

THE STRUCTURE

OF THE BOOK OF THE

Acts of the Apostles

IN THE LIGHT OF

'THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL.'

BY

ZETETES (*Ζητητής*).

Dedicated to

THE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA, AND AMERICA.

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UNITED KINGDOM, AUSTRALIA, AND AMERICA.

' DEAR YOUNG MEN,

' The following outlines on the interesting book of THE ACTS were written in numbers for a leading periodical in Ireland; and are now, at the request of friends, put in book form, and dedicated to the members of the YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION of the United Kingdom, Australia, and America. The writer signs his name Zetētēs (Ζητητής), INQUIRER or INVESTIGATOR, as an indication of the course to be taken, in divine dependence, by any serious student of the subject. And this he considers better than that of giving his own individual name, which could only stand as the symbol of one unknown to most readers, and add no especial interest or value to the subject itself.

' But the writer has to say, that whilst good and excellent things have already been written, the main design and structure of the book of THE ACTS have, in his judgment, not been dealt with; which has consequently tended to obscure the Gospels on the one hand, and the Epistles on the other.

' And nothing has more led up to the bold scepticism of these days than the forced views hitherto given to Scripture by its friends. Let us be careful always to observe the context, and never draw conclusions apart from it, observing the harmony of other parts of revelation. Then, and then only, are we on safe ground. And remember that learning without spirituality only enables men to go the more astray, as is abundantly seen in Germany and elsewhere.

*' Your well-wisher,
' THE AUTHOR.'*

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.



INTRODUCTION.

SECTION I.

It may be permitted to us to say at the first that we intend to pursue the history of *The Acts of the Apostles*, on lines hitherto unexplored and unexplained. For whilst many books have been written, and many things said on the subject very good and excellent; yet the design, the structure, and the unity of the book, have been, as we think, strangely overlooked by all the writers with whom we are acquainted. By the urgent request of friends a sketch of the contents is now undertaken, and will not fail to interest the reader, even though he may not see his way in agreeing with the conclusions of the writer on all the points raised in the investigation.

We pray the Lord to aid us in sketching the salient features of this deeply interesting book, so as to convey to the reader what is meant to be unfolded. Of course we all 'know but in part,' and 'knowledge' on any given subject is limited. Hence, differences of judgment are to be expected, and much 'patience' requisite. However, without further preface, let us commence and say that the question put by the Apostles to our Lord at the outset *rules the whole book*—the great question touching the Messianic Kingdom—'Dost thou at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?' (Acts i. 6, R.V.). At what time? He had just said, 'Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,' connecting it with the baptism of John, and the testimony of the great 'messenger that went before His face to prepare His way before Him.' So the Apostles ask Him, if when the Holy Ghost comes and gives the future testimony to Israel, whether the Kingdom will or will not be then restored to them? The Lord then says, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be My witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea,

and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' (Acts i. 7, 8, R.V.).*

Now the Lord's reply to this question confirms *the fact* of the Kingdom as it was held in the mind of the disciples, but not *the time* of its restoration. For the restoration of it was now to depend on their testimony and its reception. Their appeal of course was to be made to faith, and 'faith cometh by hearing.' But, the Prophet said, 'If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.' For the Kingdom turned on Israel's reception of the Messiah (Isa. vii. 9). Such was the nature of the question of the disciples, and of our Lord's reply to them. The question instead of being 'carnal,' as modern writers inform us, had definite divine connections. For they saw with their own

* Our Lord here in His reply to the disciples, does not say as He said in the Gospels (Mark xiii. 32), that He did not know the times or the seasons of the restoration of the kingdom, but says, "It is not for you to know"—and why? Because it remained to the servants and messengers still hidden as to what the result of their testimony should be. They are now to be dependent on the effects produced by the testimony, just as was our Lord Himself in the days of His flesh of whom the Prophet had said, 'Who is blind as my servant and deaf as my messenger that I sent, seeing many things, but thou observest not, opening the ears, but he heareth not' (Isa. xlii. 19, 20.)

eyes that the two great messengers that went before were deliberately rejected by Israel. John, 'My messenger,' at first sent before His face to prepare His way before Him, and after that the Lord Himself, 'the messenger of the covenant.' For the last of the Prophets had spoken of these two angel messengers, the latter *the angel of the covenant* (Mal. iii.). Of both these it had now come to pass as our Lord said, 'They have done unto him (John) whatsoever they listed, likewise also shall the Son of Man suffer of them' (Matt. xvii. 12). Supplementing thus what He previously said, 'And if ye are willing to receive him, this is Elijah which is to come' (Matt. xi. 14, R.V.). But they were not willing to receive him, and so he was not Elias to them!

THE THREE WITNESSES.

Two witnesses therefore were now rejected, both of whom began their testimony with the words, 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' John began this testimony in the wilderness of Judea (Matt. iii. 2), and when John was put in prison, our Lord takes up the same testimony in Galilee (Matt. iv. 17), and says, 'Repent, for the

kingdom of heaven is at hand.' *The kingdom of heaven* is a term taken from the Prophet Daniel, having definite reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, with Jerusalem as centre 'the City of the great King,' 'the holy City' (Dan. vii. 27; Mic. iv. 8). Both these witnesses to 'the kingdom,' John the Baptist and our Lord were refused and rejected one after the other by Israel. The question now is as to whether the Holy Ghost, the *third and last witness*, would be received, and the kingdom then restored. However, our Lord being taken and 'by wicked hands crucified and slain,' it answered another and deeper purpose on the part of God. That, however, is another question, and we are now speaking of Israel's responsibility in reference to their Messiah as heir of the kingdom promised to the Fathers. They rejected Him, and 'the stone which the builders rejected becomes the head of the corner.' But when the Holy Ghost comes down at Pentecost, the same testimony is continued and addressed to 'Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven' (Acts ii. 5), that is the Jews of the dispersion (*διασπορα*) or the ten Tribes, who had come up to worship.

The Ten Tribes as such had not got the direct testimony of the Lord Himself. It was con-

fined, so to speak, to the two Tribes in the land, (individuals of the Tribes of course excepted). But now that the Holy Ghost is come, the testimony is to all the Tribes who are now represented at Pentecost and in Jerusalem, and they are called 'Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven' (Acts ii. 5).

And St. Peter addressing these 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' dwells on 'the last days;' when the prophecy of Joel said 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh'—and, again, that God was to raise up the Son of David to sit on David's throne (Acts ii. 30). For David had spoken of Him in resurrection in three aspects—(1) That His soul was not left in hell, nor His flesh suffered to see corruption; (2) That He was to be raised up to sit on his (David's) throne; (3) That He was also, according to David to be 'raised up to the right hand of God:' to whom Jehovah said, 'Sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool' (Psa. cx.).

These three distinct statements are made about Him; and the effect of this sermon was that 3,000 believed. For when it came to this last point the multitude felt their guilt and concluded that they were the 'foes' who should be made a footstool

for His feet and crushed—and ‘when they heard this they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ (ii. 24-38).

St. Peter then immediately preaches forgiveness to them in the name of Him whom they crucified, even as our Lord had said, ‘That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem’ (Luke xxiv. 47).

After this the Holy Ghost in St. Peter repeats the testimony of the two former witnesses. For John and our Lord had said, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,’ and St. Peter now says, ‘Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, *even* Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets which have been since the world began’ (Acts iii. 17-21, R.V.).

Language cannot be plainer than this to show that the Holy Ghost now in the Apostles, was on the same lines as the two witnesses who went

before. And the very question which the disciples ask at the first is here answered, and the people are told that if they 'repent,' the times of refreshing will come, and 'the Christ' (the Messiah) will be sent back to them, and the restoration of all the things set in, of which God had spoken by the holy prophets from the first. In other words, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,' as said by the former witnesses. We see then that these three great witnesses open their testimony with the same pronouncement. Two of them had now been rejected, and it remains to be seen whether the third will be accepted or not. And to this great question the book afterwards addresses itself. And there is no book, as has been said, 'in which the principle of intentional selection is more evident to a careful observer. There is no reason given why one speech is repeated and one event related at length in preference to others which are passed over or slightly touched' (Bampton Lectures, 1864). Hence the writer justly concludes that it is on 'the principle of intentional selection.' Nevertheless, it seems to us that internal evidence does furnish some clue to this 'intentional selection.'

THE TWO PRAYERS.

In looking at the salient points of the history, perhaps we ought now to bring forward the two prayers—that of our blessed Lord, when He said—‘ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do ’ (Luke xxiii. 31), and that of Stephen—‘ Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ’ (Acts vii. 60).

These two prayers being heard and answered, a protracted and lengthened period of long-suffering mercy to the people of Israel in the hope of repentance, sets in; God in mercy lingering over them and ‘ confirming the word with miracles and wonders and signs ’ (Heb. iii. 4). And this is carried on to the last chapter of the book, when judicial blindness comes upon the people, as said by St. Paul—‘ God hath shut up all unto disobedience,’ etc. (Rom. xi. 31, R.V.). Thus St. Peter opens ‘ the kingdom of heaven ’ to Israel at Jerusalem in the opening of the Acts, and St. Paul closes it to them at Rome in the end of the Acts. This was using ‘ the power of the keys, as it is called, to some purpose, both for salvation and condemnation. But of this ‘ binding and loosing ’ we may speak afterwards.

THE TWELVE.

The Twelve Apostles are chosen, of course, in reference to the Twelve Tribes of Israel and 'the kingdom.' St. Peter is the leader of the Apostles of 'the circumcision,' and Judas' place is filled up by casting lots with an appeal directly to Him who chose them at the first, to know 'whether of these two Thou hast chosen' (Acts i. 24-26). The 'lot' still further showing the Judaic order of the selection (see Jos. xviii. 10, 11; 1 Chron. xxiv. 5).

The number of the twelve being filled up, the Holy Ghost descends in power upon them, rendering them capable of addressing in divers tongues the multitude of Jews present: 'devout men out of every nation under heaven'—so that now the language of Isaiah seemed to be in fulfilment, that 'out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Isa. ii.). The divine idea in the tongues being to utilise and reverse the sentence of confusion originating at Babel, and bring back to God the divers nations of men of whatever language they were. For the prophecy of the Spirit having come to pass, the face of God was about to shine on Israel, and then the

blessed time arrive, as is said in David, 'that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations' (Psa. lxxvii.).

THE PENTECOSTAL ASPECT.

No one can read the Gospels without perceiving two currents running apparently in opposite directions; one in the direction of 'the kingdom,' which culminates in the King riding into Jerusalem on an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass, according to the Prophet (Zech. ix.). Then and there the kingdom is offered to the daughter of Zion; she refuses it, and the Lord goes out and weeps over the city. The other in the direction of a heavenly outlook, with the sense of rejection and persecution, when He goes up to Jerusalem also, but to be crucified and put to death and rise again the third day. These two currents were apparently so opposite that the disciples could not understand them, and were afraid to ask Him about His death (Mark ix. 31, 32), for they thought it had been He who should have redeemed Israel (Luke xxiv. 21).

However, the solution of all comes out in the Resurrection and at Pentecost. And as we are sketching *The Acts*, it is necessary just here to con-

sider Pentecost. It signifies the fiftieth day from the morning after the Sabbath of the Passover, when the two loaves were offered after harvest—they are called firstfruits (רֵאשִׁיטִּים), and in Greek πρωτογεννημάτα (Lev. xxiii. 17), and were samples of the gathering in of the harvest. The sheaf of firstfruits was antecedent, and offered the morning after the Passover Sabbath; but of this we will speak afterwards. It signifies something quite distinct. But the two loaves signify Jews and Gentiles as nations now about to be brought into the kingdom at harvest time. And St. Peter's sermon (Acts ii.) looks at the harvest as setting in and David's throne and the nation about to be established. He had yet to learn that the Gentiles, not as proselytes, were to be united with them, the sample of which afterwards is seen in the person of *Cornelius* (Acts x.). And the *firstfruits* thus gathered were formulated or put into shape as an assembly or church, bound together in one hope, the hope of the Messiah's Kingdom.

The assembly or church (ἐκκλησία) is a term which is applied in lxx. over ninety times in the Old Testament to the people of Israel, as the equivalent of the Hebrew word קָהָל kahal, so that when our Lord said to Peter, 'On this rock I will build *My Church*, and I will give thee the keys of the

kingdom of heaven,' etc. (Matt. xvi.) He used the term *Church* as a word familiar to the ears of the disciples. And 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven and the binding and loosing' power were addressed and applied first to Peter, then to the Church or assembly as such (Matt. xviii. 18), and lastly to the disciples after the Resurrection (John xx. 23). In those He refers directly to the great and divine powers to be exercised not on ordinary offences or sins merely, but on offences and sins connected with being 'ashamed of Me and of My words' Mark viii. 38); and on those sins which refer to the fundamentals of Christianity, as in 1 Cor. v. For instances of the action of these judicial powers we need only to look at *Ananias* and *Simon Magus* (Acts v.-viii.). Ananias 'lied to the Holy Ghost.' How? By professing to be influenced by the testimony of the Holy Ghost in Peter as to 'the restitution of all things' (Acts iii. 21), which was also spoken of by the Spirit in the Prophets. For, whilst holding back the price of the land, he ostentatiously professes to give up all; thus ignoring, whilst professing to believe in, the nearness of what the year of jubilee signified, when the worldly possessions changed hands (Lev. xxv. 5-16). Simon Magus was

baptized and professed discipleship whilst his thought was to make money by bestowing the gifts himself. And those afterwards whose signal judgment is mentioned in the Epistles, are either delinquents in morals (1 Cor. v.) or in doctrines (1 Tim. i. 20). On the other hand there was such a thing as a man being 'overtaken in a trespass,' and being restored (Gal. vi. 1, R. V.), and also of sinning towards a brother, and being forgiven 'till seventy times seven" (Matt. xviii. 21, 22).

Now the signal judgment of God was marked by the judicial powers of the Apostles and the Church, against 'those who did such things.' But after the Church itself began to decline—and as the Apostles dreaded, became corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is towards Christ (2 Cor. xi. 3, R. V.); and that in it 'the mystery of iniquity already worked,' as the same Apostle declared (2 Thess. ii 7)—we hear no more of these judicial powers in exercise; nor indeed could they be.

THE CHURCH IN ITS TWOFOLD ASPECT.

And here we must digress for a moment to look at the double aspect of *the Church at Jerusalem*.

The origin, birth, and beginning of the Church on earth in its heavenly aspect was not at Pentecost, but in the resurrection; as is clear from John xx. 17, 22; and we are 'begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead' (1 Pet. i. 3); or, as St. Paul puts it, 'quickened together with Christ and raised up together with Him' (Eph. i.-ii.). This was signified in the sheaf of *firstfruits* after the Passover. These firstfruits, different from the loaves, are expressed by other and different words (πρῶτον and ἀπαρχή, the first and the beginning); the latter is a term applied to Christ (1 Cor. xv. 20), and to the Church (James i. 18), and refers to the heavenly election.

When looked at thus our Lord's resurrection had a multiple aspect, as He Himself described it—'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit' (John xii. 24). But it was afterwards formulated or put into shape, and 'established' as a corporate organization, and the 'House of God' at Pentecost. And over this house, thus established, our Lord was placed as 'a Son, whose house are we if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end' (Heb. iii. 4-8). This double aspect of *the Church* had, so to speak, its counterpart in

Israel. Israel was chosen in 'the Fathers,' it had its origin and birth in them, and is now to this day 'beloved for the fathers' sakes' (Rom. xi. 28). But the nation was formulated or put into shape afterwards, and established as a House under Moses, 'who was faithful in all his house' (Heb. iii. 2).

Now, whilst the birth of both Israel and the Church took place antecedently, the formulating of them into a 'house' took place subsequently. However, at Pentecost these two aspects coincided, and the House ran on parallel lines with the heavenly election—one was the outer expression of the other, they were coincident one with the other, and outwardly grafted on a Jewish stock.

When looked on as a 'house,' the Church of God was an established, organized people locally, under the Apostles, Bishops, or Elders, and Deacons. But the difference soon became wide between it and the heavenly election that belonged to the body of Christ as such when the Lord breathed into them *ἐνεφύσησε* (John xx. 22, same as Gen. ii. 7, lxx., as God breathed into Adam the breath of life). Then the living members were formed. 'The house,' as such, on the other hand, might tumble and go to pieces as Israel did, and so it is contemplated in the New

Testament. Nor will they again coincide in outer form until the time come when the Lord's prayer is fulfilled, 'That they may be one; as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me' (John xvii. 21). Is it not thus contemplated in the New Testament—yes, and that under different figures. 'The Churches of the Gentiles,' as branches of 'the wild olive tree,' and grafted into 'the good olive tree,' are threatened with excision if ceasing to live by faith, like as Israel (Rom. xi. 22). And ere the Apostles are off the scene St. Peter says, 'For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God (1 Peter iv. 17). And finally, in the Seven Churches of Asia, the golden candlesticks are threatened, firstly to be removed, and lastly to be put out. Now, these lamps or candlesticks are not pictured by 'the Spirit' as successional (like the empires in Daniel), but contemporaneous—nor could it be otherwise, for the Lord's judicial action, going on in the midst of them, is simultaneous and *apocalyptic* (Rev. i. ii. iii.). A circumstance which precludes them entirely from a protracted historic aspect. Of course

the moral divine teaching in these Seven Epistles, as in all other Epistles, remains of the same value to the people of God for all time. But we are speaking of them as local, corporate witnesses under divine government—See further in 1 Tim., 2 Tim., 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude, in which Epistles we find the ‘faithful’ pictured in a family and individual character, and struggling by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, for the defence of the great principles of Christianity, in the presence of ‘a great house’ of outward profession and apostacy that was to come after (2 Tim. ii. 19-21).

The Church, properly so called, had its time origin forth from our Lord’s death and resurrection (see Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16, with Eph. i. 17-23, John xx. 17-22), just as Israel’s time origin was forth from the loins of Abraham. Both become afterwards conditionally limited in time, and the conditions not being fulfilled they became liable to be cut off (*ἐκκοπήσθαι* Rom. xi. 21) and *shut up* (*συνέκλεισε* Rom. xi. 32 with Rev. ii. iii.) as corporate witnesses of God.

And the judgment that set in then on the Church corporately as the House of God on earth was final. It will never again come into judgment in the character of a corporate divine witness as golden

lamps on earth. For those seven represented at the time 'all the Churches,' as He says, 'and all the Churches shall know that I am He which searcheth the reins and the heart' (see Apoc. ii. 23).

But we must proceed with the main subject before us.

THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL.

This house or Church of God at Jerusalem of which we have spoken was in the first instance entirely composed of Jewish converts who were expecting Messiah's kingdom, as is plain from St. Peter's sermon (Acts ii. and iii.). In prophetic language they are called 'the remnant of Israel.' The Prophet Zephaniah had said, 'I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth,' etc. (Zeph. iii. 12, 13) This remnant was called by another prophet 'The poor of the flock' (Zech. xi.). And the Prophet Joel, quoted by St. Peter, after speaking of the Spirit being poured out, adds, 'For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath

said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call' (Joel ii. 32).

The reader will observe here two principal statements:—(1.) The sincerity of the faith and hope pronounced by the prophet, 'They shall not do iniquity nor speak lies,' etc. Hence the fearful and quick judgment that fell on Ananias, Sapphira, and Simon Magus; and the 'great fear' in consequence that came on the rest (Acts v. 11, 13). And (2) that the Lord was adding to the Church (or together) the delivered or saved ones (Acts ii. 46).^{*} Thus this 'remnant whom the Lord shall call' now comprised the delivered or saved ones in Israel. For St. Peter said, in his sermon to the people, 'Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of (ἐπι τῷ ὀνόματι, *i.e.* resting on the name) of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call' (Acts ii.

* Not 'those that should be saved,' nor 'those that were being saved, but 'saved ones,' a class (οἱ σωζόμενοι), according to the rule of present participles with the article as divested of all reference to time. It was the current appellation of 'the remnant' (see Isa. xxxvii. 32; xlv. 20; and lx.; Luke xiii. 23.)

38, 39). Now St. Peter is not referring here to the Gentiles, but to the tribes of the dispersion 'afar off,' the children being included in the covenant, as is always the case when the national purposes and promises of God are in question. The blood on the door-post in Egypt covered the family, the infant in the household as well as him who sprinkled the blood, as 'the new covenant' expressed it, 'from the least of them to the greatest of them' (Jer. xxxi. 34)—parents and children together.

THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM.

In keeping with this we are told that the Church 'continued daily in the Temple' praying and praising God, and that 'Peter and John went up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour' (Acts ii. 46, and iii. 1). Here they meet a man 'lame from his mother's womb, who was carried, and whom they laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called beautiful,' a fit emblem, as has been said, of the moral condition of Israel at this time; having before him all the gorgeous ritual of Judaism, but still unable to lift himself up. Him Peter does lift up, and, immediately he

receives strength, rises up and goes into the Temple praising God. Just what Israel should have done at the time, and will do by-and-by when their heart turns to the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 16). After this we read of stupendous miracles at Jerusalem—‘that they brought forth the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them’ (Acts v. 15). The apostles at the same time insisting that all was done in virtue of the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven by the Lord Jesus whom they crucified. But, being exalted to the right hand of God, He hath shed forth this power, and they were witnesses of its effects. We have then in chapters iv. and v. instead of the conviction and conversion of the leaders of the people to the testimony, thus ‘confirmed by miracles, wonders, and signs,’ the deliberate determination of the High Priest and Council to ignore the testimony of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and persecute the witnesses unto death. God in His providence stays their hand for a time by the efforts of Gamaliel before the Council. But their determination and hostility reaches a crisis on the address of Stephen, and he is stoned to death, not by mere mob-violence, far

otherwise, but, like the Lord Himself, under the law of Deuteronomy, chap. xiii. That law enjoined that if a prophet arose, showing signs and wonders, and that if the prophecy and signs and wonders came to pass, yet if he called on the people to have another object of trust beside the Lord their God who delivered them from Egypt, they were to put him to death, and stone him with stones. So that if the prophecy were true and the signs and wonders 'came to pass,' he nevertheless was to be put to death. This was the law under which they justified themselves. And so, when St. Paul refers to the part he acted in the scene and in Stephen's death, he says, 'concerning zeal persecuting the Church' (Phil. iii. 6). Thus fulfilling our Lord's words : 'The time cometh that whosoever killeth will think that he doeth God service'—a sentence which has often come to pass in the history of Christianity.

But our Lord appealed to Moses and the Prophets as witnesses to Him, and also to the extended and universal miracles which he wrought, and which transcended all that went before (John xv. 24, 25), all of which spoke in their ears that *Jehovah Rophi* had visited His people. 'I am the Lord that healeth thee' (Ex. xv. 26). It was the

rolling off the curses of Moses' law from them wherever He went in the land. And from this fact He shows them 'that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins' (Matt. ix. 5, 6).

In chapter vi. the seven deacons are chosen whose names declare that they were not Jews of Judea, but Hellenist Jews of the dispersion and proselytes; and one of them, Stephen, is recorded, 'as full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people'. (Acts vi. 8). And then the one who is designated a murderer and a liar from the beginning stirs them up to bring the same accusations against him as against the Lord. 'And they set up false witnesses which said, this man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law.' On this charge they bring him before the council, and his face was as 'the face of an angel.'

STEPHEN'S ADDRESS.

Then follows Stephen's address before the council to which there has been no parallel in human discourse. The contents only have come down to us in a succinct form, giving us the sum and substance under seven different headings, each having special

point in reference to the great subject before him.

He begins with the relations of Israel to 'the fathers' as was said above. 'The God of Glory appeared unto our Father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia,' etc., and then goes on to the twelve patriarchs (vii. 1, 8).

THE FOUR GREAT ECONOMIES OR DISPENSATIONS.

Here we may refer to the four great appearances of God in connection with the four great Economies or Dispensations. The *Adamic*, the *Patriarchal*, the *Mosaic*, and the *Christian*. God revealed Himself openly to man in the person of those who stood at the head of each of these dispensations. To Adam in the garden before and after the fall; to Abraham, head and chief of the patriarchs; to Moses, with whom 'the Lord spake face to face as a man speaketh to his friend;' and, finally, in Christ, God manifest in the flesh, Immanuel. In all these four there was open vision or manifestation of God to men. To three of these heads of revelation and dispensation Stephen now adverts, beginning with Abraham, then Moses, and finally our Lord.

JOSEPH AND MOSES.

In pursuing his discourse, he confronts Israel with the special cases of Joseph and Moses, because of their bearings on the Lord's own history, and shows that theirs was a double and *antithetic history*—a history of rejection and reception, of humiliation and glory. Joseph's career is dwelt upon in verses 9-19. Joseph was sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver, and brought to the lowest ebb in affliction and in prison. But from thence he comes forth the source and lord of life to the world, 'and at the second time Joseph was made known to his brethren.' The parallel here is not to be mistaken. Joseph's brethren 'envied him,' and sold him, and 'for envy they delivered Jesus to be crucified.' And the corresponding results follow, for when the Lord comes the second time He will be made known unto His brethren after the flesh, and 'they shall look on Him whom they had pierced' (Rev. i. 7).

MOSES.

He next confronts them with Moses, whose history he carries down to verse 41. Their fathers rejected Moses at the first, 'saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?' 'Then fled Moses at that saying, and became a stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.' But afterwards he comes back to his people, as we read, 'This Moses whom they refused, saying, who made thee a ruler and judge, the same did God send to be a ruler and deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush' (verse 35). The remarkable points which Stephen here makes before the council are very striking. These two great patriarchs, whom all venerated, were rejected at first by their people, and found thereon a reception among the Gentiles; and among the Gentiles each of them got a wife and family (just as the Lord has His Church ever since among the Gentiles). But afterwards both are welcomed and received by their own people. Joseph becomes practically head of the Gentiles also (Ps. xviii. 43); and 'Moses becomes king in Jeshurun.' The portraits are drawn with

great clearness, and all done with a view to press on Israel the reception of the Messiah, whom they rejected as their fathers had done before them in the case of Joseph and Moses. For Moses had said, 'A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me—him shall you hear (verse 37).'

THE UNFAITHFULNESS OF ISRAEL.

The next division of the address, the fourth, is in verses 42, 43, and here we are startled by a statement that does not appear in the Book of Numbers, viz., that all the time of the journey in the wilderness Israel was practising idolatry. And that it was so practised appears clearly enough in Ezek. xx.; and Stephen, referring to the forty years in the wilderness, says, 'Yea, ye took up the Tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them; and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.' He thus connects together, at one sweep, the spirit of idolatry that began with the golden calf down to the captivity of Babylon—that the continuance of the same spirit became more and more pronounced

until God was obliged to send them into captivity to Babylon.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

On the other hand he shows the faithfulness and long-suffering of God, during the same period, in the next division (verses 44-50), that 'the Tabernacle which Moses made was brought into possession of the Gentiles (Canaan), 'whom God drove out before the face of our fathers unto the days of David.' 'But Solomon built him a house,' etc. Thus the faithfulness of God remained towards His people from the time of Moses to David and Solomon, who built him an house, which house was to be the house of prayer for all nations, and was but a type and figure of heaven and earth brought into harmony with God in the new creation. For the heavens are His throne and the earth His footstool (verses 47-50). The language is prophetic of the time when the Lord will take up 'the kingdom, the power, and the glory' that He has acquired both by creation and redemption (Col. i.; Isa. lxx.-lxxvi.), and of which Solomon's temple was but a pattern and copy going before, viz., 'of the new heavens and the

new earth.' And at this point the wondrous address of Stephen reaches a climax. Yet they are unmoved by it, but it was as goads in the heart of Saul, and resulted in his conversion.

THE SEQUEL.

He then warns them : 'Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, as your fathers did, so do ye,' etc. (51-53). They then ran upon him and stoned him with stones. But he sees 'the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God' and ready to come again. 'The *Son of Man*' is a title which none give the Lord but Himself until Stephen here utters it ; and his position, at the right hand, to which the Lord swore before the High Priest, is thus confirmed by a second witness before Israel ! Stephen now sees the Son of Man in that position at the right hand of God.

THE BEATIFIC VISION.

But He is seen standing, for, as has been said, Christ does not definitely sit down, whilst the question with Israel remains open, as to whether they

will receive their Messiah or not. And as regards the nation of Israel, it will not be known to them that the priests' offering is accepted inside the veil until He comes out. When He comes out then it will be known to them, for 'the Redeemer shall come to Zion and turn away ungodliness from Jacob' (Isa. lix. 20, with Rom. xi. 26). Stephen sees the Lord standing and ready 'to receive the kingdom and to return' (Luke xix. 12), but instead of that He receives Stephen now to Himself up into heaven, his testimony being rejected, and in the spirit of his Master says, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,' and then 'fell asleep.' This closes at Jerusalem the first scene in the great drama after the Holy Ghost had come down from heaven.

JERUSALEM THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING.

We may now give a rapid sketch of the chief matters after Stephen's death from chapters viii. to xii. On the death of Stephen we are told that the whole Church was scattered abroad, and they went everywhere preaching the word. Instead of the few leaders who hitherto preached it, the whole Church had now turned preachers, and went

‘everywhere.’ And the devil was disappointed in his work, for the Gospel spread abroad. Yet the Apostles remained in Jerusalem (Acts viii. 1-4). For Jerusalem was ‘the holy city’ still, and ‘the city of the Great King.’ The Apostles consequently hold the city in the prospect and hope of repentance yet reaching the Tribes ‘scattered abroad,’ expecting that they would return to the Lord and the Tabernacle of David be built up again. For this reason ‘the twelve’ held Jerusalem; ‘for out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,’ said the great Prophets (Isa. ii. ; Mic. iv.)

SAMARIA.

After the scattering of the sheep from Jerusalem, Samaria is visited by Philip, the next evangelist after Stephen, and many are turned to the Lord and Satan discomfited. So successful is the word that Peter and John were sent down to confirm the disciples and bestow gifts. It is observable that our Lord began the sowing time in Samaria with the woman at the well, and now the reaping time had come—and John who gives the narrative and the saying of our Lord on the occasion, that ‘one

soweth and another reapeth,' is one of those singled out to enter on the reaping in Samaria afterwards. For John himself, who asked the Lord that fire might come down from heaven on the Samaritans and consume them (Luke ix. 52-54), now seeks their salvation in the spirit of his Master, and preached the Gospel in 'many cities of the Samaritans' (Acts ix. 25).

ETHIOPIA.

The eunuch of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, next comes in for blessing. 'From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia they shall bring my suppliants, even the daughters of my dispersed' (Zeph. iii. 10, R. V. marg.). So that this man, who came with his retinue to Jerusalem for to worship, and was now returning to Ethiopia a person 'of great authority,' who had charge of the queen's treasure, was a sample of what was to set in, should Israel's kingdom be restored. He was a representative man.

ST. PAUL.

The next chapter (ix.) opens with the conversion of St. Paul. Paul means *little* (the Greek form of the Latin *Paulus*, and of the tribe of Benjamin, the last of the Patriarchs). He was 'born out of due time,' and calls himself 'the least of the Apostles' and 'the chief of sinners.' And yet withal his conversion was miraculous and by vision. So it will be in the latter day with 'the remnant of Israel,' who will go through much sorrow, but develop like him into Church relations afterwards. And it is so remarkable, that in the similar type of old, when Jacob was on his way to Canaan, Benjamin was born (Gen. xxxv.). His mother in travail called him *Benoni* (*son of my sorrow*), but his father called him *Benjamin* (*son of my right hand*). St. Paul repeats this type in the after history of the people, and speaks of himself as 'a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him unto life eternal' (1 Tim. i. 16), 'Born out of due time,' and 'in sorrow,' but then brought to the front. Thus 'little Benjamin,' born in sorrow, becomes again the son of the right hand. Therefore St. Paul labours under *the twelve*, through the history given

in *The Acts*, but afterwards comes to the front in unfolding the relations proper to the Church, when Israel remains in unbelief. Thus we see in these two personages, Benjamin and Paul, standing types and pictures of things to be spoken after. And the Church here, which is Judaic in its character all through *The Acts*, develops with St. Paul afterwards into the heavenly relations and blessings which he explains to them in his Epistles. Thus also it will be with the remnant of Israel in this respect in the latter days. 'So the last shall be first and the first last.'

CORNELIUS.

In chapter x. Cornelius, a pure Gentile, appears in the foreground, and St. Peter is the Apostle chosen to accept him; for the question with Israel and their Messiah was still open, and the Apostles of the Tribes consequently occupy the centre. Of these Peter was first; and he now opens the door to the Gentiles, announcing that 'He' (Christ) 'is Lord of all' (οὐτός ἐστι πάντων Κύριος). Cornelius was the first pure Gentile, and a special vision is given to St. Peter to show the purposes of God towards the Gentiles, and to remove the prejudices of 'the

circumcision.' For whilst Peter was speaking, and before they were baptized, 'the Holy Ghost fell on them which heard the word' (x. 44), a signal proof of the determination of God to bring in the Gentiles on the same plane with Israel, *i.e.*, along with them as Gentiles—'Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people.'

VISION OF THE SHEET.

St. Peter, therefore, in the vindication of his action (chapter xi.), relates the Vision of the Sheet let down from heaven, and that 'God gave them' (the Gentiles) 'the like gift as He did unto us; and as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them as on us at the beginning; and forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as He did unto us (Jews), what was I that I could withstand God?' (Acts xi. 15-17). All this was to prove to the disciples the truth of the vision and the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy which said, 'The young men shall see visions and the old men shall dream dreams, and that God's Spirit shall be poured out upon *all flesh*,' Gentiles as well as Jews. For the vision of the sheet plainly showed that the Gentiles were to come in as Gentiles and not as proselytes—

it was a new departure. But in truth the sheet showed much more than this—for it included all the dominion and glory contained in the 8th Psalm. To this dominion and glory St. Peter alludes in his address at the house of Cornelius when he speaks of Jesus Christ, saying ‘He is Lord of all’ (Acts x. 36), taking in what is afterwards called ‘The mystery of God.’

BAPTISM IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST.

The first baptism of the Gentiles by St. Peter is thus given by commandment: ‘He commanded them in the name of Jesus Christ to be baptized’ (Acts x., see R.V.). That is, *by the authority* of Jesus Christ, for the term *in the name* (ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι) has this force, and is exactly the same as in Acts iii. 6, where St. Peter says to the cripple, ‘*In the name* of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk.’ The prepositions vary in the different places where baptism is spoken of, because of its different connections, but in no case do they refer to the form of its administration, otherwise they would be always the same. And here it refers to the authority of Jesus Christ setting His seal thus to the calling in of the

Gentiles, and it is observable that the Triune God appears in the matter. For it was God who gave the vision at the first. Then the Holy Ghost fell on them who heard the word, and then by the command of the Lord Jesus they were baptized. Thus the Father, Son, and Spirit engage in the matter (Matt. xxviii. 19).

THE GRECIANS.

There has been much discussion as to who were the *Grecians* mentioned in chap. xi. 20, for there we read that those who were 'scattered abroad' came to Antioch and 'spake to *the Grecians* preaching the Lord Jesus.' Most of the modern commentators and critics hold that they were *Hellenes* or Gentiles (Ἕλληνας), while the bulk of MS. evidence shows that the ancient copies read *Hellenists* (ἑλλημιστὰς), or Greek-speaking Israelites of the dispersed tribes, and also proselytes. If they were pure Gentiles it would follow that those preachers had got an insight into the purposes of God prior to, and in a fortuitous way, more quickly than St. Peter, who had to get a special vision before he would attempt to go to the Gentiles.

It was not so ! But when it is seen that *The Acts* is occupied mainly with the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the Tribes of the dispersion, or Hellenists, the difficulty vanishes. They were Hellenist Jews who disputed with Stephen at Jerusalem (Acts vi. 7), and compassed his death subsequently. And it is to those in the first place that the message or Gospel afterwards goes in the different cities of the Gentiles, and here at Antioch, in Syria, converts from the Tribes had become numerous, and the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch (Acts xi. 20-26), all of which will be more clear as we proceed.

THE CHRISTIANS.

Then the disciples were *called* Christians; now this word *called* was not given in irony as some say, nor a mere name of reproach, but called by divine intimation. It is not merely that they were *named* Christians, which would be *ὀνομάζεσθαι* but quite another word *χρηματίζουσαι*, which always in the New Testament has the force of *divine intimation*, as is seen in the following :—The wise men ‘being *warned* of God’ (Matt. ii. 12-22). ‘It was *revealed* to him by the Holy Ghost’ (Luke ii. 26). ‘Cornelius was *warned* of God’ (Acts x. 22). ‘Moses was

admonished of God' (Heb. viii. 5). These references might be multiplied, and do, to our thinking, decidedly point to the source whence came the designation of 'Christian.' And the language of St. Peter afterwards in his Epistle corroborates this conclusion; for he says: 'Yet if any man suffer as a Christian let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this name (1 Pet. iv. 16, R. V.). It was also the word used in the official and political announcements issued from the great city of Antioch, the capital of the powerful dynasty of the Seleucidæ in Syria. We, therefore, contend that it was oracular, as the term signifies, and given from heaven to the disciples of Christ at the time, and the God-given name in which alone they were to be known ever after.

THE MINISTRATION OF ANGELS.

The prominent figures in chapter xii. are the angels, St. James, St. Peter, and Herod the King. Herod kills James, and puts Peter in prison, delivering him to four quaternions of soldiers to guard his captivity till after the Passover, when he was to be made a public spectacle! But the Lord heard the

prayers of the Church, and the angel of the Lord came by night and loosed his chain, and Peter was so astounded himself by this deliverance from his captivity (for he expected to 'suffer as a Christian') that 'he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision' (xii. 9). Thus fulfilling in embryo the word of the Lord in reference to 'His people in the latter days,' 'When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream; then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad' (Ps. cxxvi. 1). And so we may imagine the 'gladness' in Mary's house on that night when 'Peter knocked at the gate; and when they had opened the door and saw him they were 'astonished.' It was thus evidenced that 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them,' and from which the Lord's people have been encouraged in their prayers ever since.

HEROD.

From the time that the Son of God was born in the flesh the devil tried to devour Him (Rev. xii. 4). For 'He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.' And the three Herods spoken of in the New Testament are direct instruments in the dragon's grip from first to last, to play the part of Antichrist. The first Herod slew the innocents, with the object of slaying the Lord. 'He sought the young Child's life to destroy Him.' The second Herod wished to kill the Lord during His ministry. 'Depart hence for Herod *will* (*θέλει*) kill thee,' that is *wishes* to kill thee (Luke xiii. 31), and Herod and Pilate afterwards made friends over His death (Luke xxiii.). And the third Herod here mentioned (Acts xii.), filled up the trio and reached the climax. He is so 'puffed up with pride,' sitting on his throne in royal apparel, that when the people shout at his oration, saying, 'It is the voice of a god and not of a man,' he accepts the dignity. 'And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him because he gave not God the glory, and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost' (Acts

xii. 23). Thus we have those three Herods ready at any moment, in the hands of the devil, to act the part of Antichrist had Israel received Messiah. And the Herodians were a party, as we are told by Tertullian, who believed that Messiah was to appear in the Herod family. The character of all three, under the title of 'the wicked' ('wicked one' for it is singular), is remarkably portrayed in Ps. x. They all essayed to efface from the earth the Lord Himself and His disciples. But 'the angel of the Lord' who delivered Peter from the prison at the first, smote Herod at the last, that he died, and immediately then the divine writer says, 'But the word of God grew and multiplied' (xii. 24). Thus showing that the door of repentance still remained open for Israel, and the testimony progressed. For the time of the final Antichrist had not yet come; but these were the shadows going before. However, had Israel received the Lord in faith as Messiah either at the first or at the last, the devil held the Herods in leash with 'the robbers of the people' to be let loose upon them (Dan. xi. 14). This, we think, is evident from Ps. x. and lxii. and other like Scriptures, and corroborated by the portraits given of the Herods in the New Testament. The religious and civil authorities at

Jerusalem had, however, now rejected the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to the Messiahship of Israel, and it remains to be known whether the tribes of *the dispersion* amongst the Gentiles will do so likewise. Thus chapter xii. ends the first division of the Book of *The Acts*. The tribes of the dispersion (διόσπορα) come next into view.

SECTION II.

The brilliant star which shines so remarkably in the firmament of God's designs, appears conspicuously in the following section of *The Acts* (from xiii. to xxviii.), viz., the way and means by which God brings good out of evil. The fact of the dispersion of the Tribes of Israel throughout the world, which originated in their sin and their captivity amongst the Gentiles, is now used so as to bring salvation to them and to the Gentiles. In the opening of chapter xiii. 'the Holy Ghost said, separate *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I called them.' (I have called them for myself προσκέκλημαι αὐτοῦς,) the personality of the Spirit being thus asserted. What the work was to be is not stated, but it comes out immediately after.

THE SYNAGOGUES OF THE JEWS.

The synagogues of the Jews throughout the provinces were now to be the channels through which the kingdom and salvation of God was to reach them and also the Gentiles. And those very synagogues had no standing in Moses or ordinance in Israel. They arose out of the circumstances of *the dispersion*, and probably after the failure of the second temple. They had their origin and foundation, most likely, in what the last of the prophets had said, who when testifying to the failure of the second temple, adds in conclusion, 'Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it,' etc. (Mal. iii. 16). In this way they acted, after the captivity, and especially when the Lord had promised that He Himself would be to the penitent 'a little sanctuary in all the countries where they shall come' (Ezek. xi. 16).

ST. PAUL'S CUSTOM.

St. Paul, therefore, 'as his custom was' (*κἀρα τὸ εἰωθὸς*), went first into the synagogues in all the cities of the Gentiles (see Acts ix. 20; xiii. 5-14-42-43; xiv. 1; xv. 21; xviii. 1-2), and there spoke to the 'men of Israel, and ye that fear God'—the latter being of course 'proselytes of the gate' (xiii. 16). The Proselytes of the Gate renounced idolatry and acknowledged the God of Israel as Creator. The Proselytes of 'righteousness' were circumcised and conformed to the Jewish ritual. We cannot say that in the Acts these are distinguished; but when such expressions occur as, 'ye that fear God,' and 'devout Greeks' and 'devout women,' etc. These all are converts to the synagogues among the Gentiles (xiii. 50; xviii. 7; xvii. 4, etc.). Thus the divine idea was to reach the Gentiles through the tribes of *the dispersion* in their synagogues, and bring Gospel salvation to the Gentiles along with Israel—'Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people,' as Moses had said.

The chronology in verses 19-20 of this chapter (Acts xiii.) is rectified in the Revised Version which the reader can see.

THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID.

In St. Paul's address at Antioch (Pisidia) we light on a very interesting and important passage (xiii. 32-34), in which he presents the Messiah to Israel in two aspects as the Son of God in His birth and the Son in resurrection, just as it is found in Heb. i. ii.—the Messiah in both aspects. He shows that God fulfilled His promise to the Fathers in having raised up Israel His Son, for Moses said, 'a prophet shall the Lord raise up unto you like unto me.' This refers to the incarnation, and the 2nd Psalm is quoted in proof—'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.' Then the Apostle adds—'and as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said I will give you the sure mercies of David' (see Revised Version). The word 'again' is not in verse 32, and it confuses the reader of the Old Version. The relations of *the Son of God* remained in incarnation unchanged. He was the Son of God in eternity as well as the Son of God in time, and also the Son of God in resurrection—and it is to the Son of God in time that Ps. ii. applies—'Thou art my Son, this day

have I begotten Thee'—and in this aspect 'He learnt obedience by the things which he suffered,' etc. (Heb. v. 5-8). And the unchangedness of these relations have a strong bearing on the Melchisedec Priesthood, of which we cannot now speak particularly. But in resurrection 'the sure mercies of David' are secured, and all the promises of God made to be 'yea and amen in Christ Jesus.' The Apostle in these verses thus distinguishes His incarnation and resurrection.

JUSTIFICATION.

One of the immediate mercies which St. Paul draws from the resurrection is couched in the following words: 'Be it known to you therefore brethren that through this Man is proclaimed to you remission of sins; and by Him everyone that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses' (Acts xiii. 39). Justification, in the teaching of St. Paul, has a twofold character, clearance from guilt; this is one aspect, as in this passage and also in Rom. iv. 6. And also the imputation of righteousness (Rom. iv.-v.). One is the inception, the other the complete and consummated character of it. There are many who take in the one and are quite con-

fused as to the other. But the word *reckon* or *impute* occurs no less than twelve times in Rom. iv. v. ; for the question is how God 'justifieth the ungodly' without works (Rom. iv. 5). So that whatever justification means this word (*λογιζομαι*) *impute* must be taken into account. Now, the old writers worked out the problem by what was called *the active and passive righteousness of Christ*. The *active* in application preceding the *passive*. Modern writers work out the problem by presenting the believer as a new man risen in Christ.* But with St. Paul it is not how a man risen in Christ is justified (which is quite another subject) but how God justifieth the ungodly. So that both these methods are open to fatal objections. The consequence is that the foundation stone not being laid in its true position, all sorts of doctrines are built upon it

* This view, when made to do service for *justification*, runs into *subjectivity*, and easily allies itself with the *infused righteousness* of Romanism and the *sinless perfection* of the *Perfectionists*. Indeed, its principal exponent, the leader of a large following (J. N. D.), was himself not satisfied with it, for he says, 'so when we connect our risen position with justifying, it is not logically exact,' and again, 'this is not properly justification,' etc. Obs. 'not logically exact,' and 'not properly justification.' Quite true! for one was as wrong as the other (see *Answer to the Record*, p. 47, reprinted from the 'Bible Treasury').

in wrong directions—such as the *sinless perfection* doctrine, the *annihilation* doctrine, and the doctrine of *universalism*. For ‘the strength of sin’ being lowered and reduced, the death of Christ must be reduced also. ‘The strength of sin is the law,’ the law in this aspect being the whole divine guide and standard of God in revelation (*Torah*. Heb., *nomos* Greek). And ‘the strength of sin’ being reduced, there must be found an outlet somewhere to satisfy conscience on the force of the divine statements respecting ‘eternal judgment.’ And so, one finds the outlet with a light heart in *sinless perfection*, another in *annihilism*, and another in *universalism* ! all of which reduce ‘the strength of sin,’ and the death obedience of Christ our Lord. But the happy part of it is that the simplest real believer in the Lord Jesus is justified, though his intelligence of ‘the righteousness of God’ as it is found in St. Paul, may be very defective indeed.

THE SYNAGOGUES IN ASIA.

However, as we read on in chapters xiii. and xiv., we find that ‘at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra’ the testimony is rejected and the witnesses persecuted

by the unbelieving Jews, but nevertheless the souls of the believing disciples were confirmed, and 'elders are ordained in every church.' In this way an outward corporate organization was established under divine governmental power, with the faith of the Messiah and the hope of His coming in the foreground. And the two apostles return to Antioch (Syria) 'whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled' (xiv. 22-28), and 'there they abode a long time with the disciples.' The prophecy of Ezekiel xi. 16 became thus fulfilled.

THE COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM.

But now the whole question of *circumcision* is referred up to the Apostles at Jerusalem (chap. xv.) and there determined. For Jerusalem remains the central and metropolitan city in *The Acts*; the Twelve Apostles holding it, so long as the question remains open with Israel regarding their Messiah, whether they will, or will not have Him (Jesus of Nazareth) to reign over them? It has been questioned whether 'the Apostles did right in remaining at Jerusalem, and whether a more simple faith would not have made them go away.' It is always

dangerous to criticise inspired men, for it assumes a superior inspiration on our part; but had the Apostles done any such thing, and left Jerusalem on the death of Stephen it would have altered the whole structure and character of the Book. For Jerusalem was the centre, being the 'holy city,' and 'City of the Great King,' and the Apostles were the centre in Jerusalem. And for this reason 'they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, unto the Apostles and Elders about this question,' viz., *circumcision* (xv. 2). And St. Peter, the leading apostle of the 'circumcision,' opens the council by declaring how that God made choice of him 'that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel and believe' (xv. 7). He refers of course to the case of Cornelius; and after this St. James makes a most important statement, quoting a consensus of Prophets in support of his conclusions.

MILLENNIAL GENTILES.

St. James says that 'Simeon (Peter) had declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name, and to

this agree (συμφωνῶσιν) the words of the prophets as it is written : After this I will return and build again the Tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruins thereof and set it up, that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles on whom my name is called,' etc. Here St. James brings forward a consensus ('symphony' is the Greek word) of prophets to prove to all present at Jerusalem that after the tabernacle of David should be again built up, the Gentiles, as Gentiles, would seek the Lord and His name be called upon them. The term *After this* or *Hereafter* (μετὰ ταῦτα) are not the words of the Apostle, but, of the Prophet whom he quotes. He combines portions in proof of his conclusion from Amos ix. 11, 12; Hos. iii. 5; Jer. xii. 15 (lxx.). 'The residue of men,' is the rendering of the Greek version, for 'the remnant of Edom' in our Bibles (Amos ix. 12), *Edom* and *Adam* being so like in the original language; anyway the idea is the same. The Apostle's argument went to show that when Messiah was received by Israel (as expected) the Tabernacle of David would be set up; and then Gentiles, as Gentiles, and not as proselytes, were to flock in. That when Jerusalem and Mount Zion were restored, the nations would

come up to 'the joy of the whole earth,' and to this their own Prophets bore witness. And consequently the conclusion which he draws from it is as follows :

NATURE OF THE JERUSALEM DECREES.

'Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. But that we write unto them that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.' And so the decrees of the Council run thus :

'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things—that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication ; from which if ye keep yourselves ye shall do well,' etc. (xv. 19, 20, 21, 28, 29).

These decrees go forth as from 'the Apostles and elders, with the whole Church.' And Paul

and Timothy deliver those Decrees through the cities to be kept by them (xvi. 4). Now it is quite clear that this is not the ground taken as the expression of Christian Doctrine in any of the Epistles of St. Paul which come after. In the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, the Christians, from both Jews and Gentiles, are swept clean out of 'meats and drinks, and days and months, and times and years,' as well as out of 'circumcision' (Rom. xiv. 17, Gal. iv. 10, etc.), and are made partakers of a 'heavenly calling,' altogether outside the conditions of 'a worldly sanctuary' and an earthly religion.* So that St. James' 'sentence' runs entirely on the lines of Moses and the Prophets.

* In his *Introduction to the New Testament*, Dr. Salmon shows his usual patient discrimination. Adverting to St. Paul's course, he uses the following language: 'And here let me say, in passing, that I cannot agree with some orthodox interpreters, who regard the part which Paul took by James's advice in the Nazarite vow, on his last visit to Jerusalem, as deceitful on his part, and as is in its result a failure. St Luke's representation all through is, that though Paul resisted the imposition of the Mosaic law on Gentiles, he did not forbid the practice of its observances by the Jews; and it was as a practical proof of this that he exhibited himself in the Temple, taking part in a Jewish sacrifice. Nor do I see reason to regard this step as unsuccessful' (p. 385).

CIRCUMCISION.

Chapter xvi. opens with the circumcision of Timothy, whose mother, *Eunice*, was a Jewess. This was in keeping with the Jerusalem Council, and to which St. James refers (Acts xxi. 20, 25). For whilst the overture of God in long suffering remains open with Israel respecting Messiah, the law of Moses holds sway. The last of the Prophets, speaking of the people being prepared for the Lord, says, 'Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments' (Mal. iv.). For this reason circumcision and other ordinances, such as vows and offerings, appear in *The Acts* as matters of course, and without any adverse comment made upon them. But when 'the heavenly calling' comes out with St. Paul, after the Messianic question is closed with Israel then 'circumcision' has no place, and the ordinances of Moses become 'the rudiments of the world,' and are called 'carnal.' And even Mount Sinai, which is in the Old Testament styled 'the Mount of God,' is called 'Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is, for

she is in bondage with her children,' etc. (Gal. iv. R. V.).

But to proceed with the subject before us, St. Paul is forbidden for the moment to preach in Asia, and a man of Macedonia appears to him in a vision inviting him into Europe. Strange to say his first convert in Europe, when he comes to Philippi in Macedonia, is an Asiatic. 'Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken of Paul, and when 'she was baptized, and her household,' she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house,' etc. (Acts xvi. 14, 15). Observe, '*household*' here should be '*house* !'

HOUSE AND HOUSEHOLD.

The reader will perceive the collective character attached to the salvation. Lydia was baptized, and her *house*. To the jailer at Philippi it is said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy *house*,' and 'Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with *all his house*' (xviii. 8). It reminds us also of what

the Lord said of Zaccheus in the Gospel, 'This day is salvation come to this *house*,' etc. (Luke xix.). For the Prophets had said of the time of Messiah — 'At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people' (Jer. xxxi. 1). And the disciples consequently were commissioned to 'go and make disciples of all nations, from Jerusalem to Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.' Hence the testimony was of the collective family and national type at this time, operating under the covenant made with Abraham, that 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.'

And whilst nations, as nations, are contemplated, the form of it should take this type of course and no other. The covenant, as such, was collective. And so when the head of the house, or family surrendered to the claims of the Messiah, the whole house was included in the covenant, just as in the night of the destroying angel in Egypt, each house as such was covered by the blood on the door-post. And so now the Apostle says, with Divine authority, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and *thy house*,' etc.

NATIONAL PROSPECTS.

It was on the principle of the promise made to Abraham—and here we must trouble the reader with a criticism, but will make it as brief and simple as we can. The words *house* and *household* are kindred words, but not convertible terms, though the English versions treat them as identical. The *house* properly refers to the parents and children only. The *household* includes the whole surroundings, the parents and children with the inmates, servants, and retainers—a distinction clearly pointed out by Aristotle (Pol. i. 1 c. 2). Hence when the Apostle announced to the jailor salvation for him and his *house* (οἶκός) it is then added, 'They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his *household*' (οἶκία αὐτοῦ) (Acts xvi. 32). The LXX. observe the same distinction in the Old Testament, see Gen. xviii. 19, 'his children and his household.' In 1 Cor. i. 16 it should be *house* not *household*. In short, the *household* included *the house* and all its belongings, whilst the *house*, when specified refers only to the immediate family, who were all baptized, being

included in the covenant ; for the promise, as St. Peter said, is 'to you and to your children.' And it is remarkable that whilst Timothy is said to be circumcised, no mention is made of his baptism. This may be accounted for by the circumstance that in *The Acts* the ordinance runs on the lines of the *circumcision*, the prospect being national respecting Israel and the Gentiles also.

THE PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION OF THE GREEKS.

In the next chapters, xvi., xvii.-xix., the Apostle encounters, confronts, and discomfits the powers of the darkness of the Gentile world. (1) The *Pythoness* or serpent of the great Delphic oracle (Pathan serpent, Hebrew) ; (2) The *Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers*, and (3) *Idolatry* as connected with the great goddess, Diana of Ephesus, whose temple was one of the seven wonders of the world. Thus *Demonology, Philosophy and Idolatry* are attacked and confronted in their strongholds—'The stronger than the strong man enters the house and spoils his goods.' A foretaste was thus given of that Divine power and wisdom which is

finally to dislodge all the wisdom of the serpent and all the works of the devil.

Now the Epicurean and Stoic Philosophy was the Gentile counterpart of the Sadducean and Pharisaic principles in Judaism, *pleasure* and *pride* characterising both those schools. And with those principles the Gospel of Christ had then to contend, and will always have to contend in this world till the Lord comes. Principles all the more potent when they are backed up by a religion or a philosophy, as was the case then and now also.

THE PERSONALITY OF CHRISTIANITY.

It is true that philosophy in a Christian garb overtakes us in these days also; and in the words of the Bishop of Derry, 'Moralists and philanthropists make their appeal in the name of *principles* or of *ideas*. They efface their own personality before *principles* of charity or patriotism or general good—at least they profess to do so,' etc., and he pictures a philosophic moralist, addressing his audience thus—'I speak in full possession of those principles which contain in themselves the germ of their own accomplishment. This which I announce is a law of things,

a result of experience, the unfailing consequence of premises which cannot be denied.' 'On the contrary, principles are effaced before the personality of Christ. I do not mean that they cease to exist, but that they are absorbed in Him. Read the description of the last Judgment (Matt. xxv.). The general principle of compassion, of charity, is swallowed up in the relation of the act to Christ. In this *altruism*, the *alter* is Christ. I was an hungered and ye gave *me* meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave *me* drink,' etc.*

This is most true, for Christianity puts our Lord in the foreground as the personal object in all actions that belong to it. But religious philosophy puts man and the benefits accruing to mankind in the foreground. Man is the supreme object for whose interests and predilections the real object of Christianity (which is Christ Himself), is to be placed at a distance as an example and an ornament to be admired, but little more. The result of this form of Christianity, philanthropy and morality is that man will by-and-by worship himself and wind up as St. Paul tells us, in 'the man of sin, sitting in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God' (2 Thess. ii. 4).

* *Divinity of our Lord*, pp. 79-81.

THE DECISIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS.

But how very like were the decisions of the former philosophers to those of the present day. The Athenian philosophers looked on St. Paul as a 'babbling,' and 'when they heard of the resurrection of the dead some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter' (xvii. 32). Agnosticism had its representatives in those days also; and when the Town Clerk at Ephesus, no doubt then a very great man, pleaded for the great goddess Diana (xix.), and deciding in the most pronounced manner, says '*Seeing that these things cannot be spoken against,*' we imagine ourselves transported from Athens and Ephesus to London, and think that we are listening to the language of our own philosophers on the Creation, such as Huxley, Spencer, and Arnold, etc. In fact so far as religion is concerned there is presented as much strength in the decisions of the former philosophers as in their later brethren, and as of old, their decisive conclusions satisfy their followers!

THE DECISIONS OF CHRIST.

However, any real Christians are satisfied only with the decisions of Him Whom they believe to be the Son of God, Who when on earth His action and manner was that of absolute unhesitating self-abnegation, but His teaching that of absolute unhesitating self-assertion. There are no less than twenty-five double *Amens* (verily, verily) as pre-ludes to His sentences in the Gospel of St. John, and no less than thirty *Amens* in the Gospel of Matthew. He makes all truth and wisdom and life and righteousness and doctrine to centre in Himself.

If it is truth—‘I am the truth.’

If it is wisdom—‘Thus saith the wisdom of God.’

If it is life—‘I am the life.’

If it is righteousness—‘He (the Spirit) shall convict the world of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye see Me no more.’

If it is the truth of the resurrection—‘I am the resurrection and the life.’

If it is the Judgment—‘All judgment is given to

the Son,' and 'As I hear I judge, and My judgment is just,' etc.*

Thus we see that all doctrine, all principles, all springs of action, and all motives find their personality in Him. He personifies them, and is the living personation of them, otherwise they are mere abstractions or doctrines or motives, good in themselves, but without objective life force—and this is just the difference between philosophy and Christianity. Philosophy is impersonal and abstract; Christianity is personal and concrete, having the Lord Himself as its motive and spring of action. In short, unless it can be said respecting all that is done upon earth (however good in itself), 'Ye have done it unto Me,' it will be but 'goat's' religion, and of no value with God in the Day of Judgment. Thus we see that there is no philosophy and no teaching so absolute, so unhesitating, so self-assertive as that of the Son of God—proving to us absolutely that He is God and Alpha and Omega to us. (See Matt. xxv. 45.)

* The reader will observe that wherever the term *Christ* occurs in *The Acts* in the *Auth. Ver.*, it should be *the Christ*, the Messiah of Moses and the prophets; for the article is always present.

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

We next come, and confine ourselves, to the remarkably instructive chapter, Acts xx. The first day of the week holds a place in Scripture of the greatest significance. (1) It was on the first day of the week that the Lord called light out of darkness. (2) It was on the first day of the week that our Lord rose from the dead. (3) It was on the first day of the week, the day of Pentecost, on which the Holy Ghost descended on the disciples. (4) It was on the first day of the week that the disciples came together to break bread. (5) It was on the first day of the week that the saints were exhorted to lay by help for the poorer brethren. (6) And it was on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, that St. John had in Patmos the great vision of the Apocalypse, which winds up with the 'new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.' Now this last is actually the 'eighth day' in the Mosaic ordinance; it came in after the Sabbath, or seventh day, and so was the first day of a new week, ushering in a new condition of things. There was a mystery therefore attaching to it, as Justin Martyr says, when speaking

of circumcision on the eighth day: 'I can prove that God has by these means discovered to us that the eighth day contains some greater mystery in it than this. Moreover, the precept of circumcision, by which we are circumcised from sin and error through Him Who rose again from the dead on the first day of the week—the first of all days; but when all the days of the week are gone regularly round again in their course, it is called the eighth day, and yet still continues to be, as it really is, the first day,' etc. So far Justin Martyr. And so the *first day* appears in seven separate instances in Scripture.

THE NEW CREATION.

Now the first day of the week was the symbol of 'the new creation,' or of that condition of things which, beginning with 'a firstfruits,' never stops its potential capacity until the whole creation, delivered from the bondage of corruption, reaches 'the liberty of the glory of the children of God' (Rom. viii. 21). It begins with Christ 'the first-born from the dead,' and 'firstfruits of them that sleep,' working within till 'the Kingdom comes when His power will be manifested, all enemies

subdued, and God is all in all' (1 Cor. xv. 20-30). This day is therefore the symbol of the new creation, and which began with our Lord Himself in that new condition of life and immortality—which the Christians observed; for on that day, as we are told, 'the disciples came together to break bread.' It was to memorialize the death of Him Who destroyed death, 'until He come;' having thus in it both a retrospective and prospective aspect, when 'all things are made new.'

The Sabbath day, on the other hand, was the symbol and witness for God as the Creator, Who 'rested on the seventh day from all His works.' The old creation, thus made, and called 'very good,' lapsed morally, bringing in sin and death in its train. And consequently our Lord lay in death on the Sabbath day, and thus it finished up in judgment the power of death on the old creation. Therefore the death of Christ our Lord declared rather the triumph of death and sin than their destruction. It is in the resurrection we discern the victory. Hence the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, is to be observed to the Lord, containing in it the expression of the triumph and potentiality of resurrection ever after and all that belongs to it. The Sabbath day thus ended judicially

and morally the 'old creation' in our Lord's death ; whereas the first day of the week ushered in judicially and physically 'the new creation' in His resurrection, beginning with the Church of the firstborn, afterwards Israel, then the Gentiles.

THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

From Miletus, St. Paul sent to Ephesus and called the *Elders* of the Church, and they having come, he reminds them of his manner of life, and how he taught them publicly and in the various groups of saints gathered 'from house to house,' where those Elders had charge. Those groups or *Houses* are seen conspicuously in the last chapter of Romans. The Apostle, referring them to his tears and labours, adds : ' I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,' etc. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God, ' the whole counsel of God ' (Acts xx. 20-27, R. V.). What ' the whole counsel of God ' was, we are not told here. It was one of those things on which this wonderful book observes intentional silence. But we may gather what it was from similar language used in the Epistle to the Ephe-

sians afterwards, and we are not left in much doubt about it. Here to the Elders of Ephesus he refers to the whole counsel of God (*πάσαν τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ*); and when unfolding to the Ephesians the remarkable divine purposes to be carried out by God, he adds: 'Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will' (*κατὰ τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματός αὐτοῦ*, Eph. i. 11)—language so very like to the Acts that we must presume they had the same reference.

'THE PILLARS' AT JERUSALEM.

If we take this view of the subject, we find that St. Paul did with 'the Elders of Ephesus' precisely the same as he did with 'the Pillars' at Jerusalem, both cities being the religious centres of the Gentile and Jewish world at the time. He went up 'by revelation to Jerusalem, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them of reputation, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain.' He confines himself to 'the Pillars' of the Church, as he styles them (Gal. ii.). What, then, is meant by this course of action? It is this: that while St. Paul was publicly preaching the claims of

Messiah to the Tribes of Israel in their several cities, he took 'the Elders' and 'Pillars'—in other words, the matured Christians, the elder teachers of the communities—and unfolded to them the nature of 'the heavenly calling,' and the purposes of God in Christ which were 'hidden in God from before the foundation of the world' (Eph. i. ii. iii.); purposes and revelations that were about to come to the front when the question of 'the Kingdom' was closed with Israel. These unfoldings related to 'the whole counsel of God' put before the Elders of Ephesus, and what he styles as 'my Gospel' 'laid before the Pillars' at Jerusalem. And these were finally to carry the Christians into new relations, and out of all earthly ritual belonging to 'a worldly sanctuary.' These things would have been too 'strong meat' for the multitude at the time, and overthrow such faith as they had, and the Apostle felt consequently that to attempt it would be 'running in vain.' Nor do we ourselves propose to deal with those subjects in these articles, as the main theme before us is that of the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel. But when this question comes to an end, afterwards the Apostle does say 'a dispensation (or economy, *οικονομία*) of the Gospel is committed unto me' (1 Cor. ix. 17).

This does not mean a mere stewardship entrusted to Paul, but a new divine arrangement was now revealed by God, and entrusted to him, as he says in another place, for 'to make all men see what is the dispensation (economy, *οἰκονομία*) of the mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God' (Eph. iii. 7, R.V.). Such was the nature of what St. Paul calls 'my Gospel,' and also again 'the whole counsel of God'—an economy or dispensation of God that could not be worked into the narrative of the Acts, as the time for it had not come yet.

And on this prefatory nature of *The Acts of the Apostles* Dr. Salmon has the following judicious remarks: 'But unless we suppose that St. Luke projected a third work, which he did not live to execute, I find it hard to explain his silence as to the deeply interesting period of Church history which followed Paul's arrival at Rome in any other way than by assigning a very early date to the book' (p. 391). And again: 'We conclude, then, that this book must have been written before the period when Paul's letters had passed from being the special property of the several churches to which they were addressed, and had become the general property of Christians. Secondly, the

Acts not only do not mention Paul's Epistles, but show very scanty signs of acquaintance with them' (*Introduc. N. T.*, by G. Salmon, D.D., Regius Professor of Divinity, p. 402). This is most true, and an additional evidence, that whilst the question of 'the Kingdom' is not finally closed with Israel, *The Acts* confines itself mainly to that question, nor were the Christians as yet prepared for anything further.

THE CHURCH OF GOD.

But at the end of the chapter (Acts xx. 28 to end) we light on an episodal address relating to 'the Church of God,' with a prophetic intimation of what was to come on after the Apostle himself was off the scene; what was to come on at least in the Episcopate, and like to what the Apostle afterwards informs Timothy (who was 'left at Ephesus') would mark the profession of Christianity in the end (1 Tim. iv. ; 2 Tim. iii.). This charge to 'the Elders' at Ephesus is episodal, and in this respect resembles the shipwreck of St. Paul, of which we shall speak by-and-by. It is the only address in the Acts directly relating to the Church as such, the other addresses being to Israel and the Gentiles. It runs as follows: 'Take heed therefore

unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers (or bishops, ἐπισκόπους) to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood (ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ ἁίματος τοῦ ἰδίου). For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them, etc., etc. I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.'

One may ask, and it has often been asked, which of those marks and tokens, of what is called 'Apostolic Succession,' was most likely to succeed, and did absolutely succeed in the Church history that came afterwards?

Here the Holy Ghost was not the secondary but the absolute agent who set (ordained ἔθετο) them over the Church, and it was the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood, so that it was all real and spiritual at the first any way, and in line corporately with the heavenly election.

But the way in which the Apostle views the

Lord's atonement on the side of His deity is here very remarkable; the connection is similar to that in Heb. i. 3, and ix. 14, both of which passages view the sacrifice in the same aspect. The verb *purchased* being in the middle voice, and two articles used, the passage should run, 'The Church of God which He hath purchased for Himself with His own blood.' In fact it is a quotation from the Greek version of Isa. xliii. 21—'My people whom I purchased for myself, that they might show forth my praise.' St. Paul quotes the former part and St. Peter the latter part of the verse (1 Peter ii. 9), 'A purchased people to show forth the praises,' etc. In the English Bible, which is taken from the Hebrew, it runs thus, 'This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.' It is Jehovah who speaks, and therefore the emphasis is on God—'The Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood'—identifying Christ at once as God—some MSS. have *Lord*, which in reality makes no difference, for *Lord* (*κύριος*) always stands for Jehovah in LXX. But the best editors and commentators retain *God* in the text, and indeed the passage has been always looked at as one of the foundation texts in asserting our Lord's deity. And a precious rock it is

for a believing sinner to rest on when he contemplates who the person was that redeemed him.*

* The Unitarians try to get rid of Acts xx. 28 in two ways: (1) By forcing the words and straining the language, and (2) by bringing up *Athanasius*; both of which are worse than futile. The two articles in Greek accompanying the word *own* gives a warrant, they say, to introduce the word *son*, which is not in the original at all. They forget that in the idiom of the language two articles usually accompany the word *own* and emphasize it, as the following examples will show:—Judas went to *his own* place' (Acts i. 25), and they 'put *his own* clothes on him' (Mark xv. 20). 'He first findeth *his own* brother Simon' (John i. 41). 'If another shall come in *his own* name' (John v. 43). In these passages the word *own* is accompanied by two articles and always rendered *his own*. The construction is the same here, and Gilbert Wakefield, the famous Unitarian translator, was so sensible of the incongruity, that he honestly gives the true reason for adding to it 'his own son.' He says the words are 'literally *his own blood*;' but as this expression could answer no 'good purpose, and would unavoidably lead those unacquainted with the *phrasology* of these languages into erroneous doctrines and impious conceptions of the Deity, I could not justify myself in employing it in this place' (*New Testament*, translated by G. Wakefield, vol. ii., p. 387). (2) *Athanasius* is quoted with triumph by another famous Unitarian minister, Mr. Belsham, and others beside him who say that 'the expression, *the blood of God*, is rejected with horror by *Athanasius* as an invention of the Arians;' and, again, 'Our Scriptures, says *Athanasius*, nowhere mention the blood of God' (*Calm Inquiry*, p. 141; see also *New Testament*, by J. N. D.).

Will it be believed that *Athanasius* never said any such

ST. PAUL AND THE PROPHETS.

THE chief incidents in chapter xxi. we shall now briefly consider. The Prophets *by the Spirit* said to Paul, 'That he should not go up to Jerusalem,' and *Agabus* took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, to signify that Paul would be thus bound at Jerusalem and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles'—all of which came to pass. But the love of Christ constrains Paul to go up to Jerusalem notwithstanding, for he was willing 'not only to be bound, but to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.' On this the Prophets ceased and said, 'The will of our Lord be done.' When we look at the case, the difficulty vanishes in the light of our Lord's own injunction: 'When they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another.' And

thing? What Athanasius did say was, 'The Scriptures nowhere speak of the blood of God *apart from flesh*' (*δίχα σαρκός*). Now the omission by Mr. Belsham of the last words of Athanasius destroys the whole sentence and misrepresents it altogether. And again Athanasius says, 'But the Holy Scriptures, speaking of God in the flesh and the flesh of God, when He became man, do mention the blood and sufferings and resurrection of the body of God' (*Burton's Testimonies of the Antenicene Fathers*, pp. 20-22, where the original is quoted).

many missionaries since Paul's day have braved the persecution rather than leave their post. Now, the Lord's 'service being perfect freedom,' He does not lay upon His servants burdens not to be borne, and it would have been good and right for Paul to avoid going to Jerusalem in consideration of himself. For it was on this ground the Prophets put it, and it was quite correct and in keeping with our Lord's own consideration for His servants. But then comes in the beautiful picture of the servant not caring for 'his own life' in comparison with the interest of his master (see also Phil. ii. 20-30); and he overrides the words of the Prophets, who were influenced also by personal considerations. This is plain from Paul's answer (verse 13). And so we find afterwards the Lord Himself approving the action of His faithful servant (in chap. xxiii. 11), 'And the night following the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome,' the Lord thus setting His seal to the course taken by the Apostle at Jerusalem on this occasion.

ST. JAMES AND THE ELDERS.

But what was this course? He goes into James and the Elders—who were the centres of the Council whence the *decrees* issued (chap. xxi. 18), which decrees St. Paul carried with him to the different cities. Now, St. James and the Elders tell him that there are ‘many thousands of Jews who believe, and they are all zealous for the law, and they hear of thee that thou tellest them, to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children.’ This commandment was given to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles—who were enjoined only to abstain from the defiling practices that belonged to the Gentile religion. They then counsel Paul to take a vow on him in deference to those who were zealous for the law, and this he does as he already did at Cenchrea (xvii. 18), and goes into the Temple in prosecution of it. (See Mal. iv. 4.) For divine wisdom lay in not suddenly forcing them out of what God Himself had instituted, till the time for it arrived.

THE JEWS OF ASIA.

St. Paul then, at the instance of the Apostles, at Jerusalem, goes into the Temple, whereupon the

Jews which were of Asia stirred up the people, and they laid hands on him' (27). But why are the Jews from Asia specified? Why do they appear now in front? (See also xxiv. 18.) To denote that the testimony of Messiah, as borne by Paul, was now mainly addressed to the Tribes dispersed abroad, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The Jews of Asia thus refuse and resent the testimony, in the person of the messengers, with the same hostility as the Jews of Jerusalem. Their hostility on this occasion eventuates in Paul being sent to prison, and from thence to Rome. He is brought first before the Chief Captain (xxi., xxii.); then before the Council (xxiii.); then before Felix (xxiv.); then before Festus (xxv.); then before Agrippa (xxvi.); and finally sent before Cæsar to Rome (xxvii. and xxviii.).

In all this *the Jews who were of Asia* were the prime movers.

ANANIAS.

In Paul's address to his brethren, in presence of the Chief Captain (chap. xxii.), he refers to 'Ananias, a devout man according to the law,' who said unto Paul that 'the God of our fathers had chosen thee,'

etc., etc. 'For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord' (xxii. 12, 16). After this the Chief Captain brings him before the Council, and when the Jews conspire to kill him, the Chief Captain sends him under a guard of soldiers to Cæsarea to Felix.

BAPTISM.

We must now look back for a moment, and observe that Ananias refers to Paul having personally seen and heard the Lord Himself. Then he adds, 'And now why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, having called on the name of the Lord.' Observe last clause, 'Having called on,' etc. (aorist participle, which takes precedence in time of the other verbs), and this is plain from the narrative itself, for Saul saw and heard and called on the name of the Lord Himself, in the way to Damascus, before he met Ananias at all. And St. Paul afterwards teaches that 'whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom. x. 13), where no

mention of baptism is made—what then? Ananias referred to the ordinance of baptism as denoting purification and Christian discipleship, not unlike that of John the Baptist (see John iii. 23, iv. 1). And the whole matter referred back to what Isaiah had said: ‘Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well’ (Isa. i. 16). All of which is very far indeed from saying that the virtue was in the external rite, as in Ritualism. And this form of language is often found in Scripture, as, for example, in Lev. xiii., where the priest is said to defile or *unclean* the leper (*μιάσινει αὐτόν*), which means to pronounce him unclean, and to *clean* the leper, when it means to pronounce him clean, for no priest or ordinance could cleanse a leper in Israel. The rite followed the cleansing. So is it also in the rite of baptism.

MISREADING OF SCRIPTURE.

Men have perplexed themselves over the above passage, as on many others. But it has been said: ‘Nor is the perplexity of commentators, in the case of the Bible, or any other writing, a neces-

sary index of the obscurity of the writers. Misreading of Scripture, no less than misreading of Plato, may come, and in point of fact does come, more frequently from reading into them ideas of our own rather than from any real obscurity in the texts themselves.' This observation, made by a recent writer, is most true. For instance, if we adopt Ritualism and read our own ideas into this passage, and insist that baptism washes away sins, we are forgetful that, if so, St. Paul must of necessity contradict himself outright; for in speaking of the Kingdom of God, he says to the Corinthians 'that neither thieves, nor drunkards, nor extortioners' enter into it, adding, 'and such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. vi. 10, 11). Here he uses the same word as Ananias—wash away (*ἀπελούσασθε*), yet makes no mention at all of baptism for the remission of sins. And it is even far more evident, for he says to the same Church: 'I thank God I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, etc., for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (1 Cor. i. 14-17). This language would be, if Ritualism were true, equivalent to saying, 'I thank God I saved so few of you, for Christ sent me

not to save men or to have their sins washed away,' etc. Now, any theory which can be reduced to this absurdity is condemned on the face of it. The very nature of Christianity refuses the idea of putting virtue in a rite or an ordinance; whilst they are useful and needed in giving the senses an outward expression of the inward consciousness—an external 'figure' of the answer of a good conscience by means of Christ's resurrection, from the dead as St. Peter puts it (1 Pet. iii. 21). On the other hand, the pressing of the rite on adults as a *sine qua non* of 'obedience,' makes it equivalent to saying, 'For Christ sent me not to make persons obedient,' etc., which in the mouth of St. Paul would be equally extraordinary.

Other reasons may be given for it, and at the first it was a profession of Christianity under difficulties; but of which now all are outward partakers without any difficulty under present circumstances.

PROVIDENCE INTERFERING ACTIVELY.

In chapter xxiii.-iv., the Chief Captain sends Paul under an escort to Cæsarea to Felix, who holds a court of inquiry, with Paul's accusers

present. And in this way the testimony of the Messiah, now risen from the dead, is a second time brought before 'Gentiles, kings, and the people of Israel,' just as Ananias had said unto Paul—and this may be called the subjective testimony, with 'the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,' even as our Lord Himself gave the objective testimony to the same classes (1 Tim. vi. 14). God in this way showing His patience and longsuffering before closing the question. And it is observable that, in the providence of God, angels and human powers are used of Him in the preservation of His servants all through the Acts. At the first, Peter was delivered from prison by an angel; and now the Chief Captain and his solidiers, and the Roman tribunals protect Paul. Neither of these Apostles demanded that the angelic or the human power were to deliver them in this way from the wrath of their enemies, as they were both willing to suffer death for His name sake. But when the providence of God wrought in this fashion, they accepted the protection, and took it from God directly. Of course this is quite a different thing from calling upon or putting forward the power of the world on the part of an evangelist in order to protect the Gospel. Much less does the Gospel

contemplate the Christian himself becoming an instrument to protect or propagate it with the sword of power. There is no Scripture to support a Christian in any such course, nor could there be, for it would be the antithesis of Christianity itself in practical action. (See Rev. xii. 11.)

DEADLY HOSTILITY OF PAUL'S ACCUSERS.

Seizing still the salient points only, we look at chapters xxv.-vi., when Festus comes up from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, and the notoriety of St. Paul's labours again had drawn out the animosity of the High Priest and the Jews in the central city. 'They informed him against Paul, and desired that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him;' but Festus answered that 'Paul should be kept at Cæsarea,' etc. (xxv. 2-4). Festus then obliges the Jews to go down to Cæsarea, the political capital of the country under the Romans, and there sits on the judgment seat, having Paul and his accusers before him. They laid many and grievous charges against Paul; and when it is proposed to him to go to Jerusalem, and there be judged, he then appeals to Cæsar.

'A PUBLIC EVILDOER.

Paul does not appeal to Cæsar to save his life, much less that Cæsar might favour his mission; neither one nor the other; but being publicly accused as an *evildoer*, he did not want to 'suffer as an evildoer.' He says, 'If I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these things whereof they accuse me, no man can give me up to them. I appeal unto Cæsar' (xxv. 9-11), and Festus said, 'Unto Cæsar shalt thou go.' In this way the reader cannot but see the overruling providence of God, using the very accusations of Paul's enemies, both for his preservation and for furthering and making known the testimony of Messiah to the rulers and kings of the Gentiles. Paul is committed on the ground of *evildoing*, the only ground on which the Romans could entertain their accusations; but it turns out that the *evildoing* consisted in another matter altogether.

FESTUS AND AGRIPPA.

Festus gives to King Agrippa, who comes to Cæsarea, an account of the *evildoing* whereof Paul was accused by the Jews, and winds up thus: 'Against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed; but had certain questions against him of their own religion, and of one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive; and because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters,' etc. (xxv. 18-25, R.V.). Festus then brings Paul to Agrippa, who is desirous on his own account to hear Paul, and comes down 'with great pomp, with the chief captains and principal men of the city,' and Paul is brought before the whole court, Festus introducing him as the one about whom the multitude of Jews were crying that he ought not to live any longer.'

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.

God now gives opportunity to His servant to plead before this large court of kings and rulers the

claims of the Messiah of Israel who was to 'suffer and rise from the dead, and show light unto the people (the Jews) and to the Gentiles,' as declared by Moses and the Prophets, averring that he was now judged not for *evildoing*, but for 'the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers, unto which promise our twelve tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come—for which hope sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews' (xxvi. 5, 6, 22, 23). His pleading was so powerful that 'Agrippa said unto Paul: Almost thou persuadedst me to be a Christian.'

FELIX, FESTUS, AND AGRIPPA.

We have in these three magnates a sample of how the testimony of Jesus as Messiah affected the rulers of the Gentiles. Felix trembled when Paul pressed on him the great preparations for 'the kingdom,' righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,—similar to the preaching of the Baptist at the first in the Gospels. Festus affected to treat the subject more philosophically, as he speaks of 'one Jesus who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive.' But adds, 'Because I

doubted of such manner of questions,' etc. Here this ruler is in doubt and perplexity, and desirous of freeing himself of the responsibility of condemning Paul, sends him to others. Thus Festus is unhinged by the testimony of the Messiah, whilst Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian, and Felix trembled. But there it stops. Do we not see in those three men the effect produced on the chief of the heathen world at the time? and because of not accepting the truth, they come in the end under the Messiah's pronouncement, 'He that is not with me is against me.' For now the question was if the rulers would finally decide against the Messiah, as in Psa. ii. As in this sense the question was left open to the Rulers of the Gentiles also.

THE TWELVE TRIBES AND THE TWELVE LOAVES OF THE SHEWBREAD.

St. Paul, before Agrippa, speaking of the hope of Israel, utters a remarkable sentence: 'Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come' (το δωδεκάφυλλον, the *twelve-tribed people* using a singular noun to

dénote unity). He speaks of them though 'scattered abroad,' as having a unified existence before God, and a living solidarity awaiting the hope of the Kingdom—and why? Because they are 'beloved for the fathers' sakes.' And though St. Paul knew they were a scattered people, he yet speaks of them in unity, as maintaining living freshness in relation to the promises. Now, this is just what the twelve loaves of 'the shewbread,' or 'bread of faces,' signified, if we mistake not. The golden table was the base or ground on which they lay—the objective base or foundation, typifying Christ, of course. The twelve loaves themselves, composed of 'the staff of life,' with frankincense, took the form of 'the meal offering,' an offering made by fire to the Lord (Ex. xxv.; Lev. xxiv.). This was the sweet savor aspect, so to speak. The loaves were placed before the Lord, afresh every seven days, and then taken away and eaten by the priests. They formed the Lord's portion, as it were, in the first instance ('the Lord's portion is His people'). And in the second degree that of the priests, who, as representing the people, were always to have the sense of the unity of Israel on their hearts, as St. Paul had here, for they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes, though under judgment. But be-

loved by whom? Beloved of God, for the fathers' sakes, for God does not change. How wonderful to think that this poor, despised and scattered people are still before God in unity, and loved by Him. And Paul had one mind with God about them; for, as we read elsewhere, he had 'great heaviness and continued sorrow of heart' for his brethren after the flesh. In this way God and Paul (as it were) were at one about this nation, and had satisfaction and pleasure in view of their future (Rom. xi.). Observe—To feed on anything, in Scripture language, means to find satisfaction and pleasure therein.

The Hebrew rendering is *Bread of faces or presence*. The LXX. renders it (ἄρτους ἐνώπιους) *Front placed loaves*. The New Testament has it (ἡ προθεσις τῶν ἄρτων) *The placing of the loaves* (Heb. ix. 3), translated in the common version '*Shewbread*.' But all this the Jews abused, and when David says, 'Let their table be made a snare and a trap, and a stumbling block, and a recompense unto them' (Rom. xi. 9), what does he mean, and to what table does he refer? Is it not to the table of shewbread? and to signify that Israel would afterwards boast of being Abraham's children, when the very solidarity of their nation

would blind their eyes ; glorying in their descent from the one Father ; and substituting the table for true conversion to God. In other words, resting in traditional privileges and a formal religion, which would become a stumbling block unto them, and be quite content therewith. Was not that their condition and state in our Lord's time? and such became the table of shewbread unto them a stumbling-block, as the Prophet says !

DESIGN.

Those who find in the Acts *the beginning of the Church's life*, and that the 'Church of God' is delineated therein, must be sorely puzzled at its omissions and selections. Why some things are related with a fulness of detail and others omitted or lightly touched upon ; why St. Paul's visit to Arabia, and the three years (Gal. i.) are omitted, and his voyage and shipwreck in the Adriatic minutely related ; why the founding of the Churches of Galatia (Gal. iv.) and of Corinth, where he remained 18 months (Acts xviii.), are but scantily mentioned, whilst his address in Antioch is given *in extenso* ; why his missionary journeys 'from Jerusalem and round about into Illyricum' are

unrecorded, but his entrance into the several synagogues carefully noted. This is all unaccountable on proper Church ground, and the ground on which the book is usually interpreted, so that the German Rationalists take advantage of the common interpretation to show that the book was a forgery. And that if it were written to give Church history, why close abruptly with Paul in prison, and the issue left uncertain? But, as to 'the Church of God,' it only appears in the *Acts* in embryo, as it were; and its history to come after is referred to in an episodal form, whilst the main subject of the book is to declare that 'Christ hath been made the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that He might confirm the promises given unto the Fathers' (Rom. xv. R. V.) Such is the design of the book in connection with Messiah's kingdom promised to the Fathers.

THE GENTILE SHIP, EPISODAL.

For this reason we cannot help thinking that in chap. xxvii. St. Paul's shipwreck is episodal and prophetic, giving in figure the fortunes and vicissitudes of the Church in the Gentile or heathen vessel. In the end, this Gentile ship, having thrown overboard

all her cargo, gear, tackle and boat, goes to pieces and is broken up, whilst the individual safety of the companions of Paul is secured. The termination of the overtures to Israel respecting the kingdom now coming to a close—the fortunes of what was to succeed—are given in symbolic incidents (with the Apostle of the Gentiles) in the history that was to come after. Night and darkness and tempest lie on the ship (the *πλοῖον*) till at length it becomes a mere floating hulk, (*τὴν ναῦν*, from *νάω* to float). The Bishop of Lincoln in his Commentary tells us that ‘there is great force in it here (the latter word). The vessel had formerly been a noble ship; but now that it has lost its freight, its tackle, its boat, its provisions, its anchors, its all, it is reduced to a hulk not fit to sail.’ And he further informs us ‘that the ancient Fathers found special delight in comparing the Church to a ship;’ giving in proof long passages from Hyppolytus and Chrysostom.

There can be no doubt, therefore, that in the lengthened narrative of St. Paul’s voyage, and of the ship, design is manifest, and to our thinking it conveys a prophetic symbolic history of the vicissitudes and fortunes of the Church in the world, or at least of that Body which has been identified

with St. Paul and his doctrines, but presented in this episodal manner for the reasons above given.

THE FINAL CRISIS AT ROME.

Why was Rome to be the place of the final crisis? Because Rome at the time was the capital of the Gentile world, and consequently the capital of the ten tribes who were 'dispersed amongst the Gentiles.' The Apostle entered the synagogues of the tribes in all the cities whither he went, and now he reaches Rome, the central city where the Lord said he was to 'bear witness of him.' He then calls together the chief (*πρώτους*) of the Jews, and informs them that it was not for evildoing, but 'for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain' (xxviii. 20). What the hope of Israel was we have already stated. It was the very same as the disciples entertained at the first, when they asked, 'Wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?' and that question was never determined until now—but now finally determined in the negative. The tribes in the cities of the Gentiles had been evangelized, and they rejected the testimony, and were threatened with desertion

from God, who would leave them now and go to the Gentiles (see xiii. 5 to end). For when all the overtures to turn Israel's heart to Messiah reach a crisis at Rome, the heads of the nation there refuse the testimony, and the language of the Prophet is used against them for the last time. Thus the ten tribes are brought under the guilt of Messiah's death equally with the two tribes in the land who rejected Him previously; and all Israel, consequently, was to be shut up in unbelief (Rom. xi. 32 with Acts xxviii. 25-28). *Shut up together* (συνέκλεισεν) is the term which the Apostle uses.

THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

It is not a little remarkable that the prophecy of Isaiah in the mouth of the Baptist in preparing Israel for Messiah at the first, and the prophecy of Isaiah relating to their *judicial blindness*, at the last, are each recorded four times in the Gospels. For 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord and make his paths straight,' begins each Gospel—Matt. iii. ; Mark i. ; Luke iii. ; John i. Afterwards when their ears were closed to the Lord's testimony, the other prophecy is four times reiterated: 'He hath blinded their eyes and

hardened their heart' etc. (Matt. xiii. ; Mark iv. ; Luke viii. ; John xii). It is observable that this last prophecy was uttered 700 years before our Lord. It was applied to them by Himself when in objective testimony, but finally applied to them by Paul when they rejected the subjective testimony of the Holy Ghost—so that in the patience and long-suffering of God towards Israel, this judicial prophecy, uttered so many centuries before and hanging over them for so long a time, never took effect until the final and last witness in the person of 'The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' was refused and rejected. Then the prophecy of Isaiah vi. takes full effect on the nation in the judicial blindness which has rested on them ever since ; and will rest on them, as we read, 'till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in'—this does not mean till the fulness of the Gentile Church is complete, but till the time comes for God to gather in the Gentile nations. Then He will 'lift the veil off the eyes of all nations,' and off the eyes of Israel foremost. See Rom. xi. 12, 25, where the grammar even makes plain this interpretation, for the prep. ἄχρις, with conjunctive refers to a point of time *until* which something is to take place after (Winer, p. 371). That is, till the time comes for the nations them-

selves to have the veil taken off their eyes also along with Israel.

THE SEQUEL.

St. Paul now, as representing the twelve Apostles at Jerusalem, closes up Israel, the ten tribes and all, under the judicial blindness of God pronounced by the "prophet, and then says, 'Be it known therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it' (xxviii. 28). 'God hath concluded them all (*συνέκλεισε*, shut up together all in unbelief'. Rom. xi. 32) and the Gentiles are to be taken up instead of them. Had Israel received 'the minister of the circumcision,' the Gentiles would have come in *along* with them. 'Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people. But Israel having rejected Him, the Gentiles now come in *instead* of them (Rom. xi. and xv.).

THE CALLING OF THE CHURCH.

After this St. Paul comes to the front to disclose the nature, character and calling of 'the Church of

God,' and we hear no more of the twelve Apostles at Jerusalem after. But we can well imagine what a shock was given to Jewish hopes when this crisis arrived. They found great difficulty at the first in allowing the Gentiles as such to come in *along* with them, and those difficulties had to be determined at Jerusalem in the council. But now to have the Gentiles taken up of God *instead* of them, was the last drop in the bitter cup of the covenant nation. However, the great purposes of God touching the Church of God were not and could not be disclosed ostensibly till now, and St. Paul in his Epistles is the chief agent in disclosing them. They are referred to principally in the *Ephesian* and *Colossian* Epistles.

DIFFICULTIES AND MISTAKES.

The mistakes and confusion with respect to what is called 'the Church of God' and 'the Kingdom to Israel,' have been so general, that by the request of friends the foregoing articles were written.

Some regard 'the Church of God' as beginning with Abel, put into shape in Judaism, and organised in the Acts. Others regard it as having its origin

at Pentecost, and the outcome of its life developed in the Acts. Both views as thus formulated are, if we understand right, entirely mistaken.* The former find therein a precedent for ecclesiastical arrangements, Temple services and Church councils, such as appear in the after ages. The latter regard 'the Church' in the Acts as already developed, and consequently look with amazement at St. Paul's course, condemning it altogether. To both parties the main contents of the book, and especially its closing chapters and wind up, present an enigma quite unaccountable. For the curtain drops without any intimation as to the progress of 'the Church,' or what was to come on after St. Paul. So that all the commentators have to resort to Church history and 'the Fathers' in order to fill up the gap. But if the view above taken be correct, the book could not close otherwise than it does. It closes with the final settlement of the great subject between God and Israel and their Messiah, when—after the rejection of the three greatest witnesses ever known on earth, John the Baptist, the Lord Himself, and the Holy Ghost—Israel was shut up in *contumacy* (συνέκλεισε εἰς ἀπειθεῖαν, Rom. xi. 32). And the Evangelist thus

* For explanation, the reader is to refer back to pp. 14, 15.

keeps steadily before him, up to the end, the question which the disciples at first put to the Lord respecting the issues of the kingdom. And the Lord's answer from the Holy Ghost is finally given by the mouth of St. Paul (Isa. vi.) in the chief city of the Gentiles.

NOTE.—In the foregoing articles the character and hope of 'the elect' Church as distinct from Israel's hope is barely touched on. Its genesis, or origin, and its twofold aspect require an entirely distinct treatment. The distinct *calling* of the Church was alone referred to briefly, in contrast with Israel as an earthly people and their legitimate aspirations.

P.S.—If the reader is curious to know about what are called the *we* sections, or those sections in which St. Luke appears as companion of St. Paul, he will find them in xvi. 10, xx. 5, xxi. 18, again in xxvii., then continue till xxviii. 16.