogues (that is, meeting-places), where these men met together.

Verse 9 gives us a list. "Of the Libertines," that is, where the Libertini or freedmen met. These were Jews who had been taken to Rome as slaves, and there had received their freedom; such were expelled from Rome by an order of the Emperor Tiberius about A.D. 19, and returned to Jerusalem in great numbers. These, or their descendants, would be amongst the bitterest opponents of Stephen, seeing that by his preaching that freedom for which they had suffered so much at Rome appeared to be endangered at Jerusalem. "Of the Cyrenians," Jews from Cyrene, amongst whom you might have met Simon and his sons, Alexander and Rufus; "of the Alexandrians," which would be large and filled with prosperous-looking men, for Alexander the Great saw that a third of the population of his new city of Alexandria should be Jews; "of Cilicia," where you would be

sure to meet Saul of Tarsus, the university town of Cilicia; and "of Asia," which does not mean that Jews from India or China met there, although doubtless such came to Jerusalem, but those from the Roman province of Asia—men from Ephesus, Colossæ, Sardis, Thyatira, Philadelphia, Pergamum, and Laodicea.

These were all *Hellenistes* or Grecians; and such an active and zealous Hellenist as the Cilician Saul, a member of the Sanhedrin and a well-known student under Gamaliel, would be at home amongst them all. Speaking Greek, the language common to all these men, he could pass from synagogue to synagogue, instructing them in the Law, and doubtless helping to make these strangers at home in Jerusalem—their great spiritual mother, the home of all their hopes.

But though these men were zealous for the Law, their environment abroad was not conducive to that narrowness of mind that belongs to him who has never left his native place and mingled with other people of other tongues, with differing outlooks on life, who

place emphasis on facts of life and experience unknown to or slurred over by him. In fact, the effect of environment on the Jew abroad was far greater than the effect of the Jew on his environment. Strict though he might be, he was a different being from the Jew who remained at home, and who thought and spoke of the great world lying beyond the mountains that ringed Jerusalem round or the blue peaks that marked out the confines of Jewry, as "elsewhere," and therefore of no importance. I have often heard of the minister in Orkney who prayed for it as the mainland, "with the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland." Such was the attitude of the Jew, whose ancestors, having returned from the Captivity, inherited the stay-at-home habit, and stayed at home. He, and such as he, were called "Hebrews" (verse 1).

Once more, before we end the consideration of these divisions: the Believers—for they were not yet called "Christians"—were still incorporated with the nation. They still went up to the Temple to pray; they still conformed with the ritual law of Moses;

they still kept to the customs of their fathers ; and they still looked upon Jerusalem as the cradle and home of the Church. True, there were some marks of separation or cleavage—the ordinance of baptism, the “breaking of bread,” the prayer meetings in private houses, the splendid Socialism that differs from all other Socialisms the world has ever heard of, inasmuch as it is founded on the fact that “all mine is thine,” instead of the claim “all thine is mine,” and adherence to the great doctrine attested by the Apostles that the Messiah had come, was crucified, is risen. Had the believers chosen to have some large meeting-place like the others, doubtless it had been known as the “Synagogue of the Nazarene.” That they had a meeting-place of some size is clear from the phrase, “and the Twelve called the multitude of disciples unto them” to consult with them about this murmuring between the Hebrews and Grecians.

But it is noticeable that up to the present the believers had only been persecuted by the small dominant party of men who were Sadducees—the astute Annas and crafty

Caiaphas--men who were wholly given up to the service and worship of this world and its rulers, because they believed in no other. To them the facts of the Resurrection and Pentecost were as gall and wormwood, for these two foundation-stones of the Christian's faith were stones between which their beliefs were ground to powder. Hence the believers in the risen and glorified Messiah, from Whom, as enthroned on His Father's throne, had come the descended Spirit, were tolerated as one of the numerous sects within the Jewish polity. Presently they were to be thrust out from thence and followed in their flight from the fury of both Hebrews and Hellenists to distant cities in other lands. Saul of Tarsus was both a Hellenist and Pharisee, yet no more furious and zealous persecutor of the Church of God was to be found. Far worse was he than any Claverhouse, Laud, or Jeffreys, for his was a spotless, blameless, noble life. Why this change? Why did a noble Pharisee lead in bloody work where ignoble Sadducees had led? The answer is to be found in the short, strenuous life of Stephen.

Before entering more particularly on that let us have a clear view of the divisions amongst the disciples. We begin with two great classes—Circumcised and Uncircumcised. The circumcised believers were divided into (1) Hebrews, (2) Hellenists, (3) Proselytes (Acts vi. 5). Again, the (1) Hebrews may be divided into (a) Strict (Gal. ii. 12), (b) Liberal (Acts xi. 3); whilst the (2) Hellenists may be divided into (a) Narrow (Acts ix. 28), and (b) Broad (Gal. ii. 14). Returning to the second class—the Uncircumcised—we find it divided into two—(1) Proselytes (Acts x. 2), and (2) Converts (Acts xxi. 29).

Alas! there were all kinds of brethren in those days, narrow and broad, strict and liberal, men who never went beyond their own set in their own land and city, and men who had travelled abroad and had come face-to-face with all the horrid rites of heathenism and felt the power where Satan's throne is. Therefore within the Church, as without in the world, there existed the distinction still between Hebrew and Hellenist; and I would have

you mark that fact well in consideration of what follows.

Thus in the murmuring of the Hellenists against Hebrews we have the first "little rift within the lute" that ends in making "the music mute." Jerusalem poverty was proverbial in those days when the legions of Rome had carried away all the treasures of temple and palace, and the myrmidons of Rome remained to see that any crumbs of comfort left behind were collected by continual and vexatious exactions. Yet we do not find that the Commune of the Spirit meant that able-bodied men should not work, or that young men and maidens should not seek employment. It was Christian Socialism, and the Commune was of the Spirit, therefore they who had possessions sold them and placed the money at the apostles' feet. A new place for pelf! A rare place to find money to-day! Some place it on their heads, or round their necks, or in their bosoms next their hearts, or in their pockets, or in some old stocking stowed away in some secret place, or in the bank; but they placed it in its right place at their feet and—

kept it there, for Peter could still say, "Silver and gold have I none!"

What became of this money? It was distributed amongst the necessitous—the widows, the orphans, the aged, and the ill. Thus there arose trouble, for the apostles, what between being haled before the unjust judges, being beaten, being imprisoned, as well as testifying before the Sanhedrin and singing praises in the midst of the assembly, were kept busy. So the Hellenists began to complain because their widows in the daily distribution of doles seemed to come worse off than the Hebrew widows.

Notice the wisdom and grace of the apostles. They did not stand on their dignity. They admitted that they might have given cause for this murmuring, but the cause might be removed. How? By mutual co-operation. Community of possessions means community of responsibility, and community of responsibility means community of labour. Thus we see there can be no unemployed in the true Commune. Do you suggest that these widows were unemployed? You are mistaken. Hear what

the Apostle, who had when he was Saul doubtless carefully watched all these methods, writes: "Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, hath her hope set on God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." (Read carefully 1 Tim. 5.) Therefore the multitude of disciples were exhorted to look out from among their own ranks seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. These were to attend to this pressing matter, whilst the apostles themselves continued—to take it easy? Nay, verily, "but we," say they, "will continue stedfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the Word."

See here what a living thing is the Church. The old Hebrew polity was cast in a rigid mould. In the law were given directions for every emergency that might arise. But it is not so with the Church of the Living God. It is the habitation of the Holy Spirit. It is a growth, and every growth is the product of two forces—life and environment. It is not the creation of tradition nor the creature of circumstance. But every organism has a law. Only cancers and horrible mal-

ignant growths that cause pain, deformity, and death are lawless growths. What is the law of the Church? It is "the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus." But every law is capable of statement, so this wonderful "law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus" has its statement in the words of that self-same Spirit—in the Word of God. For instance, there we find this written: "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

Try every community, every society, every small unnoticed gathering, every disciple, yea, even try thyself, by this Word of God, and see whether there is law or lawlessness in the life of the organism so tested. Yet remember the other lesson we have in this sixth chapter. Your friend may be suffering from some cancer that has eaten away his features beyond recognition; you cannot even draw near and look upon him without a shudder; but the true life is there. Behind it all is the living person that loved you, that loves you still, **ay**, that shall love you yonder where all is fair and beautiful beyond the tomb. It is only that certain cells in his

being becoming utterly lawless have caused such grief and pain and horror. Could they be cut away and the lawlessness stamped out there would be hope yet. So with fellow-saints, and gatherings, and companies of fellow-believers, lawlessness has obscured the image of Christ in them, but if they belong to Him the life in Him is there. See that the lawlessness be cut away, but hurt not the life. Think of the Hellenists and Hebrews—the apostles did not say, Let us get rid of them, for “separation from evil is God’s principle of unity”; instead of that they judged themselves and sought by some means both to abort the threatened schism and to enable themselves to give more time to prayer and to the ministry of the Word wherein is the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus.

The seven men chosen to attend to the business matters of the saints at Jerusalem were all Hellenists. That is to say, they belonged to the class who were murmuring. What a testimony to the honesty of Christianity! No other religion on earth, or ethical system which some wise men seek

to substitute for religion, has ever had this benignant effect on the heart of man. When a man becomes "saved" he becomes honest. I know it. I have seen it. Take this true illustration of it. Jerry M'Auley was a river thief. That is to say, he boarded ships in the river and stole what he could lay his hands on. After his conversion a captain coming into the room in search of sailors saw him. Going up to the old man in charge of the place the captain said, pointing at Jerry, "Is that the kind of people you keep here? He's a dirty thief and a scoundrel. He robbed my ship and stole a hundred dollars' worth of sugar, and he ought to be in the 'Pen'." Jerry didn't know what to do. He had stolen the sugar, but then had not Jesus pardoned his sins? He had been working hard and had saved just 100 dollars. His first honest savings, kept in his desk at home. However, he went up to the captain, who was cursing and swearing, and told him that he was right, but Jesus had saved him, and if he went home with him he would give him his 100 dollars. At first the captain declined to believe that Jerry had 100 cents;

then he said that Jerry was trying to get him into his house to murder him. After much ado, at length Jerry brought the captain to his door. There stood the captain stock still, while the sweat poured off his face. "Jerry," he said, "I believe you are just fool enough to pay that money."

Jerry unlocked the door, led the way in, and then said, "Yes, sir, here it is."

"Well, Jerry," replied the captain, "I stole the sugar before you stole it from me, so keep your 100 dollars!"

The reverse also is true. The world believes that Christianity is synonymous with honesty. The jeweller's traveller who thought he had fallen amongst thieves lay awake sweating with fear, until sheer desperation forced him to find out what his rough-looking host was doing downstairs with a light. When, peeping into the room, he found an open Bible on the table and the man on his knees, he returned to his room to fall into a dreamless sleep, because he knew he was safe.

Whom can men trust if they cannot trust a Christian? What a sermon this is! Who

makes the thief an honest man ? the swindler a trustworthy man ? the liar and cheat a true man ? Thousands of tongues reply—" Jesus Christ ! " Then He who can do this must be eminently worthy of trust Himself ? Surely : no conclusion can be more reasonable. If His faint image in a man excites in others a feeling of trust in that man, how much more should men turn in utter confidence and trust to Him who is the source and origin of honesty and trustworthiness in those from whom such characteristics have been alien ? And that is what He desires. " Believe in Me," He cries. You cannot honour Him more than by committing yourself, your sad case, your terrible habits, your unhealed maladies, your earthly prospects, your family cares, and secret burdens to Him, in full confident trust that He will save you and deliver you from all your distresses. But there must be no half-confidences, no partial trust, no reaching forth to place all in the hands of Jesus, and then timidly drawing back. It must be all or none with Him. And every time you prove a Christian worthy of trust every time you find an un-

answerable reason why you should trust wholly in Him who is the source of the Christian's trustworthiness.

I cannot leave the lesson to be learned from the fact that these seven men belonged to the class that thought itself unjustly dealt by—they were all Hellenists, yet the Hebrews trusted them with their widows—without noticing this other fact. Men are fond now-a-days of questioning the reliability of the men who certified the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. These are men who concoct worthless arguments in their rooms, where commonsense is absent, or first give them voice in company with other atheists or agnostics in little back-street halls, where such arguments as “printing by movable types was invented in the middle of the 15th century, how could there be any Bibles before then?” are greeted with applause that makes the welkin ring. The man of the world knows that Christianity (the real, not the imitation thing, as sold by the Jesuits) stands for honesty, and that if the men who certified publicly the Resurrection of our Lord were not acting honestly, the Jews

were the least likely of all peoples to be deceived by them. They tell me that the cleverest criminals are oftentimes the easiest of detection. They are over-clever. This I can believe after I have read what the chief priests with the elders did: "Say ye," said they to the soldiers who had watched the tomb, "His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept." Certainly the soldiers were silly if they were foolish enough to say so, for how could they tell what had happened whilst they slept? But we hear nothing more about it. There is no trace in all history of any Jew ever saying such a thing, or calling the witnesses of the Resurrection dishonest.

It is simply irrational enough to be believed only by men who deny the glorious facts that have changed the face of the world: that men who preached the Gospel that makes men honest—and the only Gospel that ever does so—were dishonest, and proclaimed a Resurrection they knew had never taken place.

I have a copy of an ancient book that gives a full account gleaned from con-

temporary history of the tortures Christians endured under the Roman emperors. Accustomed to horrors, and case-hardened to physical sufferings, as, alas! I have to be, it makes my blood run cold to read it. And all these unmentionable agonies they could have escaped had they been content to preach Jesus *without* the Resurrection. But they could not; and their Risen Lord marvellously sustained them under sufferings, the mere reading of which makes one suffer.

Early did these persecutions begin. Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. Unconvinced by these, certain from the synagogues I have already mentioned disputed with him as to the reality of what he did and said. Unable to stand up against his keen dialectic, they resorted to that common expedient—force. Through the dim alleys and crowded bazaars they forced him, along with that usual concomitant of all crowds in the East—noise.

With clamour and shouting, with thrustings and mad, onward rushes, which threatened to engulf the prisoner, this wild

sea rose steadily, with many eddyings here and there, until it cast the human waif at the feet of the Seventy-two that formed the Sanhedrin. These were the heads of the twenty-four courses of the priests, with twenty-four elders and twenty-four scribes—in all, seventy-two representative men, who sat in Gazith, a chamber high up in the Temple. True, the Romans had forbidden their session there, as within the sacred precincts they were beyond Roman supervision; but now there was an interregnum, and they sat again, an awful judicature, a college of justice—in their belief, God's Bench—in Gazith, the lofty chamber within the Temple.

Picture to yourself the crowd, breathless with climbing and clamouring, silently setting Stephen in the centre of the solemn semicircle of priests, elders, and scribes. In the middle sat Theophilus, the Sadducee, son of Annas, and brother-in-law to Caiaphas who gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and that man—JESUS. Mayhap on one hand sat hoary Annas, and on the

other that self-same Caiaphas. Look round the half-moon of seated senators and scan their faces well; for one face you will see there that you will see in heaven—the keen, scornful face of Saul.

“Let the witnesses stand forth and give their evidence.” So, with ready tongue, perchance the defeated dialecticians of the synagogues themselves tell the tale: “This holy place he speaketh blasphemous words against!” “Ay, and the holy law he counts an unworthy thing!” “Yes, and Jesus the Nazarene, he declares, has changed all this!” And all together, in a strident chorus, “Jesus the Nazarene shall destroy this . . . place.” You can see them cast one comprehensive glance around as they say “this place.” False? Yea, verily, as they who bore witness against his Master spake falsely. The truth was there, but it was distorted, because the context was left out. We find it so every day. You repeat the words the man I thought my friend said of me, but you leave out the look; you have not caught the tender tone; you have obliterated the pause that made all

the difference in the meaning: and you have shattered the friendship of years. The words are all right, but the deprecatory shrug, the malign suggestion, the bitter sneer—these you have added, and I knew it not. I see men cut down trees without the least compunction. I wonder, had they thought that it took fifty long years for that tree to grow, which they cut down in a few hours, would they have cut it down so gaily. Fifty years! Let us say 15,000 days of sunshine and rain, of soft summer showers and keen winter frosts; 15,000 nights of silent growth under the silent stars when the world sleeps—but the tree grows. I may be peculiar, but the man with the axe, and his fellow with the saw, depress me. How much more the man who, with a look, cuts down a friendship—the growth of years—that might have lasted to eternity. Yet such things are done every day without a thought that it is “false witness” that God will judge.

It is done every day in pamphlets and books by the score—no, not by worldlings, but by brethren. Words are taken from

some reported address of yours. The corrective context that prevented these words enshrining a half-truth is omitted, and you are branded as a heretic, and your heart broken, or your authority is thus apparently obtained for circulating a doctrine your heart loathes.

It was false witness of this kind that ruined the most promising work for God the world had ever known since apostolic days, and continued indulgence in it is the curse that crowns the remains of that disaster to-day with hopeless ruin. There can never be union or reunion until that sin is openly confessed and put away without the slightest reservation or attempt at palliation. To heal the hurt of God's people slightly is as terrible an error as to tell the convicted sinner that he must not take it to heart so much, as God is merciful; or to say to the newly converted that, as all his sins are now forgiven, he must not let his conscience trouble him about such trifles as confession and restitution.

And those who write controversial papers filled with texts of Scripture torn from their

context to prove the contrary of what is the plain meaning of the Word of God when read honestly as one is compelled to read a lease or deed, are guilty of this same crime of false witness—telling the truth, but not the whole truth!

So the last echoes of the witnesses' voices died away, and there was silence. And amid the silence men looked on Stephen's face. It was as if it were the face of an angel. No fear, no anxiety, no furtive glance round the hall as look wild animals trapped, no haughty and scornful look, neither pale with trembling lips, nor scowling with brow dark as thunder and eyes blazing as with lightning—none of these emotions did Stephen's face express or expressions did it wear. Like the moon that has climbed the heavens, peering through the flying clouds, and now shines forth in calm and stately refulgence from her throne set amidst the silent throng of her courtier stars, far above the toil and moil of earth, far above the clouds that guard the horizon like gloomy ramparts tipped with golden spires, so shone the face of Stephen.

At length, shattering the holy silence, with low tones spake the high priest: "Are these things so?"

Now Stephen's defence is one of the finest things in that Book of splendours — the Word of God. Carelessly reading it, one might take it for an epitome of the history of his people, and might imagine that, ere he had reached the application of it, Stephen, suddenly pricked by the apparent indifference and definite hostility of his audience, had thrown the rest of his speech to the winds and had poured over them a lava torrent of burning, scorching invective that had blistered and burned until they could bear the agony no more, and with one horrid, blood-curdling shout had, after a moment's pause, cast themselves upon him, and had halted not until he lay dead under a shower of stones.

True, the end came suddenly, but when you study the speech word by word, you will find Stephen had by three parallel lines crept up to the enemy's weak spot, and then with a mighty climactic rush had hurled himself upon it. I do not wonder that even such a

dialectician as Saul in after days proved himself to be could not withstand this wonderful reasoner. Notice, then, the three parallel lines of attack :

(1) What relation has locality to the acceptable worship of God ?

His accusers said that he had spoken against this "holy place,"

Now Abraham had acceptably worshipped God, yet no possession had he in that land save for a burial-place.

Moses saw in a lonely spot in the wilderness a bush burning yet not consumed, and from the heart of it came a voice, "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground."

Although David had captured Jerusalem, yet he was not allowed to build a temple there, the tabernacle meanwhile being pitched in various parts of the land. Even Solomon, who built the temple said : "But will God indeed dwell on the earth ? Behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain Thee ; how much less this house [notice how Stephen uses this word "house "] that I have builded !"

And what saith the prophet Isaiah many years later? Stephen tells us: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool; what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord; or what is the place of My rest?"

Therefore it is the Presence and not the Place that makes worship acceptable. What a truth for these present days! Men may even make spiritual localities and call them by such high-sounding titles as "in the Name," or "unto the Name," or "upon divine ground." The same mistake! The true pilgrim pitches his tent for communion and erects his altar for worship ere he speaks of "calling on the Name of Jehovah." It is he who walks with God that can worship God. Like Moses, with the best intentions in the world, yet by seeking to put things right in the power of the flesh, he may be rejected by his brethren, nevertheless if he be truly seeking to walk with God, the lonely bush shall suddenly blaze forth to brighten his path through the solitary wilderness. There the pilgrim will find himself on holy ground.

(2) What relation has the Mosaic economy

to time? Was it permanent or impermanent?

His accusers said that he had "blasphemed Moses."

Stephen calls them to behold the evolution of true religion. Abraham had been called from his own country—an idolatrous land—and brought into a strange land, yet there he erects his altar. Then comes the covenant, with its seal of circumcision. Next, when the performance of the promise is nearly due, there arises another great leader who was to bring them—now grown a great company—out of Egypt into the Land of Promise. This was another great act of faith, yet Moses points to a coming and yet greater Leader, for "this is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." Notice the remarkable words he adds, "Him shall ye hear." As Moses brought in one economy, so his successor was to bring in another. Thus from the altar of Abraham, which smoked whilst dawn stained the sky, and blazed at dewy eve a beacon light on the heights of Mamre,

to the elaborate service of the tent of meeting in the wilderness was a step; and from the tent that at the motion of the pillar cloud could be taken down, to the temple that crowned the rocky heights of Moriah, with its stately fabric and splendid ritual, was another; yet as these were all material, and the "Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands," there must be another, still another step. And in that dazzling moment when Stephen stood on that mount of spiritual exaltation we so seldom climb, and saw with keen vision the greatness of that step, doubtless the Paraclete brought to his memory the words of the Lord Jesus: "The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. . . . God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth."

To assert, then, the permanence of Moses and his economy was to deny what he himself had said and what the history of their nation had proved. Therefore he could not have "blasphemed Moses" in thus speaking the truth, for no blasphemy is of the truth.

(3) In thus treating him, the preacher of the truth, with contumely and cruelty, they were manifesting the continuity of that generation that had ever been the curse of their race from its beginning, when "the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt." And here Stephen adds one more of his significant phrases, "but God was with him." As Joseph had suffered for speaking the truth, so Moses suffered for doing the same. Let him slay the Egyptian, but let him not dare to remonstrate with a Hebrew. "Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?"

For these words Moses had to flee into Midian. Yet again God was with him, and the Angel of the Lord, the pre-Incarnate Messiah, as his hearers understood the expression, appeared unto him. Yet again, although this great leader had brought them out from their bondage and the land of their slavery, they turn against him whilst he is absent talking with this self-same "Angel in the Mount Sinai." Nay, they turned away from God Himself, from His service, and from His worship.

Did his eye light upon the crafty Caiaphas and the hoary Annas, and did he realise what this generation had now done? They made much of the Moses their fathers had rejected, but what of Him whose coming Moses had foreseen and prophesied—they had crucified Him! And in a moment the three parallel lines of argument met in one mighty shock. The thunder of his voice rolled and reverberated through Gazith whilst the lightning of his eyes lighted to their dim depths their false hearts—"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears . . . your fathers . . . they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. . . ."

As to the wanderer over the dim moor at nightfall there comes a lightning flash that illumines the distant objects as well as the near, yon group of solitary pines, this stiff regiment of reeds, so to them came the vivid perception in that moment that it was they who were arraigned before the bar of God, and that their course, their character, and their destiny had been foretold centuries

before by the men their fathers had slain. As it were, these had risen from their martyr graves to witness against them in the person of Stephen, whom they were now conscious they had been determined to destroy.

So they "gnashed on him with their teeth," and with that noise and clamour that has always characterised such deeds of darkness, they dashed the life out of Stephen crying "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," and "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And thus the leader of a long line of faithful martyrs, of whom the golden roll is not yet complete, quietly "fell asleep."

As one of our own poets has written :

“ He heeded not reviling tones,
Nor sold his heart to idle moans,
Though cursed and scorned and bruised
with stones;
But, looking upward, full of grace,
He prayed, and from a happy place
God's glory smote him on the face.”

VI.

SAUL.

"Whose name was Saul" (Acts 7. 58).

THERE were certain rules which had to be attended to in such an affair as the execution of Stephen. The Rabbis said that the scaffold was to be twice the size of a man. Thither the criminal was to be led with his hands securely fastened.

Reaching the scaffold and standing upon it, he was to be struck on the breast with a large stone by the first witness, and thrown down. Should this not kill him, then the second witness was to strike him upon the head with another stone. In order to do this, it was necessary that the witnesses should divest themselves of their loose outer garments, which would otherwise hinder the play of their muscles. These garments they laid down at the feet of a young man. The name of this young man was Saul.

Stripped for the dreadful task, they approached their victim. Scarce ere he knew their deadly intent, he was struck on the breast and hurled to the ground crying,

“ Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ! ” Had his shining face, as the sun would do, disconcerted their aim ? It would appear so, for, struggling to his knees, he calls, “ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ! ” And then, as the Rabbis further directed, the populace joined in the stoning, and Stephen fell asleep. “ And Saul was consenting unto his death ” —the word here translated “ death ” literally meaning “ taking up and carrying away. ” That seems to spell finality, for what is taken up and carried away is surely finally disposed of. Persecutors have always thought so. They burned Christ’s faithful witnesses at the stake and cast their ashes into the river. That was surely an end on’t !

Never : “ The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. ” And in a fine passage the great Augustine proclaims : “ Si Stephanus non orasset ecclesia Paulum non haberet. ” That is to say, “ The Church owes Paul to the prayer of Stephen. ” It is like the flag in the old days : he who carried it into battle might be cut down, but ere he fell another hand had grasped the staff, and another, and yet another. Go into St. Giles’

Cathedral or St. George's Chapel, and high above your head you will perceive tattered old ensigns, the glory of their heraldry faded, but on them, if you can but see, you will find the names of great conflicts through which they passed uncaptured, but not the names of the brave men who counted not their lives dear to them as long as the flag was kept from the foe. And so with the blood-red banner of the Cross. I see one standard-bearer after another cut down, but ere he falls his eye has caught a comrade's, and whilst the man falls, the flag flies.

Now, on careful examination, you will find Paul's writings permeated with Stephen's words, and I think here we have the incident that illustrates Paul's dark saying in 1 Corinthians xv. 29, "Else what shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?" I would be allowed to put it in better words than my own—in the words of that great Gospel preacher, Robert Candlish. Before doing so, let me make this observation: that Christian baptism is a public profession of faith in the risen Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism has ever

been of the nature of a public profession of faith in someone. Why, Naaman's baptism in the River Jordan (for you will find the very word in the Septuagint description of the act) was a public profession of his belief in the Prophet Elisha. In the *London Standard*, to my surprise, I read an account of J. Hixon Irving's baptising believers in the Lord Jesus in the sea. That was a public profession. It may be good for newly-saved souls to be made to stand up in a crowded hall to repeat a formula by which they profess to take the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, King, &c. I know it is a good thing to tell your household, your friends, your companions, your sweetheart, your customers, and clients that you are saved. You may think not, but they know what that means, and they know what to expect if you ARE saved, and their attitude of critical expectancy is tonic. But after all is said and done, THE scriptural way of going to the Cross, by the foot of which gapes the empty tomb, and there taking your stand by the Lord Jesus and against the world, is by baptism. Nay, more, in

baptism you identify yourself with Him, as in the Supper He identifies Himself with you; for as this very Paul writes, "We are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." In baptism you give yourself to Him, as in the Supper He gives Himself to you. Therefore baptism rightly precedes the Lord's Supper in the history of the believer's new life. And here I remark, as some are saying that baptism is not for this dispensation, that Paul himself baptised some, and gave a cogent reason why he had not baptised more, a reason which enforces all the more strongly the necessity for every child of God in this dispensation (if he would be obedient) being baptised.

I do not say "sprinkled," for to be sprinkled is not to be baptised, for it is admitted by all great authorities (I mention John Wesley and Dean Stanley) that *baptism* is in its original tongue the word for *immersion*, and immersion is not sprinkling.

Remembering, then, what being baptised

must have meant to a Roman, a Corinthian, or a Thessalonian, listen to the beautiful words of Candlish: "The vacancies left in the ranks of the Christian army, when saints and martyrs fell asleep in Jesus, are supplied by fresh recruits eager to be baptised as they were, and pledged by baptism to fall as they fell, at the post of duty and danger. It is a touching sight which the Lord's baptised hosts presents to view especially in troublous times. Column after column advancing to the breach, as on a forlorn hope, in the storming of Satan's citadel of worldly pomp and power, is mowed down by the ruthless fire of persecution. But ever as one line disappears, a new band of volunteers starts up, candidates for the seal of baptism, even though in their case, as in the case of their predecessors in the deadly strife, the seal of baptism is to be the earnest of the bloody crown of martyrdom."

Again he writes: "There are many among us, they seem to hear their beloved teacher exclaiming, who in being baptised, have nothing but death before us. We had everything to lose as regards this present

life, and absolutely nothing to gain when we were baptised. So far as this world is concerned, our baptism was virtually our death. We embraced the Gospel, we attached ourselves to Christianity, knowing that those who had gone before us had lost all, even their very lives in the cause. I myself held the clothes of the slayers of Stephen when amid a shower of stones, seeing, as he said he saw, the heavenly glory, he 'fell asleep.' I was baptised for the dead when but a few days after I was by baptism enlisted to occupy his vacant post. My baptism came in place of his death. What if the vision of a risen Saviour was a delusion to the martyr Stephen, as it must have been if the dead rise not? Then the appearance of a risen Saviour to me as I was on my way to Damascus was a delusion also. And it was on the faith of that appearance that I was baptised, as I may say, in Stephen's room. Well may I ask, 'What shall they do which are baptised for the dead, if the dead rise not at all?'

As we have in a former chapter seen, Stephen was granted a Pisgah view of the

greatness of God's plan to be unfolded in this dispensation, and the vision carried him out of himself. The mind of Stephen was one of those rare intellects that God vouchsafes to but few, and his address shows with what a grasp he had laid hold of the greatness of God's grace compared with the greatness of man's ingratitude. Surely this is the leader that will bring God's people into the rich, unexplored continents of His grace. Young, beautiful, strenuous, zealous, lovable, full of wisdom, and above all full of the Holy Ghost and of power—such was Stephen.

Young, ill-shaped, proud, covetous, full of self-esteem, bigoted, cruel, a sophist, a stammerer, a Pharisee, a persecutor, a torturer of women and children, with vast mental powers that had been dwarfed and twisted by the Jesuits of that day, and consequently gloomy, suspicious, introspective, hypersensitive, a capable tool in the hands that paid a traitor's price, and, mocking the traitor's agony, were imbrued in the blood of Jesus Christ the Lord—such was Saul. That I am not overburdening the picture is

seen by his own words. Is it eight times that he refers to himself in terms that, were the usual view of his character and deeds taken, are rhetorical and unreal? Saul, but for the overwhelming power of the grace of God, could sit for his portrait with Torquemada and Philip the Second.

And this is the man who is to take the standard from the dead hand of Stephen. This is the man who is to see far further than even Stephen ever saw, for he is to look with that keen, inner vision beyond the ruins of God's earthly people as a witness on earth, in time, for Him and unto Him, and to see rising stately amidst the welter of sects and parties that building of God, that temple of living stones, a holy temple growing silently without noise of hammer or other tool through the night of time, and growing securely, for its chief foundation-stone is Jesus Christ the Lord, and to Him by a living, loving, lasting union every other stone is joined. This is the man that God is about to take into His council, and make him the depositary of a sacred secret that had been kept until then hid in the heart of

God. John Bradford could look at the criminal travelling in the cart to Tyburn, and say in all humility, "There goes John Bradford but for the grace of God." And we can all echo the sentiment in one form or another if we be honest dealers with ourselves. But there is another aspect of the grace of God, and here we have it exemplified in the case of the man who wrote as Paul the Apostle to his Corinthian brethren: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Grace is not only God's goodwill towards us, it is also His good work in us.

VII.

THE CHRONICLER OF PAUL.

"A Man of Macedonia" (Acts xvi. 9).

TROY! What thoughts cluster round that name. Priam and his Trojans; Agamemnon and his Greeks; the lovely Helen and sulking Achilles; the wise Nestor and impulsive Ajax; the noble Hector and pious Æneas; the raving Cassandra, and all the other

shades that the mighty pen of Homer and gentle muse of Vergil have made to pass before our eyes, a mournful pageant of the past. Troy! there Xerxes paused and Julius Caesar gazed and Alexander, brooding o'er Achilles' tomb, saw in the triumphs of the past a presage of the victories of the future, and, donning his ancestor's armour, went forth to conquer Asia. Troy (or Troas)! yes, here came three way-worn wanderers down the pine-clad slopes of Ida's far-famed mount, past the sparkling fountains of the Simois and Scamander, across the ravine that protects Troy's Port to the water's marge, to see far off the gloomy peaks of Europe pierce the ruddy disk of the setting sun. They knew it not these three way-worn pilgrims, but they were marching to a greater victory than Alexander ever knew, although he wept to think there were no more worlds to conquer—they were marching to the conquest of the West and of the World. They, too, had been to a tomb, but an empty one. These three comers to Troy, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, youth, middle-age and aged, had also caught fire at a tomb,

but it was through contemplating the victory Jesus had wrought; and, donning the Spirit's armour, their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace, had carried the fiery cross to rouse the sleeping peoples to a greater revolt, even against the world-wide and age-long slavery of Satan, sin, and death. Trace their steps by means of the map in your Bible, which you too seldom consult; begin with Paul and Silas leaving Antioch in that far eastern corner of the Mediterranean; follow them as they turn the corner there and reach Tarsus, where Paul was born, thence through the Cilician Province and *through the gates of the same name* by which the lofty chain of the Taurus is pierced, a journey that now takes four laborious days, in which the mind is depressed by the dark and gloomy pass, where sighs the night wind, and the pines nod their solemn heads like plumes o'er the dead.

Then the journey took longer; the gloom of the surroundings was deepened by the deadly signs of the presence of robbers, whilst the ordinary imagination peopled every caliginous cavern with the malignant

spirits known to Paganism. At length the party reach the upland plains where stand Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe; and after visiting Derbe first, farther on at Lystra Paul finds a dear boy ready to go forth with him on his journey. Converted through the instrumentality of the great apostle on his former visit, he has manifested his zeal by his service for the Lord amongst the towns and villages of that region (xvi. 2), and is now ready to go forth on mission work. The Lord knows it, Paul sees it, the brethren approve, and aged Lois and gentle Eunice were proud women that day, when through their tears they saw their boy step forth with Paul and Silas on that wondrous journey towards the West, accompanied a little way by the loving brethren who, having seen their little "David" kill his lion and bear in private, were sure that they were sending him forth under a good commander to slay his Goliath in public. And I must not forget that he also carried his sling and smooth stones from the brook, for he had this testimony from his dying leader years later, "From a child hast thou known

the Holy Scriptures." The great Philip Doddridge was a fragile little boy. So when the frost made the fire burn bright he was snug in his little arm-chair gazing at...? No! not castles in the ash, but at the blue porcelain tiles (I have them round my own fire) with quaint pictures of the ravens feeding Elijah, the Good Samaritan, and the Prodigal Son's return, with other outstanding incidents of sacred history. And little fragile Philip's great delight was to lay his curly head on mother's lap while she told and told and told again the stories that lay hidden in these quaint blue porcelain tiles. And many years after, when God had used him to the salvation of very many, Philip Doddridge ever harked back to these porcelain tiles and his mother's words. So would I not encourage anyone whose knowledge of the Word is not deep and true to go forth to tread the path Timothy trod. They say that once we were almost disgracefully beaten because our soldiers' swords were blunt, and bent when they used them. A great man fell in single combat, not because his sword failed, but because his

knowledge of how to use it failed. "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God," is keener far than any two-edged weapon, and is so strong that it pierces where any other weapon would turn aside, but, like David, we must not only know its use, but must have proved it. If we have not proved its piercing power on the Briton at home, woe betide us if we put its trial off until we reach China, or India, or Africa, or the islands that bejewel the breast of the southern seas. When, with stammering tongue, thou venturkest to utter a few ill-chosen "texts," in a language of which thy knowledge is small, to a crowd of people who think themselves, perchance, far thy superiors in knowledge and philosophy, dost thou think thou hast a better opportunity of proving the saving power of the wondrous Word than at home? Nay, then, in those days there had been no need of the gift of tongues, and in these days a well-equipped gramophone would serve the purpose better. It is not altogether what thou sayest; it is how thou livest out the living, abiding Word of God in the presence of the

life-giving Spirit that tells. All religions are methods of interpreting the facts of life in the face of death, so that our living may not be like that of poor, beaten, driven slaves—a mere existence.

What is our religion? and wherein is it better than the hoary religions of the East? It is faith, hope, and love crystallised in the Person of the Saviour Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom we are united through faith and by the Spirit in a living, loving, lasting union.

Religion? it may not be the grammarian's derivation, but ours in deed and in truth is that from *religare*, "to bind"—bound together with Him in the bundle of life and love.

Let us return once more to our map and carefully read the description which appears to hurry on. Paul and Silas, with the young helper Timothy, have bade farewell to Lystra, Timothy's native place, and its contiguous city of Iconium, these all being in the province of Galatia (verse 6), where lived these believers to whom in after days Paul writes that red-hot letter of his called "to the Galatians."

Passing through the province called Asia, where the Spirit forbade their preaching, right up to a point from which a line drawn at right angles to their course would pass through Mysia, they stand on the borders of the great province of Bithynia. Standing there at the source of the rivers flowing north to the Black Sea and west to the Ægean, gazing over the rolling chalk uplands that travellers tell us remind them of our own home counties, their eyes catch sight of the lofty Mount Olympus, and they know that down yonder glade is the way to the rich lands of Bithynia.

Did they feel drawn to that sphere? Perhaps so, for it is written that to journey thither they attempted. But no: "The Spirit of Jesus [so, as in R.V., it ought to read] suffered them not." Ay, and when, turning their backs on that promising land, they travel down the vale of the Rhyndakos through populous Mysia, they were not suffered to stay their steps or open their lips until they stood on the marge of the swelling tide that separated them from Europe.

VII.

THE BELOVED PHYSICIAN.

“A Man of Macedonia” (Acts xvi. 9).

I HAVE ventured to call your attention to these geographical details, and to beg your accompanying me on the map as we travel with Paul, Silas, and Timothy, so that you may catch a glimpse of the speed with which the Spirit of Jesus hastens His messengers across large and populous provinces, shutting their mouths, staying their steps, marking out the way they must travel in silence with distinctness, and bringing them (like Israel of old) to the place where waves break perpetually, and the sun sets red behind the distant peaks of our continent.

This vigorous sweep of Luke's brilliant narrative brings us to a notable point in its pages. Here in verse 10 we meet for the first time with the first person plural “WE.” Luke, the writer of the narrative, joins the party at Troy Town (or Troas). All exact commentators agree that when Luke is present this pronoun is used, and where it is not used it is because he is absent.

Now understanding that the Epistle to the Galatians is written (as beyond a doubt from the latest discoveries as to the divisions of Asia Minor in Paul's day it is) to the believers in the districts and towns mentioned in Acts xiii., xiv., and xvi. we learn that Paul in his first missionary journey (Gal. iv. 13) was seized with a painful disease which excited the sympathy of the dwellers in the Galatic province greatly (Gal. iv. 12-15). Surrounded by the lofty range of the Taurus, these low-lying plains in the interior are moist and extraordinarily fertile. The atmosphere is close and steamy. Along the course of sluggish rivers are great marshes, where breed in myriads the malaria-giving mosquito. I am assured by a traveller that the climate resembles that of Province Wellesley or Hong Kong.

Coming down from the Highlands of the Cilician Gates, excited by meeting men and women brought to the Lord on his former journey, meeting doubtless with many disappointments, his physical energies sapped by the enervating air, Paul is seized with a fresh and aggravated attack of his old

malaria, which leaves him with these intense neuralgias that malarial subjects know so well—that “brow ague” that causes the sufferer even to faint with agony, and makes him feel as if someone were slowly tearing his eyes out with red-hot pincers. Seeing their beloved teacher suffering such racking tortures, these Galatians felt (as I myself have felt as I have contemplated such misery) that they could have “dug out” (the same word as in Mark ii. 4, where the men “dug up” the roof to bring the paralytic to Jesus, and a vivid description of Paul’s pain) their eyes and given them to him (Gal. iv. 15). I know not whether this were his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor. xii. 7-9), but “brow ague” is just like the slow progress of a blunt nail or stake (the true meaning of the word translated, “thorn”), tearing and bruising its way through the tender tissues. The Lord is gracious to His weary tortured servant. He gives him grace. He gives him silence. He brings him with all speed to Troy, where all unconsciously there awaits him the man whom afterwards he calls “the beloved physician.” Now when

we consider that in those days doctors were pagans who ascribed their successes to *Æsculapius*, and whose principal methods of treatment were the use of charms and incantations, what a boon it must have been to have with him Luke, who from his writings we easily see was a close student of the best medical writers of the day—Hippocrates, “the father of medicine,” Galen, Dioscorides, and Aretæus. In other words we detect from a close scrutiny of his language and a comparison of his expressions with those of these writers that Luke was (for his time) a scientific observer of no mean order. He was no less fitted by God to relieve the apostle’s anguish, than to write the apostle’s history, which like all such men’s histories, commences at the cradle and the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Up to the present, then, we have had Paul and his party actively guided by the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus; now we are to find them guided by a vision. That night in the caravanseñai in Troy Paul dreamed a dream, and in a vision saw “a man of Macedonia.” The Greek is very

definite here. It is "a certain man," and after that phrase one expects in Greek to find the name, but instead we have "of Macedonia." Now, how did Paul know that? Macedonians wore no particular dress like our Highlanders. Nay, they rather sought to show themselves to be true Greeks by wearing the Greek dress. You see it is not connected with what he said, or else we might suppose that his tongue betrayed him, but with his appearance. I believe some one else has suggested what occurs to me, that he knew the man in the vision, because the man was Luke whom he had met that day, and he came (I think it can be clearly shown from his own words) from Philippi.

To me this thought adds beauty and pathos to the passage. God is guiding His servant to Europe. Had it been otherwise, had the surging tide of Gospel gladness gone eastward, now perhaps missionaries of the Cross had been landing on these shores from China and Japan to preach the glorious tidings of a full salvation to us. We should have been sitting in darkness and the shadow

of death. From the East would have come the light, but it would have been the far East and two thousand years later. To encourage him in this invasion of a new continent God sent an embassy to His servant. Doubtless Luke told Paul and his two companions of the clamant need of Philippi, that is, of Europe, but as hitherto such very definite guidance had been vouchsafed him, the apostle waits upon God and receives his answer in a vision of the night—he sees Luke standing before him, and hears his plea of the day re-echoed in the night, “Come over and help us!”

You can now understand the feelings with which Luke pens the next verse: “And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the Gospel unto them.”

VIII.

PAUL THE ROMAN CITIZEN.

"Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts xxii. 25).

"The magistrates . . . feared when they heard that they were Romans" (Acts xvi. 38).

"Philippi . . . a colony" (Acts xvi. 12).

"Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20).

FOUR men had climbed the last rise in the road through the mountains, and turned the last corner in the pass, when Philippi lay before them. Yonder embosomed in verdure were the white walls of the flat-roofed houses that crouched at the foot of a rock. Far and wide stretched the alluvial plain. On the left rose the eminence on which Cassius, so well-known to every school-boy, slew himself; whilst forming a background to the fertile scene lay the black-browed, tempest-scarred mountains, where in some frondent fold his fellow, Brutus, lost hope and slew himself. That very same Brutus who had smitten his dear friend, so that when Cæsar sunk down a dying heap at the pillar's foot,

his life leaping out by a hundred wounds, his eye caught him, and "Oh, thou! . . . what Brutus, thou also?" were the last words of Julius Cæsar. But there still stand the pillars that were the four corners of the market-place, from whence it was but a step to the frowning portals of Philippi's prison. Sixty-five years after Cassius and Brutus sought desperately death's shelter from disgrace, another stood just there.

An earthquake had swung the gates wide open. Silence reigned in the black corridors, and the jailor thinking the prison empty, and the prisoners gone, drew his sword for the same purpose, when from out the mirky gloom came a voice, "Do thyself no harm!"

A striking contrast! A new star had risen on Europe's horizon. Its beams were penetrating the dark night of Europe's despair. The light was beginning to shine in dark places, the morning star was rising in dark hearts, and the four travellers were its heralds. Tell me that it is worse than wrong, that it is the utmost folly to send missionaries to China, India, and Japan. That they already possess religions before

the antiquity of which ours is but a mushroom! So might it be said of Europe in those days when philosophy and art had not only reached the zenith of their perfection, but had sat enthroned there for so long, that familiarity had bred a hopeless contempt in many a heart. Yet with all its philosophy, æstheticism, art, poetry, and knowledge, it needed a Christian to say, "Do thyself no harm!" Hospitals, almshouses, orphanages, asylums, and homes for waifs and strays, are all the outcome of Christianity. To-day the Jains in the East, who tie a cloth round their mouths lest they should cause the hapless death of some ephemeral insect, care naught for the sick or the useless. They truly strain out the gnat and swallow the camel, and I venture to assert that were Christianity to be blotted out with all its offspring, it would scarce occur to our most learned philosophers or eager socialists to tend the sick, to smooth the dying pillow, to uplift the fallen, and to seek for the lost. As it needed a messenger from Jesus Christ to say to the jailor that had treated him brutally, "*Do thyself no*

harm!" so it would require one to-day. It is the most natural thing in the world to say it to myself; it is something supernatural to say it to another who has done me all the harm that lay in his power.

It was a beautiful scene upon which the apostle and his three companions gazed. Around them lay green pastures, where blossomed in rare profusion the lovely rose, whilst in all directions their eyes caught the sparkle of living waters amidst the foliage. The town they were approaching had been called Datum. From the numerous fountains in its vicinity its name was changed to *Krenides* or The Fountains. Then when Philip, Alexander's father, conquered the wild Thracian mountaineers he fortified the place and called it after himself—Philippi. After the Republic went down under the victorious arms of Antony and Octavius, the conquerors raised a triumphal arch which spanned the road along which Paul was journeying. This road led through Philippi, and half a mile from the western gate, by which it left the town, it passed under this arch and crossed the river just where the

Jews had their place of prayer—a circular building open to the heavens and close to the water, so that the washings prescribed by the law might easily be accomplished.

Not only did the victors commemorate their success by raising an arch, the ruins of which remain to this day, but Augustus, as Octavius afterwards called himself, planted at Philippi a colony of his soldiers. Thus Luke's description of it is important.

Philippi was, writes he, a "colony." Now, a colony meant much more to the Romans than to us. And in order to understand the significance of the term, let me say that the world in those days was divided into two classes of beings—those who were *cives* or "citizens," and those who were *peregrini* or "strangers." Now, by the *Jus Italicum* all who were born in Italy (except slaves) were *cives* or citizens of Rome. Their names were written in the Roll of the Tribes at Rome. Thus Italy was the Roman's "Holy Land," and the Roll the Roman's "Book of Life."

To be a citizen of Rome was considered a high honour in those days. You might become one by birth, either through being

born in Rome or having a Roman citizen as your father. Thus Paul was a citizen by birth through his father being a Roman citizen. You might purchase the honour, as Captain Lysias of the temple guard said, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom." And you might obtain this dignity by being made a colonist. For as by the Jus Italicum the soil of Rome with all its rights and privileges was extended to the whole of Italy, so by a colonising act it was extended to the colony. Look at a coloured map of Scotland, and you will see little pieces of one county scattered through another. So it was the custom in those days to plant by colonisation little bits of Roman soil in distant places, and oftentimes in recently conquered and therefore hostile provinces. Here, for instance, at Philippi, Augustus planted a number of his soldiers, drawn from Marsian and Pelignian stock; rough, rude, and ruthless, yet trained by the civil wars in Italy to understand the greatness of Rome and the Roman Ideal. Some were doubtless freedmen, others slaves, but as victorious soldiers of Augustus they were placed here in Philippi, made by

that act Roman citizens, therefore ruled by Roman laws, governed by magistrates created according to the Roman custom, surrounded by the effigies and emblems of Roman glory, with their names written in the great roll of the Roman tribes kept amidst the sacred treasures of Roman tradition.

Thus they who had been but a short time ago slaves or freedmen, belonged now to the noble Voltinian tribe. They lived at Philippi; they belonged to Rome. The Governor of the province could touch none of them. The laws and customs of the province had no claim upon them. They spoke the Roman tongue, and Greek was to them as the "taal" is to the free-born Englishman. Nay, their very gods were Roman, for on the hill above the town there stood next the citadel the theatre, and next the theatre the temple of the rude old god Sylvanus, the tutelary deity of the Italian peasant.

Knowing this, we can understand the virile tone of Paul's letter to these Philip-pians. He was writing to no superstitious dreamers of Colosse, to no inconstant, cap-

ricious dwellers in Galatia, to no philosophic doubters of Achaia; no, Paul was writing to men of larger mould and manlier mind—citizens of Rome dwelling at Philippi.

As we have seen, Paul was born a Roman citizen, and that because his father was one, for Tarsus although a “free city” was not a “colony.” It matters not how his father became one, although many solutions of the riddle have been put forward, but from that fact it is clear that to be one was not contrary to his rigid religious tenets; and that it was of some advantage to him.

That such was the case is clear from contemporary accounts. Everyone has heard of the great Roman orator Cicero. Well, Cicero undertook the task of impeaching the powerful Verres before the Senate of injustice and cruelty.

It is a magnificent oration, and the orator rises to great heights when he describes what took place at Messina under the government of Verres. It appears that there by his orders a man had been scourged. Whilst this is being done, Cicero tells us that there were only two sounds

heard, the dull "thwack, thwack" of the lictors' rods, and the wailing cry monotonously repeated, "*Civis Romanus Sum*"—that is, "I am a Roman citizen." Burning with indignation, the speaker cries, "It is a dreadful deed to bind a Roman citizen. It is a crime to scourge him. It is almost parricide to put him to death." No wonder it stirred the Senators to the core, for it reminded them how sacred in the eyes of their law was the person of a Roman citizen. To do what Verres had done was to break two fundamental laws of the Roman polity—the *Lex Porcia* and the *Lex Valeria*. But, on the other hand, to utter the words *Civis Romanus Sum!* when one was not a Roman citizen was to become guilty of death.

In the eyes of no people was law such a sacred principle as it was to the Romans. The principles embodied in Roman law rule the world to-day. And the Roman citizen was the embodiment of Roman law. To understand what this means, let me take an illustration from every-day life. Nothing surprises visitors to our shores more than the

power our policemen possess. To see the man in "blue" stand in the midst of Piccadilly or Oxford Street, or the Strand, when the rushing floodtide of traffic is at its height, and with the simple uplifting of a hand stay the roaring torrent to let the hobbling cripple or woman with little child or nervous lady cross in safety where the countryman has stood, dazed and bewildered, waiting in vain for the interminable lines of traffic to cease, has drawn many comments. How is it that such a simple action of an unarmed man produces so great an effect? Because the policeman is the embodiment of law, that power of which the visible exponents are King, Parliament, and Judges. Touch the humble policeman and a thrill runs through the majesty of the Empire. So it was with the Roman citizen. Hence the words, "Roman citizens," brought the arrogant magistrates of Philippi to their senses. The day before, elated by the adulation of the mob, they had refused to listen to men who appeared to be Jewish tramps and vagabonds. To-day they are realising that these men are Roman citizens

and heirs of the world, and hold them in the hollow of their hand.

And here I would draw your attention to some of the evidence that goes to show that Luke resided at Philippi. Only Paul and Sylvanus are suffering; where are Timothy and Luke? Surely we cannot impute cowardice to these two men. No, what happened is what often happens when visitors come to you. You have your professional duties to attend to, so some of your guests go out by themselves, as Paul and Sylvanus did, whilst another prefers to remain with you and accompany you on your rounds or to your workshop, which personally I have found a much more interesting place than the streets. Thus Timothy went with Luke and escaped the mob.

Not only so, but in describing the magistrates Luke does not use the word for their proper name of *Duumviri*, but *Strategoi*, the Greek equivalent for the once military term of "Prætors." Now Cicero had already made great fun of the *Duumviri* of Capua, because they had assumed the title of Prætors, which was much grander, and

suggested that they would not rest until they had bedizened themselves with the still grander one of consuls! It appears from Luke that these magistrates of Philippi were of the same cast of mind as those of Capua—a stroke of personal observation. What a tremendous lesson Paul must have read these consequential officials when he sent them the reply, “Nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us out.”

Such descriptions make us see how true to nature, to circumstances, to the times, Luke’s narrations are. But they are like the telegraphic messages from foreign correspondents—every word is weighty, and requires expanding to be fully understood.

Now, having studied the environment of Paul’s visit to Philippi, let us study shortly allusions to it in his letter to the Philippian believers written years afterwards. Thus he writes: “Only [*i. e.*, this one thing I urge upon you] let your conversation be [*politeuesthe*—be citizens] as it becometh the Gospel of Christ, . . . and in nothing terrified [*pturomenoi*—terrified as a startled horse*]”.

Now "Philippos" means a lover of horses, and as Paul shows himself apt at *paronomasia* or play upon words (see e.g. Onesimus or *profitable*, Philemon 11), we may well imagine that in this passage he not only reminds them of all that their citizenship pictures when transferred to the spiritual sphere, but also illustrates his injunction by a "horsey" term, seeing that they are Philippians or "lovers of horses!" And what the apostle allows in himself may not we? Do not forget to feather and barb your arrows. They will shoot all the straighter and stick all the faster.

Again, in chapter iii. he refers again to their citizenship, for there he uses the word *politeuma* or "citizenship." Why did our translators in 1611 render it "conversation"? For just then "conversation" had so lately come into our language that it had hardly lost the meaning of its Latin progenitor—*conversari*, "to live with anyone." Now, it

* So Diodorus Siculus describes the chariot horses of Darius at the battle of Issus, "Frightened by reason of the multitude of the dead heaped round them, they shook off their reins"; and Plutarch says: "Scared by sight or sound like a shy and fickle animal." I quote these passages as the word does not occur elsewhere in the Bible.

too often means "idle talk"; hence it is better to use a word that represents the apostle's meaning more closely, and read the passage: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we are awaiting as Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ."

Bearing these brief explanations in mind, consider some of the lessons the apostle would have his Philippian brethren learn, and not them alone, but also us.

1. Consider *the honour* which is the believer's. They knew what an honour it was to be a Roman citizen. By birth they might have been rude peasants, gathered to the Antonian standard by the rush of civil strife. Their names unknown; their condition that of Egyptian fellaheen; their portion that of poverty, with no rights, the prey of the strongest. Now that was all changed. They had become members of the "Colonia Augusta Julia Victrix Philippensium"; that is to say, they bore the name of Augustus Julius the Conqueror, under whose reign the Roman Empire rose to such a zenith of prosperity and splendour that the phrase still is ours, "the Augustan Age,"

proverbial for a time of unexampled plenty and felicity. They were no longer clods of living clay; their names were inscribed amidst the storied fame of the Voltinian tribe. There were written the names of Crescens, Secundus, Trophimus, Aristobulus, Pudens, and Urbanus, all of Philippi. The roll has long ago perished, but these names were carved in the living rock, and excavations at Philippi have unveiled them, the names of men living at Philippi, but belonging to Rome. No longer were they like Russian peasants, without recognised rights; they had their magistrates who administered their laws, and these the laws of Rome, whose sacred name they bore. How easy then is it for the apostle to bring before such their new standing in Christ, the Heavenly Victor, as citizens of heaven. Their names written in the "Book of Life" (iv. 3), their laws heavenly, their habits of thought and their manner of looking at things no longer provincial—that is to say, earthly—but heavenly; for their Judge is heavenly, and that Judge their Saviour, Christ, for before Him they must all appear; so Paul

prays that they may be "pure and without offence for the Day of Christ." Nay, farther on he desires with great desire that they may be "a boast to me in Christ's Day" (ii. 16), that it might then be manifested that "not in vain I ran, nor in vain laboured." "Christ's Day" must not be confounded with the "Day of the Lord." It will be "Christ's Day" above when it is "Anti-christ's Day" on earth. Now "day" stands for judgment (1 Cor. iv. 3). How often does one wait for the daylight before one judges a matter? To take a very homely illustration, I have seen a lady in the recesses of one of the great London emporiums, having tried in vain to match a riband or colour, snatch up the materials and go to the door, where there is full daylight. In this connection it also means some period of time occupied by a course of operations in experience or influence, as when we say, "He was a great man in his day." So Scripture teaches us very plainly that the portion of time occupied by the Lord Jesus, in awarding every believer of this dispensation a prize or dignity, accord-

ing to his works, will also be occupied by Antichrist in his course of operations upon earth. I said this truth is plainly taught in Scripture. That surely is the case, because before we can be manifested WITH HIM in glory (Col. iii. 4) we must be manifested BEFORE HIM in judgment (2 Cor. v. 10), for it is written: "Of each the work manifest will become: for the DAY will declare it, because in fire it is revealed (apocalypsed); and of each, the work what sort it is, the fire will prove" (1 Cor. iii. 13). This takes place AFTER the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour (Phil. 3. 20), for it is in our heavenly—that is, in our resurrection bodies—that we are manifested before the *Bema* or judgment-seat of Christ, in order to receive "the things done through the body." Hence Paul says that our Lord Jesus Christ comes "as Saviour," because He is coming, not only to save us from the presence of sin, but also from the presence of THE sinner who is Antichrist. So writing to the Thessalonian saints (neighbours of the Philippians) he tells them how glad he is that they "turned to God from idols to

serve the living and true God, and to await His Son from the heavens . . . JESUS [His special name as Saviour], who is delivering us from the wrath that is coming" which is another way of saying, "the Tribulation, the great One."

2. Consider *the service* which is the believer's. All of us know how at some critical moment in our lives the scene seems to be impressed on us with such force that the smallest item stands out with the greatest sharpness. So Paul appears to have remembered the market-place at Philippi, with its insignia of Roman colonisation—the S.P.Q.R., the standards, the arms, the statues of the Emperor (one with the paludamentum of an Emperor, and the other with the cincture of a divinity). Thus he writes to them: "That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one soul striving together," as if he would remind them of the battle-shields, with a row of hooks down one edge and a row of eyes down the other, so that when they stood together and linked their shields together, by means of these hooks and eyes, the whole company formed an

impenetrable body, against which the enemy broke in hopeless waves. So it is ever well for Christians to remember *L'Union fait la Force*, or in other words, "United we stand, divided we fall." The ways of warfare have greatly altered since Paul's day, but with us still 'tis the case that shoulder to shoulder wins the day. I know some very worthy people who stand outside all religious organisation on the plea that there are so many bodies, to each of which some objection may be made. Such, I feel, have never yet grasped what is meant by that oft-repeated word in Scripture, "fellowship." Let them look it up by the aid of the *Englishman's Greek concordance*, and they will be surprised. The longer I live, the more I thank God for that word and the living fact it represents. Paul speaks to his Philippian friends of Epaphroditus as his "companion in labour and fellow-soldier." Literally his words read: "My fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, but your apostle." Readers! the words are misused, but for all that we ought to know more of the glorious fact that the Church is Catholic and Apostolic. The

Philippians' apostle was the apostle's brother-in-arms! You see, these old soldiers of the Voltinian tribe knew how necessary a "base of supply" is to an army—that an army without one is an army defeated. True, Paul's base was heaven, for he writes to them in this connection: "My God will fill up all your need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." But you will observe that heaven's supplies always come to us *viâ* earth's possessions; so Paul recognised the fact that it was no less God that sent them, because both recruit and supplies came by way of Philippi.

Reader! if the New Testament be true—and it is, every word of it—then we are in an enemy's land. As Pharaoh was king of Egypt, so Satan is prince of this world; and as Augustus was not only sculptured as Imperator but as divinity too, so Satan is god of this world as well. It is because the little group of war-scarred veterans at Philippi caught a glimpse of the apostle's teaching on this subject (2 Cor. iv. 3; Eph. vi. 11, 12)—how many do to day?—that his letter to them breathes such an air of victory

and joy. They saw how necessary it was to support each other and all the saints of God. Do you and I know sufficient of this? "Knowledge is power," because the man, really cognisant of a truth, puts it into practice, for it has become a part of himself, enwoven with the texture of his life. That is what the apostle means by his oft-repeated word, "full-knowledge," not *gnosis* only, but *epignosis*. Therefore his injunction to the Philippians to "think on these things"; for what digestion (and by that word I mean the processes of assimilation that end in making the crust of bread, or that piece of meat, as much a part of yourself as bone, or muscle, or sinew, or nerve, that is yours can be) is to the body, so meditation is to the mind. And as heaps of bricks never built a house yet, so in addition we require exercise to set into motion that peculiar process which builds up these supplies into tissues. So what use, movement, exercise, is to the body, so practice is to the spiritual being. So I repeat, do we know and practise what these saints at Philippi did? Then we know something about being Catholic and Apostolic.

Happy missionaries, who have gone forth looking to the Lord for supplies and recruits! We are your base, your recruiting-ground, and our apostles laden with supplies ("an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God") will reach you not once, not twice only (iv. 16, and elsewhere), and in them ye shall find brothers in work and in arms.

3. Consider *the position* which is the believer's. These Philippian brethren knew the wide gulf which yawned betwixt a *Civis* and a *Peregrinus*, for they stood a group of Roman citizens amidst a whole province of "strangers." Thessalonica was but a "free city," so when the jealous Jews raise the usual riot against the apostle the charge is different from what the masters of the ventriloquist slave-girl charged him with. They cried, "These men, being Jews . . . teach customs . . . not lawful for us . . . being Romans!" The Jews yelled, "These that have turned the world upside down . . . do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another King, one Jesus!" Whilst the magistrates are no longer

Duumviri but *Politarchs*, for a free city had its own laws sanctioned by the Emperor (Cæsar, Kaiser, or Czar), its own town council or *Demus* (Duma), that is, assembly of citizens (Acts. xvii. 5), and its own chief magistrates or *politarchs*. The diplomatic Roman knew, as he knew most things political, how pleased the Greeks were with the bestowment of empty distinctions, and that by converting a Greek village into a "free city" he secured its clamant loyalty, and thus a garrison was spared to be used elsewhere. See here the extreme fidelity of Luke to facts. A century later many of these things had disappeared, and become as if they had never existed. In fact it is only by recent research that the political and social life of Paul's day has been unveiled, and every new discovery of what was the state of things in the first century of the Christian era has also unveiled still further the absolute trustworthiness of Luke as an eye-witness and keen observer.

Now in the light of this compare Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, and his letter to the Philippians. I have only space for one

illustration of their difference in accord with the difference betwixt the "colony" and the "free city." In the closing chapter of the Philippian letter we read: "For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity," for "in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated [literally, had fellowship] with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only."

Not only was the "citizenship" a passport that took you from end to end of what was then known as the "habitable earth" in safety, but it also secured you against hunger and thirst. Roman citizens were not in the custom of allowing a fellow-citizen to starve at the hands of mere provincials or *peregrini*. Such an occurrence would be a blot on their escutcheon, and on the fair fame of Rome herself. I daresay that this thought entered into the minds of these citizens of Rome at Philippi. Inhabitants of free cities were apt to plume themselves on their dignity, and almost reckon themselves as good as colonists. Those at Thessalonica might, but these of Philippi

were determined that Paul should not seem to be in want in their midst. That their fellow-citizen and beloved Paul should appear to be lacking any good thing, and that in a free city? . . . perish the thought! And if you search you will find that these Philippians sent to him four times at least, and sent some one with the supplies, so that they might have a full report of his condition. Oh, careful splendid Philippians, my heart swells as I think of your nobility! Ignorant peasants, ruthless soldiery, ye may once have been, but now Rome had no nobler children than ye! I am glad your names were written in the precious roll with names which even now the world honours, but gladder far that they are written in the Lamb's "Book of Life," all the names in which God honours.

I cannot resist quoting here as a contrast the words of beloved John M'Vicker: "I remember," writes he, "going in company with my friend to a rich, ungodly man to ask a subscription for the building of a meeting-place. He took us both for business men, and in replying to our application used

several oaths. I felt greatly shocked, re-proved him for swearing, and got no subscription. But what a state of heart I was in: when I, a servant of Jesus Christ, could stand, hat in hand, before such a man, asking him to give me money for my Master's work, and hear him blaspheming God's name, without feeling shocked enough to give up such a Christ-dishonouring course. I persevered, however, until the building was erected." Now observe carefully the *denouement*, for the whole pith of the quotation is in it. "I hear that——(the friend above mentioned) is doing his utmost to hinder us from getting a lease for our chapel, in consequence of the church's position on the question of ministry. In the time of my backsliding I was closely associated with this unconverted man in getting this chapel built; now the Lord is chastising me through him for this sin."

4. Consider *the portion* which is the believer's. Paul writes to these Philippian: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Here is a

military term that will carry the promise home to the hearts of the old campaigners: "Shall keep" is "shall mount guard over." In other words, God's peace is the patrol that mounts guard over the heart's entrance. As one of our own poets has said most beautifully:

" Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, though as yet I keep
Within His court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by His faithful guard,
And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well."

These men dwelt at Philippi, but they belonged to Rome. They formed one of the great chain of Roman outposts that guarded the peace of the empire.

Days and nights of toilsome travel and weary journeying lay between them and Rome. But they were not forgotten, for they belonged to Rome, and all its greatness and all its glories belonged to them. In them they were partners.

So with the citizen of heaven: where he dwells there is an outpost of heaven. And

when the conflict is over the trumpet will sound, and falling in behind the advanced guard of the Great Commander he, too, will share in the splendours of that glorious Triumph that will never end, for "when Christ, our Life, shall be manifested then also ye with Him shall be manifested in glory."

When He was on earth He said: "Let not your heart be troubled; believe on God, on Me also believe." He links the twain together as objects of faith: "God and Me." When He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He says through His servant: "Ye with Him." He links the twain together as subjects of glory.

Again He speaks through His servant: "The Son of God who loved me and gave up Himself for me"—"Himself for me." He links the twain together in a union without which there could be no linking together in glory, for it is "Christ IN you—Christ within you, the hope of THE glory." The only glory worth having.

IX.

JESUS,

THE BEGINNING AND THE ENDING.

"Jesus . . . Jesus" (Acts xvii. 7 ; xviii. 5, 28).

"ALL roads lead to Rome!" What is proverbial is not always practical, but in Paul's day all roads led to Rome, for what led elsewhere did not deserve the name of road.

Since he saw the vision and heard the cry of "Come over into Macedonia and help us" in Troy, he and his companions have been trudging along the great highway that ran from the Orient to Rome, called "Via Egnatia," or Egnatian Way. In Britain we still have the remains of these Roman roads, for they were all well made, well kept, and well measured. In Rome stood the golden milestone, and the itineraries are still in existence that give us the mileage of these great ways that wandered over hill and dale, linking up town with town, city with city, province with province, and all with the central unit—the City of Rome.

Thus we know how Paul left Philippi. He took the way that went westward, past the simple meeting-place where he first talked to Lydia, underneath the Arch of Triumph, over the river Gangites, across the plain, until, thirty-three miles farther on, he with his fellow-travellers entered Amphipolis—a beautiful town, lying like our Hampshire Christchurch, encircled by two rivers, hence its name. The position was not only beautiful, but its history was romantic. Years before, another Paul, Paulus Æmilius, who had just won the battle of Pydna, here publicly proclaimed that the Macedonians should be free. Now here comes another Paulus. No victorious general he, clad in all the panoply of war and elated by a well-won victory, but an “ugly little Jew,” poor, rough in speech, accompanied by two other men and a youth of the peasant class. Reading his magnificent writings and knowing what he is, it is hard for us to picture to ourselves what he really looked like; judging by the descriptions he gives of himself throughout his writings I quite believe that if you and I had been

loitering about the eastern gate of Amphipolis in the cool of the evening, and, hearing the tramp, tramp, shuffle, shuffle, sounds that betoken feet and limbs wearied by a long march, had looked up, we should have perceived naught by the eyes of the flesh save four men of somewhat doubtful appearance; probably had we been keen observers we should have noticed that at least two had been in a scuffle, and perceived that their garments smelt of prison. So hard is it to judge by the outward appearance what the inner, the real man is. Yet here was the greater Paul with a nobler message of freedom. It is the custom to smile at the dictum for which so many died more than a hundred years ago, "That all men are equal; that all men are brethren; and that all men are free!" It sounds true, but it does not seem true, for in America, whose Declaration of Independence enshrines the statement "All men are equal," freedom alone, nothing more, is granted the black man, and even that only after a sea of blood had been shed. Why is this? Because the Gospel alone makes men brethren, equal, free.

Paul did not stay at Amphipolis. Why, we are not told, save that there was no synagogue there.

Another thirty miles and they reach Apollonia, surrounded by streams and lakes, whilst the rising ground on every side is clad with verdure and crowned with trees. Here again there is no synagogue, and no stay is made.

Once more they trudge along the Egnatian Way, which here leads them through a deep pass, the sides of which are clothed with forest trees, amidst which, leading off from each side of the road, are mossy dells with tinkling brooks, inviting the weary traveller to rest and bathe his blistered feet, for it is thirty-seven long miles ere the next town be reached. As the lengthening shadows tell of dying day, they at last issue from the narrow glen, and magnificent is the view that meets their eyes. Yonder the blue waters of the *Ægean*, repeating in every wave the crimson and gold of the setting sun; to the right the deep purple of the mountains famed in classic story; in front the noble plain of the *Axius*; and yonder,

yes, yonder, are seen the towers and turrets of the "free city" of Thessalonica. Philippi was named by King Philip after himself. The day his daughter was born he won a battle, and so he named her Thessalonica. Thessalonica grew up, and in due course married Cassander, one of her brother's (Alexander the Great he was) generals. Now Cassander fell into ill-health, and after trying various means he was cured by bathing in the hot springs that gave its name to Therma. Grateful, he embellished the little town, and changed its name from Therma to Thessalonica, his wife's name. Hence on its coins is to be seen the figure of Victory. And the name and place are with us to-day, for Salonika is a well-known seaport, with about 100,000 Jews.

I have dwelt on this, for is there not something appropriate in addressing the epistle which sounds the note of contest with the great world-powers to "Those fond of horses," remembering the symbolism of the horse (Zech. i. and Rev. vi.) and the meaning of the word "Philippians"; whilst the letters to the Thessalonians or "Those

who have won the Victory " are filled with the glory of the believer's Hope ?

As we have already seen, although Paul found here a flourishing synagogue, he was soon driven from the city by the malignant madness of those who would neither have Jesus to be the true Messiah—that is, Jehovah's Anointed (Psalm ii. 1, 6)—nor suffer the Gentiles to be saved. Clearly the magistrates took bail of Jason and his associates that Paul would not return to the city. To this effective action on the part of the *politarchs* and the *Demus*, the richly populated region of Achaia owed Paul's presence for two years, for he was intensely desirous of revisiting Thessalonica, where he had met with much success, and had left many eager students of the Word but young in the faith. Thus, writing to them, he says: " Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I, Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us."

Years before this Cicero in his impeachment of Piso for gross maladministration of the Province, depicts him, in a very vivid passage, slinking into Thessalonica by

night. But there (he proceeds) he found no rest from the wails of the oppressed and the clamour of the injured, so he left the main road and fled to the obscure town of Berea.

So Paul leaves the Egnatian Way, and, travelling fifty miles, reaches Berea, a little town quite off the track of traffic and in a different division of Macedonia. Not from cowardice did he do this, for arriving at Berea he immediately searches out the synagogue and begins his labours afresh. If he imagined he had escaped from the intense antagonism of the Thessalonian Jews, he forgot what he was ever reminding others of—his own fanatical exertions before his conversion. No sooner did they hear of the success that was following the apostle's labours than along these fifty miles of hilly highway came feet "swift to shed blood." Again the same successful tactics are pursued, again the apostle has to flee. What a life this man spends! Preaching by day, persecuted always, fleeing by night, he knows no rest. Before Paul knew Jesus he gave himself no rest: since then no rest is given him.

Paul flees, and the words descriptive of

his flight are very pathetic. "And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul, to go as it were to the sea; but Silas and Timothy abode there still"; and it is added, "but those conducting Paul brought him unto Athens." Notice: "conducting Paul," leading him along, those brethren were "to go as far as the sea" (so runs the best reading). You can see it all, can't you? The feeble Jewish artisan, with the wounds inflicted at Philippi scarce skinned over, with his feet sore and his heart heavy, whilst his sight is so affected that the very signing of his name is a feat, and his writing so large that it almost stares a blind man out of countenance (Gal. vi. 11). He is brought by the brethren of Berea to Dium, only sixteen miles away, with such difficulty that they cannot find it in their hearts to wave him an adieu from the quay, but, compelled by pity, accompany him on board, and never leave him until they see him safely landed at Athens, a six days' sail if the wind be favourable.

So it happens that the shepherd feeding his flock on the mountain side above the

lovely vale of Tempe sees a white-winged craft disappear into the azure depths of the sunlit sea, and heaves a sigh of relief, for 'tis the vessel bearing away the loved but somewhat reckless servant of the Lord from the intemperate violence of the mob.

As the vessel is wafted on, the majestic snow-crowned mass of Olympus, which but for the apostle's coming they had believed was the very dwelling-place of the gods, comes into view, and on the left they pass the field of Marathon, where the proud hosts of Persia were hopelessly broken, and Greece, according to Daniel's prophecy, became the third great world power. On, on, the white wings bear them, and rounding the lofty Cape of Sunium they espy the white shrine of Athene glittering on its summit. The helm shifted, the ship has Salamis under her prow—Salamis, the Trafalgar of its day. And now rounding the last white promontory the voyagers see before them a landlocked bay surrounded by busy wharves, backed by a level plain broken about three miles off by a rock, like that of Stirling, crowned with buildings,

among which something that flashed and glittered catches their eyes. It is the Acropolis, and the glittering object is the broad-headed spear and polished helmet of the idol, *Athene Promachus*, the guardian goddess of the Athens that crouched beneath.

The wharves are those of Piræus, which is united with Athens by two lofty walls enclosing a considerable tract of ground covered with small houses which line the broad road that leads to Athens.

This broad strip of inhabited territory leads the eye to four eminences outlined against the wooded background of Mount Lycabettus. The hill to the apostle's right is that of the Muses or the *Museum*; next to it is the hill crowned with temples and Athene's great image—the *Acropolis*; beyond this but lower is the *Aveopagus* or Mar's Hill, whilst quite to the left is the *Pnyx*. And in the hollows between these four heights lies Athens, "the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence." Get this well before your mind's eye, and it will help you to understand the apostle's movements in this city. We do not need to draw upon

our imagination, which would be quite out of place in such a connection, for another traveller visits Athens about this time, and having no message for the souls of men, he had plenty of attention to give to the environment. As he marched along between these walls, he tells us, he saw many idols, and amongst them altars dedicated to "God Unknown."

That this was not an infrequent inscription amongst idolaters we learn from what a seer did at Rome. A plague had broken out. Prayers and sacrifices had failed; what was to be done? The seer ordered a flock of black and white sheep to be driven forth from the Capitol, and wherever one lay down, there they were to erect an altar and sacrifice to the unknown god who had been offended by their neglect of him. So doubtless one of the brethren, as they conducted the apostle to the Piræic gate, pointed out such an altar with this inscription, AGNOSTŌTHEŌ, that is, "to an unknown god."

And now bidding his faithful guides farewell, and giving them many messages to the dear friends at Thessalonica, he enters

Athens. Around him, above him, before him on this side and that, bearing the names of streets, pointing the way where roads met, were idols. Petronius with a curl of his lip once said that in Athens it was easier to find a god than a man! So there were idols large and idols small; idols singly and idols in groups; idols of wood, metal, earthenware, ivory, marble, plain and coloured; idols by famous sculptors and the reverse; idols contemplative, smiling, frowning, fighting, dancing, and threatening; idols on pedestals, in shrines, starting from caves, standing as sentinels in long lines; idols in fact innumerable, for Pausanias said that there were more gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together. Not only were there idols, but there were statues. Had Paul known it, he could have looked upon the beautiful Berenice in stone ere he looked upon her in the flesh. There stood Augustus, here Hyrcanus, the Jewish high priest. Not only were there idols and statues, but there were philosophers who held them in derision somewhat secretly, for Socrates had lost his life through having

mocked at them. So here, under Mar's Hill, Paul passed the *Stoa Pæcile*, or painted cloister, where Zeno founded his school of philosophy, hence called "Stoic," whilst not far off, on the other side of the hill, was the garden where Epicurus taught, and which he left in trust for the use of his disciples, so named "Epicurean." Thus whilst the flesh was everywhere with its religion, pride and pleasure lived in quarrelsome propinquity.

What effect had all these philosophers on religion? None save to add to the number of idols, for the Athenians, impressed by their doctrine of the abstract, erected images to pity, energy, modesty, and fame.

How plain to us then are Paul's feelings as he wandered through the streets of Athens waiting the advent of Sylvanus and Timothy, for whom he had so urgently sent. "His spirit painfully excited (hence our word "paroxysm"), seeing the city being full of idols." Not only so, but when he sought to proclaim "Jesus and the resurrection" to the curious Athenians, they were greatly excited as they thought, "Here are two new

gods!" for they would of a surety take Jesus to be a god, and the resurrection to be a goddess. From this excitement it came about that seizing him by the arm they led him up the hill by the same steps that we can climb to-day. Up from the Market-place scrambled a host of curious folk, accompanied by numbers of sneering philosophers from the Stoa and the Garden. Now the top of the hill called Mars (for tradition had it that here Mars was judged for the murder of Neptune's son) was cut out into rows of seats in semi-circular fashion. At one end of the semi-circle, or let us call it at the tip of one horn of the half-moon, stood a stone upon which the accuser stood called "The Stone of Insolence," whilst at the tip of the other horn stood another on which the accused stood called "The Stone of Impudence." On this stone, then, stands Paul the apostle under the shadow of the Acropolis crowned by the magnificent Parthenon or Virgin's House, in the innermost apartment of which was the olive wood image of Athene, said (like the ill-shapen one of Diana at Ephesus) to have

fallen down out of heaven. He stands just where Socrates stood four centuries before to be condemned for manifesting the uselessness of the gods. What will Paul say? What will be done to Paul?

(1) Paul, as we would expect the man who wrote Romans xii. 14-18 to be, is courteous. He began, "Men, Athenians!" Whatever else they differed in, they had this in common—they were men. And it is very helpful to all who would be preachers of the Word to remember that those whom they address, and whose hearts they would win for Christ, are men. Try and remember how thou didst feel when another once addressed thee. He was not able to compel either thy attention or thy acquiescence by taking it for granted that as he was speaker and thou wast hearer, therefore to thee what he said was as pearls of wisdom.

The law gives to every dog his first bite, so we must give to each hearer his first yawn, but it is our fault if he yawn again, for that yawn has told its tale to the observant speaker. Perhaps, warned by the example of Eutychus, we must look to the

ventilation of the hall or the length of our sermon. Or instructed by that open mouth we must open ours more widely; no, not to shout, but to pour forth a powerful stream of instructive matter. Perhaps we have been lingering in the backwaters of pleasant platitudes, now it is time to let the audience hear the brawl of the broken brook as it dashes headlong amongst the rocks. As the old man said to the minister, who had suggested that he might take snuff to deliver him from drowsiness, "Hech, sirs, pit the snuff in yir sermon!" we must remember, as the apostle does, that we are addressing men and not idyllic listeners by showing that we have been observing them; for not only did he call them men but followed it up by "Athenians," whose life he had been observing. (2) Paul was the bearer of news. The New Testament word for "gospel" originally meant a present given in return for good news, then the sacrifice offered on the receipt of good news, and then the good news itself. So he came with news that was good. Now if I can rivet an audience by telling them of the latest discoveries of

science, shame on me if I let their attention wander when I tell them of the "good news." Ay, shame on you, sir, as well. Why is it? I believe this paragraph will reveal it.

Deeply interested in men Paul had been closely studying the Athenians, and as a consequence he had found out that with all their boasted knowledge there was something they did not know. Passing along he had read a confession of their ignorance in the altar-inscription, "To an unknown god." So watch that accusing finger pointing to the far Piræic road, where on one shrine at least was inscribed the limitation of their knowledge. Here he encounters the Epicureans and Stoics. They were philosophers. The business of a philosopher is to learn what or who is behind this we call "the universe," and learning it to instruct me, the ignorant one, the ignoramus—or to use the Athenian altar-word, the agnostic; for he to whom God is *agnostic* must himself be an agnostic, for in this matter it is only crass idiots that rush in and say, "There is, or there exists no God." The question

quashes him at once, "How do you know?" For to make a universal denial, is to claim universal knowledge.

Now there are two worlds in the universe, the world of matter and that of spirit, or as some would rather call it, "of morals"—which, after all, is just a more emphatic way of saying, "of spirit," for who would ascribe morality to a stock or stone; in other words, to matter? I may, like some of those philosophers, affirm that matter only exists; but the instant I use the little word "ought," I am affirming that of which matter knows nothing. Thus, whatever philosophy a philosopher professed concerning the universe to the three questions concerning it: whence? what? whither? he must answer according to either his world-of-sense theory or his world-of-morals theory.

Take for instance these Epicureans whom Paul is facing on Mars Hill. Their founder's world-of-sense theory was that the world is made up of atoms existing from eternity.

See here how Paul's mention of the altar to "God Unknown" crushes the Epicurean theory, that if the world-of-sense is atomic,

the world-of-morals must be chaotic. From which chaos the sensuous alone emerges—“Death is nothing to us; for what is dissolved is insensible, and what is insensible is nothing to us,” was their favoured dictum—and what is sensuous is pleasure. Alas! it is very easy in a garden contemplatively to babble about atoms, and that the soul being formed of them (“let these be round and of a somewhat finer texture”) had no consciousness after death, but was resolved into its atoms again; to declare by a flight of imagination, that since we are nothing more save a collocation of atoms which the breath of the charnel house disperses, so the *summum bonum*, the highest good, must be the greatest pleasure that may be enjoyed during the brief space of time that elapses betwixt the two nonentities.

But as Aulus Gellius tells us that the ancient Romans, alarmed by an earthquake, prayed not to any of the gods individually, but to “god in general, as to the unknown,” so it is when some poor soul coming amid the stress of life to meet death, with all its hopes and stays shaken to their foundations,

then it is, as perchance at the grave of some sweet child, that love cries out for immortality. Then is tumbled into a heap to be swept away, all the cobweb logic spun in pleasant hours spent in the garden of pleasure; then the despairing soul, clad in its Nyssus' robe of doubt, erects an altar to "God Unknown" beyond the gate of learning and of logic. Can atoms love atoms? Or does it comfort one writhing in the agony of parting with what has been his star and sun, to whisper in his ear, "Man, why grieve thus over what was but a cluster of atoms. Up! up! let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

Zeno of the Stoa made a further advance, for he said: Let power be granted and call it God, for he taught saying, "that whatever is real is material. Matter and force are the two ultimate principles. Matter in itself is motionless and unformed, though capable of receiving all motions and all forms. Force is the active, moving, and moulding principle. It is inseparably joined with matter. The working force in the universe is God." Hence, God is the world, and the

world is God. So the human soul is but an emanation from God, and is destined to be finally re-absorbed in Him. Thus the poet quoted by Paul was a Stoic, for Cleanthes wrote in his hymn to Jupiter this line :

“For we thine offspring are.”

It is true that a fellow-countryman of Paul (Aratus, the Cilician) uses the same expression in the opening of his poem :

“Doth care perplex? Is lowering danger nigh?
We are his offspring, and to Jove we fly.”

This being Zeno's doctrine as to the world-of-sense, what does he say of the world-of-morals? This, surely; that as all things are God, so all things must be good. That there is neither pleasure nor pain, for to the wise man all things are alike, for to Reason they are alike good. For as God is but the Reason of the world, hence not its creator but only its organiser, pleasure could be no good and pain no evil.

The outcome of which is, that the wise man is the man who bears all things with equanimity, knowing that he is superior to all the events of life, seeing that, having the power of putting an end to his life, he pos-

esses the power of returning to God at any time. Thus Zeno, Cleanthes, Cato, Seneca, and Brutus, were all Stoics and all suicides.

These, with all the others—be they Peripatetics, Platonists, Sophists, or what not—discredited the gods, for they disbelieved that they could make the world; but all their searching into the question “How did this world come into being?” brought them no nearer Him of whom Paul said: “Who made the world and all the things that are in it, He of heaven and earth the Lord being.”

Four centuries before, Socrates stood where Paul stands, and begins in the same fashion, “Ye men of Athens,” and in his eloquent defence says, “Let us take the accusation. It runs to this effect: ‘Socrates hath violated the laws by corrupting the youth, and by acknowledging not the gods whom the city acknowledge, but other strange deities.’” After expatiating on the principles upon which he had trained the youth, he proceeds: “If you were to say to me, ‘Socrates, we acquit you, but on this condition only, that you abandon your

former courses; but if you are again detected in them you die.' Ye men of Athens! I am obliged to you, and thank you; but I must obey God rather than you. . . . This which hath befallen me will, I doubt not, turn out a blessing, and it cannot be that their opinion is right who esteem death to be an evil. . . . The dead are more happy than the living, both in other respects, and thenceforth they die no more for ever, if at least we may believe what is said of them." Then, after beseeching his judges seated there on Mars' Hill to "corrupt" his own sons as he had corrupted theirs—that is, by instilling into them these principles—he adds: "And now the hour is come for us to depart; I go to death, and you to life, but which of the twain is the better choice is known only to God."

Condemned by a great majority, this noblest of heathens descends to prison and death. All are agreed that never lived a wiser pagan; but his words emphasise sharply the world's need for a Revelation, and the marvellous beauty of Paul's words, spoken from the same spot, "to seek the

Lord, if perhaps they might feel* after Him and might find Him, though indeed not far from each one of us He is." Socrates' speech is a marvellous *tour de force*; Paul's is a revelation.

(8) The climax. Never preach a sermon without a climax; never trouble an audience with anything that lacks a climacteric. Paul has been busy constructing his world-of-sense doctrine, now he comes to his world-of-morals. If God is Creator, then He is Lord of all, and the ignorance of man concerning this is the root of all evil.

Therefore God now charges all men everywhere to repent: *metanoein*—*meta*, "after," and *noeo*, "to think as the result of perceiving or observing"—hence there is implied in the combination the two elements of time and change; that is to say, there is a change of mind followed by a change of conduct, but the former must precede the latter, for in the former lies latent that energy which becomes

*The word used in Luke xxiv. 39; and of the *feeling of the blind and groping in the dark*; as our own poet says:

"I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all."

kinetic or work-producing when brought to bear upon conduct or manner of life. This was then, and still is, a new philosophy. To think His thoughts of ourselves after Him is necessary before we can become imitators of God. I said "is new," for the every-day philosophy of life is that of Naaman's: "I thought!" Not much difference, you say. No, only the new is the change of the emphasis from "I" to "thought," which makes as great a difference in our spiritual science as did Galileo's discovery that our astronomical system is not geocentric [earth-centred] but heliocentric [sun-centred] in the science of astronomy; we cease to be "self-centred," we start being "God-centred." Ah! this is the greatest objection of thousands to the Gospel: it is of faith unto faith, not of reason upon reason. Still, "God is charging every man everywhere to repent, BECAUSE He set a day in which He is about to judge the world in righteousness by a Man whom He appointed: this proof having given to all—having raised Him from among the dead." Dr. Arnold said that there is no historical fact so strongly attested as the

resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Thus Paul reaches his climax, for he has reached Jesus. All has been preparatory for His appearance on the stage of the address. Each fact, observation, quotation, has been marshalled so that the mind's eye is led to the solitary figure, *Jesus!* JESUS ONLY!!

Hark! what sounds are these that break the judicial calm of the place? "Ha! ha! ho! ho! hi! hi!" For it is written: "And when they heard of the resurrection from among the dead some mocked! . . . mocked!"

One reads what an Indian missionary has written: "This has been one of the worst nights I ever endured. Mockery! mockery! cruel mockery! almost unbearable! I talked for a while, and was heard by some, on the blessings to be enjoyed by faith in Christ, when a man came with a hell-hardened countenance, and that peculiar constant laugh which I can hardly bear. The burden of his cry was 'Juggernaut is the foundation! Juggernaut is completely God! Victory to Juggernaut!' He clapped his hands, he shouted, he laughed, and induced the rest, or a great part of them, to do the same. On

the ground of reason I fear no one, and rage I commonly bear very well ; but these everlasting buffoons are nearly too much for me. It is my own great care that, amidst a reviling, laughing crowd, I do not seem abashed."

Yes, mocking laughter will do what nothing else will do—it will kill where reason cannot convince, and obliterate what persecution cannot destroy. Lost is many a man's soul because, alas! the devil knew better than to reason with him or persecute him ; because he laughed at Christ until the man laughed with him.

So as Paul stepped down from the "Stone of Impudence" he was followed by mocking laughter, and with bland assurances, "We will hear thee again concerning this." They laughed at him never again ; they heard him concerning this never more. Paul stayed in Athens over a month, but I never read of him addressing these cultured Athenians again. Persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, stoned, tortured, harried, pursued, and maligned—Paul is accustomed to all these things, and where he endures most there he

returns oftenest. But to the one solitary place where he was laughed at, he never returns, he never sends a message, he never writes a letter. In all the apostle's writings it is as if it had never been.

Beware lest thou come into the same condemnation. Thou art learned. Thou art eloquent. To thee life has given many gifts, and to thee many honours have come. Thou hast never been openly immoral; lust, intemperance, and many more such, have had no part in thy well-ordered life. Such a woman as Mary the Magdalen, or Damaris the Athenian, is an offence to thy artistic soul. Nay, even Dionysius the Areopagite would have been no more than a nodding acquaintance of thine, for thou art liberal, broad minded, disinclined to judge thy fellows harshly. Bigotry, Puritanism, narrowness of soul, that must always be dividing the world into twain, saved and unsaved, are as distasteful to thee as a wrong note or a harsh colour is discordant.

Thou wouldest not even permit thyself Huxley's liberty in ostentatiously tearing up a tract handed him. Thou mightest laugh

or say "thank you!" To a Gospel invitation thou wouldest answer, "Another time I'll hear thee!" And when one with beating, breaking heart would speak to thee of JESUS, of His Cross, of His Resurrection, and of His Coming Again, thy politeness freezes the words on his lips; but if he speaks to thee of Repentance! "Ha! ha! repentance forsooth!"

Friend, let Athens speak to thee.

Had Paul ever climbed the Acropolis and stood at the feet of Athene, then through the clear atmosphere of Greece he would have seen yonder to the south-west a peak two thousand feet high, casting its shadow across a narrow neck of land, lapped on either hand by the shining sea. That peak is the Acro-Corinthus upon which stood the temple of Venus, and at whose base nestled the town of Corinth, whilst the narrow neck was the Isthmus or *bridge of the seas*, the scene of the Isthmian games, to the manner of conducting which Paul refers in his letter to the Corinthians.

Looking at your map you will see that Greece ends in a piece of land shaped some-

what like a mulberry leaf (hence its name Morea), and joined to the mainland by a fine stalk—the Isthmus. From the place where this stalk joins the leaf rose a huge rock, like Dumbarton Rock, but far loftier. In the morning it cast its shadow over the town of Corinth, and in the afternoon over the Isthmus. Now, on the side of the Isthmus looking towards Jerusalem was a busy seaport, the town of Cenchrea (Rom. 16. 1); whilst on the side looking Rome-wards was the port of Lechæum. This latter, but a mile and a half distant, was united to Corinth by double lines of fortifications, similar to those that united the Piræus to Athens; whilst on the other hand Cenchrea was distant eight and a half miles. Not only so, but crossing this Isthmus saved a voyage of five hundred miles. A stormy five hundred! for rounding Cape Malea, the southmost extremity of the mulberry leaf, was to the ancients what rounding the Cape of Good Hope was to our sailors in Nelson's days. So you can imagine that crossing the Isthmus was a matter of importance. Hence they made a ship-railway, by which ships were lifted out of

the water at Cenchrea, run on rollers across the land, and launched anew at Lechæum. In fact, to use a Canadian term, it was a huge "portage." Nero tried to be the Lesseps of his day, and attempted to dig a canal across.

You will thus be prepared to learn that Corinth, with its two ports, was the ship-building centre of the East. There was built the good ship "Argo," which sailed unknown seas under Jason, its captain—whose sailors were called after their ship, the Argonauts—to find the Golden Fleece.

The first great warships were also built at Corinth. Therefore what with the building of ships, the transporting of ships, the sailing of ships, the loading and unloading of ships, Corinth, or as it was called, "The City of the Two Seas," was a busy place. Glasgow, London, Paris, Vienna, all rolled into one, and the essence extracted, that essence would make Corinth. Wheretradeabounded there did luxury abound, and where luxury abounded there did vice much more abound. The very priests were panders, and the gorgeous temples haunts of horrid cruelties

and nameless vices. From what we are told I believe that Corinth, where met East and West, was worse than Sodom and Gomorrah twenty times over. And thither in due season Paul came.

Whatever way he took he arrived in this city, where he was going to spend the next two years of his busy life. He entered it alone and unknown. Here he met Syrians with their gay garments, Romans with their martial step, and Greeks with their affected gait, whilst Jews abounded on every hand. They were in specially great numbers, for Claudius had just banished them from Rome. Why? The decree incidentally mentioned by Luke is referred to by the Roman historian, Suetonius, who writes: "The Jews, who were in a constant tumult, Chrestus being their leader, he banished from Rome." Now most scholars understand by "Chrestus" Christ. *Chrestus* means "good," whilst *Christus* means "anointed." The former term would be easily understood by the Romans, and the latter by the Jews. Hence, doubtless, Suetonius' slight error, for to him and his

informants there would appear to be some sense in having a leader called Chrestus, but none in calling him Christus. Here then is a testimony to the early planting of a church in Rome. Doubtless the Jews pursued their usual course in arraigning the believers before the magistrates. They, like their compeers elsewhere, would not understand the complaints. Perhaps some citizen appealed to the Emperor.

At any rate Claudius cut the Gordian knot by banishing all the Jews from his capital, and so got rid of their riotous mobs, goaded into madness because they could not find a Pilate in Rome.

Undaunted, the lonely man found his way to the synagogue. There the various guilds sat by themselves, whilst the women peeped behind the lattice-work. A weaver of the coarse black hair of the Cilician goats, he took his place amongst the workers in that commodity, and soon found himself going home with Aquila and Priscilla; and in the work-room in their dwelling, packed away in some narrow alley, he approved himself a good workman worthy of his hire. There

he earned his livelihood by long hours of monotonous toil. I daresay it was with difficulty that the apostle kept the wolf from the door, for the shadow of hard times lay heavy on the land just then.

Yet the stream of merchandise flowed on—carpets from Babylon, papyrus from Egypt, gums and fragrant balsams from Arabia, dyes from Asia, ivory from Africa, wool from Lycaonia, and slaves from Libya. And as Paul visited the wharves in search of material for his labour, doubtless he heard the well-known accents of his native place, and entered into conversation with some sailor or trader from Tarsus. We know not whether the cool breeze off the beautiful blue waters of the gulf, or the busy scene of healthful toil refreshed the jaded apostle, but we do know that the servants of shameless vice holding their heads high, for there to be vicious was to be religious, must have met him at every crossing, and appalled by hideous crime and dazzled by ostentatious luxury, he must have crept back to his room in that alley with his chaste soul quivering.

There was one thing that kept him

patiently enduring, and that was that blessed thing called work. How often has hard labour prevented the mind from breaking down under an intolerable strain

Wise were these Jews of old, whose rabbis taught that he who did not teach his son a trade made him a thief. Hillel, Paul's teacher, was a woodcutter; his great rival in learning, Shammai, was a carpenter; whilst of one of the greatest of the rabbis it is recorded that he discoursed to his students from the top of a cask of his own making, which each day he carried to the class-room. True in the ministry of the Word, "the labourer is worthy of his hire," a fact we too oft overlook. But happy is that labourer who can support himself, and lay himself under no obligation to unwilling professors of Christianity.

Thus was Paul able to write to these Corinthians in a different strain from that in which he wrote to these fine old soldiers at Philippi: "And when I was present with you, and WANTED, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia

supplied; and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself."

So one day when the apostle was wondering what was going to happen to him, there came two strangers asking in the alley for Paul of Tarsus. Two shadows darkened the threshold of the door, and looking up he saw Silas and Timothy. What joy! what gladness! what fresh energy was imparted to the drooping Paul! Maybe that night they sat up until the morning came, and the shadows fled away and a new day dawned on Corinth, talking about their experiences in Asia and in Europe, and in showing the various gifts they brought, and repeating again and again all the dear messages from the saints of God in distant Macedonia.

It put new heart in the apostle. He had been arguing in the synagogue and persuading men to accept Jesus as the Messiah, but somehow it had all fallen flat. Like the old hero he was, Paul missed the grand stimulus of stones and curses, of rods and stocks. So he wrought at tents for shepherds and poor pilgrims from day to day, and

helped Aquila and Priscilla to make them. What an opportunity for Aquila and Priscilla!

What long talks about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Scriptures! No wonder these two in after days could instruct the eloquent Apollos. Prithee, brother, are you making the most of your opportunities? Paul might be low-spirited, but he was not mean-spirited. Freely he had received, so freely he passed on the knowledge to his fellow-labourers at the loom and the board. So click, clack! might go the loom as the coarse black hair became cloth; snip, snap! might go the scissors as Priscilla's deft fingers shaped gores and flaps; stitch, stitch! flew the shining needles as all three sat on the board running up the seams; but all the while came answer to question as these two learned the sacred truths from the lips of the apostle to the Gentiles.

But the advent of Sylvanus and Timothy altered all this. Immediately we read, "Paul was pressed in the Word" (not "spirit," as in A.V.). Another wonderful word this:

Luke xii. 50, "How am I *straitened* until it be accomplished?"

2 Corinthians v. 14, "For the love of Christ *constraineth* me."

Philippians i. 23, "For I *am in a strait betwixt* two."

The picture in the word is of a man walking along a path between two walls by which he is held together, so that he can turn neither to right nor left, nor even turn back. If a lion was in the way he could not help himself, he must go on.

Like the fisher who was playing a fine fish in one of the American rivers. He came to a place where the path along the stream rose somewhat with a steep slope on one side, and the bank falling precipitously into the rushing torrent on the other. Here at a sudden turn he came upon a bear. As he was walking east Bruin was walking west, and the path was narrow. To neither side could he turn. To retreat he knew was fatal. So fixing his gaze on the bear he marched steadily towards him. Bruin stopped and contemplated the oncomer, who advanced without hesitation. Then suddenly turning *he* disappeared, and was no more seen.

So Paul is on a path that presently will

bring him face to face with the maddest and most malignant passions of his countrymen. The passage half suggests that Paul had been in a familiar Scots phrase, "ca'ing canny." But Sylvanus and Timothy are now with him. He scents the fray from afar, and the very next words tell us how he set a match to the magazine. He ceased to reason and persuade, he began to "testify that Jesus is the Messiah." And then came the curses, and blasphemies, and his expulsion from the synagogue. Presently we shall see how he was allowed to set up a meeting-place adjoining the very synagogue itself. But see, the moment of separation was the moment of blessing. Crispus, one of the rulers (there were generally two; Sosthenes was the other, but he had to do the devil's work and undergo the humiliation that is the devil's reward for faithful service, before he shared the joy of Crispus), was converted with all his house, and it is added, "many of the Corinthians hearing, believed and were baptized." How magnificent! God's order, "hearing," then "believing," then "being baptized." Why, there is much

more said about being baptized than about "breaking bread." And for this reason: it is much more agreeable to take the Lord's Supper amidst the quietude of a gathering of fellow-saints, who all see the same as to its importance; it is much more difficult for flesh and blood, to be immersed in a tank of cold water, or in a river, or in the sea before an assemblage of people, many of whom look upon it as a show, or view with disapprobation your (what they call) "making a fool of yourself." It was no light matter for these æsthetic Corinthians to undergo publicly this ordinance. The one thing that might have ameliorated the harshness of the ordinance was that the apostle himself should baptize them. To the Greek mind this would gild the act of obedience. Yet this is not granted them. Paul, as in the matter of money, sees through them and refuses to lead them away from the fact that baptism is a public profession of a man's or a woman's faith in a rejected Saviour, and therefore that it is not pleasant to the natural man. I know this, for this lesson the Lord made me learn myself. That my

beloved teacher, John M'Vicker, was going to baptize me, smoothed for me the pathway of obedience. Suddenly he developed lumbago, and I was baptized by one whose doing it would probably have prevented my submitting to the ordinance had I known in time!

And yet the blessing came. It was in itself an ordeal, and from the changed circumstances it became a great ordeal. Yet the Lord graciously led my mind away to Himself, until I came to feel that for Him I could go through fire and water. It at once had its simplicity as an act of obedience restored to it; man had no share in my obedience. I was the Lord's disciple.

How is it that the storm of Jewish passion did not break upon the devoted apostle for eighteen months? True the prospect of it, and the state of the town, must still have weighed greatly upon his mind, for we read that in a vision the Lord said to him, "Fear not, but speak and be not silent; because I am with thee, and no one shall set on thee to ill-treat thee; because there is to Me much people in this city."

The answer is plainly before us in Luke's description, and from what we know from contemporary records: Because the Jews, being under the ban of the Emperor, were out of favour with the Corinthian mob, and the governor was an "Anti-Semite."

The political history of Corinth is intricate. Under Augustus it was under the Senate, hence ruled by a proconsul. Under Tiberius it was under the Emperor, and ruled by a proprætor. In the fourth year of Claudius matters were reversed, and until Nero it had a proconsul; whilst under Vespasian it had a proprætor again. All this we know by coins and contemporary records. Now will Luke make a mistake? Very easy it would be for him to do so. In fact wholly probable if, as some of the critics say, he lived a century or two later. No; Luke uses the exact term for the governor that then existed and ruled Corinth. He was a proconsul.

Take a more striking instance. You will remember the case of Sergius Paulus, the governor of Cyprus. Luke calls him a proconsul. The historian of those times,

D. Cassius, calls him a *proprætor*. Now, nobody thought that both might be right. Of course the learned thought Luke must be wrong. We now know that both are right. Augustus exchanged Cyprus for another province that had become unruly and required troops—the Emperor was the head of the army, and *proprætor* practically meant *general*. Thus whilst D. Cassius was right in saying that Cyprus was an Imperial province with a *proprætor* as governor, Luke was minutely correct, for by the time Paul (who was until then called Saul) had reached the island the exchange had been made, and the province becoming Senatorial the noble Sergius Paulus had been sent as proconsul to rule over it.

I am equally persuaded that every difficulty in the Bible not arising from a wrong translation, or our ignorance of Hebrew, is equally simple of elucidation if we had the facts before us, and not the products of some wise man's imagination—it is wonderful what a plentiful crop there is of these at present cumbering the ground. Here lies the great importance of the archæological investiga-

tions that are, praise God! being carried on at this present time in Bible lands. Just as the gradual advance of science into the world of the unknown is cutting away with ruthless hand all the ground upon which Hæckel and other antagonists of the Lord Jesus Christ have built with such perverse ingenuity their fortress of infidelity. In fact materialists, *et hoc genus omne*, are to-day hopelessly out-classed. They are hopelessly behind the times.

It is the simple believer that is so far ahead that scientists are just beginning to catch far off glimpses of what to him are familiar truths.

Don't then let any blatant opposer of the Gospel bear you down, or make you believe that your faith must be held apologetically. Why, about two years ago a man scoffed at me for believing such out-of-date doctrines. I asked him to tell me what better he had to offer me. He told me. I pointed out that his statements contained exploded theories. He asked me had I read such and such books, and was mightily offended because I told him I had no time to study what was

hopelessly out of date. Not long ago I met him again. He was in sore trouble. But, thank God! he did not offer me new lamps for old, like the wily merchant in the Arabian tale. I trust he is now walking in the light of Him who nineteen hundred years ago said: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Oh, that the world were walking in His wake to-day!

So there was a great day in Corinth. A new proconsul was coming. And, as it happens, we know a great deal about this new proconsul.

Gallio was one of three brothers, for Mark Seneca had three sons. Mark A. Novatus, who is our Gallio, because he had been adopted by Luke J. Gallio; Luke A. Seneca, the brilliant philosopher; and Mark Seneca, the Seneca of history and famous tutor of Nero, whose reward for his training was to order his murder later on. In fact, all the three brilliant brothers lost their lives under the reign of that murderous maniac, who began life by sticking pins through flies to

laugh at their struggles, and ended it by crying and howling with fear, because Nemesis had come and die he must, yet liked not the prick of a dagger.

Some think that Seneca knew the apostle, because some of his epistles breathe the same lofty spirit as Paul's. He writes of his brother, Gallio, "whom every one loved too little, even he who loved him to the utmost." He speaks of him playfully as "my lord Gallio," because of his distinguished bearing; while Statius, a poet, calls him "that sweet Gallio."

We learn that Gallio was of a consumptive tendency, and after his proconsulship in Corinth had to take a journey to Egypt for his health. By this and other facts our best chronologist fixes his arrival at Corinth as being on the fourth of June, A.D. 53. There his compliant disposition and reputation for being attentive to all have become already known. Here is the Jews' opportunity. The preceding proconsul seems to have had Pilate's keen intuition and insight into Jewish minds and methods without Pilate's unfortunate habits of cruelty that placed

him at their mercy. Besides gloomy Tiberius, whom upstart Pilate feared, was dead, and Claudius, who banished the Jews from Rome, was not likely to listen to their complaints against an official of the Senate. That this was no light matter we know, because Cicero—the great Cicero himself—bowed before the influence of the Jews of Rome.

But Gallio, sweet Gallio, of whom the stern philosopher brother writes, “no mortal man is so sweet to any single person as he is to all mankind,” this flower of Pagan chivalry, this marvel of Pagan courtesy, this triumph of Pagan culture, a Roman with all a Roman’s stateliness and sense of justice, yet a Greek with all a Greek’s flexibility and broadmindedness, here at last is a suitable subject for the exercise of all the skilful flattery and wily management that are the gifts alone of the sons of Jacob. “Sure,” may we not hear them saying in the synagogal council, “’twill be most easy to turn and twist ‘my lord Gallio’ round our little finger.”

Thus one day the alley that had re-echoed

the songs of redemption now reverberated with cries of revenge and shouts of destruction. Wild-eyed men invaded the quiet work-room, and the apostate was seized by a dozen hands. Well need the apostle recall the quiet night when, in the starlit garret, a holy form stands in vision by his poor pallet, and that voice he had heard outside Damascus saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest," now says, "Fear not . . . I am with thee . . . no one shall set on thee to ill-treat thee . . ."; and as in all great crises where our minds are left unclouded, memory recalls the past with undimmed clearness, so, thus armed against all foes, Paul rises to go with these men, in whose menacing eyes murder is writ full plain, with a quiet peace ruling within his breast.

In a Roman colony, at the very judgment seat of Roman Majesty, as in Jerusalem* so in Corinth they dare not murder the apostate save judicially. So hear them howling through the streets, gathering momentum and fury, dragging Paul to the

*Stephen was murdered because the governor was absent, and owing to the sudden news of the emperor's decease Rome was off her guard.

proconsular residence, outside which is the Pavement (John xix. 13, R.V.) on which is set the curule chair, a "bema" or foot above the common level.

There set round are the insignia of Roman power; there stand the lictors with their axes bound round with rods; there march to and fro the Roman guard, their equipment jangling as they move or stand still ready to salute the proconsul. Beyond the Pavement, behind the curule chair, hangs a heavy curtain of crimson or purple.

Suddenly a noise of shouting is heard, the soldiers stiffen into sudden attention, the lictors' grasp tightens on their fasces, when round the corner comes an Eastern mob, tearing, rushing, shouting, shaking their fiercely clenched fists at some unseen object that forms the nucleus of the crowd. Accompanying them is a slowly growing mob of another kind, clad in different garments, who seem to be viewing the first mob with increasing distaste, for the Greeks loved not the people their Emperor had banned.

Thus was invaded Gallio's Pavement. A slight movement of the heavy drapery, a

sound of presenting arms, and an elegant form appears clad in the white toga of the Roman Senator, bordered with the narrow band of the Patrician purple. A slight sign, and the Jews find their prisoner seized from them, so that they can no longer spit in his face or cast mud on his torn and ragged garments. They in return force Sosthenes to the front to make accusation against the prisoner. And the accusation was well constructed. Judaism was a *religio licita*. Christianity was not. Therefore for Paul to seduce souls from Judaism and lead them to Christ was correctly enough an offence against the Roman laws. It was an act of *Majestas* or disloyalty to the Emperor: therefore punishable by death. Hence the strategic strength of the Jews' position: "This [fellow is not in the original. It is not required: a pointing of many fingers, a sudden upheaval of many fists into the air, a glaring of many eyes bloodshot with passion, a contemptuous spitting on the ground] this . . . persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law"—Roman, not Mosaic. It is a critical moment. I daresay Paul

makes that vow in Cenchræa (common among Jews in token of a great and marvellous deliverance) in remembrance thereof. Bracing himself and drawing his breath he begins his defence. His mouth is about to open with the beginning of some courteous salutation, when "Silence!" cry the ushers, and the elegant accents of Gallio are heard. They fall in chilling, icy tones on these thrice heated hearts: "If, indeed, it were some illegality or wicked criminality, O Jews, according to reason I should have borne with you. But if a question about a word and names, and a law, which is among you, ye will see to it yourselves. For a judge I of these things do not wish to be." What cutting irony! What a perfect intuition of their methods! See how he penetrates, as by a flash of lightning, their *suggestio falsi*! They would have him think that their zeal was all for the law of Rome. He brushes this aside, and goes to the heart of the matter by putting it all down to bigoted zeal for "a law which is among you."

Thus the calm, cultured voice of Gallio piercing the air, still agitated by the strife of

angry passion, uttered words that fell like an icy douche upon the blazing fire of Jewish animosity. Would they dare to dispute his judgment? "Ho! lictors, clear the court." He rises from the curule chair, and, lifting the curtain's heavy folds, idly saunters back through the cool atrium, where the tinkling fountain cools the air. A great noise from the Pavement excites his curiosity. From some coign of vantage he views the scene. Driven off the Pavement by the lictors, the Jews had fallen foul of the Corinthian mob. The Corinthians had seized their leader, Sosthenes, and, to the music of the wild wailing of his compatriots, were beating the solemn patriarch with rods borrowed from the laughing lictors.

For once the biter is bit; and the ruler of the synagogue is beaten instead of the apostate Paul of Tarsus.

An injustice doubtless, but apparently there had been something offensive in the attitude of Sosthenes, a hint of that brow-beating spirit before which Pontius Pilate quailed, and even Cicero grew pale; so with a careless laugh Gallio once more turns

away, "and nothing about these things mattered to Gallio."

He turns away: perchance to write a letter to his brother Seneca at Rome about his morning's experience on the Pavement. To that brother whose spirit was so lofty and yet so humble that he was in the habit of dining with his slaves. Once his friends ventured to ask the Stoic why he did this extraordinary thing, to whom the philosopher replied, "I dine with certain of my slaves because I have learned to esteem them, and with the rest I dine because I wish to make them worthy of my esteem."

I stay to ask—Is it not so with my Lord? He takes us into His most blessed company not because we are worthy, but that He might make us worthy!

Does Gallio write to him of Paul? We know not. Yet but for that morning's work Gallio had been nothing to the world to-day. Contact with the "ugly little Jew" ennobles not the Jew (who needed no ennobling), but the noble Roman, "My lord Gallio." So it is with all men. It is not what they do, or are, but

with whom they come in contact. One of our own poets has beautifully said of the rustics resting in unmarked graves :

"Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd . . .
But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll ;
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul . . .
Some village Hampden, that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood ;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood."

It is not the lot of most of us to come into contact with men who make history, and thus ourselves make history in our turn. But we may, we have, come into contact with Jesus Christ, King of the Ages, and this, not that, is immortality.

It was with a glorious sense of triumph that the Seventy returned with the news that they had struck heavy and successful blows at Satan. What said our Lord ? " Rejoice not . . . but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

Gallio never suspected that the poor, ragged, mud-bespattered prisoner, with his face covered with spittle, was the maker or breaker of his fortunes. Had he but heard

Paul's defence, what might not have happened? An equally noble Roman has written: *Audi alteram partem*—"hear the other side." Had Gallio not been a Stoic, but had cared more for things undreamed of by such, he might have accompanied Paul to that death at Nero's hands, which awaited them both, with a glad hope that he lacked in spite of his graces of figure and character.

Do not then, I beg of you, put the Gospel on one side because he who would draw thee to a view of Christ is poor in speech and rugged in style. After all, this world is not everything. A simple Scotsman by long contact with men of affairs came at last to occupy the first place in the kingdom. But at the zenith of his fortunes, death smote his wife. And after his Royal Master had kindly bidden him be comforted as he followed the coffin with him, the first time the monarch had attended personally on such an occasion in a subject's case, the poor old man burst into tears, and, amidst his sobs, they heard him say: "I used to tell her everything; now I have no one to tell anything to." His place, his honours,

his king's favour, had turned to dust and ashes at death's touch. All that a long and successful career has done for him is to leave him alone. But Paul has the words still burning in his breast, "Fear not . . . for I am with thee." And at the close of his long and glorious career we find that he is not alone, although "no man stood with me, but all forsook me . . . notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

For, after all, this deliverance at Corinth is but one escape more nearer that final tragedy at Rome.

On the night of the 19th July, A.D. 64, a fire broke out in the Circus Maximus that soon threatened to leave Rome but a heap of smoking ruins, and whilst it was raging Nero stood on Mæcenas' Tower singing the "Fall of Troy" and strumming an accompaniment on his everlasting guitar.

He had gone too far. Public opinion was roused, and, being suspected of causing the fire for his own pleasure, Nero began to fear lest he should lose his throne.

It is supposed that the Prefect Tigellinus, a creature still more base than himself,

whispered in his ear "the Christians." Thus began the great persecution under Nero in which thousands of Christ's servants perished by the most dreadful deaths. Some wrapped in tarry cloths were tied to posts, and when darkness fell they were lit as torches to display the splendour of Nero's *entourage* and the deftness of his driving, of which he was inordinately proud; some wrapped in wild beasts' skins were thrown to hungry hounds to be torn to pieces before multitudes of men and women who showed no pity, because they believed these Christians were the incendiaries that had brought no end of disasters upon their city; others were beaten by lictors with their rods until unconsciousness supervened, when they were hacked to death with the axes bound up in the rods: but Paul as a Roman citizen escaped the pain, the horror, the ignominy of such deaths. Clement, writing about thirty years later, gives an account of his martyrdom outside the walls of Rome.

He appears before Nero the first time. The Emperor then was about twenty-nine. A handsome face, but blotched and disfigured

by lust and alcohol. From the same causes his body was too corpulent for the spindle legs on which it stood. With him were the jurors, all of proconsular or proprætorial rank. To each were given three white tablets: on one of which was written A for *Absolvo* (acquittal); on another C for *Condemno* (condemnation); and on the third N.L. for *Non Liquet* (not proven).

From his letter to Timothy we learn that at this *prima actio* Paul had no *patronus* to encourage him, no *advocatus* to plead for him, no *deprecator* to say a word in his favour.

Alone he stood at the bar before that wild beast who thirsted daily for blood. Yet he gained the day. The fierce stare relaxed, the blood-shot eyes softened, the lustful mouth gave vent to words that led the trembling jurors hastily to drop the tablet marked A into the circling urn. Once more it was a marvellous deliverance.

The Jews once again were baulked of their prey. Nero was not to condemn Paul.

But not for long did he escape. Nero was singing and dancing through Achaia, having left a freedman Helius in his place, and

as early tradition places the Apostle's martyrdom on 29th June, 66, it was before him that he was brought at his second trial.

As he told Timothy: "I was delivered out of the lion's mouth," but as after events proved it was only to be played with; so at his second trial in Nero's absence Paul was condemned.

No long time elapsed between his condemnation and his decapitation.

The place we know. Just outside the walls, about two miles along the road to Ostia, there stood in Paul's day a pyramid. It was a monument erected to the memory of Caius Cestius, and over his remains, by L. Pontius Mela a kinsman of Pontius Pilate.

There are now many monuments in that little hollow. The pyramid stands no longer alone. It is the burial place of our countrymen and women who die at Rome.

Early in the morning the jailor wakes the sleeping apostle, or so one would fancy, like that Argyle whom his bitter enemy found sleeping like an infant on the morn of his execution, and fled the castle to a kinswoman's

house the other side of the parade ground yonder at Edinburgh, exclaiming, "Would I were like that man!" For Christians know how to die. Forth they sped on their three miles' march. Doubtless some of the loungers in the Prætorium went to see the end. The beams of the rising sun touch the points of the soldiers' weapons with living fire. Thus tramping along with martial tread, with jingling of accoutrements, and occasional gruff words of command, the little procession, slowly growing in size, would meet a motley throng of travellers towards Rome. Merchants hasting with their bills of lading to secure the markets; sailors fresh from long voyages (for Ostia was a seaport) rolling along to spend their wages amidst the haunts of horrid vice and sudden death in the great barracks that had sprung up after the fire, where swarmed the poor of Rome like obscene insects under great stones; dancing girls from the East with gaily painted turbans; officials returning from the seats of their government to give an account of themselves at headquarters; Chaldean astrologers and shaven Egyptian priests

with their distinctive dress and tonsured crowns, then all the rage with the Smart Set of Rome: these and many more met the escort of Death.

So at length the grassy mound that heaves its rounded form above the common level of the surrounding turf is reached.

The homeless man, alone, yet accompanied by heaven's triumphant hosts—oh! if it be possible for these glorious beings to entertain envy within their breasts 'tis now, for earth finds not so grand a moment, so rich a pageant, as when the least of the human race dies for JESUS—kneels down at the place appointed, commends his spirit to his never-failing Friend, whose words he still remembers “Fear not . . . because I am with thee, and no one shall set on thee to do thee hurt!” The great sun suddenly boils over the brim of the world, a sign, a sigh, a moment's flash, a sullen thud, a crimson stain spreading fast, obliterating the green, and a new face is before the Throne. The greatest of the Lord's servants has reached home at last, but the Lord's work remains unfinished.

Thus we have neither the death of Peter nor of Paul recorded in the Word.

Doubtless this autumn you have been north. Your favourite view is where a great crag raises its lofty head above the still waters of the lake. It is covered from head to foot with a beautiful garment of foliage, and as autumn's fingers would rend its robe, it blushes. Thus the green robe has become a gorgeous vesture dipped in blood.

Presently winter will come, and with resolute hands rub the vestment threadbare until nothing is left but the grey crag glooming through ragged threads that cling around it. The leaves have gone—to come again—but the rock remains.

Thus the teachers whom we loved, the saintly men and women whose lives spoke louder than their lips, the men of larger faith and massive knowledge, the Müllers, the Chapmans, the Wrights, the M'Vickers, the three Henrys (Henry Groves, Henry Dyer, Henry Heath) have gone, and the despairing cry rings through the chambers of our souls: "My father! my father! the chariot of Israel and horsemen thereof."

Is the work finished? No. Then be sure that until the work be finished He whose work it is remains "Jesus the same yesterday, and to-day, and FOR EVER."

Paul died? Never! He lived on in the love and lives of the men and women to whom he had brought the best boon of all, the knowledge of this same Jesus.

Longinus, Acestor, Megistus, were three of the escort. Longinus, Acestor, Megistus, themselves ere long marched to death for Christ. For the indomitable spirit of Paul the Apostle, aforetime Saul the Persecutor, had in the hour of death still pointed souls to Jesus, and three at least of the instruments of persecution, following the direction, had found JESUS who is the SAME yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Amen.

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