

**SHORT PAPERS
ON
CHURCH HISTORY**

PREFACE

As all we know of history comes to us through books, I have examined, with some care, the authors which are most esteemed in this country and considered the most reliable. And although there is frequent reference to volume and page, this by no means indicates all that has been gathered from those histories. It would be impossible to say how many thoughts, words, and sentences, are interwoven with my own. The references have been generally given, not so much to verify what has been written, as to induce the reader to study them or whatever works may now be available as he may have opportunity. The materials are so varied and abundant, that the difficulty lies in making a selection, so as to maintain a continued historic line, and yet leave out what would now be neither profitable nor interesting.

Some of my earliest and valued friends, such as Greenwood, Milman, and Craigie Robertson, conclude their histories about the fourteenth century; Waddington, d'Aubigné, and Scott, about the middle of the sixteenth; and Wylie closes his history of Protestantism with its establishment under the reign of William and Mary. Dr. M'Crie's special histories and biographies are extremely valuable; and so is the history of Protestantism in France by Felice, the history of the Reformation in the Low Countries by Brandt, the brief history of the Middle Ages and the Reformation by Hardwick, and also Cunningham's history of the Scotch Church; but good general histories from the early part of the sixteenth to the present century are indeed scarce.

I have aimed at more than mere history. It has been my desire to connect with it Christ and His Word, so that the reader may receive the truth and blessing, through grace, to his soul. And it will be observed that I commence with the Lord's revealed purpose concerning His Church in Matthew 16. Other parts of the New Testament have been carefully examined as to the first planting of the Church, but its actual history I have endeavoured to trace in the light of the addresses to the seven Churches in Asia. This, of course, must be in a very general way, as I have been desirous to give the reader as broad a view of ecclesiastical history as possible, consistently with my plan and brevity.

May the Lord's blessing accompany the volume that now goes forth.

London

Andrew Miller

CONTENTS

Introduction

The Seven Churches of Asia

Chapter 1

The Rock Foundation

Foundation of the Church

Opening of the Kingdom of Heaven

Church Government

Chapter 2

The Day of Pentecost

Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

Descent of the Holy Ghost

Calling in of the Gentiles

First Christian Martyr

Chapter 3

The Disciples Persecuted and Scattered

Jerusalem and Samaria United by the Gospel

Conversion of Saul of Tarsus

Chapter 4

The First Missionaries of the Cross

The Twelve Apostles

Herodian Line of Kings

Chapter 5

The Apostle Paul

First Visit to Jerusalem

First Missionary Journey

Third Visit to Jerusalem

Visit to Athens

Chapter 6

Paul's Third Missionary Journey

Departure for Macedonia

Fifth Visit to Jerusalem

Before the Sanhedrim

Martyrdom of Paul

Chapter 7

The Burning of Rome

First Persecution Under the Emperors
Downfall of Jerusalem
The Real Cause of Persecution
Persecutions in France

Chapter 8

The Internal History of the Church

Apostolic Fathers
Origin of Clergy and Laity
Origin of Dioceses

Chapter 9

From Commodus till the Accession of Constantine.

Persecution in Africa
Altered Position of Christianity
The General State of Christianity
The Condition of the Church

Chapter 10

Constantine the Great

Church as Constantine Found It
Effects of Royal Favour
Baptism and Death of Constantine

Chapter 11

The Council of Nice

The Council of Tyre
The Barbaric Invaders

Chapter 12

The Internal History of the Church

Infant Baptism
First Society of Ascetics
Calamities of Rome

Chapter 13

The Epistle to the Church in Thyatira

Leo the First, Surnamed the Great
Missionary Zeal of Gregory
Romish Hierarchy in England

Chapter 14

The Spread of Christianity Over Europe

First Preachers in Ireland
First Preachers in Scotland
Foreshadowing of the Man of Sin

Chapter 15

Mohammed, the False Prophet of Asia.

Religion of Islam

Successors of Mohammed.

Second Council of Nicaea

Chapter 16

The Silver Line of Sovereign Grace

Origin of the Paulicians

Religious Wars of Charlemagne

Feudal Hierarchical System.

Chapter 17

The Propagation of Christianity

Louis the Pious

The Slavonians Receive the Gospel

England, Scotland, and Ireland

Chapter 18

The Church-Building Spirit Revived.

Learning of the Arabs Imported into Christendom

Traces of the Silver Line of God's Grace

Chapter 19

The Pontificate of Gregory VII

Gregory and Clerical Independence

Celibacy and Simony

The Emperor Deposed by the Pope

Effects of the Papal Policy

Burning of Ancient Rome

Chapter 20

The Crusades

The First Crusade

The Second Crusade

The Third Crusade

The Remainder of the Crusades

Chapter 21

Henry V and Gregory's Successors

St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux.

The Great Council of the Lateran

Arnold of Brescia

Chapter 22

The Encroachments of Rome in England

The Introduction of Canon Law into England
Thomas a Becket and Henry II
The “Constitutions of Clarendon”

Chapter 23

The Theology of the Church of Rome

Transubstantiation
Mary — Worship
Saint — Worship
Relic — Worship
Purgatory
Extreme Unction
Auricular Confession
Indulgences.

Chapter 24

Innocent III and His Times

Innocent’s Views of Popedom
Philip and Otho
Innocent and England
England Surrendered to Rome

Chapter 25

Innocent and the South of France

Peter Waldo
Raymond a Spiritual Outlaw
The Real Object of the Catholics

Chapter 26

The Inquisition Established in Languedoc

The Application of Torture
The Auto-da-Fe
St. Benedict
New Orders — St. Dominic and St. Francis

Chapter 27

The Approaching Dawn of the Reformation

Christianity in Ireland
Christianity in Scotland
Popery as a System.

Chapter 28

The Decline of Papal Power

Gregory IX and Frederick II
The Overruling Hand of God
The Humiliation of the Pontiff

Chapter 29
The Forerunners of the Reformation
Literary Men
The Theologians
The Waldenses
The Dark Year of 1560

Chapter 30
John Wycliffe
England and the Papacy
Wycliffe and the Bible
The Lollards.

Chapter 31
The Reformation Movement in Bohemia
The Imprisonment of John Huss
The Arrest and Imprisonment of Jerome
The United Brethren or Moravians

Chapter 32
The Capture of Constantinople
The First Printed Bible
The Immediate Precursors of Luther
Reflections on the Life of Savonarola

Chapter 33
The Reformation in Germany
Popery and Mankind
The First Period of Luther's Life
Luther's Conversion

Chapter 34
The First Papal Jubilee
Luther's Public Appeal
Distinguished Men of the Sixteenth Century
The Diet of Worms

Chapter 35
Luther at Wartburg.
Luther and the German Bible
The Hundred Grievances
The First Diet of Spires

Chapter 36
Protestantism
The Lutheran Churches

Meetings of the Protestants

Chapter 37

The Sacramentarian Controversy

The Conference at Marburg

A Proposal for Toleration and Unity

Chapter 38

The Council at Bologna

The Diet of Augsburg

The Articles of Faith

The Letters of Melanchthon and Luther

Chapter 39

The Popish Refutation

The Final Decree

The League of Smalcald

The Peace of Ratisbon

Chapter 40

The Reformation in Switzerland

Zwingle, Pastor of Glaris

The Rising Storm

Chapter 41

The Leaders of the Reformation in Switzerland

The Progress of the Reformation — Zurich

Zwingle and His Brothers

The Disputations at Zurich

Chapter 42

The Results of the Disputations

The Answer of Zurich to Lucerne

The Swiss and German Reformation

The Weapons of Rome's Warfare

Chapter 43

The General Progress of Reform

The Reformation in Berne

The Conference at Baden

The Great Conference at Berne

The Reformation of Basle

Chapter 44

The Extension of Reform in Switzerland.

The Five Cantons Form a League with Austria

The Treaty of Cappel
War Declared Against Zurich

Chapter 45

The Reformation in Germany

The Great Actors Passing Off the Scene
The Death of Luther
Reflections on the Life of Luther

Chapter 46

The Opening of the Council of Trent

The Smalcald War
The Treachery of Maurice
The German's Treated as a Conquered People

Chapter 47

“The Interim”

The Revolution in Germany
The Calamities of the Protestants
The Rise of the Jesuits

Chapter 48

The Effect of the Reformation in Germany on the

Nations of Europe
Sweden and Denmark
Italy
Spain
The Netherlands

Chapter 49

The Reformation in French Switzerland

Early History of William Farel
The Arrival of Calvin in Geneva
Calvin and Calvinism

Chapter 50

The Reformation in France

The Bible in French at Meaux
Commencement of Persecution in France
The Year of the Placards

Chapter 51

The Great Progress of the Reformation

The First Planting of the Reformed Church in France
The Saint Bartholomew Massacre
The Council of Trent

Chapter 52

The Waldenses

The Wars of Extermination

The Sympathy of England

The Persecution and Expulsion of the Waldenses

Chapter 53

The Reformation in the British Isles

Ireland

Scotland

The Fiery Zeal of Cardinal Beaton

George Wishart

John Knox

Chapter 54

The Reformation in England

The Reformation Begun

The Persecution Begins

Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer

Chapter 55

The Reign of Elizabeth

The Puritans

John Wesley

Sunday Schools

Foreign Missions

Chapter 56

Philadelphia

Laodicea

Church Truth

The Spread of the Truth

Conclusion

General Index

Index to Persons

Index of Places

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

Many of our readers, we know, have neither the time nor the opportunity for reading the voluminous works that have been written from time to time on the history of the church. Still, that which has been the dwelling-place of God for the last eighteen hundred years, must be a subject of the deepest interest to all His children. We speak not now of the church as it is often represented in history, but as it is spoken of in scripture. There it is seen in its true spiritual character, as the body of Christ, and as the “habitation of God through the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2)

We must always bear in mind, when reading what is called a history of the church, that, from the days of the apostles until now, there have been two distinct and widely different, classes of persons in the professing church: the merely nominal, and the real — the true, and the false. This was predicted. “For I know this,” says the apostle, “that after my departure 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.” (Acts 20) His Second Epistle to Timothy is also full of warnings and directions as to the various forms of evil which were then but too plainly manifest. A rapid change for the worse had taken place from the time that his first epistle was written. He exhorts the truly godly to walk in separation from those who had a form of godliness, but who denied the power thereof. “From such,” he says, “turn away.” Such exhortations are always needed, always applicable — as much now as then. We cannot separate ourselves from Christendom without giving up Christianity but we can and ought to separate ourselves from what the apostle calls “vessels to dishonour.” The promise is, that, “if a man... purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”

It is interesting — though painfully so — to mark the difference on this point between the First and the Second Epistles to Timothy. In the first, the church is spoken of according to its true character and blessed position on the earth. There it is seen as the house of God — the depository and display of truth to man. In the Second Epistle, it is spoken of as what it had become through the failure of those into whose hands it had been entrusted.

Take one passage from each Epistle in illustration. 1. “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God,... the pillar and ground of the truth.” 2. “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour.” Here all is changed — sadly changed. In place of divine order there is hopeless confusion; in place of “*the* house of God, the pillar and ground of truth,” there is “*a* great house” — practically “the mystery of iniquity.” In place of the house being kept according to the will of God and suitable for Him, it was arranged and ordered according to the will of man, and for his own personal advantage and exaltation. Thus early had the evils, which have been the sin and the disgrace of Christendom ever since, made their appearance. But this was overruled for good. The Spirit of God, in great mercy, has supplied us with the plainest directions for the darkest day of the church’s history, and has pointed out the way of truth for the worst of times; so that we are left without excuse. Times and circumstances change, not the truth of God.

THE MISTAKES OF HISTORIANS IN GENERAL

Some historians, it is sorrowful to say, have not taken into account this sad mixture of evil vessels with the good — of true Christians and false. They have not themselves been spiritually minded men. Hence they have rather made it their chief object to record the many unchristian and wicked ways of mere professors. They have dwelt at great length, and with great minuteness, on the heresies that have troubled the church, on the abuses that have disgraced it, and on the controversies that have distracted it. Much rather would we endeavour to trace, all down through the long dark pages of history, *the silver line of God’s grace in true Christians*; though at times the alloy so predominates that the pure ore is scarcely perceptible.

God has never left Himself without a witness. He has had His loved and cherished though hidden ones in all ages and in all places. No eye but His could see the seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, in the days of Ahab and Jezebel. And tens of thousands, we doubt not, even from the darkest ages of Christianity, will be found at last in the “glorious church,” which Christ will present to Himself, on the long-looked-for day of His nuptial joy. Many precious stones from the rubbish of the “middle ages” will reflect His grace and glory on that crowning day.

Blessed thought! even now it fills the soul with ecstasy and delight. Lord, hasten that happy day for Thine own name’s sake!

The truly godly are instinctively humble. They are generally retiring, and for the most part but little known. There is no humility so deep and real as that which the knowledge of grace produces. Such lowly and hidden ones find but a small place on the historic page. But the insinuating or zealous heretic, and

the noisy or visionary fanatic, are too clamorous to escape notice. Hence it is that the historian has so carefully recorded the foolish principles and the evil practices of such men.

We will now turn for a little, and take a general view of the first part of our subject, namely

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

These seven Epistles, so far, will guide our future studies. We believe they are not only *historical*, but also *prophetical*. Doubtless they are strictly historical, and this fact must be allowed its full weight in studying their prophetic character. Seven churches actually existed in the seven cities here named, and in the condition here described. But it is equally clear, that they were intended, by Him who knows the end from the beginning, to bear a prophetic meaning, as well as a historical application. They were selected from amongst many, and so arranged and described as to foreshadow what was to come. To limit their application to the seven literal churches then in Asia would be to mar the unity of the Apocalypse, and to lose the promised blessing. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." The character of the whole book is prophetic and symbolic. The second and third chapters are no exception to this. They are introduced by the Lord Himself in their mystic character. "The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in My right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

The **number seven** is characteristic. It marks a complete circle of the thoughts or ways of God as to time. Hence the seven days of the week — the seven feasts of Israel — the seven parables of the kingdom of heaven in mystery. It is often used throughout this book, which takes up Jew, Gentile, and the church of God, as responsible on the earth. Hence we have seven churches, seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials or the seven last plagues. Only in chapters 2 & 3 is the church seen as responsible on the earth, and the object of divine government. From chapter 4-19 she is seen in heaven. Then she appears in full manifested glory with her Lord. "And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

In the body of the book, especially from chapter 6, the Jews and Gentiles come before us, and are judicially dealt with from the throne of God in heaven. But this will not take place till after the church — the true bride of the Lamb — is caught up to heaven, and the merely nominal corrupt thing finally rejected.

The **threefold division** of the book, as given by the Lord Himself, makes the order of events quite plain, and ought to have immense weight as a

principle of interpretation in the study of the Apocalypse. In chapter 1:19 He gives us the contents and plan of the whole book: "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter," — or, literally, "after these things." "The things which thou hast seen" refer to the revelation of Jesus as seen by John in chapter 1; "the things which are," to the time-condition of the professing body as presented in chapters 2 & 3. "The things which shall be hereafter" are from chapter 4 to the end. The third division begins with chapter 4. A door is opened in heaven, and the prophet is called to come up. "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter," or "after these things." It is the same phrase in chapter 4:1 as in chapter 1:19. The things which are, and the things which shall be *after these things*, cannot possibly be concurrent. The one must end before the other begins.

When the number seven is used, not in a literal but in a symbolic sense, it always signifies completeness. It is evidently thus used in chapters 2 & 3. There were other churches, we know, besides those named; but seven are selected and associated to present a complete picture of what would afterwards be developed in the church's history on earth. The more important moral elements which then existed, the Lord foresaw, would reappear in course of time. Thus we have a sevenfold or divinely perfect picture of the successive states of the professing church during the entire period of her responsibility on the earth.

We will now take a rapid glance at the outline of the seven churches, and give a general idea of the different periods in history to which they apply.

OUTLINE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Ephesus. In Ephesus the Lord detects the root of all declension. "Thou hast left thy first love." It is threatened with the removal of the candlestick unless there be repentance. *Period* — from the apostolic age to the close of the second century.

Smyrna. The message of Ephesus is general, to Smyrna it is specific. And though it applied at that time to the assembly there, it shadowed forth, in the most striking way the repeated persecutions through which the church passed under the heathen emperors. Yet God may have used the power of the world to arrest the progress of evil in the church. *Period* — from the second century to Constantine.

Pergamos. Here we have the establishment of Christianity by Constantine as the religion of the State. Instead of persecuting the Christians, he patronized them. From that moment the downward course of the church is rapid. Her unholy alliance with the world proved her saddest and deepest fall. It was then that she lost the true sense of her relationship to Christ in heaven, and of her

character on earth as a pilgrim and a stranger. *Period* — from the beginning of the fourth to the seventh century, when popery was established.¹

Thyatira. In Thyatira we have the popery of the middle ages, Jezebel-like, practising all kinds of wickedness, and persecuting the saints of God, under the disguise of religious zeal. Nevertheless there was a God-fearing remnant in Thyatira, whom the Lord comforts with the bright hope of His coming, and with the promise of power over the nations, when He Himself shall reign. But the word of exhortation to the remnant is, “That which ye have already, *hold fast till I come.*” *Period* — from the establishment of popery to the Lord’s coming. It goes on to the end, but is characterised by the dark ages.

Sardis. Here we see the Protestant part of Christendom that which followed the great work of the Reformation. The foul features of popery disappear, but the new system itself has no vitality. “Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead.” But there are true saints in these lifeless systems, and Christ knows them all. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.” *Period* — from the eventful sixteenth century onwards. Protestantism after the Reformation.

Philadelphia. The church of Philadelphia presents a feeble remnant, but they are faithful to the *word* and *name* of the Lord Jesus. That which characterised them was keeping the word of Christ’s patience, and not denying His name. Their condition was not marked by any outward display of power nor of anything externally great, but of close, intimate personal communion with Himself. He is in their midst as the Holy One and the True, and is represented as having charge of the house. He has “the key of David.” The treasures of the prophetic word are unlocked for those inside. They are also in the sympathies of His patience, and in the expectation of His coming. “Because thou hast kept the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” *Period* — especially from an early part of this century but activity on all hands is now rapidly developing the last phases of Christendom.

Laodicea. In Laodicea we have lukewarmness — indifference — latitudinarianism; but with high pretensions, a boastful spirit, and great self-sufficiency. This is the last state of that which bears the name of Christ on the earth. But alas! it is intolerable to Him. Its final doom has come. Having separated every true believer from the corruptions of Christendom to Himself, He spues it out of His mouth. That which ought to have been sweet to

¹ The title “Pope” was first adopted by Hyginus in 139; and Pope Boniface III induced Phocas, Emperor of the East, to confine it to the prelates of Rome in 606. By the connivance of Phocas also the pope’s supremacy over the Christian church was established — *Haydn’s Dictionary of Dates.*

His taste has become nauseous, and it is cast off for ever. *Period* — beginning after Philadelphia, but especially the closing scene.

Having thus taken a general view of the seven churches, we would now endeavour, through the Lord's help, briefly to trace these different periods of the church's history. And we purpose examining more fully, each of the seven Epistles as we go along, that we may ascertain what light is shed on the different periods by these addresses; and how far the facts of church history illustrate the scripture history of these two chapters. May the Lord guide for the refreshment and blessing of His own beloved ones.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 1

THE ROCK FOUNDATION

In commencing the study of any subject, it is well to know its beginnings — the original intention or plan, and the first step in its history. These we have in the clearest, fullest way, as to the church, in holy scripture. There we have not only the original intention, but the plans and specifications of the great Builder, and the early history of the work under His own hand. The foundation had been laid, and the work was going on; but the Lord Himself was still the only Builder: therefore, up to this time all was real and perfect.

At the close of the Jewish dispensation the Lord added the saved remnant of Israel to the newly formed church: but, at the close of the present or christian dispensation, He will take all who believe in His name up to heaven in glorified bodies. Not one belonging to the church will be added to the congregation of millennial saints. “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” (1 Thess. 4: 16-17) This will be the happy close of the history of the church on earth the true spouse of Christ: the dead raised, the living changed, and all, in their bodies of glory, caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Thus we have the entire limits of the church defined, and the whole period of her history before us. But we return to the dawn of her day on the earth.

Under the figure of a building the Lord first introduces the subject of the church. And so infinitely precious are His words, that we may adopt them as the text or motto of its whole history. They have sustained the hearts and the hopes of His people in all ages, and in all circumstances; and they will ever be the stronghold of faith. What can be more blessed, more assuring, more peace-giving, than these words? **“UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT.”**

In Matthew 16 the Lord questions His disciples as to the sayings of men concerning Himself. This leads to the confession of Peter, and also to the gracious revelation of the Lord concerning His church. It may be well to transfer the whole conversation to our pages — it all bears so directly on our subject.

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16: 13-18)

Here we have the two main things connected with the proposed building — the Rock-foundation, and the divine Builder. “**Upon this rock** I will build My church.” But who is, or what is, “this rock”? some may inquire. Clearly, we answer, the confession of Peter; not Peter himself, as the apostasy teaches. True, he was a stone — a living stone in the new temple, “Thou art Peter” — thou art a stone. But the Father’s revelation, by Peter, of the glory of the Person of His Son, is the foundation on which the church is built — “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But the glory of the Person of the Son in resurrection is the unveiled truth here. “Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” Immediately on the confession by Peter, the Lord intimates His intention to build His church, and asserts its eternal security. “Upon this Rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

He Himself, the fountain of life, could not be conquered by death; but, in dying as the great Substitute for sinners, He triumphed over death and the grave, and is alive for evermore, as He said to His apostle John after His resurrection: “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death.” (Rev. 1:18) What majestic, what triumphant words are these! They are the words of a conqueror — of One who has power; but of power over the gates of hades — the place of separate spirits. The keys — symbol of authority and power — hang at His girdle. The stroke of death may fall upon a Christian, but the sting is gone. It comes as a messenger of peace to conduct the weary pilgrim home to eternal rest. Death is no longer the *master*, but the *servant* of the Christian. “For all things are yours whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or *death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours: and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” (1 Corinthians 3: 21-23)

The Person of Christ, then, the Son of the living God — in His resurrection-glory — is the foundation, the solid and imperishable foundation, on which the church is built. As alive from the dead He communicates life in resurrection to all who are built on Him as the true foundation-stone. This is plain from what Peter says in his first Epistle. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone... ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house.” And further down in the same chapter he says, “Unto you therefore which believe, He is precious,” or “an honour.” (See margin.) May both reader and writer

note well these two most precious truths in connection with our “Rock-foundation” — divine life and divine preciousness. These are communicated to, and become the possession of, all who put their trust in Christ. “To *whom* coming,” not to *what* coming; it is the Person of Christ we come to, and have to do with. His life — life in resurrection — becomes ours. From that moment He is our life. “To whom coming, as unto a living stone... ye also, as lively [*living*] stones, are built up a spiritual house.” Christ’s own life, as the risen Man, and all that He is heir to is ours. Oh, wondrous, marvellous, blessed truth! Who would not desire, above all things, this life, and this life beyond the power of death — the gates of hades? Eternal victory is stamped on the risen life of Christ, it can never more be tested, and this is the believer’s life.

But there is more than *life* for every living stone in this spiritual temple. There is also Christ’s *preciousness*. “Unto you therefore which believe He is precious;” literally, “the preciousness.” That is, just as the life of Christ becomes ours when we believe in Him, so does His preciousness. The principle in both is the same. The life may be viewed as our capacity to enjoy; and the preciousness, as our title to possess our inheritance on high. His honours, titles, dignities, privileges, possessions, glories, are ours — all ours in Him. “To them that believe He is the preciousness.” O wondrous thought! “He loved the church and gave Himself for it.” Such then is our Rock-foundation, and such the blessedness of all who are on the Rock. Like Jacob of old, when a pilgrim and a stranger he rested on the stone in the desert, the whole panorama of heaven’s riches in grace and glory passed before him. (Genesis 28)

CHRIST THE ONLY BUILDER OF HIS CHURCH

But Christ is also the Builder of His church. The building against which no craft or power of the enemy can ever prevail is Christ’s own work, though we read of other builders. “**Upon this Rock** I will build My church.” It is well to be clear on this point, so that we may not confound what *man* builds with what Christ builds. There must be the greatest confusion of mind, both as to the truth of God, and the present state of Christendom, unless this distinction is seen. Nothing is more important to note here than that Christ is the only Builder of His church; though Paul and Apollos, and all true evangelists, are preachers by whom sinners believe. The Lord’s work in the souls of believers is perfect. It is a real, spiritual, personal work. Through His grace in their hearts they come to Himself, as unto a living stone, and are built upon Him who is risen from among the dead. They have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Such are the living stones with which the Lord builds His holy temple; and the gates of hell can never prevail against it. Thus Peter himself, and all the apostles, and all true believers, are built up a spiritual house. When Peter speaks of this building in his First Epistle, he says nothing of himself as a

builder. Here Christ is the Builder. It is His work, and His *only*. “I will build My church,” He says.

Let us now see from the word of God what man builds, what materials he uses, and the way he goes to work. In 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Timothy 2 we have these things brought before us. “A great house” is raised by human instrumentality: which, in a certain sense, is also the church, and the house of God: as in 1 Timothy 3:15 we read of “the house of God, which is the church of the living God.” It is also spoken of as Christ’s house in Hebrews 3, “whose house we are.” But the house soon became sadly corrupted through human infirmity and positive wickedness. The authority of God’s word by many was set aside, and man’s will became supreme. The effect of human philosophy on the simple institutions of Christ was soon painfully manifest. But wood, hay, and stubble, can never be “fitly framed together” with gold, silver, and precious stones. The house became great in the world; like the mustard tree, in the branches of which many find a convenient lodging. Connection with the “great house” gives man a status in the world, in place of being like the *Master*, despised and rejected. The archbishop stands next to royalty. But the professing church is not only outwardly great, it is most pretentious, and seeks to put the stamp of God on its own unhallowed work. This is its greatest wickedness, and the source of its blindness, confusion, and worldliness.

Paul, as one chosen of the Lord to do His work, laid the foundation of “God’s building” in Corinth, and others built upon it. But they did not all build with divine materials. The right foundation was laid, and every man was to take heed how he builded thereon. In connection with the true foundation, some might build **gold, silver, and precious stones, and others wood, hay, and stubble**. That is, some might teach sound doctrine, and look for living faith in all who applied for communion: others might teach unsound doctrine, and receive into the fellowship of the church persons in whom was no faith — the mere outward observance of ordinances taking the place of faith and eternal life. Here man’s instrumentality, responsibility, and failure came in. Nevertheless, the builder himself may be saved, having faith in Christ, though his work is destroyed.

But there is another and a worse class of builders, who corrupt the temple of the Lord, and are themselves destroyed. We give, for the convenience of the reader, the entire passage Nothing can be plainer. “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved yet so as by

fire... If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” (Verses 10-17)

We may further observe on the Lord’s words, “upon this Rock I will build My church,” that He had not begun to build it yet: He is telling them what He is going to do. He does not say, I *have* built it, or I *am* building it, but I *will* build it, and this He began to do at Pentecost.

But there is another truth most intimately connected with the history of the church, and linked up with its condition and character, on the earth, that we must notice, before proceeding with its actual history. We refer to the truth contained in the expression,

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

This leads to the “great house” — already referred to — of outward profession. At the same time we must bear in mind that though intimately connected, the kingdom of heaven and the great house are quite distinct. In title the world belongs to the King. “The field is the world.” His servants are to go on sowing. In result we have “a great house,” or Christendom.²

But when all that which is merely nominal in Christendom shall be swept away by judgment, the kingdom will be established in power and glory. This will be the millennium.

While still speaking to Peter about the church, the Lord added, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” The church as built by Christ, and the kingdom of heaven as opened by Peter, are widely different things. It is one of the great but common mistakes of Christendom, to use the terms interchangeably as if they meant the same thing. And theological writers in all ages, from assuming as a basis that they are the same, have written in the most confused way, both as to the church and the kingdom. The expression is *dispensational*, just as the similar phrase, “the kingdom of God,” is *moral*. But unless we have some acquaintance with the dispensational ways of God, we can never rightly divide His word. That which Christ Himself builds, and that which man *instrumentally*, by means, it may be, of

² The terms “church,” “a kingdom of heaven,” and “great house,” are scriptural, and somewhat different in their meaning as used by the Lord and His apostles. The term “my church,” as used by the Lord, can only embrace true and living members. The primary thought in the expression “kingdom of heaven,” surely refers to the *authority* of the ascended Lord. And all who profess subjection to Him are owned as in the kingdom. In the “great house” we see the evil, which had crept into the professing body through the failure of man, in *activity*, so that in result it is co-extensive with the kingdom of heaven and the professing church. But there is another term in constant use which is not found in scripture — Christendom. It is an ecclesiastical term, and originally meant all who were christened, or those portions of the world in which Christianity prevails, in distinction from heathen or Mahometan lands. But now it is used synonymously with the other three terms already considered. In a general way the four terms are used interchangeably, though originally different in their meaning and application. But where is it that there is not confusion?

preaching and baptizing, must not be confounded. The church which is Christ's body is built upon the confession that He is the Son of the living God, glorified in resurrection. Every truly converted soul has to do with Christ Himself before it can have anything to say to the church. The kingdom is a wider thing, and takes in every baptized person — the whole scene of christian profession, whether true or false.

Christ does not say to Peter that He will give him the keys of the church or the keys of heaven. Had He done so, there might have been some show of reason for the evil system of popery. But He merely says, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" — *i.e.* of the new dispensation. Keys, it has been said, are not for building temples, but for opening doors; and the Lord honoured Peter to open the door of the kingdom first to the Jews, and then to the Gentiles. (Acts 2) But the language of Christ about His church is of another order. It is simple, beautiful, emphatic, and unmistakable. "My church." What depth, what fulness there is in these words: "My church!" When the heart is in fellowship with Christ about His church, there will be an apprehension of His affections towards it, which we have no power of expressing. As it is, we love to linger over these two words, "My church!" but who can speak of the measure of Christ's heart that is therein revealed? Again, think of these other two words "This rock." As if He had said, The glory of My Person, and the power of My life in resurrection, form the solid foundation of "My church." And again, "I will build." Thus we see in these seven words, that everything is in Christ's own hands, as "to the church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

THE OPENING OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

The administration of the kingdom the Lord, in an especial manner, committed to Peter, as we see in the early chapters of the Acts. The term is taken from the Old Testament. (See Dan. 2 & 7) In chapter 2 we have the kingdom; in chapter 7 we have the King. The phrase, kingdom of heaven, occurs only in the Gospel of Matthew, where the evangelist writes chiefly for Israel.

The bringing in of the kingdom of heaven in power and glory on the earth, in the Person of the Messiah, was the natural expectation of every godly Jew. John the Baptist, as the Lord's forerunner, came preaching, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. But, in place of the Jews receiving their Messiah, they rejected and crucified Him; consequently the kingdom, according to Jewish expectations, was set aside. Nevertheless, it was introduced in another form. When the rejected Messiah ascended to heaven, and took His place at God's right hand, triumphant over every foe, the kingdom of heaven began. Now the king is in heaven, and as Daniel says, "the heavens do rule," though not openly. And from the time that He ascended until He return, it is the kingdom in *mystery*. (Matt. 13) When He comes back again in power and great glory, it will be the kingdom in *manifestation*.

The new economy Peter was privileged to open to both Jew and Gentile. This he did in his address to the Jews, Acts 2, and in his address to the Gentiles, Acts 10. But again we would draw attention to the fact, that the church, or the assembly of God, and the kingdom of heaven, are not the same thing. Let us be clear, in starting, as to this fundamental point. The identifying the two things has produced great confusion of thought and may be viewed as the origin of Puseyism, popery, and every human system in Christendom. The following remarks on “the tare-field,” from a recent publication, bear directly on this subject, though they refer to a later period than the early chapters of the Acts.³

THE PARABLE OF THE TARES

“**Matthew 13:24, 25.** ‘Another parable put He forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way’ — exactly what is become of the profession of Christ There are two things necessary for the inroad of evil among Christians. The first is the unwatchfulness of the Christians themselves. They get into a careless state, they sleep, and the enemy comes and sows tares. This began at an early epoch in Christendom. We find the germs even in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more so in the Epistles. 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired Epistle that the Apostle Paul wrote; and the second was written shortly after. And yet he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work; that there were other things to follow, such as the apostasy and the man of sin, and that when the lawlessness should be fully manifest (instead of working secretly), then the Lord would put an end to the lawless one and all concerned. The mystery of iniquity seems akin to the sowing of tares spoken of here. Some time after ‘when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit’ when Christianity began to make rapid strides in the earth ‘then appeared the tares also.’ But it is evident the tares were sown almost immediately after the good seed. No matter what the work of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels. When man was made, he listened to the serpent and fell. When God gave the law, it was broken even before it was committed into the hands of Israel. Such is always the history of human nature.

“So the mischief is done in the field, and never repaired. The tares are not for the present taken out of the field: there is no judgment of them. Does this mean that we are to have tares in the church? If the kingdom of heaven meant the church there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there. Here is the importance of seeing the distinction between the church and the kingdom. The Lord forbids the tares to be taken out of the kingdom of heaven: ‘Let both grow together until the harvest’ (ver. 30) that is, till the Lord comes in judgment. Were the kingdom of heaven the same as the church, it would, I repeat, amount to no less than

³ *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew.* By W. Kelly.

this: that no evil, let it be ever so flagrant or plain, is to be put out of the church till the day of judgment. We see, then, the importance of making these distinctions, which too many despise. They are all-important for truth and holiness. Nor is there a single word of God that we can do without.

“What then is the meaning of this parable? It has nothing to do with the question of church communion. It is the **‘kingdom of heaven’** that is spoken of — the scene of the confession of Christ, whether true or false. Thus Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, as well as Protestants, are in the kingdom of heaven; not believers only, but also bad people professing the name of Christ. A man, who is not a Jew or a pagan, and who outwardly professes Christ’s name, is in the kingdom of heaven. He may be ever so immoral or heretical; but he is not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven. But would it be right to receive him at the table of the Lord? God forbid! If a person falling into open sin were in the church, he ought to be put out of it; but you *ought not* to put him out of the kingdom of heaven. In fact this could only be done by taking away his life; for this is meant by the rooting up of the tares. And this is what worldly Christianity did fall into, in no very long space of time after the apostles were departed from the earth. Temporal punishments were brought in for discipline: laws were made for the purpose of handing over the refractory to the subservient civil power. If they did not honour the so-called church, they were not to be suffered to live. In this way the very evil our Lord had been guarding the disciples against came to pass; and the Emperor Constantine used the sword to repress ecclesiastical offenders. He and his successors introduced temporal punishments to deal with the tares, to try and root them up. Take the church of Rome, where you have so thoroughly the confusion of the church with the kingdom of heaven: they claim, if a man is a heretic, to hand him over to the courts of the world to be burnt, and they never confess or correct the wrong, because they pretend to be infallible. Supposing that their victims even were tares, this is to put them out of the kingdom. If you root a tare from the field, you kill it. There may be men outside profaning the name of God; but we must leave them for God to deal with.

“This does not destroy christian responsibility towards those who surround the Lord’s table. You will find instructions as to all this in what is written about the church. **‘The field is the world,’** the church only embraces those believed to be members of Christ’s body. Take 1 Corinthians, where we have the Holy Ghost showing the true nature of ecclesiastical discipline. Supposing there are professing Christians, guilty of any sin you please; such persons are not to be owned, while they are going on in that sin, as members of Christ’s body. A real saint may fall into open sin, but the church, knowing it, is bound to intervene for the purpose of expressing God’s judgment about the sin. Were they deliberately to allow such a one to come to the Lord’s table, they would in effect make the Lord a party to that sin. The question is not whether the person be converted or not. If unconverted, men have no business in the church, if converted, sin is not to be winked at. The guilty are not to be put

out of the kingdom of heaven, they *are* to be put out of the church. So that the teaching of the word of God is most plain as to both these truths. It is wrong to use worldly punishments to deal with a hypocrite, even when he is detected. I may seek the good of his soul, but this is no reason for punishing him thus. But if a Christian is guilty of sin, the church, though called to be patient in judgment, is never to suffer it; but we are to leave guilty people, who are unconverted, to be judged by the Lord at His appearing.

“This is the teaching of the parable of the tares; and it gives a very solemn view of Christianity. As sure as the Son of man sowed good seed, His enemy would sow bad, which would spring up along with the rest; and this evil cannot for the present be got rid of. There is a remedy for evil which enters the church, but not yet for evil in the world.”

It is perfectly clear, both from scripture and history, that the great mistake into which the professing body fell was the confounding of these two things — **tares with wheat**; or, those who were admitted by the administration of baptism to all the official and temporal privileges of the professing church with those who were truly converted and taught of God. But the vast difference between what we may call the *sacramental* and the *vital* systems, must be clearly understood and carefully distinguished, if we would study church history aright.

Another mistake, equally serious, followed as a consequence. The great outward or professing body became, in the eyes and in the language of men — *the church*. Godly men were drawn into this snare, so that the distinction between the church and the kingdom was early lost sight of. All the most sacred places and privileges, in the professing body, were thus held in common by godly and ungodly men. The Reformation utterly failed to clear the church of this sad mixture. It has been handed down to us in the Anglican, Lutheran, and Presbyterian systems, as the form of baptism and admission clearly shows. In our own day, the sacramental system prevails to an alarming extent, and is rapidly on the increase. The real and the formal, the living and the dead, are undistinguished in the various forms of protestantism. But alas! most solemn reflection! there are many in the professing church — in the kingdom of heaven — who will never be in heaven itself. Here we find tares as well as wheat, evil servants as well as faithful ones, and foolish virgins as well as wise ones. Though all who have been baptized are reckoned in the kingdom of heaven, only those who are quickened and sealed with the Holy Ghost belong to the church of God.

But there is another thing connected with the professing church which demands a brief notice here. We refer to

THE DIVINE PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Not only did the Lord give the keys to Peter that he might open the doors of the new dispensation, but He intrusted to him its internal administration. This principle is all-important in its bearing on the church of God. The words of the commission are these, "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The question is, What do they mean? Clearly, we believe, authority and power from the Lord, to be exercised in and by the church, but limited, in result, to this world. There is no thought in the Lord's words about the church deciding anything as to *heaven*. This is the false interpretation and the deceiving power of the apostasy. The church on earth can have nothing to say or do with what is done in heaven as to binding or loosing. The sphere of its action is within its own limits, and, when it so acts according to the commission of Christ, it has the promise of ratification in heaven.

Neither is there any thought here, we may add, of the church, or of any of its officials, coming in between the soul and God, as to eternal forgiveness or eternal judgment. This is the daring blasphemy of Rome. "Who can forgive sins but God only?" He reserves this power to Himself alone. Besides, the subjects of church government *are* pardoned, or, at least, are on that ground. "Do not ye judge them that are within?" It will only apply to them that are *within* the pale of the church. "But them that are *without* God judgeth." Of every believer in the wide field of Christendom it is said, "For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." (Heb. 10) Hence, the retaining or the remission of sins by the church is only for the present time, and strictly *administrative* in its character. It is the divine principle of receiving persons into the assembly of God, on the ground of adequate testimony to their conversion, soundness in doctrine, and holiness of life; and also of putting away impenitent offenders until restored by true repentance.

But some of our readers may have the common impression, that this power was only given to Peter and the rest of the apostles, and consequently ceased with them. This is a mistake. True, it was given to Peter only in the first instance, as we have seen; and no doubt greater power was exercised during the days of the apostles than has been since, but not greater authority. The church has the same *authority* now as then as to discipline in the assembly, though it lacks the *power*. The word of the Lord remains unchanged. Only an apostle, we believe, could speak as Paul does in 1 Corinthians 5. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." This was spiritual power in an individual, not the judgment of the

church.⁴ The same apostle, in reference to the same case, says to the assembly, “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” The act of putting away was the act, not merely of the apostle, but of the whole assembly. In this case, and in this way, the excommunicated person’s sins were *retained*, though evidently a converted man. In the Second Epistle, chapter 2, we find him fully restored. His repentance is accepted by the assembly his sins are *remitted*. The overflowing of the apostle’s heart on this occasion, and his exhortations to the church, are valuable lessons for all who have to do with church government, and are intended to remove that cold suspicion with which an erring brother is too often received back to the privileges of the assembly. “Sufficient to such a man is this punishment [or censure] which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore, I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.” Here we have a case in point, illustrative of the government of the assembly according to the will of Christ. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

THIS PRINCIPLE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT STILL APPLICABLE

But “how can these principles be carried out now?” is still the question and difficulty with many. Well, we must just go back to the word of God. We ought to be able and willing to say, “We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.” (2 Cor. 13:8)

The administrative authority and power of which we speak was given not only to Peter and the other apostles, but also to the church. In **Matthew 18** we have the working out of the principle laid down in chapter 16, “Tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven... For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Thus we learn that the acts of the two or three, gathered together in Christ’s name, have the same divine sanction as the administration of Peter. And again,

⁴ “Delivering to Satan is an act of power — putting out a wicked person, a duty attached to the faithfulness of the assembly. No doubt, exclusion from the assembly of God is a very serious thing and leaves us exposed to sorrow and just trouble of heart, and that from the enemy: but direct delivery to Satan is an act of positive power. It was done in Job’s case for his good. It was done by Paul in 1 Corinthians 5, though acting in the gathered assembly, and for the destruction of the flesh, and again, without reference to the assembly, in 1 Timothy 1, as to Hymanaeus and Alexander, that they might learn not to blaspheme. All discipline is for the correction of the individual, though to maintain withal the holiness of the house of God, and clear the consciences of the saints themselves.” — *Present Testimony*, vol. 1, p. 392, New Series.

in John 20, the Lord delivers the same principle of government to the *disciples*, not merely to the *apostles*, and that too on resurrection ground, where the assembly is livingly united to Christ as the risen Man. This is all important. The spirit of life in Jesus Christ makes the disciples free — every disciple free — from the law of sin and death. The church is built upon “this rock” — Christ in resurrection, and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it. “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the *disciples* glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Here the Lord sets up, we may say, and fairly starts, the new creation. The disciples are filled and clothed with peace, and with the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They are to go forth as His messengers, from the resurrection side of His empty grave, bearing the blessed message of peace and eternal life to a world bowed down with sin, sorrow, and death. The principle of their own internal government is also clearly laid down: and its due administration will always give to the christian assembly a distinctive and heavenly character, in the presence of both God and man.

THE PRINCIPLE OF RECEPTION AT THE BEGINNING

But as this principle is the proper basis of all christian congregations, it may be well to look for a moment at its operation in the days of the apostles. Surely they understood its meaning and how to apply it.

On the day of **Pentecost**, and for some time after, it does not appear that the young converts were subjected to any examination as to the reality of their faith, either by the apostles or others. “Then they that gladly received His word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.” Thus receiving the word was the ground of baptism, and fellowship; but the work was then entirely in Christ’s own hands. “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” The attempt to deceive by **Ananias and Sapphira** was at once detected. Peter acts in his right place, but the Holy Ghost was there in ungrieved majesty and power, and Peter owns it. Hence he says to Ananias, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?”

But this virgin state of things soon passed away. Failure set in — the Holy Ghost was grieved, and it became necessary to examine the applicants, as to whether their motives, objects, and state of soul were according to the mind of Christ. We are now in the condition of things described in 2 Timothy 2.

We are only to have fellowship “with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”

After the church became so mixed with merely nominal professors, great care was necessary in receiving persons to communion. It was not enough that a person *said* he was converted and claimed admission into the church on the ground of his own statements: he must submit to be examined by experienced Christians. When one professes to be awakened to a sense of sin, and to be brought to repentance before God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, his confession must be examined by those who have gone through the same kind of experience themselves. And even where conversion is manifestly genuine, godly care, with tenderness, must be exercised in reception; something dishonouring to Christ, injurious to themselves, weakening to the assembly, may be entertained, even unconsciously. Herein spiritual discernment is needed. And this is the truest kindness to the applicant, and nothing more than a necessary care for the honour of Christ and the purity of communion. Christian fellowship would be at an end if persons were received on the sole ground of their own opinion of themselves.

In **Acts 9** we see the practical working of this principle in the case of the great apostle himself. And surely, if he could not be accredited without adequate testimony, who need complain? True, his case was peculiar, still it may be taken as a practical illustration of our subject.

We find both **Ananias at Damascus**, and **the church at Jerusalem** questioning the reality of **Saul’s conversion**, though it was a miraculous one. Of course he had been an open enemy to the name of Christ, and this would make the disciples still more careful. Ananias hesitates to baptize him until fully satisfied of his conversion. He consults the Lord on the subject, but after hearing His mind, he goes directly to Saul; assures him that he has been sent by the same Jesus that appeared to him on his way to Damascus, and confirms the truth of what had taken place. Saul is greatly comforted, he receives his sight, and is baptized.

Then as to the action of the church at Jerusalem we read “And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” **Paul** is a model man to the church in many things, and in this also. He is received into the assembly — as all applicants should be received — on the ground of adequate testimony to the genuineness of his Christianity. But while all godly care must be taken that the Simon Maguses may be detected, all tenderness and patience must be exercised with the timid and doubting ones. Still, life in Christ and consistency therewith must be looked for. (See Rom. 14, 15; 1 Cor. 5 and 2 Cor. 2) The church’s path is always a narrow one.

Popery has shown its desperate wickedness in the evil use it has made of the church's prerogative to retain or remit sins hence all the abominations of priestly absolution. **Protestantism** has gone to the other extreme — probably fearing the very appearance of popery — and has well-nigh set aside discipline altogether. The path of faith is to follow the word of the Lord.

The ground being thus cleared as to the great fundamental principles of the church and kingdom, we come to the day of Pentecost — the first moment of the church's history on earth. Unless we understand the principles of Christianity, we can never understand its history.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 2

THE DAY OF PENTECOST FULLY COME

The Jewish feast of **Pentecost** may be called **the birthday of the Christian church**. It was also the anniversary of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, though it does not appear that a day was observed by the Jews in commemoration of the event. Fifty days after our Lord's resurrection the church was formed — its history commenced. The Old Testament saints form no part of the New Testament church. It had no existence in *fact* until the day of Pentecost.

All saints, from the beginning, have the same eternal life, they are the children of the same God and Father, and the same heaven will be their home for ever; but the Old Testament saints belong to another dispensation, or to the different dispensations which ran their course before Christ came. Each dispensation has its own rise, progress, decline, and fall, in scripture, and will have its own reflection in heaven. Neither persons nor dispensations will be undistinguished there.

Hence the Apostle in Hebrews 11, when speaking of the ancient worthies, says, "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Surely if God has provided a *better thing* for us, it must also be a *different thing*. Let us not object to God's own word. Besides, our Lord in Matthew 16 says, "On this Rock I will build My church." And at the same time, He gave the keys to Peter to open the doors of the new dispensation. *Then* He had not begun to build His church, and the doors of the kingdom were not opened. But the difference between the *old* and the *new* will be more distinctly seen when we speak of the great events of the day of Pentecost. We begin with the types of Leviticus, chapter 23.

The children of Israel were commanded to bring a sheaf of **the first-fruits of their harvest** to the priest, that he might wave it before the Lord, to be accepted for them. This rite, we believe, shadowed forth our Lord's resurrection on the morning after the Jewish sabbath, the ground of the Christian's acceptance before God in the risen Christ. "Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." (See Matt. 28 and Mark 16)

Seven full weeks after the waving of the sheaf, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated. The former was reckoned to be the first day of the harvest in Judea, the latter supposed the corn to be fully gathered in. Then they had a solemn festival of thanksgiving. Two loaves of bread, baked with the flour of the new harvest, characterised this festival. They were to be baked with *leaven*, and brought *out* of their habitations. Some have thought that the two loaves prefigured the *out-calling* of the church as composed of Jew and Gentile. Be this as it may, the *number* is significant. Two witnesses were necessary for a testimony in Israel. The leaven indicates, we doubt not, indwelling sin in the believer, and, of course, in the church, viewed in its time condition.

With **the wave sheaf** — beautiful type of the risen Christ pure and holy — sacrifices of a sweet savour were offered, but no sacrifice for sin. With the two wave loaves — type of those who are Christ's — a sin-offering was presented. Sin, being there, a sin-offering was needed to cover it. Though the one perfect sacrifice of Christ answered to God for both indwelling sin and the many actual sins of the life, still, as a matter of fact and experience, sin dwells in us, and will do so as long as we are in this world. All acknowledge this, though all may not see the completeness of the work of Christ. The Christian has by one offering been perfected for ever, though he may humble himself and make confession to God for every failure.

The typical significance of Pentecost was remarkably fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Ghost. He came down to gather together the children of God that were scattered abroad. (John 11:52) By this great event the system of Judaism was set aside, and the new vessel of testimony — the church of God — was introduced. And now, observe, the order of events. First,

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, are the great facts or foundation truths, of the church — of Christianity. Incarnation was necessary to crucifixion, and both to resurrection. It is blessedly true that Christ died on the cross for our sins, but it is equally true, that the believer died in His death. (See Rom. 6; Col. 2) The Christian's life is life in resurrection. The church is built on the risen Christ. No truths can be more blessed and wonderful than incarnation and crucifixion but the church is associated with Him who is risen and glorified

In **Acts 1** we have that which is connected with the Lord's resurrection and ascension; and also with the actions of the apostles before the descent of the Holy Ghost. The blessed Lord, though in resurrection, still speaks and acts by the Holy Ghost. It was "*through the Holy Ghost*" that He gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen. This is worthy of special note as teaching us two things.

1. The character of our union with Christ; the Holy Ghost in the Christian, and in the risen Lord, joins them together. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” By the “one Spirit” they are united.

2. This important fact points out the blessed truth of the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting in the Christian also after he is actually in resurrection. Then He will not have — as He has now — the flesh in us to contend against, but will, ungrieved and unhindered, lead us on to the full joys of heaven — the happy worship, the blessed service, and the whole will of God.

The risen Lord next exhorts the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for “the promise of the Father,” which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” It is no longer a question of temporal promises to Israel; that field must be left till a future day. The Father’s promise of the Holy Ghost was an entirely distinct thing, and widely different in its results.

Several things “pertaining to **the kingdom of God**” having been spoken of between the Lord and His apostles, He ascends to heaven, and a cloud receives Him out of their sight. The Lord’s return is also most plainly and distinctly taught at the same time. “And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.” It is quite evident from these words, that He ascended *personally, visibly, bodily*, and that He shall so come again in like manner — that He will again appear beneath the heavens, and be manifested to people on the earth, personally, visibly, and bodily; but then it will be in power and great glory.

The apostles and disciples had now learnt two things:

1. That Jesus was taken up out of this world into heaven:

2. That He was coming back again into this world. On these two great facts their testimony was founded. But Jerusalem was to be the starting-point of their ministry, and they were to wait for power from above. We now come to the second great event, important beyond all others, with respect to man’s condition in this world — the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now, it is to be, not only God *for* us, but God *in* us. This took place on the day of Pentecost.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

The time was now fully come. Redemption was finished God was glorified — Christ at His right hand in heaven, and the Holy Ghost come down to earth. God inaugurates the church and this He does in a way suitable to His own

wisdom, power and glory. A mighty miracle is wrought, an outward sign is given. The great event is thus recorded.

Acts 2. “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” It may be well here to pause for a moment, and note a few things connected with the descent of the Holy Ghost and the display of His power on this important day.

There was, in the first place, the accomplishment of the Father’s promise; the Holy Ghost Himself was sent down from heaven. This was the great truth of Pentecost. He came from above to dwell in the church — the place prepared for Him by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. There was also the fulfilment of the word of the Lord to the apostles, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” Not that the disciples then knew the meaning of this word but the fact was now accomplished. The full revelation of the doctrine of the “one body” awaited the ministrations of Paul; as he elsewhere says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. 12)

But further, besides the various gifts dispensed for the work of the Lord, we have something most blessedly personal, and quite new on the earth. The Holy Ghost Himself came down to dwell, not in the church only, but also in each individual who believed in the Lord Jesus. And, thank the Lord, this most blessed fact is as true today as it was then. He dwells now in every believer who rests on the finished work of Christ. The Lord had said, looking forward to this day, “For He dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you.” These two grand aspects of the Spirit’s presence were fully accomplished on the day of Pentecost. He came to dwell in each Christian and in the church; and now, blessed truth, we know that God is not only *for* us, but *in* us, and *with* us.

When “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” He appeared in the form of a dove — beautiful emblem of the immaculate purity, of the meekness and lowliness, of Jesus. He was not to make His voice heard in the streets, or break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. But in the case of the disciples who were waiting at Jerusalem, it was altogether different. He descended on them in cloven tongues — tongues of fire; and sat upon each of them. This was characteristic. It was the power of God in testimony a testimony that was to go forth, not only to all Israel, but to all the nations of the earth. The word of God was also to *judge* all that came before it — it was as tongues *of fire*. God’s judgment on man because of sin had been judicially expressed in the cross, and now the solemn fact is to be made known, far and wide, by the power, of the Holy Ghost. Nevertheless,

grace reigns — reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus. Pardon is proclaimed to the guilty, salvation to the lost, peace to the troubled, and rest to the weary. All that believe are, and ever shall be, blessed *in* and *with* a risen and glorified Christ.

The astonishment and consternation of **the Sanhedrim** and the Jewish people must have been great indeed at the re-appearance, in such power, of the followers of the crucified Jesus. They had doubtless concluded that, as the Master was now gone, the disciples could do nothing of themselves. For the most part, they were plain uneducated men. But what must have been the people's amazement, when they heard that these plain men were preaching boldly in the streets of Jerusalem, and making converts by thousands to the religion of Jesus! Even historically viewed, the scene is full of the most thrilling interest, and has no parallel in the annals of time.

Jesus had been crucified; His claims to be the Messiah, in popular estimation, had been buried in His grave. The soldiers, who guarded His sepulchre, had been bribed to spread a false report as to His resurrection; the popular excitement had no doubt passed away, and the city, and temple worship, had returned to their former course, as if no great event had taken place. But on God's part things were not to be thus quietly passed over. He was awaiting the appointed time to vindicate His Son, and to vindicate Him in the very scene of His humiliation. This took place early in the morning on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, and unexpectedly, His scattered followers reappeared in miraculous power. They boldly charged the rulers and the people with the guilt of His apprehension, trial, and crucifixion — that they had killed their own Messiah; but that God had raised Him up, to be a Prince and a Saviour, and to set Him at His own right hand in heaven. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." (Rom. 5:20)

The sentence of **Babel**, we may also say, was reversed on that wonderful day. In the different languages, to which man had been doomed in God's just displeasure, salvation is proclaimed. This mighty marvellous work of God attracts the multitude. They are amazed, and speculate as to this strange thing. Each one, in the language of the country from whence he came, hears from the lips of poor Galileans the wonderful works of God. The Jews who dwelt at Jerusalem, not understanding these foreign languages, mocked. Then Peter stood up, and declared to them in their own tongue, and proved from their own scriptures, the true character of what had taken place.

PETER'S FIRST APPEAL TO THE JEWS

Thus we read: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of *every nation* under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And

how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Capadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day," or, as we should reckon, nine in the morning — the hour of prayer in the temple.

Thus Peter takes the lead, and explains to the Jews, that the wonderful things they had seen and heard that morning, were not the result of excitement, but rather that which ought to have been looked for according to their own prophetic scriptures. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." But mark the *ground* on which Peter stands and preaches with such boldness. He stands on the ground of the *resurrection* and *exaltation* of Christ. This is carefully to be noted, as showing the foundation on which the church rests, and when and where her history commences. This was the first day of her existence, the first page of her history, and the first triumphs of God's ineffable gift to man.

"This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

We quote the words of another, on the blessed effects of Peter's first sermon, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth.

"It was not merely a moral change, but a power which set aside all the motives which individualized those who had received it, by uniting them as one soul, and in one mind. They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, they were in communion with each other, they broke bread, they spent their time in prayer: the sense of God's presence was powerful among them; and many signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles. They were united in the closest bonds, no man calling anything his own, but all divided their possessions with those that needed. They were daily in the temple, the public resort of Israel for religious exercises, whilst having their own, apart, breaking bread at home daily. They ate with joy and gladness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people around them. Thus the assembly was formed, and the Lord added daily to it the remnant of

Israel, who were to be saved from the judgments which should fall on a nation which had rejected the Son of God, their Messiah. God brought into the assembly — thus owned of Him by the presence of the Holy Ghost — those whom He spared in Israel. A new order of things had commenced, marked by the presence of the Holy Ghost. Here was found the presence and the house of God, although the old order of things still existed until the execution of the judgment.

“The assembly was formed, therefore, by the power of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, on the testimony that Jesus, who had been rejected, was raised up to heaven, being made of God both Lord and Christ. It was composed of the Jewish remnant who were to be spared, with the reserve of bringing in Gentiles whenever God should call them.”⁵

This, then, is **the church of God**; a gathering together of those whom God has called to the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. Love rules and characterizes the newly formed assembly. The mighty victories which grace achieved on that memorable day fully attested the power of the exalted Lord, and the presence of the Holy Ghost on earth. Three thousand souls were converted through one sermon. Those who had been the avowed enemies of the Lord, and who had participated in the guilt of His murder, agonised under the power of Peter’s word. Alarmed at the awful thought of having killed their own Messiah, and that God, in whose presence they now were, had exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven, they cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Peter now seeks to deepen the good work in their souls — He seeks to humble the once proud and scornful Jews. “Repent,” he says, “and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” He does not say simply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved;” though, of course faith and repentance must go together wherever the work is genuine. But Peter, in this case, presses repentance. Their guilt had been great, and a deep moral work in their conscience was needful for their humbling. They must see their guilt in the sight of God, and receive the remission of their sins at the feet of Him whom they had rejected and crucified. Nevertheless, all was grace. Their hearts were touched. They sided with God against themselves — they truly repented, were pardoned, and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. Now they are the children of God and have eternal life: the Holy Ghost dwells in them.

The reality of the change was made manifest by a complete change of character. “Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

⁵ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 8.

Baptism, on the confession of faith; reception into the assembly; the Lord's supper, the fellowship of saints, and prayer, were their distinguishing observances. For the moment, the Lord's prayer, "that they may all be one," was answered, as we read in chapter 4. "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." We will now turn for the sake of connection to chapter 10.

THE CALLING IN OF THE GENTILES

Cornelius, the centurion, a devout man, and those that were with him, are now received into the assembly of God. Peter had intimated their call in his first discourse. He is now summoned of God in a special way and with special indications of His purpose, to open the door to those God-fearing Gentiles. Up to this time the assembly consisted chiefly, if not solely, of Jews. But God dealt tenderly with His ancient people considering their national prejudices. "Cornelius was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." They could have no objection, personally, to receive such a one. Thus God is gracious, tender and merciful. But no doubt was left on Peter's mind as to the divine will. God graciously silenced his reasonings, and overcame his unwillingness, with the mild reproof, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common."

Peter now proceeds, though slowly; it was a new kind of work for him. But nothing seems more surprising to Peter, than that the Gentiles should be brought into blessing, without either becoming Jews, or submitting to any Jewish ordinances. This to Peter, to the Gentiles, and in itself, was an immense step. It strikes at the very root of Popery, Puseyism, Apostolic Succession, and every system of ordinances. In this fact a flood of light is shed on the character of the present dispensation. "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." Clearly, it was no longer necessary to become a Jew, or submit to external rites and ceremonies, in order to enjoy the richest blessings of heaven. Without the imposition of apostolic hands — though Peter himself, in divine power and authority was present — and before being baptized with water, they were baptized with the Holy Ghost. While the word of God was falling from Peter's lips, the Holy Ghost fell on all who heard it. Before this, however, a blessed work, through God's grace, had been going on in the heart of Cornelius: he was a divinely quickened soul.

The *quickening* operations of the Spirit are quite distinct from being *sealed with* the Spirit. Before the Holy Ghost *can* seal, there must be something for Him *to* seal. He cannot seal our old nature; there must be a new nature for Him to seal. So that there must be a moment in every Christian's history, when he is quickened and not sealed; but sooner or later the work will be completed. (Eph. 1:13) For example, the prodigal son was quickened, or

converted, when he left the far country, but he was a stranger to the Father's love and grace; and, consequently, had not yet the faith that calmly rests in Christ as the source of all blessing. He was legal if not unbelieving, though quickened. Certainly he was not sealed of the Spirit, as to his pardon and acceptance, until he received the kiss of reconciliation, or the ring, the symbol of eternal love. The gospel of salvation is more than concern for the soul, however real. Christ-dishonouring unbelief may accompany, for a while, a genuine work of God's Spirit in the soul. The prodigal had a certain belief, that there was something good in his Father's heart, therefore he ventures to draw near. But surely this is short of evangelic fulness of faith. "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Wherever there is faith in Christ and His work, there is the seal of God. Paul himself was at least three days in the deepest exercise of soul, without the peace and rest which the sealing of the Holy Spirit gives. "And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." (Acts 9)

But we return to the main point before us.

THE SEALING OF THE GENTILES

Notice, then, this important fact connected with the bringing in of the Gentiles — they receive the gift of the Holy Ghost simply through the preaching of the word. At Jerusalem the Jews were baptized before they received the Holy Ghost. At Samaria the Samaritans were not only baptized, but had the apostles' hands laid on them with prayer, before they received the Holy Ghost. But at Caesarea, without baptism, without the laying on of hands, without prayer, the richest christian blessing was given to the Gentiles; though the *doctrine* of the church as the body of Christ was not yet revealed.

The grace of God, thus shown to the Gentiles at the commencement of the dispensation, has characterised it ever since. We are Gentiles; we are neither Jews nor Samaritans. Therefore God's ways in grace, and His order of things with the Gentiles, have a special application to us. There is no instance recorded by the inspired historians of one being baptized without professing faith in Christ; but if we are to follow the pattern of things at Caesarea, we must look for sealing as well as quickening — for peace with God as well as faith in Christ before baptism. The case of Cornelius stands at the very head of our dispensation; it was the first direct expression of grace to the Gentiles; and surely it ought to be a model for Gentile preachers and disciples. When the word of God which was *then* preached to Cornelius is *now* believed, the same effects, as to peace with God, we may rest assured will follow.

Preaching, believing, sealing, baptizing, is the divine order of things here. God and His word never change; though "times change," as men say, and human opinions change, and religious observances change; but the word of God — never. Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans, professed faith in Christ before they were baptized. Indeed baptism supposed eternal life *possessed* through

faith, not *communicated* by its observance, as Anglican Catholics teach. “Grace is communicated life is communicated, by sacraments,” they say, “and is only effected through these means; irrespective of any exercise of the intellect on the part of the person brought into union. Holy baptism is the means of conferring on the recipient a new and spiritual life.”⁶

Such notions, we need scarcely say, are utterly opposed to scripture. Baptism, we affirm, *confers* nothing. *Life* is conferred by other means, as the scriptures plainly teach. Conversion, or “being born again,” is effected, in all cases, without exception, by the Holy Spirit. As we read in 1 Peter “Seeing ye have purified your souls *in obeying the truth through the Spirit* unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” Here the truth of the Gospel is viewed as the *means*, and the Holy Spirit as the *power*, in conversion. Christ, or God in Christ, is the new object of the soul. It is by the Spirit and truth of God that this blessed change is effected. Those who trust to *water baptism* as the means of effecting it trust, alas! to a great and fatal delusion.⁷

⁶ *The Church and the World*, page 178-188.

⁷ The following brief statements from the fathers of the fourth century, on the subject of baptism, will show our readers the sources, or the authorities, of much that is said and done in the present day by the ritualists. The *authority* of scripture is entirely set aside. “At Easter, and at Pentecost, and in some places at the Epiphany, the rite of baptism was administered publicly — that is, in the presence of the faithful — to all the converts of the year, excepting those few instances in which it had been expedient to perform the ceremony without delay, or where the timid Christian put it off till the close of life, after the example of Constantine: a practice for a long time condemned in vain by the clergy. But the fact of the delay shows how deeply the importance and efficacy of the rite were rooted in the christian mind. It was a complete lustration [purifying] of the soul. The Neophyte [new convert] emerged from the waters of baptism in a state of perfect innocence. The dove — the Holy Spirit — was constantly hovering over the font, and sanctifying the waters to the mysterious ablution of all the sins of the past life. If the soul suffered no subsequent taint, it passed at once to the realms of purity and bliss; that is, the heart was purified; the understanding illuminated, the spirit was clothed with immortality.

“Robed in white, emblematic of spotless purity, the candidate approached the baptistery — in the larger churches a separate building. There he uttered the solemn vows which pledged him to his religion. The symbolizing genius of the East added some significant ceremonies. The Catechumen [one in the first stages of christian instruction] turned to the West, the realm of Satan, and thrice renounced his power; he turned to the East, to adore the Sun of Righteousness, and to proclaim his compact with the Lord of life. The mystic trinal number prevailed throughout; the vow was threefold, and thrice pronounced. The baptism was usually by immersion; the stripping off the clothes was emblematic of ‘putting off the old man,’ but baptism by sprinkling was allowed, according to the exigency of the case. The water itself, became, in the vivid language of the church, the blood of Christ: it was compared, by a fanciful analogy, to the Red Sea: the daring metaphors of some of the fathers might seem to assert a transmutation of its colour.

“Almost all the fathers of this age, Basil, the two Gregories, Ambrose, etc., etc., have treatises on baptism; and vie, as it were, with each other in their praises of its importance and efficacy. Gregory of Nazianzen almost exhausts the copiousness of the Greek language in speaking of baptism.” — *Milman’s History of Christianity*, vol. 3.

In the case of the Gentiles, now under consideration, even more than life was possessed before baptism was administered. They had the seal of God. Baptism is the sign of full deliverance and salvation as secured for the believer by the death and resurrection of Christ. Cornelius had life, was a devout man, but he must send for Peter, and hear words whereby he would be saved or fully delivered. The Old as well as the New Testament teaches this blessed truth most plainly. Israel, as a typical people, after being brought to God and sheltered by the blood of the lamb in Egypt, were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Thus they were delivered out of Egypt, and saw the salvation of Jehovah. Again, Noah and his family were saved *through* the flood — *not by it*. They left the old world, passed through the waters of death, and landed in a new condition of things altogether. “The like figure, [or antitype,] whereunto even baptism doth also now save us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (Exodus 14; 1 Peter 3:21)

But what was the word, some may inquire, that Peter preached, which was accompanied with such remarkable blessing? He preached peace by Jesus Christ, as Lord of all. Christ risen, exalted, and glorified, was the grand object of his testimony. He sums up with these words: “*To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.*” The blessing follows. The Jews present were astonished; but they bow, and own God’s goodness to the Gentiles. “*While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.*”

We now retrace our steps a little way, and notice some of the leading events, which, in order, precede chapter 10.

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN MARTYR

Stephen, the deacon and evangelist, is the first to receive the crown of martyrdom for the name of Jesus. He stands at the head of “the noble army of martyrs.” He is perfect as a type — as the *proto-martyr*. Firm and unwavering in his faith; bold and undaunted before his accusers; pointed and faithful in his defence before the Sanhedrim; free from malice in his strongest statements; full of charity towards all men, he seals his testimony with his blood, and falls asleep in Jesus.

In some respects Stephen resembles the blessed Lord Himself. “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” is like “Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit;” and again, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” resembles “Father, forgive

them, for they know not what they do;" only Stephen does not plead their ignorance.

Already we see that troubles both within and without assail the young assembly. True, the word of God increased, multitudes were converted, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. But the Grecians, or Hellenists (Jews of Greek origin), murmured against the Hebrews (natives of Judaea), because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. This led to the appointment of **seven deacons**. (Acts 6) From their names here given it would appear that the seven chosen were "Grecians" — all from the side of the murmurers. Thus the Spirit of God ruled in grace. Stephen was one of the number; and in his case the word of the apostle was exemplified: Those who "have used the office of deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." He was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people. The energy of the Holy Spirit was especially manifested in Stephen.

There were different synagogues in Jerusalem appropriated to the different races of Jews. It was the synagogue of the Libertines, Cyrenians, etc., that opposed Stephen. But "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Then followed that which has usually been the case with the confessors of Jesus in all ages: unable to answer him, they accuse him before the council. False witnesses are suborned, who swear that they had heard him speak "blasphemous words against Moses, and against God," and that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy this place, and change the customs delivered to them by Moses. The case was now before the Sanhedrim — the trial commences. But what must his judges have thought when they saw his face radiant, as the face of an angel?

We have the noble **address of Stephen** to the heads of the nation before us. To them it was convincing, perplexing, overwhelming. Doubtless, it was the testimony of the Holy Ghost to the Jews, from the mouth of Stephen; and all the more humbling to the proud Jews to hear their doom from the lips of a Hellenist. But the Spirit of God, when unhindered by man's arrangements, works by whomsoever *He* will.

Stephen recapitulates in bold language the chief points in their national history. He refers especially to the history of Joseph and of Moses. The former their fathers sold to the Gentiles, the latter they despised as a ruler and a judge. He also charges them with always resisting the Holy Ghost — with always disobeying the law, and now with having been the betrayers and murderers of the *Just One*. Here Christ's faithful witness was interrupted. He was not allowed to finish his address: — a picture, too true, of the treatment of martyrs from that day even until now. The murmurs, the indignation, the fury of the Sanhedrim, were beyond control. "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth." But in place of pursuing his discourse, he turns in ecstasy of heart to the Lord, and

fixes his eyes on heaven — the home and centre of gathering for all His people.

“I see,” said Stephen, “the heavens opened.” He is full of the Holy Ghost as he looks on high, and he sees the Son of man standing there ready to receive his spirit. “Such, then,” as another has said, “is the position of the true believer — heavenly upon the earth — in presence of the world that rejected Christ, the murderous world. The believer, alive in death, sees by the power of the Holy Ghost into heaven, and the Son of man at the right hand of God. Stephen does not say, ‘Jesus.’ The Spirit characterises Him as ‘the Son of man.’ Precious testimony to man! It is not to the glory that he testifies, but to the Son of man in the glory, heaven being open to him... As to the object of faith and the position of the believer, this scene is definitively characteristic.”

“Foremost and nearest to His throne
By perfect robes of triumph known
And likest Him in look and tone,
 The holy Stephen kneels,
With steadfast gaze, as when the sky
Flew open to his fainting eye,
Which like a fading lamp flashed high,
 Seeing what death conceals.

“He, though he seem on earth to move
Must glide in air like gentle dove,
From yon unclouded depths above
 Must draw his purer breath:
Till men behold his angel face
All radiant with celestial grace,
Martyr all o’er, and meet to trace
 The lines of Jesus' death.”

We have now gone over, with some care, **the first section of the church’s history**. And we have been the more careful, as church histories in general commence at a later period. Most of them begin where scripture ends, at least as to details. None that we have yet seen refer to Matthew 16, and few attempt a critical examination of the Acts of the Apostles, which, after all, is the only part of her history which commands our faith, and has an absolute claim upon our obedience.

In chapter 8 we find the Holy Ghost in Samaria working by Philip. He has, as it were, left Jerusalem. This marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church; and especially in her connection with Jerusalem. We leave, for the present, the enraged and persecuting Jews, and follow the path of the Spirit to the city of Samaria. But we must glance for a moment at what some have called the *third persecution*.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 3

THE DISCIPLES PERSECUTED AND SCATTERED

After the death of Stephen a great persecution broke out. (Acts 8) The Jewish leaders appear to have gained a victory over the disciples, and they determined to pursue their apparent triumph with the utmost violence. But God, who is above all, and who knows how to restrain the rising passions of men, overruled their opposition for the accomplishment of His own will.

Man had not yet learnt the truth of the proverb, that “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” In the case of the first and the noblest of martyrs, the proverb was fully verified. But all these eighteen hundred years, men have been slow to learn, or believe, this plain historical fact. Persecution, generally speaking, has advanced the cause which it sought to repress. This will be found true in the main, under every form of opposition and persecution. Resistance, decision, and firmness are created by such treatment. True, timid minds may be driven to apostasy for a time by persecution; but how often have such, with the deepest repentance, and in order to regain their former position, endured with cheerfulness the keenest sufferings, and displayed in their last moments the greatest fortitude! But persecution, in one form or another, is to be expected by the followers of Jesus. They are exhorted to take up their cross *daily* and follow Him. It tests the sincerity of our faith, the purity of our motives, the strength of our affection for Christ, and the measure of our confidence in Him.

Those who are not true in heart for Christ will be sure to fall away in a time of sharp persecution. But love can *endure* for its object, when it can do nothing else. We see this *perfectly* in the blessed Lord Himself. He *endured* the cross — that was of God: He *despised* the shame — that was of man. It was amidst the shame and sufferings of the cross that the full strength of His love appeared, and that He triumphed over everything. Nothing could turn His love aside from its object; it was stronger than death. In this, as in all things, He has left us an example, that we should walk in His steps. May we ever be found following hard after Him!

From the history of the church in the Acts we learn, that the effect of the martyrdom of Stephen was the immediate spread of the truth, which his persecutors were seeking to hinder. The impressions produced by such a witness, and such a death, must have been overwhelming to his enemies, and convincing to the unprejudiced and the thoughtful. The last resort of human cruelty is death: but, wonderful to say Christian faith, in its first trial, was proved to be stronger than death, and that in its most frightful form. This the

enemy witnessed, and would ever after remember. Stephen was on the *Rock*, and the gates of hell could not prevail against Him.

The whole church at Jerusalem, on this occasion, were scattered abroad; but they went everywhere preaching the word. Like the cloud that flies before the wind, bearing its refreshing rain to thirsty lands, so the disciples were driven from Jerusalem by the storm of persecution, bearing the living waters to thirsty souls in distant lands. “And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.” Some historians have thought that the fact of the apostles remaining in Jerusalem when the disciples fled, proves their greater firmness and faithfulness in the cause of Christ, but we are disposed to judge differently, and to consider it *failure* rather than *faithfulness*. The Lord’s commission to them was, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And they had been told before, “When they persecute you in one city, flee into another.” As far as scripture history informs us, the commission was never carried out by the twelve. Nevertheless, God was mighty in Paul towards the Gentiles, and in Peter towards the Jews.

The Holy Spirit now leaves Jerusalem as to outward manifest power — most solemn truth! But that guilty city preferred the patronage of Rome to the resurrection-power of their own Messiah. “What do we?” said the Jews, “for this man doeth many miracles. If we let Him thus alone, all men will believe on Him; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and our nation.” They rejected the Messiah in His humiliation, and now they reject the testimony of the Holy Ghost to His exaltation. Their iniquity was full, and wrath was coming on them to the uttermost. But, for the present, our happier place, in tracing the history of the church, is to follow the Holy Spirit on His way to Samaria. His path is the *silver line* of saving grace to precious souls.

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL IN SAMARIA

Philip, the deacon, evidently next to Stephen in zeal and energy, goes down to Samaria. The Holy Spirit works with him. In the wisdom of the Lord’s ways, despised Samaria is the first place, outside of Judaea, where the Gospel was preached by His chosen witnesses. “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city.” A great many believed and were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon Magus, the sorcerer, owned the presence of a power far above his own, and bowed to the force and current of the Spirit’s work in others, though the truth had not penetrated his own heart or conscience. But as we have now travelled to another part of the country, this may be the fitting place to say a word as to its history.

The **Holy Land**, interesting beyond all other nations of the earth, both morally and historically, is in size very small. “It is but a strip of country, about the size of Wales, less than 140 miles in length, and barely 40 in average breadth.”⁸ The northern portion is Galilee; the centre, Samaria; the south, Judaea. But though physically so small, it has been the theatre of the most momentous events in the world’s history. There the Saviour was born, lived and was crucified — and there He was buried and rose again. And there too, His apostles and martyrs lived, testified and suffered; and there the first gospel sermon was preached, and there the first church was planted.

The land originally occupied by Israel, lay between the ancient empires of Assyria and Egypt. Hence the frequent reference in the Old Testament to “the king of the North,” and the “king of the South.” Owing to this position, it was often the battle field of these mighty empires, and we know it will yet be the scene of their last and deadly conflict. (Dan. 11) So superstitious have men been about the Holy Land, that it has been the object of national ambition, and the occasion of religious wars, almost ever since the days of the apostles. Who could estimate the blood that has been shed, and the treasure that has been wasted, on these sacred plains? — and all, we may add, under the fair name of religious zeal, or rather, under the banners of the cross and the crescent. Thither the pilgrims in every age have travelled, that they might worship at the holy sepulchre, and fulfil their vow. It has also been the great attraction for travellers of all characters and of all nations and the great emporium for miracle-working relics. The Christian, the historian, and the antiquarian have searched it diligently, and made known their discoveries. Ever since the days of Abraham, it has been the most interesting and attractive spot on the earth’s surface. And to the student of prophecy, its future history is even more interesting than its past. He knows that the day is coming, when the whole land shall be peopled by the twelve tribes of Israel, and filled with the glory and majesty of their Messiah. Then shall they be owned as the metropolitan people of the earth. We now return to Samaria, with its new life and joy.

The Samaritans through God’s blessing readily believed the Gospel, as preached by Philip. The effects of the truth, thus received in simplicity, were immediate and of the most blessed character. “There was great joy in that city,” and many were baptized. Such must ever be the effects of the Gospel, when believed, unless there be some hindrance in connection with ourselves. Where there is genuine simplicity of faith, there must be genuine peace and joy, and happy obedience. The power of the Gospel, over a people who had for ages resisted the claims of Judaism, was thus displayed. What the law could not do, in this respect, the Gospel accomplished. “Samaria was a ‘conquest,’ as one has said, “which all the energy of Judaism had never been able to make. It was a new and splendid triumph of the Gospel. The spiritual subjugation of the world appertained to the church.”

⁸ *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible.*

JERUSALEM AND SAMARIA UNITED BY THE GOSPEL

The bitter jealousy that existed between Jews and Samaritans had long been proverbial; hence we read, “The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” But now, in connection with the Gospel of peace, this root of bitterness disappears. Nevertheless in the wisdom of God’s ways, the Samaritans must wait for the highest blessing of the Gospel, until the Jewish believers — the apostles from the church at Jerusalem lay their hands on them, and offer up prayer for them. Nothing can be more deeply interesting than this fact, when we take into consideration the religious rivalry that had been so long manifested by both. Had not Samaria received this timely lesson of humility, she might have been disposed, once more, to maintain her proud independency of Jerusalem. But the Lord would not have it so. The Samaritans had believed, rejoiced, and were baptized, but they had not received the Holy Ghost. “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John; who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.”

Identification is the great idea of the laying on of hands, and *unity* is the consequence of the gift of the Holy Ghost. These are immense facts in connection with the progress of the church. Samaria is thus brought into happy association with her ancient rival, and made one with the church at Jerusalem. There is no thought in God’s mind of the one assembly being independent of the other. Had they been each blessed separately and independently, their rivalry might have been greater than ever. But it was to be no longer: “Neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem,” but one Head in heaven, one body on earth, one Spirit, one redeemed family worshipping “God in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”⁹

For the origin of **the mixed people and worship of Samaria**, see 2 Kings 17. They were but half Jews, though they boasted of their relation to Jacob. They received the five books of Moses as sacred, but undervalued the rest of the Bible. They were circumcised, kept the law after a sort, and were expecting a Messiah to come. The personal visit of the blessed Lord to Samaria is of the deepest and most touching interest. (John 4) The well at which He rested, it is said, “lay in a valley between the two famous mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, on which the law was read. On the latter height stood the rival temple of the Samaritans, which had so long afflicted the more zealous Jews by its daring opposition to the one chosen sanctuary on Mount Moriah.”

⁹ See Lecture 6 on Acts 2, 8, 10, 19. *Lectures on the New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.* By W. Kelly.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH RECEIVES THE GOSPEL

Philip is now called to leave his happy and interesting work at Samaria, and go down to Gaza — a wilderness — and preach the gospel there to a single person. Surely there is in this fact a lesson for the evangelist of the deepest importance, and one that must not be passed over without a brief notice.

The preacher, in such a scene of awakening and conversion as there was at Samaria, necessarily becomes greatly interested in the work. God is setting His seal on the ministry of the word, and sanctioning the meetings with His presence. The work of the Lord prospers. The evangelist is surrounded with respect and affection, and his children in the faith naturally look up to him for further light and instruction as to their path. How can he leave such a field of labour? many will inquire, Would it be right to leave it? Only, we reply, if the Lord called His servant to do so, as He did in the case of Philip. But how is one to know *now*, seeing that angels and the Spirit do not speak to him as they did to Philip? Though not spoken to in this way, he ought to look for and expect divine guidance. Faith must be his guide. Circumstances are unsafe as a guide; they may rebuke and correct us in our path, but the eye of God must be our guide. “I will guide thee with Mine eye” is the promise, “I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go.” (Ps. 32)

The Lord only knows what is best for His servant and for His work. The evangelist in such a scene would be in danger of feeling his own personal importance. Hence the value, if not the necessity, of changing the place of service.

“Arise,” said the angel of the Lord to Philip, “and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went; and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” (Acts 8: 26-29)

The immediate and unquestioning obedience of Philip at this time is beautiful. He raises no question as to the difference between Samaria and Gaza — between leaving a wide field of labour, and going away to a desert place, to speak to *one person* about salvation. But the Spirit of God was with Philip. And the one desire of the evangelist should ever be to follow the leading of the Spirit. From the want of spiritual discernment a preacher may remain in a place after the Spirit has ceased to work in it, and so labour in vain.

God, in His providence, takes care of His servant; He sends an angel to direct him as to the road he is to take. But when it is a question of the gospel and dealing with souls, the Spirit takes the direction. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.” We know of nothing, in the

whole history of the church, more interesting than this scene on the way to Gaza. The angel and the Spirit of God accompany the evangelist: the former representing the providence of God in marking out the very road he is to take; the latter representing spiritual power in direct dealing with souls. As it was then, so is it now; though we are more in the habit of thinking of the guidance of the Spirit, than of the direction of providence. May we trust God for everything! He changes not!

The gospel now finds its way, in the person of **the queen's treasurer**, to the centre of Abyssinia. The eunuch believes, is baptized, and goes on his way rejoicing. What he sought for in vain in Jerusalem, and had taken a long journey to seek there, he finds in the desert. Beautiful instance of the grace of the gospel! The lost sheep is found in the wilderness, and living waters spring up in the desert. He is also a beautiful instance of an anxious soul. When alone and unemployed, he reads the prophet Isaiah. He muses on the prophecy of the suffering, unresisting, Lamb of God. But the moment of light and deliverance had come. Philip explains the prophet: the eunuch is taught of God — he believes: immediately desires baptism, and returns to his home, filled with the new joys of salvation. Would he be silent there as to what he had found? Certainly not; a man of such character and influence would have many opportunities of spreading the truth. But as both scripture and history are silent, as to the results of his mission, we venture not further.

The Spirit is still seen in company with Philip and carries him far away. He is found at Azotus, and evangelizes all the cities unto Caesarea.

But a new era in the church's history begins to dawn. A new workman enters the scene, and the most remarkable in many ways that ever served the Lord and His church.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS

No event in the progress of the church so deeply, or so blessedly, affects her after history, as the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. From being the chief of sinners, he became the chief of saints — from being the most violent opposer of Christ, he became the most zealous defender of the faith — as a hater and persecutor of the name of Jesus on the earth, he was “chief;” all others, compared with him, were subordinate. (Acts 9; 1 Timothy 1)

It is quite evident, from what he says of himself, that he believed Judaism to be not only divine, but God's perpetual and unchangeable religion to man. It would be difficult to account for the strength of his Jewish prejudices on any other principle. Therefore all attempts to set aside the Jews' religion, and to introduce another, he considered to be of the enemy, and to be strenuously opposed. He had heard the noble speech of Stephen — he had witnessed his triumphant death; but his subsequent persecution of the Christians showed that the moral glory of that scene had made no serious impression on his mind. He was blinded by zeal; but zeal for Judaism now was zeal against the Lord. At

this very time he was “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.”

Hearing that some of the persecuted saints had found a shelter in Damascus, an ancient city of Syria, he made up his mind to go there, and bring them back to Jerusalem as criminals. For this purpose he received letters from the high priest and the estate of the elders, that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem to be punished. (Acts 22, 26) He thus became the very apostle of Jewish malice against the disciples of Jesus; ignorantly, no doubt, but he made himself their willing missionary.

With his mind wrought up to the most violent pitch of persecuting zeal, he sets forth on his memorable journey. Unshaken in his ardent attachment to the religion of Moses, and determined to punish the converts to Christianity, as apostates from the faith of their ancestors, he approaches Damascus. But there, in the full energy of his mad career, the Lord Jesus stops him. A light from heaven, above the light of the sun, shines around him, and overwhelms him in its dazzling brightness. He falls to the earth — broken in will, subdued in mind, humbled in spirit, and altogether changed. His heart is now subject to the voice that speaks to him; he owns its power and authority. Reasoning, extenuation, self-justification, have no place in the presence of the Lord.

A voice from the excellent glory had said unto him, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? And he said, **Who art Thou, Lord?** And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” Thus the Lord Jesus, though in heaven, declares Himself to be still identified with His disciples on the earth. The oneness of the church with Christ, its Head in heaven, the germ of the blessed truth of the “one body,” is folded up in these few words, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou *Me*?... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” To be at war with the saints is to be at war with the Lord Himself. Blessed truth for the believer, but how solemn for the persecutor!

The vision Saul had seen, and the terrible discovery he had made, completely engross him. He is blind for three days, and can neither eat nor drink. Thus he enters Damascus, blind, broken, humbled, beneath the solemn judgment of the Lord! How different from what he had intended! He now joins himself to the company which he had resolved to exterminate. Nevertheless he enters in by the door, and humbly takes his place with the disciples of the Lord. Ananias, a godly disciple, is sent to comfort him. He receives his sight, he is filled with the Holy Ghost, he is baptized, he receives meat and is strengthened.

It is the thought of some, that the Lord gives in the conversion of Saul, not only a sample of His long-suffering, as in every sinner that is saved, but as a sign of **the future restoration of Israel**. Paul tells us himself, that he obtained mercy because he did it ignorantly in unbelief; and this is the very ground of mercy for Israel in the latter day. As our Lord Himself prayed for

them: — “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Peter also, says, “And now brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.” (Acts 3:17)

But as the apostleship of Paul differs in many respects from that of the twelve, it will be necessary to notice it briefly. Unless this difference is understood, the true character of the present dispensation will be but feebly apprehended.

THE APOSTLESHIP OF PAUL

The LAW and the PROPHETS were until JOHN; after John the LORD Himself, in His own Person, offers the kingdom to Israel, but “His own received Him not.” They crucified the Prince of life, but God raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. We have next THE TWELVE APOSTLES. They are endued with the Holy Ghost, and bear witness to the resurrection of Christ. But the testimony of the twelve is despised, the Holy Ghost is resisted, Stephen is martyred, the final offer of mercy is rejected, and now the Lord’s dealings with Israel as a people close for a season. The scenes of Shiloh are enacted over again, Ichabod is written on Jerusalem, and a new witness is called out, as in the days of Samuel.

THE GREAT APOSTLE of the Gentiles now comes before us. He is as one born out of due time and out of due place. His apostleship had nothing to do with Jerusalem, or with the twelve. It was outside of both. His call was extraordinary and direct from the Lord in heaven. He is privileged to bring out the new thing, the heavenly character of the church — that Christ and the church are one, and that heaven is their common home. (Eph. 2) So long as God was dealing with Israel these blessed truths were kept a secret in His own mind. “Unto me,” says Paul, “who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, Who created all things by Jesus Christ.” (Eph. 3)

There could be no doubt, from the *character of the apostle’s call*, as to its divine authority. “Not of men, neither by man,” as he says in his Epistle to the Galatians, “but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, Who raised Him from the dead.” That is, it was “not of men,” as to its source, not of any *synod* of official men. “Neither by man” was it, as to the medium through which his commission came. He was not only a saint, but an apostle, by calling: and that call was by Jesus Christ, and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead. In some respects his apostleship was even of a higher order than that of the twelve. *They* had been called by Jesus when on the earth; *he* had been called by the *risen* and *glorified* Christ in heaven. And, his call being thus from heaven, he wanted neither the sanction nor the recognition of the other apostles. “But when it pleased God... to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and

blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.” (Gal. 1:15, 17)

The **manner of Saul’s call** to be an apostle is worthy of special note, as it struck at the root of Jewish pride, and may also be viewed as the deathblow to the vain notion of apostolic succession. The apostles, whom the Lord had chosen and appointed when He was on the earth, were neither the source nor the channel, in any way, of Saul’s appointment. They did not cast lots for him, as they did in the case of Matthias. *Then* they were scarcely off Jewish ground, which may account for their deciding by lot. It was an ancient form in Israel of discovering the divine will in such matters. But these emphatic words, “Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ,” completely exclude the intervention of man in every shape and way. Apostolic succession is set aside. We are *saints by calling and servants by calling*. And that call must come from heaven. Paul stands before us as the true pattern for all preachers of the gospel, and for all ministers of the word. Nothing can be more simple than the ground he takes as a preacher, great apostle though he was. “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written I believed, and therefore have I spoken; *we also believe, and therefore speak.*” (2 Cor. 4:13)

Immediately after he was baptized and strengthened, he began to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus, and to preach in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. This is a new thing. Peter preached that He had been exalted to the right hand of God — that He had been made both Lord and Christ, but Paul preaches the higher doctrine of His personal glory — “that He is the Son of God.” In Matthew 16, Christ is revealed by the Father to the disciples, as “the Son of the living God.” But now He is revealed, not only *to* Paul, but in Paul. “It pleased God to reveal His Son in me,” he says. But who is sufficient to speak of the privileges and blessings of those to whom the Son of God is thus revealed? The dignity and security of the church rest on this blessed truth; and also the gospel of the glory, which was especially entrusted to Paul, and which he calls “my gospel.”

“On the Son thus revealed within,” as one has sweetly said “hangs everything that is peculiar to the calling and glory of the church — her holy prerogatives — acceptance in the Beloved with forgiveness of sins through His blood — entrance into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so as to have made known to us the mystery of the will of God — future inheritance in and with Him in whom all things in heaven and earth are to be gathered — and the present seal and earnest of this inheritance is the Holy Ghost. This bright roll of privileges is inscribed by the apostle, thus — ‘spiritual blessings in the

heavenlies;’ and so they are; blessings through the Spirit flowing from and linking us with Him who is the Lord in the heavens.”¹⁰ (Eph. 1: 3-14)

But **the doctrine of the church** — this mystery of love, and grace, and privilege — was not revealed until Paul declared it. The Lord had spoken of it as that which the presence of the Comforter was to effect, saying, “At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” And again, when He said to the disciples after the resurrection, “I ascend unto My Father and your Father, unto My God and your God.” Of this “bright roll” of blessing Paul was especially and characteristically the apostle.

We must now leave the history of Saul for a little, and turn to Peter, who occupies the field until Saul commences his public ministry in Acts 13.

¹⁰ See fuller details on this subject, by J.G.B., *Christian Witness*, vol. 4, page 221; and by W.K., *Lectures on Galatians*, chap. 1.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 4

THE MISSIONARIES OF THE CROSS

In place of going over consecutively the remaining chapters of **the Acts**, we think it may be more interesting and equally instructive to our readers, to consider them in connection with the history of the apostles, especially with the history of the two *great* apostles. The book of the Acts is almost entirely occupied with **the acts of Peter and of Paul**, though of course under the guidance of the Holy Ghost: the one, as the great apostle of the Jews; the other, as the great apostle of the Gentiles. But we would also embrace the present opportunity, briefly to notice the first personally chosen companions and missionaries of our blessed Lord — the twelve apostles.

But before attempting an outline of these interesting lives it may be well to state the object we have in view in doing so. We are stepping a little out of the usual course. In none of the Church Histories that we know are the lives of the apostles presented in a regular form; and we think it strange that the great founders of the church should have no place in its history. We have also noticed with some surprise that most of the histories close with the commencement of the Reformation. Surely this is the brightest day in her history — at least since the days of **Constantine** — and the one above all others in which the Spirit of God wrought mightily; and thus ought to be the most special part of her history.

At the same time, with regard to the apostles, we have to bear in mind, that beyond the sacred narrative, there is very little known that can be relied upon. The traditional and the scriptural, the certain and the uncertain, are almost helplessly blended together in the writings of the Fathers. Every distinct ray of historical light we greatly value, but it is only to the scriptures that we can turn with certainty. Still, the few scattered notices which we have there, of some of the apostles, with what may be gathered elsewhere, when brought together may give the reader a view of the person and individuality of the apostle, which he never had before. Others, of note, besides the apostles, will come before us in connection with them, especially with Paul; so that our readers will have, in a convenient form, a brief outline of nearly all the noble preachers, teachers, confessors, and martyrs of the Lord Jesus spoken of in the New Testament.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

were **Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John** (sons of Zebedee), **Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James** (the son of Alphaeus),

Thaddeus, Simon Zelotes, and Matthias, who was chosen in place of Judas Iscariot. See Matthew 10; Luke 6, Mark 3, and Acts 1.

Paul was also an apostle by the Lord's direct call, and that in the highest sense, as we have seen. There were others who were called apostles, but soon were more especially the apostles of the churches. The twelve and Paul were pre-eminently the apostles of the Lord. Compare 2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25; Romans 16:7.

The official name, "**apostle,**" signifies one "sent forth." "These twelve Jesus *sent forth.*" This name was given to the twelve by the Lord Himself. "He called unto Him His disciples; and of them He chose twelve, whom also He called apostles." A personal acquaintance with the whole ministerial course of the Lord, was the original and a necessary qualification of an apostle. This was stated by Peter before the election of a successor to the traitor Judas. "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of the resurrection." By this close personal intercourse with the Lord, they were particularly suited to be the witnesses of His earthly path. He describes them Himself as "they which have continued with Me in My temptations." (Luke 22:28)

The number twelve, we believe, distinctly marks their relation to the twelve tribes of Israel. The fancies of **the Fathers,** as to the meaning of the *number* here chosen, show how little their minds were governed by the immediate context. St. Augustine "thinks our Lord herein had respect to the four quarters of the world, which were to be called by the preaching of the gospel, and which, being multiplied by three, as denoting the Trinity, make twelve." From not seeing the distinction between Israel and the church, there is much confusion in such writers.

The number twelve in scripture we understand to mean *administrative completeness in man.* Hence the twelve tribes, and the twelve apostles, and the promise to the latter, that they should sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. 19:28) But here, in plainest terms, the Lord limits the mission of the twelve to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They were not even to visit the Samaritans, nor to go in the way of the Gentiles. **The mission was strictly Jewish.** "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Surely nothing could possibly be plainer. The calling out of the church is not here referred to. This took place after, when another and an extraordinary apostle was chosen, with a special view to the Gentiles. *Then* the twelve would have their own place in the church, but Paul was its divinely called and qualified minister.

The general notion that the twelve were altogether illiterate, we cannot agree with. The expression “**unlearned and ignorant men,**” as used by the council in Acts 4:13, we understand as simply denoting persons in private stations of life, who had not been taught in the rabbinical learning and traditions of the Jews. Our term “laymen” would convey the same idea; that is, men of ordinary education, as contrasted with those who have been specially trained in the schools of the learned; or men not in “holy orders.” Thus Peter and John may have been thoroughly acquainted with the holy scriptures, and with the history of their country and people and yet be considered by the council as “unlearned and ignorant men.” James and John at least had all the advantages of a godly and devoted mother’s training, which has often done great things for the church of God.

We will now glance briefly at the twelve, and first in order is the apostle

Peter. There can be no doubt that **Peter** held the first place among the twelve. The Lord gave him this position. He is first named in every list of the apostles. This precedence we know, did not arise from his having known the Lord first for he was neither first nor last in this respect. Andrew, and probably John, knew the Lord before Peter. Let us here note with deepest interest, the first meeting of those friends who were to be united for ever. See John 1: 29-51.

John the Baptist bears testimony to Jesus as the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world. Two of John’s disciples leave him and go with Jesus. “One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, *We have found the Messiah*, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” This was Peter’s first introduction to the Lord — to one who was to be the source of his happiness for ever. And how significant their first interview! “And when Jesus beheld him, He said, Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone.” Naturally impulsive, quick in seizing an object, but too ready to relinquish it by the force of another impression, he has in the Lord’s grace firmness given him; though every now and then his natural character shines out.

The first thing that brings Peter into great prominence is his noble confession of Christ, as **the Son of the living God.** (Matt. 16) The Lord then honoured him with the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and gave him the chief place among his brethren. But this part of Peter’s history, with some of the early chapters of the Acts, we have already considered; therefore we will only refer to what has not been touched upon.

The fourth chapter of the Acts we have not alluded to; though we are disposed to think that it presents the brightest day in the apostle’s history, as the baptism of Cornelius presents the crowning day in his ministry. As there is

often displayed in the great apostle a mixture of strength and weakness of excellencies and defects, it is deeply interesting to trace his path through the first storms which assailed the infant church. But we must not forget that the grand secret of the boldness, wisdom, and power of the apostles, was not owing to their natural character, but to **the presence of the Holy Ghost**. He was *with* them and *in* them, and working *by* them. **The Holy Ghost was the strength of their testimony.**

Notice in particular the blessed effects of His presence in *four* distinct aspects.

1. In the **courage** displayed by Peter and the others. “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole, Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the Head of the comer. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” The great and solemn question between God and the rulers of Israel is here *formally stated*. Nothing can be plainer. The testimony of God is no longer with the rulers of the temple, but with the apostles of the exalted Messiah.

2. In His presence **with** the disciples as an assembly. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.” This verse clearly teaches what has been so often said, as to the Spirit being *with* the disciples and *in* them. The place was *shaken* where they were assembled together; this proves His presence *with* them. But they were also *filled* with the Holy Ghost — so filled, we believe, that for the time being, there was no room for the flesh to act.

3. In **great power** as to service. “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all.” Readiness and energy now characterize the apostles.

4. In whole-hearted **devotedness**. “As many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet.” In chapter two the rich gave to the poor themselves: a thing which can scarcely be done without adding importance to the giver. But in chapter four the rich laid their money at the apostles' feet. This fact we would accept as a sure sign of increased humility, and of greater devotedness.

It is also in this full and instructive chapter that we have the famous answer of Peter and John to the council. “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” From that day until now,

the true confessors of the name of Jesus have found in these words a suitable answer to their inquisitors and oppressors. What a difference, we may exclaim, between the man who sat by the fire in the hall of the high priest, and **the man who takes the lead in Acts 4** — between the man who fell before the assault of a maid, and the man who makes a nation tremble with his appeals! But how is the difference to be accounted for? some may ask. The presence and power of an ungrieved, unquenched Holy Spirit explains it fully. And the weakness or power of many in our day is to be accounted for on the same principle. The Spirit of God alone is power in the Christian. May we know the blessedness of living, walking working, in the saving and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit! “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” (Eph. 4:30)

We are now come to the last section in the sacred narrative of the history of Peter. From verse 32 of chapter 9 to verse 18 of chapter 11 we have an account of his preaching and working miracles. There we see him once more in full apostolic authority, and the Holy Ghost working with him. His mission at this time was greatly blessed, both in the towns of Israel, and at Caesarea. The whole **town of Lydda** and the **district of Saron** appear to have been awakened. The miracles which Peter wrought, and the gospel which he preached, were used of God for the conversion of many. Thus we read, “And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron turned to the Lord.” The blessing was general. “Turning to the Lord” is the scriptural idea of conversion. And at Joppa also, through **the raising of Dorcas**, there was a great stir and great blessing. “And it was known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.”

In chapter 10 — which we have already considered — the Gentiles are brought into the church. And now, Peter having finished his mission in these quarters, he returns to Jerusalem. After the account of his deliverance from the power of Herod in chapter 12, we have no continuous history of the apostle of the circumcision.

As **Herod Agrippa**, the Idumean king, comes so prominently before us here, it may be well to notice the part he takes. He professed great zeal for the law of Moses, and maintained a certain respect towards its outward observance. He was therefore ready with a pretended pious zeal to side with the Jews against the disciples of Christ. This was his policy. He was a type of the adversary king.

It was **about A.D. 44**, that Herod sought to ingratiate himself with his Jewish subjects, by persecuting the unoffending Christians. Not that there was any love between Herod and the Jews, for they hated each other heartily; but here they united, as both hating the heavenly testimony. Herod killed James with the sword and cast Peter into prison. It was his wicked intention to keep him there till after the passover, and then, when a great many Jews from all parts would be in Jerusalem, to make a public spectacle of his execution. But

God preserved and delivered His servant in answer to the prayers of the saints. They have weapons of warfare which the governments of this world know nothing of. God allowed James to seal his testimony with his blood; but Peter He preserved for further testimony on the earth. Thus our God rules over all. He is the Governor among the nations, whatever the pride and will of man may be. Power belongeth unto Him. Feeble indeed is the power of every enemy when He interferes. Herod, being baffled and confounded by the manifestations of a power which he could not understand, condemns the keepers of the prison to death, and leaves Jerusalem. But he little thought that his own death was to precede that of his prisoners.

At **Caesarea**, the Gentile seat of his authority, he ordered a splendid festival in honour of the Emperor Claudius. Multitudes, we are informed, of the highest rank flocked from all quarters. On the second morning of the festivities the king appeared in a silver robe of great splendour, which glittered with the rays of the sun, so as to dazzle the eyes of the whole assembly, and excite general admiration. When making an oration to the people from his throne, some of his flatterers raised a shout, "It is the voice of a god!" In place of repressing this impious adulation, which spread through the theatre, Herod accepted it. But a sense of **God's judgment** at that very moment pierced the heart of the king. In tones of deep melancholy he said, "Your god will soon suffer the common lot of mortality." In the forcible language of scripture, it is said, "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." He was then seized with violent internal pains, and carried from the theatre to his palace. There he lingered five days, and died in the greatest agony, and in the most humiliating and loathsome state of body.

THE HERODIAN LINE OF KINGS

As it may not be out of place here, or uninteresting to our readers, we would notice for a moment the **Herodian line of kings**. They frequently come before us, both in the life of our Lord, and in the early history of the church. We have associated in our minds, from early youth, the massacre of the infants of Bethlehem and Herod, king of Judaea; though it is somewhat remarkable that Josephus, the principal historian of Herod, takes no notice of this event. It is generally thought, that the murder of a few children, in an obscure village, compared with Herod's other deeds of blood, was too unimportant in the eyes of Josephus to be recorded. But not so in the mind of God: both the deceit and cruelty of the treacherous heart of the king are recorded in the sacred narrative. The eye of God watched over the "Child born" unto Israel — the only source of hope for all nations. The cruel design of Herod was thus defeated.

Herod the Great, the first Idumean king over Israel, received the kingdom from the senate of Rome through the influence of Mark Antony. This took place about thirty-five years before the birth of Christ, and about thirty-seven

before his own death. These Idumeans were a branch of the ancient Edomites, who, while the Jews were in the Babylonish captivity, and their land lay desolate, took possession of as much of the southern part of it, as contained what had been the whole inheritance of the tribe of Simeon, and also half of that which had been the inheritance of the tribe of Judah; and there they dwelt ever after. In course of time, the Idumeans were conquered by John Hyrcanus, and brought over to Judaism. After their conversion, they received circumcision, submitted to the Jewish laws, and became incorporated with the Jewish nation. In this way they became Jews, though not of the ancient stock of Israel. This happened about one hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ. They were bold, crafty, and cruel as princes: they had great political foresight, courted the favour of Rome, and cared only for the establishment of their own dynasty. But, as God would have it, with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Idumean dynasty passed away, and even the very name of Herod seems to have perished from among the nations.

Besides **the slaughter of the children in Bethlehem**, which took place shortly before Herod's death, he had deeply imbrued his hands in the blood of his own family, and in the blood of many noble persons of the Asmonean line. His cruel jealousy towards that heroic family never slumbered. But one of his last acts was to sign the death warrant of his own son. When dying under the signal judgment of God, like his grandson, Herod Agrippa, he raised himself up in his bed gave the mandate for **the execution of Antipater**, named **Archelaus** as his successor to the throne, fell back, and expired.

Thus, alas! have monarchs often died, dispensing death on the one hand, and kingdoms on the other. But, what then? In the naked reality of their own moral condition they must stand before the tribunal of God. The purple can no longer shield them. Inflexible righteousness rules on that throne. Judged according to the deeds done in the body, they must be banished beyond the "gulf" which God's judgment has "*fixed*" for ever. But, oh! there to remember, in torment every moment of their past history — the privileges they have abused, the opportunities they have lost, and all the evil they have done. May the Lord save every soul that glances at these pages, from the awful weight of these words — *remember — tormented — fixed*. They describe and characterise the future state of impenitent souls. (Luke 16)

The sect of the Herodians may have been the partisans of Herod, and chiefly political in their character, their main object being the maintenance of the national independence of the Jews, in the face of Roman power and ambition. They may have thought to use Herod for the accomplishing of this end. In the Gospel history they are represented as acting *craftily* towards the blessed Lord, and in concert with the Pharisees. (Matt. 22:15,16; Mark 12:13, 14)

But we must now return to the history of our apostle.

In Acts 15 after an absence of about five years, **Peter again appears**; but during that time we know nothing of his abode or of his work. He takes an active part in the assembly at Jerusalem, and seems to have retained his original place among the apostles and elders.

PETER AT ANTIOCH

Soon after this, as we learn from **Galatians 2**, he paid a visit to Antioch. But notwithstanding the decision of the apostles and church at Jerusalem, a characteristic weakness of Peter's betrays him into an act of dissimulation. It is one thing to settle a question in principle, it is quite another to carry it out in practice. Peter had actually stated in the assembly before them all that the gospel which Paul had preached, by the revelation given to him, was no less a blessing to the Jew than to the Gentile. And while *alone* at Antioch, he acted on this principle, walking in the liberty of the heavenly truth and eating with the Gentiles. But when certain Jewish-minded Christians came down from James, he no longer dared to use this liberty: "He withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." "What a poor thing is man!" exclaims one. "And we are weak in proportion to our importance before men, when we are nothing, we can do all things, as far as human opinion is concerned... Paul, energetic and faithful, through grace, alone remains upright; and he rebukes Peter before them all."

From this time, **A.D. 49 or 50**, his name does not again appear in the Acts of the Apostles; and we have no certain knowledge of the sphere of his labours. But, as he inscribes his first Epistle to the Hebrew Christians, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," he is supposed to have laboured in these countries. His second Epistle is of a much later date, and must have been written shortly before his death. This we learn from what he says in the first chapter: "Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." (See John 21:18, 19)

The exact date of **Peter's visit to Rome** has been a subject of great controversy between Catholic and Protestant writers in all ages. But it may now be considered as a settled point, that he did not visit that city till near the end of his life. The date of his martyrdom is also uncertain. Most probably it took place about A.D. 67 or 68, and about the seventieth year of his age. **The burning of Rome by Nero** is dated by Tacitus about the month of July, 64. The persecution against the Christians broke out soon after; and it was under this persecution that our apostle was honoured with the crown of martyrdom.

He was **sentenced to be crucified**, as the most severe and shameful death. But when he looked on the cross, he entreated the favour of the officers that he might not be crucified in the ordinary way, but that he might suffer with

his head downwards: affirming that he was unworthy to suffer in the same posture as his blessed Lord and Master had done before him. His request being granted, he was crucified with his head downwards. Whether this be a fact or a mere legend, it well agrees with the fervent temperament and the deep humility of the great apostle.¹¹

In following the catalogue already given, we next notice the apostle —

Andrew. The sacred historian has been very full and copious in describing the acts of Peter, but very sparing in his accounts of his brother **Andrew**. He was brought up with Peter to his father's trade, and continued at his occupation until he was called by the Lord to become a "fisher of men."

Andrew, like other young men of Galilee, had become a disciple of John the Baptist. But on hearing his master a second time speak of Jesus as the Lamb of God, he left John to follow Jesus. He was, immediately after this, the means of bringing his brother Peter to his new Master. So far, he has the honour of being the first of the apostles who pointed to Christ. (John 1) He comes before us in the sixth and in the twelfth of John, and in the thirteenth of Mark, but, beyond these few scattered notices, scripture relates nothing concerning him. His name does not appear in the acts of the Apostles, except in the first chapter.

Conjecture and tradition have said many things about him but it is only of fairly established facts that we would speak. He is said to have preached in Scythia, and to have travelled over Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, and to have **suffered martyrdom at Patrae in Achaia**. His cross, it is said, was formed of two pieces of wood crossing each other in the middle, in the form of the letter **X**, hence usually known by the name of St. Andrew's cross. He died praying and exhorting the people to constancy and perseverance in the faith. The year in which he suffered is uncertain.

From the two brothers, Peter and Andrew, we now proceed to the two brothers, **James and John**. The four had also been partners in business. And first in order we notice

James. Zebedee and his two sons, James and John, were following their usual occupation on the sea of Galilee, when Jesus passed that way. Seeing the two brothers, "He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him." Peter and Andrew were also there. It was on this occasion that the Lord desired Peter to launch out into deeper water, and try another cast for fish. Peter inclines to reason: they had been very unsuccessful the previous night. Nevertheless, at the Lord's word, the net was let down. "And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude

¹¹ See Cave's *Lives of the Apostles*; Burton's *Ecclesiastical History*; Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

of fishes; and their net brake.” Astonished and overwhelmed at this draught, Peter beckoned to his partners to come and help in landing the fish caught.

Full conviction was now wrought in the minds of those four young men, that Jesus was the true Messiah. They may have had doubts before, they have none now. At the call of Jesus they leave all, and become, once and for ever, His disciples. Henceforward they were to become “fishers of men.” In every list we have of the apostles, these four noble men are placed first; they stand at the head of the twelve throughout. (Matt. 4: 17-20; Mark 1: 16-20; Luke 5: 1-11)

This is the call of James to the *discipleship*; about a year after this he is called to the *apostleship* with his eleven brethren. (Matt. 10, Mark 3; Luke 6; Acts 1)

Peter, James and John, and **occasionally Andrew**, were always and most intimate companions of the blessed Lord. The *first three* only were admitted to the raising of Jairus' daughter. (Mark 5; Luke 8) The same three apostles were alone permitted to be present at the transfiguration. (Matt. 17, Mark 9, Luke 9) It was the same three that witnessed His agony in Gethsemane. (Matt. 26; Mark 14; Luke 22) But the four, Peter, James, John and Andrew, are joined together when they ask the Lord privately about the destruction of the temple. (Mark 13)

Like the change in Peter's name, or the addition to it, the sons of Zebedee are surnamed *Boanerges*, or “**the sons of thunder.**” Great boldness and faithfulness may have singled out James to Herod, as the first to be seized and silenced. It is not a little remarkable that “the son of thunder” and the “rock-man” are the first to be apprehended. But James has the honour to be the first of the apostles that received the crown of martyrdom, A.D. 44. Peter was rescued by a miracle.

A mother's jealousy and her sons' ambition lead Salome to ask for very distinguished places in the kingdom for her two sons. The Lord allowed the petition to pass with a very mild reproof, but told the brothers that they should drink of His cup, and be baptized with His baptism. James was early called upon to realise this prediction. After the ascension he is seen in company with the other apostles in Acts 1. Then he disappears from the sacred narrative until his apprehension and death in **Acts 12**. And there we are simply told, in the brief language of the inspired historian, that Herod the king killed James the brother of John with the sword

Clement of Alexandria relates a tradition concerning **James's martyrdom**, which is not an unlikely thing to have occurred. As he was led forth to the place of execution the soldier or officer that had guarded him to the tribunal, or rather his accuser, was so moved by the courage and bold confession of James at the time of his trial, that he repented of what he had

done, and came and fell down at the apostle's feet, and begged forgiveness for what he had said against him. James, after a little surprise at the thing, raised him up embraced and kissed him; and said, "Peace, my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Whereupon, before all, he publicly professed himself to be a Christian, and so both were beheaded at the same time. Thus fell James, the apostolic proto-martyr, cheerfully taking that cup which he had long since told his Lord that he was ready to drink of.¹²

John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the younger brother of James. Though his father was a fisherman, it appears from the Gospel narrative that they were in good circumstances. Some of the ancients speak of the family as wealthy, and even as nobly connected. But these traditions are not reconcilable with the facts of scripture. We read however, of their "hired servants," and they may have owned more vessels than one. And Salome we doubt not was one of those honoured women who ministered to the Lord of her substance. And John had a house of his own (Luke 8:3; John 19:27) We may safely infer from these facts; that their position was considerably above poverty. As many have gone to extremes in speaking of the apostles as *poor* and *illiterate*, we think it well to notice the few hints of scripture on these subjects.

Of the character of Zebedee we know nothing. He made no objection to his sons leaving him at the call of the Messiah. But we hear no more of him afterwards. We frequently find the mother in company with her sons, but no mention of the father. The probability is that he died soon after the call of his sons.

The evangelist Mark, in enumerating the twelve apostles (Mark 3:17), when he mentions James and John, says that our Lord "surnamed them **Boanerges**, which is, **Sons of Thunder**." What our Lord particularly intended to convey in this title, is not easily determined. Conjectures there have been many. Some suppose that it was because these two brothers were of a more furious and resolute disposition, and of a more fierce and fiery temper than the rest of the apostles. But we see no ground for such a conjecture in the Gospel history. Doubtless, on one or two occasions their zeal was intemperate, but that was before they understood the spirit of their calling. More probably our Lord so surnamed them, as prophetic of their burning zeal in openly and boldly proclaiming the great truths of the gospel, after they became fully acquainted with them. Certain we are, that John in company with Peter, in the early chapters of the Acts, displayed a courage that feared no threatenings, and was daunted by no opposition.

John is supposed to have been the youngest of all the apostles, and, judging from his writings he appears to have been possessed of a disposition singularly affectionate, mild, and amiable. He was characterised as "**the disciple**

¹² See *Cave's Life of St. James the Great*.

whom Jesus loved.” On various occasions he was admitted to free and intimate intercourse with the Lord. (John 13)

“What distinguished John,” says **Neander**, “was the union of the most opposite qualities, as we have often observed in great instruments of the advancement of the kingdom of God — the union of a disposition inclined to silent and deep meditation, with an ardent zeal, though not impelling to great and diversified activity in the outward world; not a passionate zeal, such as we suppose filled the breast of Paul before his conversion. But there was also a love, not soft and yielding, but one seizing with all its might, and firmly retaining the object to which it was directed — vigorously repelling whatever would disgrace this object, or attempt to wrest it from its possession; and this was his leading characteristic.”

As the history of John is so intimately connected with the histories of Peter and James, which we have already gone over, we may now be very brief. These three names are seldom separated in the Gospel history. But there is one scene in which John stands alone, and which ought to be noted. He was the only apostle who followed Jesus to the place of His crucifixion. And there he was specially honoured with the regard and confidence of his Master. “When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy Son! then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” (John 19:26, 27)

After the ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, John became one of the chief apostles of the circumcision. But his ministry goes down to the end of the first century. **With his death the apostolic age naturally closes.**

There is a widely spread and generally received tradition that John remained in Judaea till after the death of the virgin Mary. The date of this event is uncertain. But soon after he proceeded to Asia Minor. Here he planted and watched over several churches in different cities, but made **Ephesus** his centre. Thence he was banished to the **Isle of Patmos** towards the close of **Domitian’s reign**. There he wrote the Revelation. (Rev. 1:9) On his liberation from exile, by the accession of Nerva to the imperial throne, John returned to Ephesus, where he wrote his Gospel and Epistles. **He died about A.D. 100**, in the third year of the emperor Trajan, and about one hundred years of age.¹³

From the many **traditions about John** himself, we select only one, which we think the most interesting, and the most likely to be true. As one who was unwearied in his love and care for the souls of men, he was deeply grieved by the apostasy of a young man in whom he had taken a special interest. When revisiting the place where he left him, he heard that he had joined a band of

¹³ See *Horne’s Introduction to the New Testament*.

robbers and had become their captain. His love for him was so great that he determined to find him out. He hastened to the retreat of the robbers suffered himself to be seized, and begged to be taken into their captain's presence. When he saw the venerable appearance of the aged apostle, his conscience was awakened. The recollection of earlier days was more than he could stand, and he fled in consternation from his presence. But John, full of paternal love, hastened after him. He entreated him to repent and return to the church, and encouraged him by the assurance of the forgiveness of his sins in the name of the Lord Jesus. His marvellous affection for the young man and his deep concern for his soul, completely overcame him. He repented, returned, was restored, and afterwards became a worthy member of the christian community. May we seek to do likewise in restoring backsliders!

We now come to what we may call the second group of four apostles; and, just as Peter heads the first group, the second is headed by the apostle

Philip. In the first three Gospels he is placed in this order. He is mentioned as being of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. (John 1:44) It is more than probable that he was among the Galileans of that district who flocked to hear the preaching of John the Baptist. Though no part of Palestine was spoken of in such terms of reproach as Galilee, it was from these despised but simple, earnest, and devoted Galileans that our Lord chose His apostles. "Search and look," said the Pharisees, "for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." But sweeping statements, generally speaking, are untrue. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is a sample of their character.

Nothing is said in the Gospel history of Philip's parents or occupation. Most likely he was **a fisherman**, the general trade of that place. From the similarity of language used by Philip and Andrew, and their being repeatedly mentioned together, we may conclude that our apostle, and the sons of Jonas and Zebedee, were intimate friends, and that they were all looking and waiting for the expected Messiah. But in the whole circle of our Lord's disciples Philip has the honour of being first called. The *first three* had come to Christ, and conversed with Him before Philip, but afterwards they returned to their occupation, and were not called to follow the Lord for about a year after. But Philip was called at once. "The day following," we read, "Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him **Follow me.**" These words, so full of meaning and rich blessing to the soul, "Follow me," (we believe) were first said to Philip. When the twelve were specially set apart for their office, he was numbered among them.

Immediately after his call, he **finds Nathanael** and leads him to Jesus. It is evident, from the glad surprise which breathes in his information, that they had spoken together of these things before. His heart was now well assured of their truth; hence the joy expressed in these words, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." There is **an evident earnest-heartedness** about Philip,

though little is said of him in the Gospels. Our last interview with him, like the first, is deeply interesting. Having heard the Lord repeatedly refer to His Father in John 12, 13, & 14, He manifested a strong desire to know more of the Father. The pathetic words of our Lord about His Father appear to have made a deep impression on His heart; and little wonder. “Father, save Me from this hour”; “Father, glorify Thy name”; “In My Father’s house are many mansions,” are sayings which, we doubt not, sank deep in all the disciples’ hearts. But there is a beautiful simplicity about Philip, though lacking in intelligence. “Philip saith unto Him, Lord **show us the Father**, and it sufficeth us.” There is evident reproof, if not reproach, in the Lord’s reply to Philip. “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? **he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very works’ sake.” There had been the revelation of the Father in His own Person, and He ought to have known Him. He had now been a long time with His disciples, and they ought to have seen that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him, and thus have known where He was going, for He was going to the Father. They had both the “*words*” and the “*works*” of the Son, to convince them that the Father dwelt in Him. They had heard His words, they had seen His works, they had witnessed His character; and these things were fitted and intended to bring the Father before them. His own Person was the answer to every question. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” He was the way — the only way to the Father. He was the truth; the truth as to every one and everything, as they are, is only known by Him. He is the life — “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” But it is only by the teaching and power of the Spirit that He who is “the way, the truth, and the life,” is known and enjoyed. And there must be subjection of heart to Christ, if we would know the teaching of the Spirit.

After this deeply interesting and instructive conversation with the Lord, all is uncertain as to Philip’s history — his name disappears from the Gospel narrative. He has his own place in the catalogue, **Acts 1:13**. Tradition has so frequently confounded Philip the evangelist with Philip the apostle, that all is uncertain. No doubt his remaining years were spent in devoted service to his Lord and Saviour, but where it is difficult to say. Some think that Upper Asia was the scene of his early labours, and that in the latter period of his life he came to Hierapolis in Phrygia, where he suffered **a cruel martyrdom**.

Bartholomew. It has been very generally believed both by ancients and moderns, that the history of Bartholomew lies concealed under another name. That he was one of the twelve apostles is perfectly clear from the Gospel narrative, though nothing more is said of him than the bare mention of his name. In the first three Gospels Philip and Bartholomew are mentioned together; in John’s Gospel, it is Philip and Nathanael. This circumstance has given rise to a very common conjecture, that these are but different names for the same person. Nothing was more common than this among the Jews. For

example, Simon Peter is called “Bar-jona,” which simply means — the son of Jona. “Bar-timeus” again, means the son of Timeus; and “Bar-tholomew” is a name of the same class. These are merely *relative*, not *proper*, names. From this custom being so general among the Jews, it is often extremely difficult to *identify* persons in the Gospel history.

Assuming, then, **that Nathanael of John is the Bartholomew of the synoptical Gospels**, we proceed with what we know of his history. Like the rest of the apostles, he was a Galilean; he was “of Cana in Galilee.” We have seen in a former paper, that he was first conducted by Philip to Christ. On his approach, he was greeted by the Lord with the most honourable distinction, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile.” He was, no doubt, a man of true simplicity and integrity of character; and one that “waited for redemption in Israel.” Surprised at our Lord’s most gracious salutation, and wondering how He could know him at first sight, “Nathanael saith unto Him, Whence knowest Thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.” Solemn, yet blessed thought! he stood before One — a man — in this world, who knew the secrets of his heart and ways. Nathanael was now fully convinced of the absolute deity of the Messiah, and owns Him in His higher glory as “the Son of God” as well as “the king of Israel.”

The character of **Nathanael and his call** are considered by many as **typical of the remnant of Israel** without guile in the latter day. The allusion to the fig-tree — the well-known symbol of Israel — confirms this view of the passage; and so does his beautiful testimony, “Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel.” The spared remnant, seen and known by the Lord, will thus confess their faith in Him, as the prophets most fully show. And all those who thus own the Messiah shall see His universal glory as the Son of man according to Psalm 8. That coming day of widespread glory is anticipated by our Lord in His concluding remarks to Nathanael: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” Then will the heavens and the earth be joined together, as if by Jacob’s ladder. But we must now return to the direct history of our apostle.

The most distinct and conclusive passage as to his apostleship is John 21. There we find him in company with the other apostles, to whom our Lord appeared at the Sea of Tiberias after His resurrection. “There were together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus, and *Nathanael of Cana in Galilee*, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples,” who probably were Andrew and Philip.

There is a generally received tradition, that Bartholomew travelled **as far as India preaching the gospel** — probably to that part of India which lies nearest to Asia. After travelling in different places, seeking to spread Christianity, he at last, reached **Albanople in Armenia the Great**, a place

overgrown with idolatry. There he was arrested in the midst of his labours by the governor of the place, and **condemned to be crucified**. The date is not certainly known.

Matthew — called also **Levi, the son of Alpheus**; but not the same person, we believe, as Alpheus the father of James. (Matt. 10:3; Mark 2:14; Luke 5: 27-29) Though a Roman officer, he was “a Hebrew of the Hebrews,” and probably a Galilean, but of what city or tribe we are not informed. Before his call to follow the Messiah, he was a publican, or tax-gatherer, under the Romans. He seems to have been stationed at **Capernaum**, a maritime town on the Sea of Galilee. He was what we should call a **custom-house officer**. It was in this capacity that Jesus found him. When He passed by, He saw him “sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow Me. And he arose and followed Him.” But before proceeding with the history of Matthew, we would say a few words on the character of his occupation, as it is so frequently mentioned in the New Testament, and is really a generic term.

Publicans, properly so called, were persons who farmed the Roman taxes or revenue. They were, usually, persons of wealth and credit. It was considered among the Romans an honourable position, and generally conferred on Roman knights. Sabinus (it is said, father of the Emperor Vespasian), was the publican of the Asiatic provinces. They employed under them inferior officers, and these, generally, were natives of the provinces in which the taxes were collected; to this class Matthew no doubt belonged.

These petty officers were everywhere notorious for their fraudulent exactions; but to the Jews they were especially odious. The Jews looked upon themselves as a freeborn people and that they had this privilege direct from God Himself. “We be Abraham’s seed,” was their boast, “and were never in bondage to any man.” Consequently, **the Roman tax gatherers** were the visible proofs of their slavery, and of the degraded state of their nation. This was the chain that galled them, and betrayed them into many acts of rebellion against the Romans. Hence it was that publicans were abhorred by the Jews. They looked upon them as traitors and apostates, and as the ready tools of the oppressor. Besides, they were most arbitrary and unjust in their taxations; and having the law on their side, they could enforce payment. It was in their power to examine each case of goods exported or imported, and to assess the alleged value in the most vexatious way. We may gather, from what John said to them, that they overcharged whenever they had an opportunity. “And He said unto them Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” (Luke 3:13) See also the case of **Zaccheus**. (Luke 19:9)

Surely these things were more than enough to bring the whole class into the greatest detestation everywhere. But we will confine ourselves to what we learn of them in the New Testament. The spirit of truth never exaggerates. There we find them classed with *sinner*s (Matt. 9:11; 11:19); with *harlots*

(Matt. 21:31, 32), with *heathen*. (Matt. 18:17) As a class, they were regarded as outside, not only from the privileges of the sanctuary, but from the privileges of civil society. And yet, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, their ranks furnished some of the earliest disciples both of John and of our Lord. They had less hypocrisy than those who were esteemed better; they had no conventional morality, and they had no false religion to unlearn. These things may be fairly argued from the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. (Luke 18) Conventional goodness is a great hindrance to the soul's salvation. It is difficult for such to take the place of a lost, ruined sinner, that grace may have a free course and do her blessed, saving, gracious work. He who would be justified of God, must take the publican's place, and offer up **the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner."** We now return to the history of our apostle.

With great readiness Matthew obeyed the call of Jesus. His lucrative situation was at once given up; and his conversion, so thorough and manifest, was accompanied with much blessing to others. There was a great awakening and interest among his own class. "And Levi made a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them." A feast is the symbol of joy and rejoicing — the immediate effect of a hearty surrender to Christ. It is worthy of note that in his own Gospel he gives his well-known name, but neither of the other evangelists speaks of "Matthew the publican." Along with the others he was chosen one of the twelve. From that time he continued with the Lord like the rest of the apostles. Blessed privilege! — "a familiar attendant on His person, a spectator of His public and private life, a hearer of His sayings and discourses, a beholder of His miracles, a witness of His resurrection and ascension to glory." This he does not testify, though he saw it. Matthew was with the other apostles on the day of Pentecost and received the gift of the Holy Ghost. How long he continued in Judaea after that event, we are not informed. **His Gospel is supposed to be the first that was written**, and has a special reference to Israel.

Ethiopia is generally assigned as the scene of his apostolic labours. There, some say, by preaching and miracles, he mightily triumphed over error and idolatry, was the means of the conversion of many, appointed spiritual guides and pastors to confirm and build them up, and to bring others over to the faith; and there finished his course. But the sources of information on these points cannot be trusted.

Thomas. The apostle Thomas was duly called by our Lord to the apostleship, and he is duly mentioned in the various apostolic lists. Of his birthplace or parents we are not informed in scripture; but tradition says he was born at Antioch. All that we know of him with certainty is related by John. But though our knowledge of Thomas be thus limited, there is no *character* among the apostles more distinctly marked than his. In fact, his name has become, both in the church and in the world, a synonym for doubting and

unbelieving. It is said of a famous artist, when asked to produce a portrait of the apostle Thomas, that he placed a *rule* in his hand for the due measuring of evidence and argument. **His mind was thoughtful, meditative, slow to believe.** He looked at all the difficulties of a question and inclined to take the dark side of things. But we will glance for a moment at the portrait which the pen of inspiration has drawn of him in the three following passages.

1. In **John 11** his true character distinctly appears. He evidently viewed the proposed journey of our Lord into Judaea with the darkest forebodings. "Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow-disciples, Let us also go that we may die with Him." In place of believing that Lazarus would be raised from the dead, he feared that both the Lord and His disciples would meet their own death in Judaea. He could see nothing arising from such a journey but complete disaster. Nevertheless, he does not seek to hinder the Lord from going, like the other disciples. This too is characteristic. He had deep affection for the Lord, and such was his devotedness that, though the journey should cost all of them their lives, he was willing to go.

2. The second time referred to was **after the Last Supper. [John 14.]** Our Lord had been speaking of going away, and of the home He would prepare for them in heaven, and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself, so that where He was they should be also. "And whither I GO YE KNOW," He added, "and the way ye know." But to our apostle's mind these beautiful promises only awaken dark thoughts of the unseen, unknown, future. "Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" Evidently he was eager to go, and earnest in his inquiries, but he wanted to be sure of the way before taking the first step. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." So long as the eye is fixed on Christ, we cannot make a false step. It is the single eye that receives the light of heaven, which sheds its radiance over the whole path.

3. The third time was **after the resurrection. [John 20.]** He was absent when the Lord appeared the first time to the disciples. When they told him that they had seen the Lord, he obstinately refused to believe what they said. From what he says, we may fairly gather, that he had seen the Lord on the cross, and that the overwhelming sight had produced a deep impression on his mind. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." The following Lord's day, when the disciples were assembled, Jesus appeared, and stood in the midst of them — His own place as the centre of the assembly. He again saluted them in the same words of peace, "Peace be unto you." But He at once turned to Thomas, as if he had been the main object of His appearing that day. "Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." The effect on Thomas was immediate: all his doubts were removed, and in true orthodox faith he exclaimed, "My Lord

and my God.” “Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”

Some have thought that the faith of Thomas in this instance rises far above all the other disciples, and that nothing higher in testimony ever dropped from apostolic lips. This opinion, though a common one, cannot be founded on the general context. Christ, in reply to Thomas, pronounces those *more* blessed who saw not, and yet believed. It can scarcely be called even *Christian* faith, as our Lord evidently hints. Christian faith is believing in Him whom we have not seen — walking by faith, not by sight.

Thomas, we have no doubt, **represents the slow, unbelieving mind of the Jews in the last days, who will believe when they see.** [Zech. 12.] He was not present at the first gathering of the saints after the resurrection. The reason why we are not told. But who can estimate the blessing that may be lost because of absence from the sanctioned meetings of the saints? He missed the blessed revelations of Christ as to relationship, “My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God.” His faith is not connected with the position of sonship. “He has not the communications of the efficacy of the Lord’s work,” as one has said, “and of the relationship with His Father into which Jesus brings His own, the church. He has peace, perhaps, but he has missed all the revelation of the church’s position. How many souls — saved souls, even are there in these two conditions!”

The future apostolic labours of Thomas, and the end of his life, are so filled with traditions or legends, that we know nothing certainly. Some say he laboured in **India** and some in **Persia**. His martyrdom, it is said, was occasioned by a lance, and is still commemorated by the Latin church on December 21, by the Greek church on October 6, and by the Indians on July 1.

James — the son of Alphaeus. The identification of the Jameses, the Marys, and the Lord’s brethren, has long been a difficult point with critics. This would not be the place even to refer to their theories and arguments. But after looking at different sides of the question, we still believe that our apostle is the James who was a principal man in the church at Jerusalem — who is the author of “**The General Epistle of James**” — who is also called the Lord’s brother and surnamed “the just,” and “the less,” probably because he was low in stature. Identification of persons is extremely difficult in such histories, from the habit, so common among the Jews, of calling near relations, brothers and sisters, and from nearly all of them having two or more names.

In the four lists of the apostles James holds the same place. He heads the third class. They appear to be in fours. Peter heads the first, Philip the second, and James the third. Very little is known of James until after the resurrection. From what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:7, it is evident that the Lord, before

His ascension, honoured James with a personal interview. This was before the day of Pentecost, and may have been for the special encouragement, guidance, and strengthening of the apostle. We will now notice the principal passages, from which we gain our knowledge of James.

In the first chapter of the Acts we find him, with the others, waiting for the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Ghost. After this we lose sight of him, until he is visited by Paul (Gal. 1:18, 19), which would be about the year A.D. 39. Now we find him equal with Peter as an apostle. He was at this time the overseer of the church at Jerusalem, and on a level with the very chiefest apostles. The place he held in Peter's estimation appears from the fact, that when he was delivered from prison, he desires that information of his escape may be sent to "James, and to the brethren." (Acts 12:17)

In A.D. 50 we find him in the **apostolic council**, where he seems to deliver the judgment of the assembly. "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God." (Acts 15) None of the other apostles speak in this manner. It would appear that he had risen greatly in apostolic position and authority. About the year 51, when Paul paid another visit to Jerusalem, he recognises James as one of the "pillars" of the church, and places his name before both Cephas and John. (Gal. 2:9) Again about the year 58, Paul paid a special visit to James in the presence of all the elders. "And the day following Paul went in with us to James; and all the elders were present." (Acts 21:18) It is easily seen from these few notices, that James was held in the very highest esteem by the other apostles and that he filled a most important position in the church at Jerusalem. His attachment to Judaism was deep and earnest and his advancement in Christianity appears to have been slow and gradual. He was a perfect contrast to Paul, Peter forms a link between them.

The martyrdom of James is placed at about 62, close upon thirty years after Pentecost. The testimony of antiquity is universal, as to his distinguished piety and sanctity. His humility, too, appears great: though he was the Lord's brother, or near relation, he styles himself the servant of Jesus Christ, and does not so much as give himself the title of an apostle. For the reputation of his holy and righteous life, he was universally styled, "James the Just." And as he conformed to Jewish customs with a measure of regularity he was by no means so offensive in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, as the apostle of the Gentiles. But notwithstanding the high opinion that was entertained of his character, his life was prematurely ended by martyrdom.

For an account of the life, character, and death of James we are chiefly indebted to Hegesippus, a Christian of Jewish origin, who lived in the middle of the second century. He is generally received as a credible historian. His narrative of the martyrdom of James is given fully, and in his own words, in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible." We can only give it in substance.

As many of the rulers and people of the Jews became believers in Jesus, through the labours of James, the scribes and Pharisees were greatly stirred up against him. The whole of the people, they said, will believe in Christ. Therefore they came together to James, and said, "We pray thee stop the people, for they have gone astray after Jesus as though He were the Christ. We pray thee to persuade all that come to the Passover concerning Jesus. Persuade the people not to go astray about Jesus; for the whole people, and all of us, give heed unto thee. Stand, therefore, on a pinnacle of the temple that thou mayest be visible, and that thy words may be heard by all the people; for all the tribes and even the Gentiles are come together for the Passover." But in place of saying what he was told, he proclaimed with a loud voice in the ears of all the people that Jesus was the true Messiah, that he firmly believed in Him, that Jesus was now in heaven at God's right hand, and that He would come again in power and great glory. Many were convinced through the preaching of James and gave glory to God, crying, "Hosannah to the Son of David."

When the scribes and Pharisees heard this, they said to each other, "We have done wrong in bringing forward such a witness to Jesus; let us go up and throw him down, that the people may be terrified and not believe in Him." And they cried out, saying, Even **James the Just** has gone astray, and they threw him down. But as he was not killed with the fall, they began to stone him. Then one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he pressed the clothes, and brought it down on the head of James. Thus the apostle died, and, like the proto-martyr Stephen, he died praying for them in a kneeling posture. It was almost immediately after this that Vespasian commenced the siege of Jerusalem, and the Roman army turned the whole scene into desolation, blood, and ruin.

Simon Zelotes — also called "Simon the Canaanite." He seems to be a different person from Simon the brother of James. We have no account of him in the Gospel history. He is duly named in the Gospels and in the Acts, and then disappears from the sacred page.

It is generally supposed that, before his call to be an apostle, he belonged to a sect among the Jews called "**The Zealots.**" They were conspicuous for their fierce advocacy of the Mosaic ritual. They looked upon themselves as the successors of Phinehas, who, in zeal for the honour of God, slew Zimri and Cozbi. (Num. 25) In pretending to follow the zeal of the priest of old, they assumed to themselves the right of putting to death a blasphemer, an adulterer, or any notorious offender, without the ordinary formalities of the law. They maintained that God had made an everlasting covenant with Phinehas, and with his seed after him, "because he was *zealous* for his God, and made an atonement for Israel." These high sounding claims and pretensions deceived both rulers and people for a time. Besides, their fury and zeal for the law of Moses, and for the deliverance of the people from the Roman yoke, gave them favour in the eyes of all the nation. But, as must ever

be the case under similar circumstances, their zeal soon degenerated into all manner of licentiousness and wild extravagance. They became the pests of every class of society.

Under a pretended zeal for the honour of God, they charged whom they would with being guilty of blasphemy or of some other grievous sin, and immediately slew them and seized their property. Josephus tells us that they failed not to accuse some of the “prime nobility,” and when they had succeeded in turning everything into confusion, they meantime “fished in the troubled waters.” He bewails them as the great plagues of the nation. Attempts were made at different times to suppress the society, but it does not appear that they were ever much reduced until, with the unbelieving nation, they were swept away in the fatal siege.

Simon is frequently styled “Simon the Zealot.” and is supposed to have belonged to this troublesome faction. There may have been true and sincere men among them, but good and bad alike passed under the odious name of “Zealots.” Nothing is certainly known of the future labours of our apostle. Some say that, after travelling for a while in the East, he turned to the West, and penetrated as far as Britain where he preached, wrought miracles, endured many trials, and at last suffered martyrdom.

Judas — the brother of James. This apostle is also called Jude, Thaddeus, and Lebbeus. These different names have different shades of meaning, but the examination of such niceties comes not within the range of our “Short Papers.” Judas was the son of Alpheus, and one of our Lord’s kindred as we read in Matthew 13:55, “Is not His mother called Mary and His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?”

When, or how, he was called to the apostleship we are not informed; and there is scarcely any mention of him in the New Testament, except in the different catalogues of the twelve apostles. His name only occurs once in the Gospel narrative, and that is when he asks the following question “Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?” (John 14:22) It is quite evident from this question, that he was still entertaining, like his fellow-disciples, the idea of a temporal kingdom, or the manifestation of Christ’s power on the earth, such as the world could perceive. But they understood not yet the dignity of their own Messiah. They were strangers to the greatness of His power, the glory of His Person, and the spirituality of His kingdom. His subjects are delivered, not only from this present evil world, but from the power of Satan, and from the realm of death and the grave: “Who *hath* delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath* translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son.” (Col. 1:13) The answer of Christ to the question of Judas is all-important. He speaks of the blessings of obedience. The truly obedient disciple shall surely know the sweetness of fellowship with the Father and the Son, in the light and power of the Holy Ghost. It is not here a question of the love of God in

sovereign grace to a sinner, but of the Father's dealings with His children. Therefore it is in the path of obedience that the manifestation of the Father's love and the love of Christ are found. (See verses 23-26)

But we must bear in mind, when remarking on the questions or sayings of the apostles, that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. The thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the apostles, after that event were altogether changed. Hence we find our apostle, like his brother James, styling himself, "Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James." He neither calls himself an apostle, nor the Lord's brother. This was true humility, and founded on a true sense of the altered relations between them and the exalted Lord. On the day of Pentecost it was proclaimed, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Nothing is certainly known of the later history of our apostle. Some say that he first preached in Judaea and Galilee, then through Samaria into Idumea, and to the cities of Arabia. But towards the end of his course Persia was the field of his labours, and the scene of his martyrdom.

From 1 Corinthians 9:5 it may be fairly inferred that he was **one of the married apostles**. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

There is a tradition about two of his grandsons, which is both interesting and apparently true. It has been handed down by Eusebius from Hegesippus, a converted Jew. Domitian, the Emperor, having heard that there were some of the line of David, and kindred of Christ still alive, moved with jealousy, ordered them to be seized and brought to Rome. Two grandsons of Jude were brought before him. They frankly confessed that they were of the line of David, and kindred of Christ. He asked them about their possessions and estates. They told him they had but a few acres of land, out of the fruits of which they paid him tribute and maintained themselves. Their hands were examined and were found rough and callous with labour. He then inquired of them concerning the kingdom of Christ, and when and where it would come. To this they replied, that it was a heavenly and spiritual, not a temporal kingdom; and that it would not be manifested till the end of the world. The Emperor, being satisfied that they were poor men and harmless, dismissed them unbound, and ceased from his general persecution of the church. When they returned to Palestine, they were received by the church with great affection, as being nearly allied to the Lord, and as having nobly confessed His name — His kingdom, power, and glory.

Matthias — the apostle elected to fill the place of the traitor Judas. He was not an apostle of the first election — immediately called and chosen by the Lord Himself. It is more than probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and had been a constant attendant upon the Lord Jesus during the

whole course of His ministry. This was a necessary qualification, as declared by Peter, of one who was to be a witness of the resurrection. So far as we know, the name of **Matthias** occurs in no other place in the New Testament.

According to some ancient traditions, he preached the gospel and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia; others believe that it was rather in Cappadocia. Thus the great founders of the church were allowed to pass away from earth to heaven without a reliable pen to chronicle their labours — their last days — their last sayings, or even the resting-place of the body. But all are chronicled in heaven, and will be held in everlasting remembrance. How marvellous are the ways of God, and how unlike they are to the ways of men!

The manner of this **apostle's election was by lot** — an ancient Jewish custom. The lots were put into the urn, Matthias' name was drawn out, and thereby he was the divinely chosen apostle. “And they appointed two, Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen... And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” The solemn mode of casting lots was regarded as a way of referring the decision to God. “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the scapegoat.” “The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.” (Lev. 16:8; Prov. 16:33) The apostles, it will be remembered, had not yet received the gift of the Holy Ghost. The lot was never repeated after the day of Pentecost.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 5

THE APOSTLE PAUL

Having briefly sketched the lives of the *twelve* apostles, we naturally come to what may be called the *thirteenth* — the Apostle **Paul**.

In chapter three¹⁴ we have spoken of the “conversion,” and of the “apostleship” of Paul. We will now endeavour to trace his wonderful path, and note some of the prominent features of his labours. But, first of all, we would gather up what we know of him

BEFORE HIS CONVERSION.

It is very evident, from the few hints that we have in the sacred narrative of the early life of Paul, that he was formed in a remarkable manner by the whole course of his education for what he was to become, and for what he was to accomplish. This was of God, who watched over the development of that wonderful mind and heart, from the earliest period. (Gal. 1:16) Then he was known as “Saul of Tarsus” — this being his Jewish name — the name given him by his Jewish parents. Paul was his Gentile name; but we will speak of him as “Saul” until he is named “Paul” by the sacred historian.

Tarsus was the capital of Cilicia, and, as Paul says, “no mean city.” It was renowned as a place of commerce, and as a seat of literature. The tutors of both Augustus and Tiberius were men of Tarsus. But it will be chiefly famous to all time as the birthplace and early residence of the great apostle.

But, though born in a Gentile city, he was “an **Hebrew of the Hebrews.**” His father was of the tribe of Benjamin, and of the sect of the Pharisees, but settled at Tarsus. By some means he had acquired the Roman franchise, as his son could say to the chief captain, “But I was free-born.” At Tarsus he learned the trade of tent-making. It was a wholesome custom among the Jews, to teach their sons some trade, though there might be little prospect of their depending upon it for their living.

When Paul made his defence before his countrymen, (Acts 22) he tells them that though born in Tarsus, he had been brought up “at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.” History speaks of Gamaliel as one of the most eminent of the doctors of the law; and from the scriptures we learn that he was moderate in his opinions, and

¹⁴ See pages 43, 45

possessed of much worldly wisdom. But the persecuting zeal of the pupil soon appears in strong contrast with the master's counsels for toleration.

At the time of Stephen's martyrdom, Saul is spoken of as yet a young man, but as consenting to Stephen's death, and as keeping the clothes of them that stoned him. His conversion is supposed to have taken place about two years after the crucifixion; but the *exact* date is unknown.

From Acts 9 we learn that he made no delay, after his conversion, in confessing his faith in Christ to those that were around him. "Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that He is *the Son of God*." This new testimony is specially worthy of notice. Peter had proclaimed Him as the exalted Lord and Christ; Paul proclaims Him in His higher and personal glory, as *the Son of God*. But the time for his public ministry had not yet come he had many things to learn, and, led of the Spirit, he retires into Arabia, remains there for three years, and returns to Damascus. (Gal. 1:17)

Strengthened and confirmed in the faith during his retirement, he preaches with increased boldness, proving that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. The Jews, his unrelenting enemies henceforward, are stirred up against him. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. But the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket. (2 Cor. 11:32, 33) He then found his way to Jerusalem, and through the friendly testimony of Barnabas he found his place among the disciples. Wonderful, blessed triumph of sovereign grace!

SAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM

ABOUT A.D. 39

The apostle is now at Jerusalem — the holy city of his fathers — the metropolis of the Jews' religion, and the acknowledged centre of Christianity. But how changed his own position since he started on his memorable journey to Damascus!

We may here pause for a moment, and notice in passing the hoary city of Damascus. It is intimately connected with the conversion, ministry, and history of our apostle. Besides, it is conspicuous all through scripture.

Damascus is supposed to be the oldest city in the world. According to Josephus (Ant. 1. 6, 4) it was founded by *Uz*, the son of Aram, and grandson of Shem. It is first mentioned in scripture in connection with Abraham, whose steward was a native of the place: "The steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus." (Gen. 15:2) It is thus a connecting link between the patriarchal age and modern times. Its beauty and richness have been proverbial for full four thousand years. The kings of Nineveh, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome have conquered it, and it has prospered under every dynasty, and

outlived them all; but it owes its chief lustre and its everlasting memorial to the name of the Apostle Paul.¹⁵

We now return to Jerusalem. After spending fifteen days with Peter and James, and reasoning with the Grecians, the brethren “brought him down to Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus. Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.” (Acts 9:30, 31) For the moment the adversary is silenced. Peace reigns, through the goodness of God. Persecution has accomplished the purposes of His grace. The two great elements of blessing — the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost — prevail in all the assemblies. Walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, they are edified, and their numbers greatly increase.

While Saul was at Tarsus, his native place, the good work of the Lord was making great progress at Antioch. Among those that were scattered abroad through the persecution which arose about Stephen, there were “men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord.” (Acts 11: 19-21) A new order of things commences here. Up to this time, the gospel had been preached to “none but unto the Jews only.” When the report of this blessed work of God among the Gentiles reached Jerusalem, Barnabas was sent by the church on a special mission to Antioch. “When he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”

As the work increased, Barnabas — no doubt, feeling the need of help — thought of Saul; and, led of the Lord, he departed at once in search of him. Having found him, he brought him to Antioch; and there they laboured together for a “whole year,” both in the assemblies of believers, and among the people. Barnabas still takes the lead. Hence we read of “Barnabas and Saul.” Afterwards the order changes and we read of “Paul and Barnabas.”

An opportunity soon occurred for the young converts at Antioch to show their affection for their brethren at Jerusalem. A prophet, “named Agabus, signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt at Judaea, which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

¹⁵ See Porter's *Five Years in Damascus*, for the latest and best account of the city and its environs.

SAUL'S SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM

ABOUT A.D. 44

Charged with this service Barnabas and Saul go up to Jerusalem. As yet, Jerusalem is owned as the centre of the work though now rapidly extending to the Gentiles. But union is preserved, and the link with the metropolis is strengthened by means of the collection now sent. Nevertheless a new centre, a new commission, a new character of power, in connection with the history of the church, now come before us. Barnabas and Saul, having fulfilled their ministry, return again to Antioch, bringing with them John, whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13 opens up before us an entirely new order of things in connection with apostolic work, and we shall do well to mark the mighty change. The great fact here to be noted is the place that the Holy Ghost takes in calling out and sending forth Barnabas and Saul. It is no longer Christ upon earth by His personal authority sending forth apostles, but *the Holy Ghost*. "Separate me," He says, "Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them... So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Not, of course, that there could be any change as to the authority or power of either the Lord or the Spirit, but their mode of action was now changed. The Holy Ghost on earth, in connection with a glorified Christ in heaven, now becomes the source and power of the work that opens before us, and which is committed to Barnabas and Saul. Hence we now come to

SAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

ABOUT A.D. 48

And here, further remark, before setting out with the apostles on their journey, how changed everything is. They start, observe, not from the old centre, Jerusalem, but from Antioch, a city of the Gentiles. This is significant. Jerusalem and the twelve have lost position as to outward authority, and power. The Holy Ghost calls Barnabas and Saul to the work, fits them for it, and sends them forth, without the jurisdiction of the twelve.

It will not be expected that, in papers of such a brief character, we can notice the many incidents in Paul's journeys. The reader will find them in the Acts and in the Epistles. We purpose merely to trace their outline, and to give prominence to certain landmarks, by which the reader will be able to trace for himself the various journeyings of the greatest apostle — the greatest missionary — the greatest labourer that ever lived, the blessed Lord excepted. But in the first place, we would notice his companions and their starting-point.

Barnabas has been for some time the close companion of Saul. He was a Levite of the island of Cyprus. He had been early called to follow Christ, and “having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.” Comparing his liberality with the fine testimony which the Holy Ghost renders to him, he stands before us as a lovely and an exquisite character. And, from his early attachment to Saul, and from his heartiness in introducing him to the other apostles, we judge that he was more frank and larger-hearted than those who had been trained in the narrowness of Judaism; but, he lacked in service the thoroughness and determination of his companion Saul.

John Mark was nearly related to Barnabas — “his sister’s son.” (Col. 4:10) His mother was a certain Mary who dwelt at Jerusalem, and whose house seems to have been a meeting place for the apostles and first Christians. When Peter was delivered from prison, he went straight to “the house of Mary the mother of John whose surname was Mark.” (Acts 12) It is supposed that on this occasion he was converted through Peter’s means, for he afterwards speaks of him as “Marcus my son.” (1 Peter 5:13)

From these notices we learn, that he was neither an apostle nor one of the seventy — that he had not companied with the blessed Lord during His public ministry. But we may suppose he was anxious to work for Christ, and so joined Barnabas and Saul, though it afterwards appeared that his faith was not equal to the hardships of a missionary life. “Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem.” (Acts 13:13) Mark is supposed to have written his Gospel about A.D. 63.

Antioch, the ancient capital of the Seleucidae, was founded by Seleucus Nicator about B.C. 300. It was a city only second to Jerusalem in the early history of the church. What Jerusalem had hitherto been to the Jews, Antioch now became to the Gentiles. It was a central point. From this time it occupied a most important place in the propagation of Christianity among the heathen. Here the first Gentile church was planted. (Acts 11:20, 21) Here the disciples of Christ were first called Christians. (Acts 11:26) And here our apostle commenced his public ministerial work.

We now return to the mission.

Barnabas and Saul, with John Mark as their ministering attendant, are thus sent forth by the Holy Ghost. The Jews in virtue of their connection with the promises, have the gospel first preached to them; but the conversion of Sergius Paulus marks, in a special manner, the beginning of the work amongst the Gentiles. It also marks a *crisis* in the history of the apostle. Here his name is changed from *Saul* to *Paul* and now — save in Jerusalem (Acts 15: 12-22) — it is no longer “Barnabas and Saul,” but “Paul and his company.” He takes the lead; the others are only those who are with Paul. But the scene has also a typical character.

The Pro-consul was evidently a thoughtful, prudent man and felt the need of his soul. He sends for Barnabas and Saul and desires to hear the word of God. But **Elymas the sorcerer** withstands them. He knew well that, if the governor received the truth that Paul preached, he would lose his influence at court. He therefore seeks to turn away the deputy from the faith. But Paul, in the conscious dignity and power of the Holy Ghost, “set his eyes on him,” and, in words of the most withering indignation, rebuked him in the presence of the governor. “O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season... Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” The mighty power of God accompanies the word of His servant, and the sentence pronounced is executed at the moment. The deputy is overwhelmed with the moral glory of the scene, and submits to the gospel.

“I do not doubt,” says one, “that in this wretched Barjesus we see a picture of the Jews at the present time smitten with blindness for a season, because jealous of the influence of the gospel. In order to fill up the measure of their iniquity, they withstood its being preached to the Gentiles Their condition is judged; their history given in the mission of Paul. Opposed to grace and seeking to destroy its effect upon the Gentiles — they have been smitten with blindness; nevertheless, only for a season.”¹⁶

During this first mission among the Gentiles, a great and blessed work was done. Compare Acts 13 & 14. Many places were visited, churches were planted, elders were appointed, the hostility of the Jews manifested, and the energy of the Holy Ghost displayed in the power and progress of the truth. At Lystra, Christianity was confronted, for the first time, with paganism; but in every place the gospel triumphs, and the various gifts of Paul as a workman, most blessedly appear. In addressing either the Jews who knew the scriptures, or ignorant barbarians, or cultivated Greeks, or enraged mobs, he proves himself to be a chosen vessel divinely fitted for his great work.

Antioch in Pisidia deserves a special notice from what took place in the synagogue. Though there is a strong resemblance in Paul’s discourse to those of Peter and of Stephen in the earlier chapters of the Acts, yet we discover certain touches strictly Pauline in their character. His conciliatory style of address, the way he introduces Christ, and his bold proclamation of justification by faith alone, may be considered as typical of his after addresses and Epistles. None of the sacred writers speaks of justification by faith as Paul does. His closing appeal has been a favourite gospel text with all preachers in all ages. In a few words he states the blessedness of all who receive Christ, and the awful doom of those who reject Him; thereby proving that there can be no middle or neutral ground, when Christ is in question. “Be it known unto

¹⁶ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 4, page 53, 54 [Second Edition, January 1950]

you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets: Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.” (Acts 13: 38-41)

Their mission being fulfilled, they return to Antioch in Syria. When the disciples heard what the Lord had done, and that the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles, they could only praise and bless His holy name. We must now turn for a moment to Jerusalem.

The effect of Paul’s first mission on the disciples at Jerusalem led to a great *crisis* in the history of the church. The jealousy of the pharisaic mind was so aroused, that a division between Jerusalem and Antioch was threatened at that early period of the church’s history. But God ruled in grace, and the matter as to Antioch was happily settled. But the bigotry of the believing Jews was unquenchable. In the church at Jerusalem they still connected with Christianity the requirements of the law, and these requirements they sought to impose on the believing Gentiles.

Some of the more strictly Jewish-minded Christians came down to Antioch, and assured the Gentiles that, unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, and kept the law, they could not be saved. Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them; but as it was too weighty a question to be settled by the apostolic authority of Paul, or by a resolution of the church at Antioch, it was agreed that a deputation should go up to Jerusalem, and lay the matter before the twelve apostles and the elders there. The choice naturally fell on Paul and Barnabas, as they had been the most active in the propagation of Christianity among the Gentiles.

And now we come to

PAUL’S THIRD VISIT TO JERUSALEM

ABOUT A.D. 50.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they found the same thing, not only in the minds of a few restless brethren, but in the very bosom of the church. The source of the trouble was there, not among unbelieving Jews, but among those who professed the name of Jesus. “But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed saying, That it was needful to circumcise them [the Gentiles], and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” This plain statement brought the whole question fairly before the assembly, and their important deliberations commenced. Chapter 15 contains the account of what took place and how the question was settled. The apostles, elders, and the whole body of the church at Jerusalem were not only present with one accord,

but took part in the discussion. The apostles neither assumed nor exercised exclusive power in the matter. It is usually called “The first Council of the Church;” but it may also be called the last council of the church which could say, “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.”

Many, according to modern notions of “essentials, and non-essentials,” will no doubt say, that the mere ceremony of circumcising or not circumcising a child was rather unimportant. But not so, according to the mind of God. It was a *vital* question. It affected the very foundations of Christianity, the deep principles of grace, and the whole question of man’s relations with God. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians is a commentary on the history of this question.

There was no rite or ceremony that the converted Jew was so unwilling to give up as **circumcision**. It was the sign and seal of his own relationship with Jehovah, and of the hereditary blessings of the covenant to his children. It has been the opinion of some in all ages, that “infant baptism” was introduced by the church to meet this strong Jewish prejudice. But had it been so intended by the Lord, the council at Jerusalem was the very place to announce it. It would have fully met the difficulty, and settled the question before them, and restored peace and unity between the two parent churches. But none of the apostles or others allude to it.

Before leaving this important and suggestive part of our apostle’s history, it may be well just to notice certain facts which he brings out in Galatians 2, but which are not mentioned in the Acts. It was on this occasion that Paul went up by **revelation**, and took Titus with him. In the Acts we have the outward history of Paul yielding to the motives, desires, and objects of men; in the Epistle we have something deeper — that which governed the apostle’s heart. But God knows how to combine these outward circumstances and the inward guidance of the Spirit. Christian liberty or legal bondage was the question at issue: whether the law of Moses — in particular the rite of circumcision — ought to be imposed upon the Gentile converts. Paul, led of God, goes up to Jerusalem, and takes Titus with him. In the face of the twelve apostles, and of the whole church, he brings in Titus who was a Greek, and who had not been circumcised. This was a bold step — to introduce a Gentile, and uncircumcised, into the very centre of a bigoted Judaism! But the apostle went up by revelation. He had positive communications from God on the subject. It was the divine way of deciding the question, once and for ever, between himself and the Judaizing Christians. This step was needful, as he says, “Because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”

The apostle, then, having attained his main object, and having communicated his gospel to them at Jerusalem, leaves, with Barnabas, and returns to the Gentile Christians at Antioch. The two delegates, Judas and Silas, bearing the

decrees of the council, accompany them. When the multitude of the disciples came together and heard the epistle read, they rejoiced and were comforted.

Thus closed the first apostolic council, and the first apostolic controversy. And, from what we learn of these matters in the Acts, we might conclude that the division between the Jewish and Gentile Christians had been completely healed by the decision of the assembly; but we know from the Epistles, that the opposition of the Judaizing party, against the liberty of Gentile Christians, never even slumbered. It soon broke out afresh, and Paul had constantly to meet it and to contend against it.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

ABOUT A.D. 51.

After Paul and Barnabas had spent some time with the church at Antioch, another missionary journey was proposed. "Let us go again," said Paul, "and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord and see how they do. And Barnabas determined to take with them John whose surname was Mark. But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." (Chapter 15: 36-41)

With a journey so important, so full of trials, and so requiring courage and steadfastness — before the mind of our apostle — he could not trust Mark as a companion; he could not easily excuse one whose home attachments rendered him unfaithful in the Lord's service. Paul himself gave up all personal considerations and feelings when the work of Christ was concerned, and he wished others to do the same. Natural affection on this occasion may have betrayed Barnabas into again pressing his nephew into the service; but a severe earnestness characterised Paul. The ties of natural relationship and human attachments had still great influence over the mild christian character of Barnabas. This is evident from his conduct at Antioch on the occasion of Peter's weak compliance with the Judaizers from Jerusalem. (Gal. 2) The spread of the gospel in the hostile world was too sacred in Paul's eyes to admit of experiments. Mark had preferred Jerusalem to the work, but Silas preferred the work to Jerusalem. This decided Paul as to his choice; though, no doubt, he was guided by the Spirit.

Barnabas takes Mark his **kinsman**, and sails to Cyprus his **native country**. And here we part with Barnabas, that beloved saint and precious servant of Christ! His name is not again mentioned in the Acts. These words "kinsman" and "native country" must be left to speak for themselves to the heart of every

disciple who reads these pages. Were we *meditating* on this painful scene, in place of giving a mere outline of a great history, we might say much on the subject; but we leave it with two happy reflections. 1. That it was overruled for blessing to the heathen, the waters of life now flow in two streams in place of one. This, however, is God's goodness, and gives no sanction to the divisions of Christians. 2. That Paul afterwards speaks of Barnabas with entire affection; and desires that Mark should come to him, having found him profitable for the ministry. (1 Cor. 9:6; 2 Tim. 4:11) We have no doubt that Paul's faithfulness was made a blessing to them both. But the honey of human affections can never be accepted on the altar of God.

Having been recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God, they start on their journey. All is beautifully simple. No parade is made by their friends in seeing them off, and no great promises are made by them, as to what they were determined to do. "Let us go again and visit our brethren," are the few, simple, unpretending words, which lead to Paul's second and great missionary journey. But the master was thinking of His servants and providing for them. They had not to go far before finding a new companion in Timotheus of Lystra; and one who was to supply the void caused by the difference with Barnabas. If Paul lost the fellowship of Barnabas as a friend and brother, he found in Timothy, as his own son in the faith, a sympathy and a fellowship which only closed with the apostle's life. "Him would Paul have to go forth with him," but before they go, Paul "circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters, for they knew all that his father was a Greek." Paul, on this occasion, stoops to the prejudice of the Jews, and circumcises Timothy to set it aside.

Timotheus, or Timothy, was the son of one of those mixed marriages, which have ever been strongly condemned both in the Old and in the New Testament. His father was a Gentile, but his name is never mentioned; his mother was a pious Jewess. From the absence of any reference to the father, either in the Acts or in the Epistles, it has been supposed that he may have died soon after the child was born. **Timothy** was evidently left in infancy to the sole care of his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois, who taught him from a child to know the Holy Scriptures. And from the many allusions in Paul's Epistles to the tenderness, the sensitiveness, and the tears of his beloved son in the faith, we may believe that he retained through life the early impressions of that gentle, loving, holy, household. Paul's wonderful love for Timothy, and his tender recollections of his home at Lystra, and his early training there, have dictated some of the most touching passages in the writings of the great apostle. When an old man — in prison, in want, and martyrdom before him — he writes, "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day; greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; when I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which

dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice: and I am persuaded that in thee also.” (2 Tim. 1: 2-5) He urges, and repeats his urgent invitation to Timothy to come and see him. “Do thy diligence to come shortly unto me” — “to come before winter.” We may be permitted to believe, that a son so tenderly loved was allowed to arrive in time to soothe the last hours of his father in Christ, to receive his last counsel and blessing, and to witness him finish his course with joy.

Silas, or Silvanus, first comes before us as a teacher in the church at Jerusalem; and probably he was both a Hellenist and a Roman citizen like Paul himself. (Acts 16:37) He was appointed as a delegate to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch with the decrees of the council. But as many details both in the life of Timothy and of Silas will naturally come before us in tracing the path of the apostle, we need say nothing more of either at present. We will now proceed with the journey.

Paul and Silas, with their new companion, go through the cities, enjoining them to keep the decrees ordained by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem. The decrees were left with the churches, so that the Jews had the decision of Jerusalem itself, that the law was not binding on the Gentiles. After visiting and confirming the churches already planted in Syria and Cilicia, they proceeded to Phrygia and Galatia. They travelled “throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.” Here we pause for a moment and wonder as we transcribe such words as these, “throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia.” Phrygia and Galatia were not towns merely, but provinces, or large districts of country. And yet the sacred historian only uses these few words in recording the great work done there. How different is the condensed energy of the Spirit, from the inflated style of man! We learn from Neander’s history, that in Phrygia alone, in the sixth century, there were sixty-two towns. And it would appear that Paul and those who were with him had gone through all then existing.

The same remarks as to labour would apply to Galatia. And we learn from Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, that at this very time he was suffering in body. “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first.” But the power of his preaching so strikingly contrasted with the infirmity of his flesh, that the Galatians were moved even to extravagance in sympathy and generous feeling. “And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an *angel of God, even as Christ Jesus*. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible ye would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.” (Gal. 4: 13-15) We learn from history that the Galatians were Celtic in their origin, impulsive and changeable in their character.¹⁷ The whole Epistle is a sorrowful illustration of their instability, and of the sad effects of the Judaizing element amongst them. “I marvel,” says Paul, “that ye

¹⁷ See Smith’s *Student’s New Testament History*.

are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.” But to return to the history in the Acts.

The character and effects of Paul’s ministry, as related in chapters 16-20 are truly marvellous. They must ever stand alone on the page of all history. Every servant of Christ, and especially the preacher should study them most carefully and read them frequently. “The vessel of the Spirit,” as one has beautifully said, “shines with a heavenly light throughout the whole work of the gospel; he condescends at Jerusalem, thunders in Galatia when souls are being perverted, leads the apostles to decide for the liberty of the Gentiles, and uses all liberty himself to be as a Jew to the Jews, and as without law to those who had no law, as not under law, but always subject to Christ. He was also ‘void of offence.’ Nothing within hindered his communion with God, whence he drew his strength to be faithful among men. He could say, and none but he, ‘Be ye imitators of me as I am of Christ.’ Thus also he could say, ‘I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.’”¹⁸

The way of the Spirit with the apostle in these chapters is also remarkable. He alone directs him in his wonderful course, and sustains him amidst many trials and opposing circumstances. For example, He forbids Paul to preach the word in Asia — He will not suffer him to go into Bithynia, but directs him by a vision of the night to go into Macedonia. “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis. And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.” (Chapter 16: 9-12)

PAUL CARRIES THE GOSPEL INTO EUROPE

This marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church the history of Paul, and the progress of Christianity. Paul and his companions now carry the gospel into Europe. And here we may be forgiven if we rest for a moment and recall the many interesting historical associations of Macedonian conquerors and conquests, and to dwell a little on the plain of Philippi, famous also in Roman history. Here the great struggle between the republic and the empire was terminated. To commemorate that event, Augustus founded a colony at Philippi. This was the first city at which Paul arrived on his entrance into Europe. It is called “the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony.” **A Roman colony**, we are told, was *characteristically* a

¹⁸ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 4.

miniature resemblance of Rome; and Philippi was more fit than any other in the empire to be considered the representative of Imperial Rome.

To many of our young and inquiring readers, this short digression, we feel sure, will not be uninteresting. Besides, a knowledge of such histories is useful to the student of prophecy, as they are the fulfilment of Daniel's visions especially of chapter 7. The city of Philippi was itself the monument of the rising power of Greece, that was to crush the declining power of Persia. Alexander the Great, son of Philip, was the conqueror of the great king Darius; when the "Leopard" of Greece overcame the "Bear of Persia."¹⁹

In looking back from the time that Paul sailed **from Asia to Europe**, nearly four hundred years had passed away since Alexander sailed from Europe to Asia. But how different their motives and their objects — their conflicts and their victories! The enthusiasm of Alexander was aroused by the recollection of his great ancestors, and by his determination to overthrow the great dynasties of the East; but, though unconsciously and unintentionally, he was accomplishing the purposes of God. Paul had girded on his armour for another purpose, and to win greater and more enduring victories. He was sent forth by the Holy Spirit, not only to subdue the West, but to bring the whole world into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Christianity is not for one nation or one people only, but for man universally; even as Paul himself expresses it in Colossians 1, "For every creature which is under heaven." This is the mission of the gospel, and this is its sphere.

But there is another thing we must notice here before proceeding with Paul's journey.

Luke, the "beloved physician," historian, and evangelist appears to have joined Paul at this particular time. From verse 10 he writes in the first person plural: "We endeavoured to go into Macedonia." It is supposed that he was a Gentile by birth and converted at Antioch. He seems to have remained the faithful companion of the apostle till the close of his labours and his afflictions. (2 Timothy 4:11)

THE EFFECT OF PAUL'S PREACHING AT PHILIPPI

The number of Jews at Philippi appears to have been small, as there was no synagogue in the place. But the apostle, as usual, goes first to them, even when it is only a few women come together by the river side. (Acts 16) Paul, preaches to them, **Lydia** is converted, the door is opened, and others also believe. It was in this unpretending place, and to those few pious women, that the gospel was first preached in Europe and the first household baptized.²⁰ But

¹⁹ See *Notes on the Book of Daniel*, by W. K.

²⁰ The action of the Spirit as to the *family* seems to have obtained remarkably among the Gentiles; among the Jews, as far as I know, we do not hear of it. We have found, already, districts among the Jews, as also among the Samaritans, which were powerfully impressed (to

its quiet beginnings, and its peaceful triumphs, were soon to be disturbed by the malice of Satan and the covetousness of man. The gospel was not to be advanced in the midst of heathenism with ease and comfort, but with great opposition and suffering.

As the apostle and his companion were going to the oratory, or place of prayer, a **damsel** possessed of an evil spirit followed them, and cried, saying, “These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation.” At first, Paul took no notice of her. He went on with his own blessed work of preaching Christ, and winning souls for Him. But the poor possessed slave persisted in following them, and in uttering the same exclamation. It was a malicious attempt of the enemy to hinder the work of God by bearing a testimony to the ministers of the word. It will be observed that she does not bear testimony to “Jesus,” or to the “Lord,” but to His “servants,” and to “the most high God.” But Paul did not want a testimony to himself, nor a testimony from an evil spirit, and he, “being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.”

As the damsel could no longer practise her arts of soothsaying, her masters saw themselves deprived of the gains which they had hitherto derived from that source. Enraged at the loss of their property, and moving the multitude to side with them, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them before the magistrates. As they were well aware that they had no real charge to bring against them, they raised the old cry of “troubling the peace” — that they were attempting to introduce Jewish practices into the Roman colony, and to teach customs which were contrary to the Roman laws. And, as it has often been since, the clamour of the multitude was accepted in the place of evidence, examination, and deliberation. The magistrates, without further inquiry, commanded them to be publicly scourged and cast into prison. And thus it was; these blessed servants of God, wounded, bleeding, and faint, were handed over to a cruel jailer to keep them safely, and he added to their sufferings by making their feet fast in the stocks. But in place of Paul and Silas being depressed by their bodily sufferings and the gloomy walls of a prison, they *rejoiced* that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and pain for the sake of Christ; and in place of the silence of midnight being broken with the sighs and groans of the prisoners, they “prayed and sang praises to God: and the prisoners heard them.”

If Satan is not without resources to carry on his evil work, God is not without resources to carry on His good work. He now makes use of all that has happened to direct the progress of the work of the gospel, and to accomplish the purposes of His love. **The jailor** is to be converted, the church is to be

say the least) by the gospel: but among the Gentiles, families seem particularly visited by divine grace, as recorded by the Spirit. Take for example Cornelius, the jailer, Stephanus; indeed you find it over and over again. This is exceedingly encouraging — especially to us. — *Introductory Lectures to the Acts of the Apostles, etc.*, by W.K.

gathered out, and a witness set up for the Lord Jesus Christ, in the very stronghold of heathenism. At midnight while Paul and Silas were singing, and the prisoners listening to the unusual sound, there was a great earthquake. God enters the scene in majesty and grace. He utters His voice and the earth trembles: the prison walls are shaken, the doors fly open, and every man's fetters fall off. And now what are chains and prisons? — what are Roman legions? what is the whole power of the enemy? God's voice is heard in the storm: but the violence of the tempest is succeeded by the still small voice of the gospel and the peace of heaven.

Awakened in a moment by the earthquake, the jailer's first thoughts were of his prisoners. Alarmed at seeing the prison doors open, and supposing that the prisoners were fled, he drew his sword and would have killed himself. "But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here." These words of love broke the jailer's heart. The calm serenity of Paul and Silas — their refusing to avail themselves of the opportunity to escape — their tender concern for him — all combined to make them appear in the eyes of the astonished jailer, as beings of a higher order. He laid aside his sword, called for a light, sprang into the prison; and, trembling, fell down at the apostle's feet. His conscience was now reached, his heart was broken, and there was something like the violence of an earthquake agitating his whole soul. He takes the place of a lost sinner, and cries "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He does not say, like the lawyer in Luke 10, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It was no question with the jailer of *doing* something for *life*, but of salvation for the lost. The lawyer, like many others, did not know himself as a lost sinner, therefore he does not speak about salvation.

In reply to the most important inquiry that human lips can ever make, "What must I do to be saved?" the apostle directs the mind of the jailer to Christ — "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." God gave the blessing, and the whole house believed, rejoiced, and were baptized. And now all is changed; the jailer takes the prisoners into his own house — his cruelty is changed into love, sympathy, and hospitality. In the same hour of the night he washed their stripes — set meat before them — rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. What an eventful night! What a change in a few hours! and what a joyful morning dawned on that happy house! The Lord be praised!

Like Darius of old, **the magistrates** appear to have been disturbed during the night. The news of the earthquake might have reached them, or that Paul and Silas were Romans. But as soon as it was day, they sent word to the jailer to "let those men go." He immediately made known the order to Paul and Silas, and wished them to depart in peace. But Paul refused to accept his liberty without some public acknowledgement of the wrong he had suffered. He also now made known the fact that he and Silas were Roman citizens. The famous words of Cicero had passed into a proverb, and had immense weight everywhere: "To bind a Roman citizen is an outrage, to scourge him is a

crime.” The magistrates had evidently violated the Roman laws; but Paul only demanded that, as they had been publicly treated as guilty, the magistrates should come and publicly declare that they were innocent. This they readily did, seeing what wrong they had done. “And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.” The apostles readily complied with the magistrates' request, left the prison, and openly entered the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed.²¹

We would only further add before leaving this memorable chapter that it is very pleasant to find, in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the proofs of an attachment which bound them together, and which continued from “the first day” even until Paul's imprisonment at Rome. His affection for his beloved Philippians was wonderful. He addressed them as — “my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.” And he acknowledges, with no small joy, their unwearied fellowship with him in the gospel, and the many practical proofs of their loving care and tender sympathy for himself. As early as his residence at Thessalonica they thought of his need. “For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.” (Phil. 4: 15-19)

PAUL AT THESSALONICA AND BEREIA

Paul and Silas now directed their course to **Thessalonica**. Timothy and Luke appear to have remained behind in Philippi for a short time. Having passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul and Silas arrived at Thessalonica, Here they found a synagogue. It was a commercial town of great importance, where many Jews resided. “Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.” The hearts of many were touched by his preaching; and a great multitude of devout Greeks, and women of high station, believed. But Paul's old enemy again appears. “The Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. And when they found them not they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also, whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.” These verses may suffice to give us the *character* of the universal enmity of the Jews against the gospel and against Paul its chief minister.

The apostle had evidently preached to the Thessalonians the truth respecting the exaltation of Christ, and His coming again in glory: “Saying that there is another king, one Jesus.” Hence the constant allusion to “the *coming* of the

²¹ See evangelistic papers on the leading characters of this chapter, *Things New and Old*, vol. 12, page 29-97.

Lord,” and to “the *day* of the Lord,” in Paul’s Epistles to that church. From what Paul says in his first Epistle we learn that his labours were most abundant and greatly owned and blessed of the Lord to many souls. 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 2:10, 11.

The apostle now proceeded to **Berea**. Here the Jews were more noble. They examined what they heard by the word of God. There was great blessing here also. Many believed, but the Jews, like hunters after their prey, hastened from Thessalonica to Berea, and raised a tumult which forced Paul to leave the place almost immediately. Accompanied by some of the Berean converts, he directed his course to Athens. Silas and Timotheus were left behind.

PAUL’S VISIT TO ATHENS

The appearance of the apostle in **Athens** is an event in his history of great importance. It was, in some respects, the capital of the world, and the seat of Grecian culture and philosophy; but it was also the central point of superstition and idolatry.

It is very interesting to observe, that the apostle was in no haste to enter upon his work here. He allowed time for reflection. Deep thoughts, and how to weigh up everything in the presence of God, and in the light of the death and resurrection of Christ, filled his mind. It was his first intention to wait for the arrival of Silas and Timotheus. He had sent back a message to Berea, that they were to come to him with all speed. But when he saw himself surrounded with temples, and altars, and statues, and idolatrous worship, he could keep silence no longer. As usual, he begins with the Jews, but also disputes daily with the philosophers in the market place, Christianity and paganism thus openly confront each other, and, be it observed, the apostle of Christianity was *alone in Athens*; but the place swarmed with the apostles of paganism, and so numerous were the objects of worship, that a satirist observed, “It is easier to find a god than a man in Athens.”

Some scornfully derided what they heard, others listened and wished to hear more. “Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoics encountered him. And some said, What will this babbling say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods; because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” Thus we learn what Paul in his daily conversation had been pressing on the attention of the people, and the different classes of philosophers. It was “**Jesus, and the resurrection.**” These words had made the greatest impression, and remained the most distinctly in their minds. What a new thing, and what a blessed reality for souls! The *Person of Christ*; not a theory: the *fact* of the resurrection, not a gloomy uncertainty as to the future. The minister of Christ lays bare to the learned Athenians their fearful condition in the sight of the true God. Nevertheless, they sought to have a fuller and more deliberate exposition of these mysterious subjects, and they brought Paul unto Areopagus.

This place, we are told, was the most convenient and appropriate for a public address. The most solemn court of justice had sat from time immemorial on the hill of Areopagus. The judges sat in the open air, upon seats hewn out in the rock. On this spot many solemn questions had been discussed, and many solemn cases decided: beginning with the legendary trial of Mars, which gave to the place the name of “**Mars' hill.**”

It was in this scene that Paul addressed the multitude. There is no moment in the apostle's history, or in the history of the first planting of Christianity more deeply interesting or better known than this. Inspired by feelings for the honour of God, and filled with the knowledge of man's condition in the light of the cross, what must he have felt as he stood on Mars' hill? Wherever he turned his eyes, the signs of idolatry in its thousand forms rose up before him. He might have been betrayed, under the circumstances, into speaking strongly; but he mastered his feelings, and refrained from intemperate language. Considering the fervency of his spirit, and the greatness of his zeal for truth it was a remarkable instance of self-denial and self-command. But his Lord and Master was with him, though to the human eye he stood alone before the Athenians, and the many foreigners who flocked to that university of the world.

For wisdom, prudence, sound reasoning, and consummate skill, Paul's address stands alone in the annals of mankind. He did not begin by attacking their false gods, or by denouncing their religion as a Satanic delusion, and the object of his utter detestation. Zeal without knowledge would have done so, and been pleased with its own faithfulness. But in the address before us we have an example of the best way of approaching the minds and hearts of ignorant and prejudiced persons in every age. May the Lord give wisdom to all His servants to follow it!

His opening words are both winning and reproofing. “Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.” He thus begins by acknowledging that they had religious feelings, but that they were wrongly directed and then speaks of himself as one who was ready to lead them to the knowledge of the true God. “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.” He wisely selects for his text, the inscription, “**To the unknown God.**” This gives him an opportunity to commence at the lowest step in the ladder of truth. He speaks of the oneness of God the Creator, and the relationship of man to Him. But he soon leaves the argument against idolatry, and proceeds to preach the gospel. And yet he is careful not to introduce the *name* of Jesus in his public address. He had done so fully in his more private ministrations: but, being now surrounded by the disciples and admirers of such names as Socrates, Plato, Zeno and Epicurus, he sacredly guards the holy name of Jesus from the risk of a comparison with such. He well knew that the name of the lowly Jesus of Nazareth was “to the Greeks foolishness.” Nevertheless it is easily seen that towards the close of his address, the attention of the whole audience is concentrated on the *man Christ*

Jesus, though His name is not mentioned in the whole speech. Thus he proceeds: “And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” Here the patience of his audience failed — his discourse was interrupted. But the last impression left on their minds was one of eternal weight and importance. The inspired apostle addressed himself to the *consciences* not to the intellectual curiosity, of the philosophers. The mention of the resurrection of the dead, and the judgment of the world, with such commanding power and authority, could not fail to trouble these proud and self-indulgent men. The essential principle, or the highest aim of the Epicurean philosopher, was to *gratify himself*; that of the Stoic, was a *proud indifference* to good and evil, pleasure and pain.

Need we wonder then, that this remarkable assembly should have broken up, amidst the scornful derision of some, and the icy indifference of others? But, in spite of all, Christianity had gained its first and noble victory over idolatry, and, whatever may have been the immediate results of Paul’s speech, we know it has been blessed to many ever since and that it shall yet bring forth much fruit in many souls and continue to bear fruit to the glory of God for ever and for ever.

Paul now departs from among them. He does not appear to have been driven away by any tumult or persecution. The blessed Lord gave him to taste His own joy, and the joy of angels over penitent sinners; “Among the which was **Dionysius** the Areopagite, and a woman named **Damaris**, and others with them.” But in the military city of Philippi, and the mercantile cities of Thessalonica and Corinth, the number of conversions seems to have been much greater than in the highly educated and polished city of Athens. This is deeply humbling to the pride of man, and to the boasted powers of the human mind. One Epistle was written to the Philippians, two to the Thessalonians, and two to the Corinthians: but we possess no letter written by Paul to the Athenians, and we do not read that he ever again visited Athens.

PAUL’S VISIT TO CORINTH

The connection of Corinth with the history, teaching, and writings of our apostle is almost as intimate and important as either Jerusalem or Antioch. It may be considered as his *European* centre. Here God had “much people;” and here Paul “continued a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.” It was also when at Corinth that he wrote his first apostolic letters — **The two Epistles to the Thessalonians.**

Corinth, the Roman capital of Greece, was a large mercantile city, in immediate connection with Rome and the west of the Mediterranean, with Thessalonica and Ephesus on the Aegean, with Antioch and Alexandria in the

East. Thus by means of its two noted harbours, it received the ships of both Eastern and Western Seas.²²

Paul appears to have travelled alone to Corinth. If Timotheus came to him when at Athens (1 Thess. 3:1), he was sent back again to Thessalonica; which place, as we shall soon see was much on the apostle's heart at this time. Soon after his arrival he unexpectedly found two friends and fellow labourers in Aquila and his wife Priscilla. At this particular time there must have been a greater number of Jews in Corinth than usual; "because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome." The Lord thus used the banishment of Aquila and Priscilla to provide a lodging for His lonely servant. They were of his own country — of his own trade — of his own heart and spirit. And being "of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought, for by their occupation they were **tent makers.**" (Acts 18)

Most gracious, and marvellous too, are the ways of the Lord with His servant. In a city of wealth and commerce surrounded by native Greeks, Roman colonists, and Jews from all quarters, he quietly works at his own trade that he may be burdensome to none of them. Here we have at any rate one example of the deepest and loftiest spirituality combined with diligent labour in the common things of this life. What an example! and what a lesson! His daily toil was no hindrance to his communion with God. None ever knew so well, or felt so deeply, the value of the gospel he carried with him: the issues of life and death were bound up with it, and yet he could give himself up to ordinary labour. But this he did, as really as preaching, for the Lord and for His saints. He frequently refers to this in his Epistles, and speaks of it as one of his privileges. "And in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia." (2 Cor. 11:9, 10.)²³

²² For full and minute geographical details, see *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, by Conybeare and Howson. We may also state here, that we follow them chiefly as to dates. It is the latest, the most comprehensive, and probably the best history of the great Apostle.

²³ As some have made too much of this passage, and others too little, it may be well to note what we believe to be its true meaning. The apostle's resolution not to be burdensome to the saints, as here so strongly expressed, applies chiefly, if not exclusively, to the Corinthian church. An important principle was involved, but it was a *special*, not a *general* principle with the apostle. He acknowledges communications from other churches in the most grateful manner possible. (Phil. 4) And in writing to the Corinthians afterwards, he says, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service. And when I was present with you, *and wanted*, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied."

The apostle, no doubt, had the best of reasons for thus refusing fellowship with the church at Corinth. We know there were "false apostles" and many enemies there; and that many grave and serious disorders had been allowed amongst them, which he strongly rebuked and sought to correct. Under these circumstances, lest his motives might be misconstrued, the apostle would rather work with his hands than receive support from the church at Corinth. And, "Wherefore?" he asks, "Because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them that desire occasion." 2 Corinthians 9:1-15.

There is another thing connected with this feature of the apostle's course which adds great interest to it. It is generally believed that he wrote his two epistles to the Thessalonians about this time, and some think the Epistle to the Galatians also. These are still before us as the true witnesses of his nearness to God and communion with Him, while he "laboured working with his own hands." But the sabbath of rest comes, the workshop is closed, and Paul goes to the synagogue. This was his habit. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks." But while Paul was thus employed, week-day and sabbath-day, Silas and Timotheus arrived from Macedonia. It is evident that they brought some assistance with them, which would meet the apostle's need at the time, and relieve him from such constant labour with his hands.

The coming of **Silas and Timotheus** seems to have encouraged and strengthened the apostle. His zeal and energy in the gospel are evidently increased. He "was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ;" but they opposed his doctrine and blasphemed. This leads Paul to take his course with great boldness and decision. He shakes his raiment, in token of being pure from their blood, and declares that now he turns to the Gentiles. In all this he was led of God, and acted according to His mind. So long as it was possible, he preached in the synagogue; but when he could no longer go there, he was compelled to use the most convenient place he could find. At Ephesus, he preached in the school of one Tyrannus: at Rome, he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house;" and here, in Corinth, a **proselyte**, named Justus, opened his house to the rejected apostle.

At this particular crisis in the apostle's history, he was favoured with another special revelation from the Lord Himself, "Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision. Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city. And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." But again his unrelenting enemies are astir. The great success of the gospel among the heathen excited the rage of the Jews against Paul; and they sought to use the coming of Gallio, a new governor, to accomplish their wicked intentions.

Gallio was the brother of Seneca the philosopher, and, like him, given to much learning. He was wise, fair, and tolerant as a governor, though *contemptuous* in his treatment of sacred things. But the Lord, who was with His servant as He had said, used the unbelieving indifference of Gallio to defeat the malicious designs of the Jews, and to turn their false accusations against themselves. As they were frustrated in their evil purposes, the apostle had greater liberty and less annoyance, in carrying on the work of the gospel. Its blessed fruits were soon manifest throughout the whole province of Achaia. (1 Thess. 1:8, 9)

PAUL'S PASSING VISIT TO EPHEBUS

The time had now come when Paul thought it right to leave Corinth and revisit Jerusalem. He had a great desire to be at the coming feast. But before his departure, he took a solemn farewell of the young assembly, promising (the Lord willing) to return.

Accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, he leaves Corinth in peace. But when at the harbour before sailing, a ceremony was performed which has given rise to much discussion. Paul, being under a vow, **shaves his head at Cenchrea**. In his own mind, and as led by the Spirit, we feel sure that he was far above and beyond a religion of feasts and vows, but he stooped in grace to the customs of his nation. To the Jew he becomes a Jew. Their constant opposition to his doctrine, and their violent persecution of himself, never weakened his affections for his beloved people: surely this was of God. While he sought in the energy of the Spirit to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, he never forgot, in faithfulness to the word of God, to preach to the Jews first. He thus stands before us, as the bright expression of God's grace to the Gentiles, and of his lingering affections towards the Jews.

The missionary band land at Ephesus. Paul goes to the synagogue and reasons with the Jews. They seem inclined to hear him, but he has a strong desire to go up to Jerusalem and keep the approaching feast. So he "bade them farewell saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem; but I will return again unto you, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus."

PAUL'S FOURTH VISIT TO JERUSALEM

We are not supplied with any information by the sacred historian of what occurred in Jerusalem on this occasion. We are merely told that when Paul had "gone up and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch." But his intense desire to pay this visit may assure us of its great importance. He may have felt that the time had come when the Jewish Christians, assembled at the feast, should hear a full account of the reception of the gospel among the Gentiles. Roman colonies and Greek capitals had been visited, and a great work of God had been accomplished. All this would be perfectly natural and right, but we need not seek to remove the veil which the Holy Ghost has drawn over this visit.

Paul goes down from Jerusalem to Antioch, visiting all the assemblies he had first formed; and thus, as it were, binds his work together — Antioch and Jerusalem. So far as we know, Paul's visit to Antioch was his last. We have already seen how new centres of christian life had been established by him in the Greek cities of the Aegean. The course of the gospel is further and further towards the West, and the inspired part of the apostle's biography, after a short period of deep interest in Judea, finally centres in Rome.

THE RETURN OF PAUL TO ANTIOCH

After a journey which had extended over the space of three or four years, our apostle returns to Antioch. He had travelled over a wide circuit, and disseminated Christianity in many flourishing and populous cities, and almost entirely by his own exertions. If the reader would keep up his interest in Paul's history, he must mark distinctly and keep clearly before him the great epochs in Paul's life, and the main points in his different journeys. But before starting with Paul on his *third* missionary journey, it may be well to notice another great preacher of the gospel, who suddenly comes before us just at this time, and whose name, next to that of the apostle, is perhaps the most important in the early history of the church.

Apollos was a Jew by birth — a native of Alexandria. He was “an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures:... but knowing only the baptism of John.” He was devoted, earnest, and upright, publicly confessing and preaching that which he knew, and the power of the Holy Ghost was manifested in him. It does not appear that he had received any appointment, ordination, or sanction of any kind, from either the twelve or Paul. But the Lord who is above all had called him, and was acting in him and by him. We thus see, in the case of Apollos, the manifestation of the power and liberty of the Holy Spirit, without human intervention. It is well to note this. The idea of an exclusive clericalism is the practical denial of the liberty of the Spirit to act by whom He will. But though burning with zeal and a powerful speaker, Apollos knew only what John had taught his disciples. This the Lord knew, and provided teachers for him. Among those who were listening to his earnest appeals, two of Paul's well-instructed disciples were led to take a special interest in him. And though he was both learned and eloquent, he was humble enough to be instructed by **Aquila and Priscilla**. They invited him to their house, and, no doubt in a lowly spirit, “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” How simple! how natural! and how beautiful! All is of the Lord. He ordered that Aquila and Priscilla should be left at Ephesus — that Apollos should come and stir up the people at Ephesus before the arrival of Paul; and, after being instructed, that he should go on to Corinth, and help on the good work there, which Paul had begun. Apollos watered what Paul had planted, and God gave abundant increase. Such are the blessed ways of the Lord in His thoughtful love and tender care of all His servants, and of all His assemblies.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 6

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

A.D. 54

Having “spent some time” in Antioch, Paul leaves that Gentile centre, and commences another missionary journey. Nothing is said of his companions on this occasion. He “went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order strengthening all the disciples;” and also giving directions for the collection on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) In a short time he reached the centre of the work in Asia.

Ephesus. At this time it was the greatest city in Asia Minor, and the capital of the province. Owing to its central position, it was the common meeting-place of various characters and classes of men. By this time Apollos had departed to Corinth, but the remaining twelve of John's disciples were still in Ephesus. Paul speaks to them about their state or position. We must give a passing notice of what occurred.

John's baptism required repentance but not separation from the Jewish synagogue. The gospel teaches that Christianity is founded on death and resurrection. Christian baptism is the significant and expressive symbol of these truths. “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” (Col. 2:12) As these men were entirely unacquainted with the foundation truths of Christianity, we suppose they had never mingled with Christians. The apostle, no doubt, explained to them the efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. They believed the truth and received christian baptism. Then Paul, in his apostolic capacity, laid his hands on them; and they were sealed with the Holy Ghost, and “spake with tongues and prophesied.”

Immediately after the mention of this important occurrence, our attention is directed to the apostle's labours in the synagogue. During three months he preached Christ boldly there, reasoning and endeavouring to convince his hearers of all “the things concerning the kingdom of God.” The hearts of some “were hardened,” while others repented and believed; but as many of the Jews took the place of adversaries, and “spake evil of that way before the multitude,” Paul acts in the most definite way. He “separated the disciples” from the Jewish synagogue, and formed them into a distinct assembly, and met with them “daily in the school of one Tyrannus.” This is a deeply interesting and instructive action of the apostle, but he acts in the

consciousness of the power and truth of God. The church in Ephesus is now perfectly distinct from both Jews and Gentiles. Here we see what the apostle elsewhere refers to in his exhortation, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God." (1 Cor. 10:32) Where this important distinction is not seen, there must be great confusion of thought as to both the word and ways of God.

The apostle now appears before us as the instrument of the power of God in a remarkable and striking way. He communicates the Holy Ghost to the twelve disciples of John, and he separates the disciples of Jesus and formally founds the church in Ephesus. His testimony to the Lord Jesus is heard in all Asia, both by Jews and Greeks; special miracles are wrought by his hands, diseases departing from many if they but touch the border of his garment. The power of the enemy disappears before the power that is in Paul, and the name of Jesus is glorified. The evil spirits acknowledge his power, and put his enemies to shame and loss; the consciences of the heathen are reached, and the enemy's dominion over them is gone. Fear falls on many who "used curious arts," and they burn their books of magic, the cost of which amounts to nearly two thousand pounds in English money. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." (See Acts 19: 1-20) Thus the power of the Lord was displayed in the person and mission of Paul, and his apostolate established beyond a question.

The apostle had now spent about three years of incessant labour in Ephesus. And he says himself when addressing the elders at Miletus, "Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." It is also supposed by some, that during this time he paid a short visit and wrote his **First Epistle to the Corinthians**.

THE TUMULT AT EPHEBUS

A great and blessed work had now been accomplished by the mighty energy of God's Spirit, through the instrumentality of His chosen servant Paul. The gospel had been planted in the capital of Asia, and it had spread throughout the whole province. The apostle now felt as if his work had been done there, and he longs to go to Rome, the capital of the West and the metropolis of the world. Greece and Macedonia had already received the gospel, but there was yet Rome. "After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." (Acts 19:21)

But while Paul was thus making arrangements for another Journey, the enemy was planning a fresh attack. His resources were not yet exhausted. Demetrius excites the thoughtless multitude against the Christians. A great tumult is raised, the passions of men being stirred up against the instruments of the testimony of God. The workmen of Demetrius raise the cry, not only that their craft is in danger but that the temple of the great goddess Diana is in

danger of being despised. When the multitude heard these things, they were filled with wrath, and cried, saying, **“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”** The whole city was now filled with confusion; but Paul was mercifully preserved — by his brethren, and by some of the chief rulers in Asia, who were his friends — from showing himself in the theatre

The Jews evidently began to fear, that the persecution might be turned against themselves, for the majority of the people knew not for what purpose they had come together. They therefore put forth a certain Alexander, probably with the intention of shifting the blame from themselves upon the Christians; but the moment the heathen discovered that he was a Jew, their fury was increased: the rallying cry was again raised, and for two whole hours the people shouted **“Great is Diana of the Ephesians.”** Fortunately for all parties, the town clerk was a man of great tact and admirable policy. He flattered, calmed, soothed, and dismissed the assembly. But to faith it was God using the persuasive eloquence of a heathen official to protect His servant and His many children there.

The far-famed temple of Diana was reckoned by the ancients as one of the wonders of the world; the sun, it was said, saw nothing in his course more magnificent than Diana’s temple. It was constructed of the purest marble, and was two hundred and twenty years in building. But with the spread of Christianity it sank into decay, and scarcely anything of it now remains to show us even where it stood. The trade of Demetrius was to make small models in silver of the shrine of the goddess. These were set up in houses, kept as memorials, and carried about on journeys. But as the introduction of Christianity necessarily affected the sale of these models, the heathen artisans were instigated by Demetrius to raise a popular cry in favour of Diana and against the Christians.

PAUL’S DEPARTURE FROM EPHESUS FOR MACEDONIA

Acts 20. After the cessation of the tumult, the danger being over and the rioters dispersed, Paul sends for the disciples, embraces them, and departs for Macedonia. Two of the Ephesian brethren, Tychicus and Trophimus, seem to have accompanied him, and to have remained faithful to him through all his afflictions. They are frequently mentioned, and have a place in the last chapter of his last epistle, 2 Timothy 4.

The sacred historian is exceedingly brief in his record of Paul’s proceedings at this time. All the information which he gives us is compressed in the following words: — **“He departed to go into Macedonia: and when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, and there abode three months.”** It is generally supposed that these few words embrace a period of nine or ten months — from the early summer of A.D. 57 to the spring of A.D. 58. But this lack of information is happily supplied by the apostle’s letters. Those that were written on this journey

supply us with many historical details, and, what is more and better, they give us from his own pen a living picture of the deep and painful exercises of mind and heart, through which he was then passing.

It appears that Paul had arranged to meet **Titus at Troas**, who was to bring him tidings direct from Corinth of the state of things there. But week after week passed, and Titus came not. We know something of the workings of that great mind and heart at this time, from what he says himself: “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.” (2 Cor 2:12, 13) His personal anxiety, however, did not hinder him from going on with the great work of the gospel. This is evident from verses 14-17.

At length the long-expected Titus arrived in Macedonia probably at Philippi. And now Paul’s mind is relieved and his heart is comforted. Titus brings him better tidings from Corinth than he had expected to hear. The reaction is manifest: he is filled with praise; “Great is my boldness of speech toward you,” he says; “great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation. For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh, had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” (2 Cor. 7: 4-6)

Soon after this, Paul writes his **Second Epistle to the Corinthians**; which we find addressed not to them only, but to all the churches in all Achaia. They may have all been more or less affected by the condition of things at Corinth. Titus is again the apostle’s willing servant, not only as the bearer of his second letter to the church at Corinth, but as taking a special interest in the collections then making for the poor. Paul not only gives Titus strict charges about the collections, but writes two chapters on the subject (chaps. 8 and 9), though it was more deacons’ than apostles’ work. But, as he had said in answer to the suggestion of James, Cephas, and John, that he should remember the poor — “The *same*,” he replied, “*which I was also forward to do.*”

The space which the apostle devotes to subjects connected with collections for the poor is remarkable, and deserves our careful consideration. It may be that some of us have overlooked this fact and suffered loss in our own souls thereby. Notice, for example, what he says of one church. We have good reason to believe that the *Philippians* from the very beginning *cared* for the apostle — they pressed him to accept their contributions for his support, from his first visit to Thessalonica, down to his imprisonment in Rome, besides their liberality to others. (2 Cor. 8: 1-4) But some may imagine from this, that they were a wealthy church. Just the opposite. Paul tells us “How that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty

abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” It was out of their deep poverty that they gave so liberally.

What the Philippians are in the Epistles, the poor widow is in the Gospels — two mites were her all. She could have given one and kept one; but she had an undivided heart, and she gave both. She, too, gave out of her poverty; and, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the whole world, these things shall be told as a memorial of their liberality.

After Paul had sent off Titus and his associates with the Epistle, he remained himself in “those parts” of Greece doing the work of an evangelist. His mind, however, was set on paying the Corinthians a personal visit; but he allowed time for his letter to produce its own effects under the blessing of God. One of the objects of the apostle was to prepare the way for his personal ministry among them. It is generally thought that it was during this period of delay that he fully preached the gospel of Christ round about unto Illyricum. (Rom. 15:19) It is probable that he reached Corinth in winter, according to his expressed intention. “It may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you.” (1 Cor 16:6) There he abode three months.

All are agreed, we may say, that it was during these winter months, that he wrote his great **Epistle to the Romans**. Some say, that he also wrote his **Epistle to the Galatians** at the same time. But there is great diversity of opinion amongst the chronologists on this point. From the absence of names and salutations, such as we have in the Epistle to the Romans, it is difficult to ascertain its date. But if it was not written at this particular time, we must place it earlier, not later. The apostle was surprised at their early departure from the truth. “I marvel,” he says, “that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” His great disappointment is manifest in the warmth of spirit in which he writes this Epistle.

But we must return to the *history* of our apostle: the *niceties* of chronology we cannot enter upon in our “short papers.” But after comparing the latest authorities, we give what seem to us the most reliable dates.

PAUL LEAVES CORINTH

The apostle’s work was now done at Corinth, and he prepares to leave it. His mind was bent upon going to Rome; but there was this mission of charity on his heart, to which he must attend first. We are favoured with his own words on these different points. “But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you, Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come unto you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a

certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.” (Rom. 15: 23-26) The array of names in Acts 20:4; Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus, are supposed to be brethren with the collections which had been made at the different places named. Instead of sailing straight to Syria, he goes round by Macedonia, because of the Jews who were lying in wait for him. His companions tarried for him at Troas. There he spent a Lord’s day, and even a whole week, in order to see the brethren.

We must notice briefly what took place at this stage of his journey. Two things, all important to the Christian, are connected with it — the Lord’s day, and the Lord’s supper. The historian, who was with Paul at this time, enters with unusual minuteness on the details of that day.

It is evident from this incidental notice, that it was the established custom of the early Christians to come together on “**the first day of the week**” for the understood purpose of “breaking bread.” We have here the *main object* and the *ordinary time* of their coming together. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” (See also 1 Cor. 16:2; John 20:19, Rev. 1:10) Even the apostle’s discoursing, precious as it was, is spoken of as a secondary thing. The remembrance of the Lord’s love in dying for us, and all that into which He has brought us as risen again, was, and is, the first thing. If there be an opportunity for so ministering the word, as to gather up the thoughts and affections of the worshippers to Christ, it is well to embrace it; but the breaking of bread ought to be the first consideration, and the main object of the assembly. The celebration of the Lord’s supper on this occasion was after sunset. In early times, it was observed in some places before daylight; in others, after sunset. But here the disciples were not obliged to meet in secret. “There were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together.” And Paul continued his speech until midnight, ready to depart on the morrow. It was an extraordinary occasion, and Paul avails himself of the opportunity to speak to them all night. The time had not come, as some one has said, when the warm earnest utterances of the heart were measured by the minute — when the burning agony of the preacher over lost souls was timed by the icy coldness of the mere professor, or the careless indifference of the worldly Christian. Eutychus, a young man, overcome with sleep “fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead.” This has been viewed by some as a *penalty for inattention*, but a miracle was wrought; the young man was raised from a state of death by the power and goodness of God through His servant Paul, and the friends were not a little comforted.

PAUL AT MILETUS

The most important stage of this journey is Miletus though the different places they pass or call at are carefully noted by the sacred historian. Paul, being filled with the Spirit, gives directions for the journey. His companions

willingly obey him, not as a master, but as one who directs in the humility of love and in the wisdom of God. He arranges not to go to Ephesus, though that was a central place, for he had purposed in his heart to be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. But as the vessel was to be detained some time at Miletus, he sends for **the elders of the church at Ephesus** to meet him. The distance between the two places is said to be about thirty miles, so that two or three days would be required to go and come, but they had sufficient time for their meeting before the ship sailed. Thus the Lord thinks of His servants and makes everything work together for their good and His own glory.

Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus is characteristic and representative. It demands our most careful study. It sets before us the deep and touching affection of the apostle, the position of the church at that time, and the work of the gospel among the nations. He exhorts them with unusual earnestness and tenderness; he felt he was addressing them for the last time; he reminds them of his labours among them in "serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears." He warns them against false teachers and heresies — the grievous wolves who would enter in among them, and the men of themselves that would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship."

As this testimony of Paul's is of the highest importance, and marks a distinct epoch in the history of the church, besides shedding divine light on all ecclesiastical systems, we give the thoughts of another on its wide and comprehensive bearing.

"The church was consolidated over a pretty large extent of country, and the church, in divers places at least, had taken the form of a regular institution. Elders were established and recognised. The apostle could send for them to come to him. His authority also was acknowledged on their part. He speaks of his ministry as a past thing — solemn thought!... Thus, what the Holy Ghost here sets before us is, that now, when the detail of his work among the Gentiles to plant the gospel is related as one entire scene among Jews and Gentiles, he bids adieu to the work; in order to leave those whom he had gathered together, in a new position, and, in a certain sense, to themselves. It is a discourse which marks the cessation of one phase of the church — that of apostolic labours — and the entrance into another; its responsibility to stand fast now that these labours had ceased; the service of the elders, whom 'the Holy Ghost had made overseers,' and, at the same time, the dangers and difficulties that would attend the cessation of apostolic labour, and complicate the work of the elders, on whom the responsibility would now more especially devolve.

“The first remark that flows from the consideration of this discourse is, that *apostolic succession is entirely denied by it*. Owing to the absence of the apostle, various difficulties would arise, and there would be no one in his place to meet or to prevent these difficulties. *Successor, therefore, he had none*. In the second place, the fact appears that this energy, which bridled the spirit of evil, once away, devouring wolves from without, and teachers of perverse things from within, would lift up their heads and attack the simplicity and the happiness of the church; which would be harassed by the efforts of Satan, without possessing apostolic energy to withstand them. In the third place, that which was principally to be done for the hindrance of evil was to feed the flock; and to watch, whether over themselves or over the flock, for that purpose. He then commends them — neither to Timothy nor to a bishop, but in a way that sets aside all official resources to God and to the word of His grace. *This is where he left the church*. The free labours of the apostle of the Gentiles were ended. Solemn and affecting thought! He had been the instrument chosen of God to communicate to the world His counsels respecting the church and to establish in the mind of the world this precious object of His affections, united to Christ at His right hand. What would become of it down here?”²⁴

Acts 21. With a fair wind, Paul and his companions sailed out from Miletus, while the sorrowing elders of Ephesus prepared for their journey homewards. With a straight course they sailed to Coos, Rhodes, and thence to Patara and Tyre. From what took place there — so similar to the scene at Miletus — it is evident that Paul soon found his way to the heart of the disciples. Though he had been only one week at Tyre, and previously unacquainted with the Christians there he had gained their affections. “And they all brought us on our way,” says Luke, “with wives and children, till we were out of the city, and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed.” It seems too, as if a spirit of prophecy had been poured out on these affectionate Tyrians, for they warned the apostle against going up to Jerusalem. After waiting there seven days, they came to Ptolemais, where they abode one day. At Caesarea, they lodged in the house of **Philip the evangelist**, which was one of the seven. He is already well known to us, but it is not a little interesting to meet him again, after an interval of more than twenty years. Now he has four daughters, virgins, who prophesy. Here **Agabus** the prophet predicted Paul’s imprisonment, and besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. All the disciples said the same thing, and entreated him with tears not to go. But however much Paul’s tender and sensitive heart must have been moved by the tears and the entreaties of his friends and of his own children in the faith, he suffered nothing to alter his resolution or move him from his purpose. He felt bound in spirit to go, and ready to leave all consequences with the will of the Lord.

²⁴ *The Present Testimony*, vol. 8, p. 405-407.

We now come to

PAUL'S FIFTH VISIT TO JERUSALEM

A.D. 58.

The apostle and his companions were gladly welcomed on their arrival at Jerusalem. "When we were come to Jerusalem," Luke observes, "the brethren received us gladly." The day following, Paul and his company visited James, at whose house the elders were present. Paul, as chief speaker declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. But though they were greatly interested, and praised the Lord for the good news, they evidently felt uneasy. They at once called Paul's attention to the fact, that a great number of Jews who believed in Jesus as the Messiah were zealous observers of the law of Moses and were strongly prejudiced against himself.

How to satisfy the prejudices of these Jewish Christians was now the important question between Paul and the elders. Multitudes of Jews, both converted and unconverted, they knew would come together when they heard of Paul's arrival. They had long believed the most serious and weighty charges against him — "that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs." What was now to be done? The elders proposed that Paul should publicly show himself obedient to the law. This was the painful and perplexing position of the apostle of the Gentiles. What can he now do? Will the messenger of the gospel of the glory — the minister of the heavenly calling stoop to the rules of Nazarite vows? This is the solemn and serious question. If he refuses compliance with their wish, the lurking suspicion of the Jews will be confirmed; if he acts according to their desires, he must humble himself — forget for the moment his high calling, yield to the ignorance, prejudice, and pride of the Judaizers. But what else can he do? He is in the very centre of a bigoted Judaism, and if mistaken, he honestly desires to win over the church at Jerusalem to a purer and loftier Christianity.

Many have been very free in their criticisms on the apostle's course at this time. But though it is our privilege humbly to examine all that the sacred historian has written some, we fear, have ventured too far in saying hard things of the apostle. We may reverently inquire, how far the will and the affections of Paul influenced him on this occasion, apart from the warnings of the Spirit through his brethren; but surely it becomes us to keep within the limits of what the Holy Spirit Himself has said. Let us now carefully view the outward facts which led the apostle to this eventful epoch in his life.

Rome had been long on his mind. He had a great desire to preach the gospel there. This was right — this was according to God — this was not of self: he was the apostle of the Gentiles. God had been working there most blessedly without Paul or Peter, for as yet no apostle had visited Rome. Paul had been

privileged to write an epistle to the Romans, and in that letter he expresses the most earnest desire to see them, and to labour among them. “For I long to see you,” he says, “that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.” This was his state of mind and the object which he had before him; which *we* also must keep in view when studying this part of his history. Compare Romans 1: 7-15; 15: 15-33.

THE END OF PAUL’S FREE LABOURS

We have now come to the important question, and to the point on which Paul’s future history turns. Will he go straight west to Rome, or will he go round by way of Jerusalem? All depends on this. Jerusalem was also on his heart. But if Christ had sent him far hence to the Gentiles, could the Spirit, on Christ’s part, lead him to Jerusalem? It was just here, we believe, that the great apostle was permitted to follow the desires of his own heart, which desires were right and beautiful in themselves, but not according to the mind of God at the time. He loved his nation dearly, and especially the poor saints at Jerusalem; and, having been greatly misrepresented there, he wished to prove his love for the poor of his people by bringing to them in person the offerings of the Gentiles. “When therefore,” he says, “I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.” Surely, some will say, this was loving and praiseworthy! Yes, but on one side only, and that side alas! was the side of nature, not of the Spirit. “And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days; who *said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.*” This seems plain enough; but Paul inclined for the moment to the side of his affections “for the poor of the flock” in Jerusalem. Could there have been, we ask, a more pardonable mistake? Impossible! It was his love to the poor, and the pleasure of carrying to them the offerings of the Gentiles, that led him to go round by Jerusalem on his way to Rome. Nevertheless, it was a mistake, and a mistake which cost Paul his liberty. His free labours end here. He allowed the flesh its liberty, and God allowed the Gentiles to bind it with a chain. This was the Master’s expression of truest love to His servant. Paul was too precious in His sight to be allowed to pass without His righteous dealings at such a time; and he was also made to prove, that neither Jerusalem nor Rome could be the metropolis of Christianity. Christ the Head of the church was in heaven, and there only could the metropolis of Christianity be. Jerusalem *persecuted* the apostle, Rome *imprisoned* and *martyred* him. Nevertheless the Lord was with His servant for his own good, the advancement of the truth, the blessing of the church, and the glory of His own great name.

Here may we be permitted to offer one reflection. On how many histories, since Paul’s fifth visit to Jerusalem, has this solemn scene been engraved! How many saints have been bound with chains of different kinds, but who can say for what, or why? All of us would have said — unless enlightened by the Spirit — that the apostle could not have been actuated by a more worthy motive in going round by Jerusalem on his way to Rome. But the Lord had

not told him to do so. All hinges on this. How needful then to see, at every stage of our journey, that we have the word of God for our faith, the service of Christ for our motive, and the Holy Spirit for our guide. We will now return to the history of events.

We left Paul sitting with the elders in the house of James. They had suggested to him a mode of conciliating the Jewish believers, and of refuting the accusations of his enemies. Disloyalty to his nation and to the religion of his fathers was the chief charge brought against him. But under the surface of outward events, and especially having the light of the epistles shed upon them, we discover the root of the whole matter in the enmity of the human heart against the grace of God. In order to understand this, we must notice that **Paul's ministry was twofold.** 1. His mission was to preach the gospel "to every creature which is under heaven" — it not only went far beyond the limits of Judaism, but it was in perfect contrast with that system. 2. He was also the minister of the church of God, and preached its exalted position, and its blessed privileges, as united with Christ the glorified Man in heaven. These blessed truths, it will be seen lift the soul of the believer far above the religion of the flesh, be it ever so painstaking — ever so abounding in rites and ceremonies. Vows fasts, feasts, offerings, purifications, traditions, and philosophy, are all shut out as nothing worth before God, and opposed to the very nature of Christianity. This exasperated the religious Jew with his traditions, and the uncircumcised Greek with his philosophy; and the two united to persecute the true witness-bearer of this twofold testimony. And so it has been ever since. The religious man with his ordinances, and the merely natural man with his philosophy, by a natural process, readily unite in opposing the witness of a heavenly Christianity. See Colossians 1 & 2.

If Paul had preached circumcision, the offence of the cross would have ceased; for this would have given them a place, and the opportunity of being something and doing something, and even of taking part with God in His religion. This was Judaism, and this gave the Jew his pre-eminence. But the gospel of the grace of God addresses man as already lost — as "dead in trespasses and sins" — and has no more respect to the Jew than to the Gentile. Like the sun in the firmament, it shines for all. No nation, kindred, tongue, or people, is excluded from its heavenly rays. "Preach the gospel to every creature which is under heaven" is the divine commission and the wide sphere of the evangelist; to teach those who believe this gospel their *completeness* in Christ is the privilege and duty of every minister of the New Testament.

Having thus cleared the ground as to the motives, objects, and position of the great apostle, we will now briefly trace the remainder of his eventful life. The time has come when he is to be brought before kings and rulers, and even before Caesar himself, for the name of the Lord Jesus.

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE

In accordance with the proposal of James and the elders Paul now proceeds to the temple with “the four men which had a vow.” Thus we read: “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself with them, entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.” On the completion of the **Nazarite’s vow** the law required that certain offerings should be presented in the temple. These offerings involved considerable expense, as we may see from Numbers 6; and it was considered an act of great merit and piety for a rich brother to provide these offerings for a poor brother, and thereby enable him to complete his vow. Paul was not rich, but he had a large and tender heart, and he generously undertook to pay the charges of the four poor Nazarites. Such readiness on Paul’s part to please some and help others, ought to have pacified and conciliated the Jews, and probably it would, had there only been present such as were associated with James; but it had the opposite effect with the inveterate zealots: they were only more incensed against him. The celebration of the feast had attracted multitudes to the holy city, so that the temple was thronged with worshippers from every land.

Among these foreign Jews were some from Asia, probably some of Paul’s old antagonists from Ephesus, who were glad of an opportunity to be revenged on him who had formerly defeated them. Towards the end of the seven days wherein the sacrifices were to be offered, these Asiatic Jews saw Paul in the temple, and immediately fell upon him, “crying out Men of Israel, help: This is the man that teacheth all men everywhere against the people, and the law, and this place; and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place... And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.” The whole city being now in an uproar, the crowd rushed furiously to the point of attack; the multitude were excited to madness and but for their sacred care not to shed blood in the holy place, Paul would have been instantly torn to pieces. Their object now was to hurry him outside the sacred enclosure. But before their murderous plans were executed, help from the Lord arrived, and they were unexpectedly interrupted.

The sentries at the gates no doubt communicated at once to the Roman garrison, situated over against the temple, that there was a tumult in the court. The chief captain, **Claudius Lysias**, immediately ran to the spot in person, taking soldiers and centurions with him. When the Jews saw the chief captain and the Roman soldiers approaching, they left off beating Paul. The governor, perceiving that he was the occasion of all this excitement, promptly secured him, and bound him with two chains, or chained him by each hand to a soldier. See Acts 12:6.

This being done, Lysias proceeded to make inquiry as to the real cause of the disturbance, but, as no certain information could be obtained from the

ignorant and excited crowd, he ordered Paul to be carried into the castle. The disappointed mob now made a tremendous rush after their victim. They saw him taken out of their hands, and so violently did they press upon the soldiers, that Paul was borne in their arms up the stairs of the castle; meanwhile deafening shouts arose from the enraged multitude below, as they had done nearly thirty years before, "Away with him, away with him."

At this moment of overwhelming interest, the apostle preserved great presence of mind, and perfectly controlled the agitation of his feelings. He acted prudently without any compromise of truth. Just as they had reached the entrance to the castle, Paul most courteously addressed himself to the chief captain, and said, "May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people." Marvellous to say, this request was granted. Paul had already gained the respect of the Roman governor, if not great influence over his mind. But the hand of the Lord was in it; He was watching over His servant. Paul had thrown himself into the hands of his enemies by seeking to please the believing Jews; but God was with him, and knew how to deliver him out of their power, and to use him for the glory of His own great name. (Acts 21: 26-40)

PAUL'S SPEECH ON THE STAIRS OF THE CASTLE

To the chief captain he had spoken in Greek; to the Jews he speaks in Hebrew. These little attentions and considerations are the beautiful blendings of love and wisdom, and ought to serve as a lesson for us. He was always ready to win, by "becoming all things to all men, that he might gain the more." We see the marvellous effects of his influence over the infuriated mob, as well as over the commanding officer. The moment he spoke to them, the whole scene was changed. He calmed the tumultuous sea of human passion by the sound of their sacred language. It fell like oil on the troubled waters, and there was immediately "a great silence." We have his noble defence, addressed to his brethren and fathers, given at length in Acts 22: 1-21.

It will be observed in reading the address, that his countrymen listened with great attention, while he spoke to them of his early life, his persecution of the church, his mission to Damascus, his miraculous conversion, his vision in the temple, and his interview with Ananias, but the moment he mentioned **his mission to the Gentiles**, an outburst of unbounded indignation arose from the crowded area below, and silenced the speaker. They could not endure the thought of God's grace to the Gentiles. That hated name stung them to fury. Their national pride rebelled against the thought of uncircumcised heathen being made equal to the children of Abraham. They cried down with scornful contempt every argument, human or divine, that could have influenced their

minds. In vain did the apostle lay great stress on what had taken place between himself and the devout Ananias. Every appeal was in vain, so long as the Gentiles were to be thus owned. A scene of the wildest confusion now followed. They cast off their outer garments, threw dust into the air, and “lifted up their voices, and said Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live.”

The chief captain, seeing the frantic violence of the people and not understanding what it meant, was thrown into new perplexity. He saw the results of a speech in the Hebrew tongue — which he probably did not understand — and, naturally concluding that his prisoner must be guilty of some enormous crime, he ordered him to be bound and scourged to make him confess his guilt. But this proceeding was instantly arrested by Paul making known the fact that he was a Roman citizen.

The soldiers who were engaged in binding him withdrew in alarm, and warned the governor as to what he was doing. Lysias came at once, “and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born.” Lysias was now in a difficulty, he had violated a Roman law. To expose a citizen to such indignity was treason against the majesty of the Roman people. But the only way of saving Paul’s life was by keeping him in custody; and he happily thought of another and a milder way of ascertaining the nature of his prisoner’s offence.

PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM

On the following day he “commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.” The policy of Lysias here is interesting. He is active in suppressing the tumult; he protects a Roman citizen; he shows deference to the religion and customs of the Jews. This blending of policy and courtesy in the haughty Roman, under such circumstances, is worthy of a moment’s reflection; but we pass on.

Paul addresses the council with dignity and gravity; but with an evident expression of *conscious integrity*. “And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” This unflinching sense of uprightness so enraged Ananias, the high priest, that he commanded those who stood near to strike him on the mouth. This arbitrary violation of the law on the part of the chief of the council so roused the apostle’s feelings, that he fearlessly exclaimed, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” It is evident that the high priest was not so clothed as to be recognised; therefore Paul excuses himself by his ignorance of the fact, and quotes the formal prohibition of the law: “Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.”

The apostle soon perceived, we are told, that the council was divided into two parties, the **Sadducees and the Pharisees**, and therefore he cried out, “Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.” This declaration, whether so intended or not, had the effect of dividing the assembly, and setting the one party against the other. And so fierce did their dissensions become, that some of the Pharisees actually took Paul’s side, saying, “We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.” The judgment hall immediately became the scene of the most violent contention, and the presence of Claudius Lysias was absolutely necessary. Paul is once more lodged in the castle.

So passed this eventful morning in the history of our apostle. In the evening, when alone, can we wonder if his heart was prone to sink within him? From what had taken place, and from the gloomy appearance of everything around him, the apostle never stood in greater need of the consolation and strength which the Master’s presence always gives. But who knew this so well, or could feel so deeply for the lonely prisoner as the Master Himself? And so He appears in richest grace to comfort and cheer the heart of His servant. It was *divinely timed* comfort. The Lord stood by him, as He had done at Corinth, and as He afterwards did on his voyage to Rome, “and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.” (Acts 18:9, 10; 23:11; 27:23, 24) A conspiracy of more than forty men **to assassinate Paul** having been discovered, and all their wicked schemes confounded, Claudius Lysias immediately summoned his centurions and soldiers, and gave strict orders to have Paul conveyed safely to Caesarea. The details of this matter are related by Luke with singular fulness. (Acts 23: 12-25)

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FELIX

As some of our readers may have observed, the *character* of God’s dealings with His servant somewhat changes here. It may be well to pause for a moment, and reverently inquire into the apparent causes of this change. And, as many have freely given their opinions on this difficult point, we will here quote a few lines from one who seems to give the mind of the Spirit.

“I believe, then, that the hand of God was in this journey of Paul’s; that in His sovereign wisdom He willed that His servant should undertake it, and also have blessing in it: but that the means employed to lead him into it according to that sovereign wisdom, was the apostle’s human affection for the people who were his kinsmen after the flesh; and that he was not led into it by the Holy Ghost acting on the part of Christ in the assembly. This attachment to his people, this human affection, met with that among the people which put it in its place. Humanly speaking, it was an amiable feeling; but it was not the power of the Holy Ghost founded on the death and resurrection of Christ. Here, there was no longer Jew nor Gentile... Paul’s affection was good in

itself, but as a spring of action it did not come up to the height of the work of the Spirit, who, on Christ's part, had sent him afar from Jerusalem to the Gentiles in order to reveal the assembly as His body united to Him in heaven.

“He was the messenger of the heavenly glory, which brought out the doctrine of the assembly composed of Jews and Gentiles, united without distinction in the one body of Christ, thus blotting out Judaism; but his love for his nation carried him, I repeat, into the very centre of hostile Judaism — Judaism enraged against the spiritual equality

“Nevertheless, the hand of God was doubtless in it. Paul individually, found his level.

“That which Paul said raises a tumult, and the chief captain takes him from among them. God has all things at His disposal. A nephew of Paul's, never mentioned elsewhere, hears of an ambush laid for him and warns him of it. Paul sends him to the chief captain, who expedites the departure of Paul under a guard to Caesarea. God watched over him, but all is on the level of human and providential ways. There is not the angel as in Peter's case, nor the earthquake as at Philippi. *We are sensibly on different ground.*”²⁵

The accusers of Paul were not long in finding their way to Caesarea. “And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul.” (Acts 24:1) In a short speech, full of flattery and insinuating art, Tertullus accuses Paul of sedition, heresy, and the profanation of the temple.

Felix then signified to Paul that he had an opportunity of answering for himself. And now, we may say, the apostle of the Gentiles is once more in his right place. However humiliating his circumstances, he is still God's messenger to the Gentiles, and God is with His beloved servant. The Jews were silent, and Paul, in his usual straightforward manner, met the charges.

Felix, it appears, knew a good deal about these things, and it is evident that a strong impression was made on his mind. Many years before this, Christianity had found its way into the Roman army at Caesarea (Acts 10), so that he probably knew something about it, and was convinced of the truth of Paul's statements, but he trifled with his convictions, and with his prisoner. He “deferred” further inquiry for the present, making some excuse about the coming of Lysias. Meanwhile however, he gave orders, that Paul should be treated with kindness and consideration, and that his friends should be allowed free access to him.

Not many days after this, Felix entered the audience chamber with his wife Drusilla, and sent for Paul. They were evidently curious to hear him discourse “concerning the faith of Christ.” But Paul was not the one to gratify

²⁵ *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, vol. 4, 90-101.

the curiosity of a Roman libertine, and a profligate Jewish princess. The faithful apostle, in preaching Christ, spoke plainly and boldly to the conscience of his hearers. He had now an opportunity in his bonds which he could otherwise scarcely have obtained. “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, **Felix trembled.**” And little wonder. If we are to believe the historians of his own day, Josephus and Tacitus, a more unprincipled or dissolute couple never sat before a preacher. But, though conscience-stricken, Felix remained impenitent. Fearful condition! “Go thy way,” said he, “for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” But that convenient season never came, though he frequently saw the apostle afterwards, and, we doubt not, gave him to understand that a bribe would procure his release. Little did the Roman governor think that his venal justice was to be recorded in the book of God, and handed down to all succeeding generations. His character is represented as mean, cruel, and dissolute; that in the indulgence of all kinds of wickedness he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave. “But after two years, Porcius Festus came into Felix' room; and Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.”

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE FESTUS AND AGRIPPA

Immediately after the arrival of Festus in the province he visited Jerusalem. There the leading Jews seized the opportunity to demand Paul's return. Their plea, doubtless, was that he should be tried again before the Sanhedrim, but their real purpose was to kill him on the way. Festus refused their petition. He invited them, however, to go down with him to Caesarea and accuse him there. The trial took place and resembles that before Felix. It is quite evident that Festus saw clearly enough, that Paul's real offence was connected with the religious opinions of the Jews, and that he had committed no offence against the law, but at the same time being desirous to ingratiate himself with the Jews, he asks Paul whether he would go to Jerusalem to be tried there. This was little better than a proposal to sacrifice him to Jewish hatred. Paul, being well aware of this, at once appealed to the Emperor — “**I appeal unto Caesar.**”

Festus was no doubt surprised at the dignity and independence of his prisoner. But it was his privilege as a Roman citizen, to have his cause transferred to the supreme tribunal of the Emperor at Rome. “Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.”

So far as the eye of man can see, this was Paul's only resource under the circumstances. But the hand and purpose of the Lord were in it. Paul must bear witness for Christ and the truth in Rome also. Jerusalem had rejected the testimony to the Gentiles; Rome too must have its share in rejecting the same testimony, and in becoming the prison of the witness. But in all this Paul is highly favoured of the Lord. His position resembles that of his blessed Master,

when He was given up to the Gentiles by the hatred of the Jews, only the Lord was perfect in it all, and He was in His true place before God. He came to the Jews — this was His mission: Paul was delivered *from* the Jews — such was the difference. Christ gave Himself up, as we read, “Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.” Part of Paul’s commission runs thus: — “Delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee.” But Paul *returned* to “the people” in the energy of his human affections, after he had been placed outside of them in the energy of the Holy Ghost. (Acts 26:17) Jesus had taken him out from both Jew and Gentile, to exercise a ministry that united the two in one body in Christ. As Paul himself says, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh.” In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Greek.

We now resume the history of the great apostle.

PAUL APPEARS BEFORE AGRIPPA AND BERNICE

It happened about this time that Agrippa, king of the Jews, and his sister Bernice, came to pay a complimentary visit to Festus. And as Festus knew not how to state Paul’s case to the Emperor, he took the opportunity of consulting Agrippa who was better informed than himself on the points in question. The Jewish prince, who must have known something of Christianity, and had no doubt heard of Paul himself, expressed a desire to hear him speak. Festus readily acceded to the request. “Tomorrow,” said he, “thou shalt hear him.”

The apostle is now to have the privilege of bearing the name of Jesus before the most dignified assembly he has ever addressed. Jewish kings, Roman governors, military officers, and the chief men of Caesarea assembled “with great pomp” to hear the prisoner give an account of himself to Agrippa. It was no mean audience, and it is perfectly clear that they regarded the prisoner as no mean person. Festus, having acknowledged the difficulty in which he found himself, referred the matter to the better knowledge of the Jewish king. Agrippa courteously signified to Paul that he was permitted to speak for himself. We have now come to **one of the most interesting moments** in the whole history of our apostle.

The dignity of his manner before his judges, though he stretched out a hand that was chained to a soldier, must have deeply impressed his audience. The depth of his humiliation only manifested more strikingly the moral elevation of his soul. He thought neither of his chain nor of his person. Perfectly happy in Christ, and burning with love to those around him, self and circumstances were completely forgotten. With a dignified deference to the position of those who surrounded him, he rose, in the honest declarations of a good conscience, infinitely above them all. He addresses himself to the conscience of his audience, with the boldness and uprightness of a man accustomed to walk with God, and to act for Him. The character and conduct of the governors are

thrown into painful contrast with the character and conduct of the apostle, and show us what the world is when unmasked by the Holy Ghost.

“I pass over in silence,” says one, “the worldly egotism which betrays itself in Lysias and Festus, by the assumption of all sorts of good qualities and good conduct — the mixture of awakened conscience and the absence of principle in the governors — the desire to please the Jews for their own importance, or to facilitate their government of a rebellious people. The position of Agrippa and all the details of the history have a remarkable stamp of truth, and present the various characters in so living a style that we seem to be in the scene described; we see the persons moving in it. This, moreover, strikingly characterises the writings of Luke.”

Chapter 26. Paul addresses king Agrippa as one well versed in the customs and questions prevailing amongst the Jews; and he so relates his miraculous conversion and his subsequent career as to act on the conscience of the king. By the clear and straight-forward narrative of the apostle, he was not far from being convinced; his conscience was awakened; but the world and his own passions stood in the way. Festus ridiculed. To him it was nothing more than wild enthusiasm — a rhapsody. He interrupted the apostle abruptly, and “said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.” The apostle’s reply was dignified and self-possessed, but intensely earnest and, with great wisdom and discernment, he appeals at last to Agrippa. “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.”

Then turning to the Jewish king, who sat beside Festus, he made this direct and solemn appeal to him

“King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.”

“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

For the moment, the king was carried away by the power of Paul’s address, and by the sharpened sting of his appeals. Then Paul made his reply — a reply which stands alone. It is characterised by godly zeal, christian courtesy, burning love for souls, and great personal joy in the Lord.

“And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”

With the expression of this noble wish, the conference closed. The meeting was dissolved. Agrippa had no desire to hear more. The appeals had been too pointed, too personal yet so mingled with dignity, affection, and solicitude, that he was overcome. Then “the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them.” After a brief consultation, Festus, Agrippa, and

their companions came to the conclusion that Paul was guilty of nothing worthy of death or even imprisonment. “This man,” said Agrippa, “might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.”

This was the Lord’s care of His beloved servant. He would have his innocence proved and acknowledged by his judges, and fully established before the world. This being accomplished, the king and his companions resume their places in the world and its gaieties, and Paul returns to his prison. But never was his heart more happy or more filled with the spirit of his Master than at that moment.

PAUL’S VOYAGE TO ROME

A.D. 60

Acts 27. The time was now come for Paul’s journey to Rome. No formal trial of the apostle had yet taken place. And, no doubt, wearied with the unrelenting opposition of the Jews — with two years’ imprisonment at Caesarea — with repeated examinations before the governors and Agrippa, he had claimed a trial before the imperial court. **Luke, the historian of the Acts, and Aristarchus of Thessalonica,** were favoured to accompany him. Paul was committed to the charge of a centurion named **Julius,** of the imperial band; an officer, who, upon all occasions, treated the apostle with the greatest kindness and consideration.

It was then “determined” that Paul should be sent along with “certain other prisoners,” **by sea to Italy.** “And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched,” says Luke, “meaning to sail by the coast of Asia. And the next day we touched at **Sidon.** And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.” Loosing from Sidon they were forced to sail under the lee of **Cyprus,** because the winds were contrary, and come to **Myra,** a city of Lycia. Here the centurion had his prisoners transferred to a ship of **Alexandria** on her voyage to Italy. In this vessel, after leaving Myra, “they sailed slowly many days,” the weather being unfavourable from the first. But running to the leeward of **Crete,** they safely reached “**the Fair Havens.**”

Winter was now near, and it became a serious question what course should be taken — whether they should remain at Fair Havens for the winter, or seek some better harbour.

Here we must pause for a moment and notice the wonderful position of our apostle in this serious consultation. As before Festus and Agrippa, he appears before the captain, the owner, the centurion, and the whole crew, as having the mind of God. He counsels, directs, and acts, as if he were really the master of the vessel, in place of being a prisoner in the custody of soldiers. He advised that they should remain where they were. He warned them that they would meet with violent weather if they ventured out to the open sea that

much injury would be done to the ship and cargo, and much risk of the lives of those on board. But the master and the owner of the ship, who had the greatest interest in her, were guided by circumstances and not by faith; they were willing to run the risk of seeking a more commodious harbour to winter in, and the centurion naturally deferred to their judgment. All were against the judgment of the man of faith — the man of God — the man who was speaking and acting for God. Even the circumstances in the scene around them seemed to favour the opinion of the sailors rather than that of the apostle. But nothing can falsify the judgment of faith. It must be true in spite of every circumstance.

It was therefore resolved by the majority that they should leave Fair Havens, and sail to **Port Phenice** as a more secure winter harbour. The wind changed just at this moment. Everything seemed to favour the sailors. “**The south wind: blew softly;**” so sanguine were they, Luke tells us, that they supposed their purpose was already accomplished. (Ver. 13) They accordingly weighed anchor and with a soft breeze from the south, the vessel, with her “two hundred threescore and sixteen souls” on board, left the port of Fair Havens. But scarcely had she rounded Cape Matala, a distance of only four or five miles, when a violent wind from the shore caught the vessel, and tossed her in such a manner that it was no longer possible for the helmsman to make her keep her course. And as Luke observes, “We let her drive,” that is, they were compelled to let her run before the wind.

But our chief concern here is with Paul as the man of faith. What must have been the thoughts and feelings now of his fellow-passengers? They had trusted to the wind, and they must now reap the whirlwind. The solemn counsels and warnings of faith had been rejected. Many, alas! heedless of the warning here recorded, and under the flattering wind of favourable circumstances, have launched on the great voyage of life, utterly regardless of the voice of faith. But like the fawning wind that betrayed the vessel from the harbour, all soon changed into a furious tempest on the troubled sea of life.

THE STORM IN THE SEA OF ADRIA

The Term “**Euroclydon**” given to this tempestuous wind indicates, we are told, a storm of the utmost violence. It was accompanied by the agitation and whirling motion of the clouds, and by great commotion in the sea, raising it in columns of spray. The sacred historian now proceeds to give an accurate account of what was done with the vessel in these perilous circumstances. Having run to the leeward of **Clauda**, they may have escaped for a little the violence of the tempest. This would give them an opportunity to make every preparation for weathering the storm.

The day after they left Clauda — the violence of the storm continuing — they began to lighten the ship by throwing overboard whatever could be spared. All hands seem to have been at work. “And we being exceedingly tossed with

a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship and the third day *we* cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.”

“His race performed, the sacred lamp of day
Now dipt in western clouds his parting ray;
His languid fires, half lost in ambient haze,
Refract along the dusk a crimson blaze:
Till deep emerged the sinking orb descends,
And cheerless night o’er heaven her reign extends
Sad evening’s hour, how different from the past!
No flaming pomp, no blushing glories cast
No ray of friendly light is seen around;
The moon and stars in hopeless shade are drown’d.”

Nothing could be more dreadful to ancient mariners than the continued overclouded sky, as they were accustomed to be guided by their observation of the heavenly bodies. It was at this moment of perplexity and despair that the apostle “stood forth” and raised his voice amidst the storm. And from his word of sympathy we learn, that all their other sufferings were aggravated by the difficulty of preparing food. “But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before **Caesar**: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.” (Verses 21-26)

THE SHIPWRECK

The shipwreck was not far distant. “When the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in **Adria** about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; and sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms.” Fourteen days and nights this heavy gale continued without abatement, during which time their sufferings must have been great beyond description.

At the close of the fourteenth day, “**about midnight**,” the sailors heard a sound which indicated that they were nearing land. The sound, no doubt, was the roar of the breakers on the unknown shore. No time was to be lost; so they immediately cast four anchors out of the stern, and anxiously wished for day. Here a natural but ungenerous attempt was made by the sailors to save their own lives. They lowered the boat with the professed purpose of laying

out anchors from the bow, but intending to desert the sinking ship. Paul, seeing this, and knowing their real design, immediately “said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, *ye* cannot be saved. Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.” Thus the divine counsel of the apostle was the means of saving all on board. “Except these abide in the ship, *ye* cannot be saved.” It is no longer the ship’s captain or the ship’s crew that are looked to for wisdom and safety. Every eye is turned to **Paul the prisoner** — the man of faith — the man who believes and acts according to the revelation of God. Circumstances often mislead when looked to for direction; the word of God is our only sure guide, whether in fair or in foul weather.

During the anxious interval which remained till the dawn of day, Paul had an opportunity of lifting up his voice to God, and for the encouragement of the whole company. What a scene of intensified interest it must have been! The night dark and stormy — the shattered vessel in danger of going down at her anchors, or of being dashed to pieces on the rocky shore. But there was one on board who was perfectly happy amidst it all. The state of the ship — the shallow water the alarming sound of the breakers, had no terror for him. He was happy in the Lord, and in full communion with His very thoughts and purposes. Such is the Christian’s place in the midst of every storm, though comparatively few rise to it; faith only can reach it. This was **Paul’s last exhortation** to the ship’s company.

“And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that *ye* have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all; and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat.” (Verses 33-36)

Their only hope now was to run the ship on shore and so escape to land. Though ignorant of the coast, “they discovered a certain creek with a shore,” or, a smooth beach; and determined to run the ship aground there. So they cast away the anchors, unloosed the rudder bands, hoisted the mainsail to the wind, and made for the shore. The ship thus driven, her bow stuck fast in the beach and remained unmoved, but the stern was broken to pieces by the violence of the waves.

Paul’s ship has now reached the shore; and once more the man of faith is the means of saving the lives of all the prisoners. The centurion greatly influenced by the words of Paul, and anxious at least for his safety, prevents the soldiers from killing the prisoners, and gave orders that those who could swim should cast themselves first into the sea and get to land; and that the rest should follow on such boards or broken pieces of the ship as were available.

“And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.” Their deliverance was as complete as Paul had predicted it would be.

PAUL AT MELITA — NOW MALTA

Acts 28. The inhabitants of the island received the shipwrecked strangers with no small kindness, and immediately lighted a fire to warm them. The sacred historian gives us a living picture of the whole scene. We see the persons described moving in it: the apostle gathering sticks for the fire — the viper fastening on his hand — the barbarians thinking him first a murderer, and then a god from the sting being harmless. **Publius**, the chief man of the island, lodged them courteously three days, and his father, who lay sick of a fever, was healed by Paul laying his hands on him and praying for him. The apostle was enabled to work many miracles during his stay on the island; and the whole company, for his sake, were loaded with many honours. We see God is with His beloved servant, and he exercises his accustomed power among the inhabitants. As the concluding part of Paul’s journey to Rome is so prosperous, that scarcely any incident in it is recorded, we will only notice it briefly.

After a three months' stay in Malta, the soldiers and their prisoners left in a ship of Alexandria for Italy. They touched at **Syracuse**, where they tarried three days: and at **Rhegium**, from which place they had a fair wind to **Puteoli**. Here they “found brethren,” and while they were spending a few days with them, enjoying the ministry of brotherly love, the news of the apostle’s arrival reached Rome. The Christians at once sent forth some of their number, who met Paul and his friends at **Appii Forum** and the **Three Taverns**. A beautiful instance and illustration of the fellowship of saints. What must have been the feelings of our apostle on this first introduction to the Christians from the **church at Rome!** His long cherished desire was at last accomplished; his heart was filled with praise; “He thanked God,” as Luke says, “and took courage.”

PAUL’S ARRIVAL AT ROME

Along the **Appian Road** most probably, Paul and his company travelled to Rome. On their arrival, “the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard²⁶: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.” Though he was not released from the constant annoyance of being chained to a soldier, every indulgence compatible with his position was allowed him.

Paul was now privileged “to preach the gospel to them that were at Rome also;” and proceeded without delay to act upon his divine rule — “to the Jew

²⁶ The wise and humane **BURRUS** was prefect of the praetorian guard when Julius arrived with his prisoners. He was a virtuous Roman and ever treated Paul with the greatest consideration and kindness. — Dr. Smith’s *Dictionary of Biography*.

first.” He sends for the chief of the Jews and explains to them his true position. He assures them that he had committed no offence against his nation, or the customs of the fathers, but that he was brought to Rome to answer certain charges made against him by the Jews in Palestine: and so unfounded were the charges, that even the Roman Governor was ready to set him free, but the Jews opposed his liberty. In fact it was, as he said, “for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.” His only crime has been his firm faith in the promises of God to Israel through the Messiah.

The **Roman Jews**, in reply, assured Paul that no report to his prejudice had reached Rome, and that they desired to hear from himself a statement of his faith; adding, that the Christians were everywhere spoken against. A day was therefore fixed for a meeting at his own private lodgings. At the appointed time many came, “to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.” But the Jews at Rome, as at Antioch and Jerusalem, were slow of heart to believe. “And some believed the things which were spoken and some believed not.” But how earnestly and unweariedly he laboured to win their hearts for Christ! From morning till evening he not only preached Christ, but sought to persuade them concerning Him. He sought, we may be sure, to persuade them concerning His Godhead and manhood — His perfect sacrifice — His resurrection, ascension, and glory. What a lesson and what a subject for the preacher in all ages! Persuading men concerning Jesus from morning till evening.

The condition of the Jews is now set before us for the last time. **The judgment pronounced by Esaias was about to fall** on them in all its withering power — a judgment under which they lie to this day — a judgment which shall continue until God interposes to give them repentance, and to deliver them by His grace to the glory of His own name. But in the meantime, “the salvation of God is sent **to the Gentiles**, and they will hear it,” and, as we know, blessed be His name, they have heard it, we ourselves being witnesses of it.²⁷

“And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him; preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

These are the **last words of the Acts**. The scene on which the curtain falls is most suggestive — the opposition of Jewish unbelief to the things which concerned their souls' salvation, suggestive alas! of what soon befell them. And here, too, ends the history of this precious servant of God, so far as it has been directly revealed. The voice of the Spirit of truth on this subject becomes silent. Our further knowledge of Paul's subsequent history must be gathered

²⁷ See [Introductory Lectures to the Acts](#), by W. Kelly.

almost exclusively from **his later Epistles**; and from these we learn more than mere history: they give us a blessed insight into the feelings conflicts, affections, and sympathies of the great apostle, and of the condition of the church of God generally, down to the period of his martyrdom.

THE BOOK OF THE ACTS TRANSITIONAL

But here we must pause and contemplate for a moment our apostle as a prisoner in the imperial city. The gospel had now been preached from Jerusalem to Rome. Great changes had taken place in the dispensational ways of God. The book of the Acts is *transitional* in its character. The Jews, we see, are now set aside, or rather they have set themselves aside by their rejection of that which God was setting up. The counsels of His grace towards them, no doubt, abide for ever sure; but in the meantime *they* are cast off and others come in and take the place of blessed relationship with God. Paul was a witness of God's grace to Israel; he was himself an Israelite, but also chosen of God to introduce something entirely new — **the Church, the body of Christ**, "Whereof I was made a minister... that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3: 7-9) This new thing set aside all distinction between Jew and Gentile, as sinners and in the *oneness* of this body. The hostility of the Jews to these truths never abated, as we have fully seen, and the results of this enmity we have also seen. The Jews disappear from the scene entirely; and the church becomes the vessel of God's testimony on the earth, and His habitation by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22) Individual Jews, of course, who believe in Jesus are blessed in connection with a heavenly Christ and the "*one body*;" but Israel for a time is left without God, and without present communication with Him. The Epistles to the Romans and to the Ephesians fully set forth this doctrine (especially Romans chapters 9, 10, 11). We now return to

PAUL'S OCCUPATION DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT

Though a prisoner, he was allowed the freest intercourse with his friends, and he was then surrounded by many of his oldest and most faithful companions. From the Epistles we learn that Luke, Timothy, Tychicus, Epaphras, Aristarchus, and others, were with the apostle at this time. Still, we must remember that he was, as a prisoner, chained to a soldier and exposed to the rude control of such. Owing to the long delay of his trial, he was in this condition for two years; during which time he preached the gospel and opened up the scriptures to the congregations which came to hear him; and wrote several epistles to churches in distant places.

Having fully and faithfully discharged the duty which he owed to the Jews, the favoured people of God, he addressed himself to the Gentiles, though not, of course, to the exclusion of the Jews. His door was open from morning till

night to all who would come and hear the great truths of Christianity. And in some respects he never had a better opportunity, for as he was under the protection of the Romans, the Jews were not allowed to molest him.

The effects of Paul's preaching through the Lord's blessing, were soon manifest. The Roman guards, the household of Caesar, and "all other places" were blessed through his means. "I would ye should understand, brethren," he writes to the Philippians, "that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace [or, **Caesar's court**, see margin], and in all other places." And again, the apostle says, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household." (Phil. 1:12, 13, 4:22) The blessing appears to have been first manifested in the praetorium, or amongst the praetorian guards. "My bonds in Christ are manifest in *all Caesar's court*" — the quarters of the guards and household troops. The gospel of the glory which Paul preached was heard by the whole camp. Even the kind prefect Burrhus, with his intimate friend Seneca, Nero's tutor, may have heard the gospel of the grace of God. Paul's courteous manners, and great abilities, both natural and acquired, were well fitted to attract both the statesman and the philosopher. His being there two whole years gave them many opportunities.

With nearly the whole of the guards, we may say, he must have been personally acquainted. With every change of guard the door for the gospel opened wider and wider. Being constantly chained to one of the soldiers as his keeper, and having the guard duly relieved, he thus became acquainted with many, and with what love and earnestness and burning eloquence, he must have spoken to them of Jesus and of their need of Him! But we must wait till the morning of the first resurrection to see the results of Paul's preaching there. the day will declare it, and God shall have all the glory.

The apostle gives us also to know that the gospel had penetrated into the palace itself. There were saints in Caesar's household. Christianity was planted within the imperial walls; "and in **all other places.**" Yes, in "all other places," says the sacred historian. Not only was Paul thus labouring within the imperial precincts, but his companions whom he styles his "fellow-labourers," were no doubt preaching the gospel in "all other places," in and around the imperial city; so that the success of the gospel must be ascribed to the efforts of others, as well as to the unwearied exertions of the great apostle in his captivity.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE, ONESIMUS

But of all the converts whom the Lord gave to the apostle in his bonds, none of them seems to have so entirely won his heart as the poor runaway slave, Onesimus. Beautiful picture of the strength, the humility, and the tenderness of divine love in the heart, which works by the Spirit, and sweetly shines in all the details of individual life! The apostle's success in the imperial palace

weakens not his interest in a young disciple from the lowest condition of society. No portion of the community were more depraved than the slaves; but what must have been the associates of a fugitive slave in that profligate city? Yet from these lowest depths Onesimus is drawn forth by the unseen hand of eternal love. He crosses the path of the apostle, hears him preach the gospel, is converted, devotes himself at once to the Lord and to His service, and finds in Paul a friend and brother, as well as a leader and teacher. And now shine forth the virtues and the value of Christianity; and the sweetest applications of the grace of God to a poor, friendless, destitute, fugitive slave.

What is Christianity? we may inquire, and whence its origin, in the view of such a new thing in Rome — in the world? Was it at the feet of Gamaliel that Paul so learnt to love? No, my reader, but at the feet of Jesus. Would to God that the eloquent historian of “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” had entered into this scene, and learnt to value, in place of scornfully ridiculing, divine Christianity! If we think for a moment of the apostle’s labours at this time — of his age — of his infirmities — of his circumstances (to say nothing of the lofty subjects, and the immense foundation truths, that were then occupying his mind); we may well admire the grace that could enter into every detail of the relationships of master and slave, and that with such delicate consideration of every claim. The letter he sent with Onesimus to his injured master Philemon, is surely the most touching ever written. Looking at it simply as such, we are at a loss whether most to admire the warmth and earnestness of his affections, the delicacy and justness of his thoughts, or the sublime dignity which pervades the whole epistle.

We now refer for a moment to the

EPISTLES THAT WERE WRITTEN DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT

There can be no reasonable doubt, that **The Epistles to Philemon**, to the **Colossians**, to **The Ephesians**, and to the **Philippians** were written towards the latter part of Paul’s imprisonment at Rome. He refers to his “bonds” in them all, and repeatedly to the expectation of his release. (Compare Philemon 22; Col. 4:18; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 25; 2:24; 4:22) Besides he must have been long enough at Rome for the news of his imprisonment to have reached his affectionate Philippians, and for them to have sent him relief.

The first three are supposed to have been written some time before that to the Philippians. An immediate issue of his cause is more distinctly spoken of in his Epistle to them. “Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.” (Phil. 2:23, 24) The first three may have been written about the spring of A.D. 62, and sent by Tychicus and Onesimus; the last, in the autumn and sent by Epaphroditus.

The Epistle to the **Hebrews** is also supposed by some to have been written about the same time, and every just consideration leads to the conclusion that Paul was the writer. The expression at the close of the epistle, “they of Italy salute you,” seems decisive as to where the writer was when he wrote it. And the following passages seem decisive as to the time: “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty: with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.” Compare this with what Paul wrote to the Philippians — “I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you... so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.” We can scarcely doubt that these passages were written by the same pen about the same time, and that they refer to the same intended movements. But we do not press this point. One thing, however, is evident — that the epistle was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, as the temple was standing, and the temple worship going on undisturbed. Compare Heb. 8:4; 9:25; 10:11; 13: 10-13.

PAUL’S ACQUITTAL AND RELEASE

After fully four years' imprisonment, partly in Judea and partly at Rome, the apostle is once more at liberty. But we have no particulars as to the character of his trial, or the ground of his acquittal. The sacred historian tells us that he dwelt two whole years in his own hired house; but he does not say what followed at the close of that period. Was it followed by the apostle's condemnation and death, or by his acquittal and liberation? This is the question, and the only certain answer to this question must be gathered chiefly from the **Pastoral Epistles**. The First to Timothy and that to Titus appear to have been written about the same time; and the Second to Timothy somewhat later.

It is now admitted, we believe, by nearly all who are competent to decide on such a question, that Paul was acquitted, and that he spent some years in travelling, at perfect liberty, before he was again imprisoned and condemned. And though it is difficult to trace the footsteps of the apostle during that period, still we may draw certain conclusions from his letters without encroaching on the domain of conjecture. Most likely he travelled rapidly and visited many places. During the lengthened period of his imprisonment, much mischief had been done by his enemies in the churches which he had been the means of planting. They required his presence, his counsel, and his encouragement. And from what we know of his energy and zeal, we are well assured that no labour would be spared in visiting them.

PAUL’S DEPARTURE FROM ITALY

1. When writing to the Romans, before his imprisonment, Paul expressed his intention of passing through Rome into **Spain**. “Whensoever I take my journey into **Spain**,” he says, “I will come to you.” Again, “When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you

into *Spain*.” (Rom. 15:24, 28) Some have thought that he did go to Spain immediately after his release. The principal evidence adduced in favour of this hypothesis is supplied by Clement, a fellow-labourer, mentioned in Philippians 4:3, said to be afterwards Bishop of Rome. The writer speaks of Paul as having preached the gospel in *the east and in the west*: — that he instructed *the whole world* (meaning, no doubt, the Roman Empire); and that he had gone to *the extremity of the west*, meaning *Spain*. As Clement was Paul’s own disciple and fellow-labourer, his testimony is worthy of our respect; still it is not scripture, and therefore not in itself conclusive.

2. From Paul’s more recent letters, he seems to have **altered his plans**, and to have given up the idea of going to *Spain*, at least for a time. This we gather chiefly from the Epistles to Philemon and to the Philippians. To the former he writes, “But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.” (Ver. 22) He here gives Philemon to expect that he may soon be with him in person. To the Philippians he writes, and speaking of Timothy he adds, “Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.” Again, “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state.” (Phil. 2:19, 23, 24) The intended movements of the apostle and his beloved Timothy seem quite clear from these passages. It was evidently the purpose of the apostle to dispatch Timothy to Philippi as soon as the trial was over, and to remain in Italy himself until Timothy returned with the report of their state.

3. It may reasonably be expected that Paul fulfilled the intention which he so lately expressed, and that he visited the churches in **Asia Minor**, some of which as yet had not seen his face in the flesh. Having accomplished the objects of his mission to Asia Minor, some have thought that then he may have undertaken his long-meditated journey into *Spain*; but of this we have no reliable information, and mere conjecture is of no value.

4. Another theory is, that he went straight from Italy to Judea, and thence to Antioch, Asia Minor, and Greece. This scheme is founded chiefly on Hebrews 13:23, 24. “Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you... They of Italy salute you.” It is also supposed that, while he was waiting at Puteoli for embarkation, immediately on the return of Timothy, tidings reached the apostle that a great persecution had broken out against the Christians in Jerusalem. This sad intelligence so filled the heart of Paul with sorrow, that he wrote at once his famous letter to them — **The Epistle To The Hebrews**. Shortly after this Timothy arrived, and Paul and his companions sailed from Judea.²⁸

²⁸ For particulars of the persecution referred to, see Josephus, Ant. 20, 9, 1.

THE PLACES VISITED BY PAUL DURING HIS LIBERTY

Having stated these different theories for the reader's examination we will now notice the places mentioned in the Epistles as visited by Paul.

1. At some time after leaving Rome, Paul and his companions must have visited **Asia Minor and Greece**. "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine." (1 Tim. 1:3) Feeling, it may be, somewhat anxious about his son Timothy, and the weight of the responsibilities of his position at Ephesus, he sends him a letter of encouragement, comfort, and authority from Macedonia — **The First Epistle To Timothy**.

2. Some time after this, Paul visited the **island of Crete** in company with Titus, and left him there. He also very soon after sent him a letter of instruction and authority, **The Epistle to Titus**. Timothy and Titus may be considered as delegates or representatives of the apostle. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Titus 1:5.

3. Paul was intending to spend the winter at a place called **Nicopolis**. "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis; for I have determined there to winter." (Titus 3:12)

4. He visited **Troas, Corinth, and Miletum**. "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments... Erastus abode at Corinth; but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." (2 Tim. 4:13, 20)

PAUL'S SECOND IMPRISONMENT AT ROME

It is supposed by some that the apostle was arrested at Nicopolis (where he intended to spend the winter) and thence carried a prisoner to Rome. By others it is supposed that, after wintering at Nicopolis, and visiting the places above mentioned, he returned to Rome in a state of personal liberty, but was arrested during the Neronian persecution and thrown into prison.

The precise charge now made against the apostle, and for which he was arrested, we have no means of ascertaining. It may have been simply on the charge of being a Christian. The **general persecution** against the Christians was now raging with the utmost severity. It was no longer about certain questions of the law, and under the mild and humane prefect Burrhus; but he was now treated as an evil-doer — as a common criminal: "wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer even unto bonds" — and very different from the bonds of his first imprisonment, when he dwelt in his own hired house.

Alexander — of Ephesus, we believe — had evidently something to do with his arrest. He was either one of his accusers, or, at least, a witness against

him. "Alexander the coppersmith," he writes to Timothy, "did me much evil" ["exhibited much evil-mindedness towards me."] Ten years before this, he had stood forward as the open antagonist of the apostle in Ephesus. (Acts 19) He may now have sought his revenge by laying information against the apostle before the prefect. That it was the same Alexander of Ephesus seems clear from the charge to Timothy; "of whom be thou ware also." (2 Tim. 4:14, 15)

During the apostle's first and lengthened imprisonment, he was surrounded by many of his oldest and most valued companions, whom he styles "fellow-labourers and fellow-prisoners." By means of these, his messengers, though chained to a single spot himself, he kept up a constant intercourse with his friends throughout the empire, and with Gentile churches which had not seen his face in the flesh. But his **second imprisonment** was a perfect contrast to all this. He had parted from all his ordinary companions. Erastus abode at Corinth; Trophimus had been left at Miletum sick, Titus had gone to Dalmatia; Crescens to Galatia, Tychicus had been dispatched to Ephesus; and the lukewarm Demas had forsaken him, "having loved this present world."

The apostle was now almost entirely alone. "Only Luke is with me," he says. But the Lord thought of His deserted and solitary servant. A bright beam, as from the fountain of love shines amidst the darkness and dreariness of his prison. There was one faithful amidst the general defection, and one who was not ashamed of the apostle's chain. How peculiarly sweet and refreshing to the heart of the apostle must the ministry of **Onesiphorus** have been at this time! It can never be forgotten. Onesiphorus and his house — which Paul links with himself — shall be held in everlasting remembrance, and shall reap the fruit of his courage and devotedness to the apostle for ever and for ever. "I was in prison, and ye came unto me." (Matt. 25: 31-46)

Concerning the circumstances of Paul's trial we have no certain information. Most probably in the spring of A.D. 66 or 67 Nero took his seat on the tribunal, surrounded by his jurors, and the imperial guard; and Paul was brought into the court. We have reason to believe that the large space was filled with a promiscuous multitude of Jews and Gentiles. The apostle stood once more before the world. He had again the opportunity of proclaiming to all nations that for which he had been made a prisoner — "That all the Gentiles might hear." Emperors and senators, princes and nobles, and all the great ones of the earth, must hear the glorious gospel of the grace of God. All that the enemy had done becomes a testimony to the name of Jesus. Those who were otherwise inaccessible hear the gospel preached with power from on high.

Fain would we dwell on this wonderful scene for a few moments. Never before had there been such a witness, and such a testimony, in Nero's judgment-hall. The wisdom of God in turning all the efforts of the enemy into such a testimony is most profound; while His love and grace in the gospel shine ineffable and alike to all classes. The apostle himself commands our

devout admiration. Though at this moment his heart was broken by the unfaithfulness of the church, he stood forth strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Though he had been forsaken by men, the Lord stood by him and strengthened him. He boldly confronted his enemies, pleading in his own cause and the cause of the gospel. He had an opportunity to speak of Jesus, of His death and resurrection, so that the heathen multitude might hear the gospel. His age, his infirmities, his venerable form, his fettered arm, would all tend to deepen the impression of his manly and straightforward eloquence. But, happily, we have an account from his own pen of the first hearing of his defence. He writes thus to Timotheus immediately after: “At my first answer [when I was heard in my defence] no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and *that all the Gentiles might hear*: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” (2 Tim 4:16, 17)

“Look now, and see Christ’s chosen saint
In triumph wear his Christ-like chain;
No fear lest he should swerve or faint:
His life is Christ, his death is gain.”

THE MARTYRDOM OF PAUL

Although we have no record of the second stage of his trial, we have reason to believe that it soon followed the first, and that it ended in his condemnation and death. But **The Second Epistle to Timothy** is the divine record of what was passing in his deeply exercised mind at this solemn moment. His deep concern for the truth and church of God; his pathetic tenderness for the saints, and especially for his beloved son Timothy; his triumphant hope in the immediate prospect of martyrdom, can only be told in his own words. “I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” (2 Tim. 4: 6-8)

The tribunal of Nero here fades from his sight. Death in its most violent form has no terror for him. Christ in glory is the object of his eye and of his heart — the source of his joy and of his strength. His work was finished; and the toils of his love were ended. Though a prisoner and poor — though aged and rejected — he was rich in God, he possessed Christ, and in Him all things. The Jesus whom he had seen in glory at the commencement of his course, and who had brought him into all the trials and labours of the gospel, was now his possession and his crown. The unrighteous tribunal of Nero, and the blood-stained sword of the executioner, were to Paul but as the messengers of peace, who had come to close his long and weary path, and to introduce him into the presence of Jesus in glory. The time was now come for the Jesus that loved

him to take him to Himself. He had fought the good fight of the gospel to the end; he had finished his course, it only remained for him to be crowned, when the Lord, the righteous Judge, appears in glory.

“In all things more than conquerors
Through Him that loved us —
We know that neither death nor life
Nor angels, rulers, powers,
Nor present things, nor things to come
Nor even height, nor depth
Nor any other creature-thing
Above, below, around
Can part us from the love of God
In Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We have the concurrent testimony of antiquity that Paul suffered martyrdom during the Neronian persecution, and most probably in A.D. 67. **As a Roman citizen, he was beheaded** in place of being scourged and crucified or exposed to the frightful tortures then invented for the Christians. Like his Master he suffered “without the gate.” There is a spot on the Ostian Road, about two miles beyond the city walls, where it is supposed his martyrdom took place. There the last act of human cruelty was executed, and the great apostle was “*absent from the body, and present with the Lord.*” His fervent and happy spirit was released from his feeble and suffering body; and the long cherished desire of his heart was fulfilled — “to *depart and to be with Christ which is far better.*”

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF PAUL'S LIFE

ABOUT A.D.

36. — Conversion of Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9).

36-39. — At Damascus — preaches in the synagogue — goes into Arabia — returns to Damascus — flight from Damascus. His **First Visit** to Jerusalem, three years after his conversion. Thence to Tarsus (Acts 9: 23-26; Gal. 1:18).

39, 40. — Rest of the Jewish Churches (Acts 9:31).

40-43. — Paul preaches the Gospel in Syria and Cilicia (Gal. 1:21). A period of uncertain length. During this time he probably undergoes the chief part of the perils and sufferings which he recounts to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 11). He is brought from Tarsus to Antioch by Barnabas; and stays there a year before the famine (Acts 11:26).

44. — Paul's **Second Visit** to Jerusalem, with the collection (Acts 11:30).

45. — Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 12:25).

46-49. — Paul's **First Missionary Journey** with Barnabas — goes to Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and back through the same places to Antioch. They remain a long time in Antioch. Dissension and disputation about circumcision (Acts 13; 14; 15:1, 2).

50. — Paul's **Third Visit** to Jerusalem with Barnabas, fourteen years after his conversion (Gal. 2.1). They attend the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15). Return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch, with Judas and Silas (Acts 15: 32-35).

51. — Paul's **Second Missionary Journey** with Silas and Timothy. He goes from Antioch to Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, Lystra, Phrygia, Galatia, Troas. Luke joins the apostolic band (Acts 16:10).

52. — Entrance of the Gospel into Europe (Acts 16: 11-13). Paul visits Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth. Spends a year and six months at Corinth (Acts 18:11). First Epistle to the Thessalonians written.

53. — Second Epistle to the Thessalonians written. Paul leaves Corinth and sails to Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19).

54. — Paul's **Fourth Visit** to Jerusalem at the feast. Returns to Antioch.

54-56. — Paul's **Third Missionary Journey**. He departs from Antioch — visits Galatia, Phrygia and reaches Ephesus, where he stays two years and three months. Here Paul separates the disciples from the Jewish synagogue (Acts 19:8, 10). Epistle to the Galatians written.

57. — (*Spring*) First Epistle to the Corinthians written. The tumult at Ephesus — Paul leaves for Macedonia (Acts 19:23; 20:1). [*Autumn.*] Second Epistle to the Corinthians written (2 Cor. 1:8 2:13, 14, 7:5, 8:1, 9:1). Paul visits Illyricum — goes to Corinth — winters there (Rom. 15:19; 1 Cor. 16:6).

58. — [*Spring.*] The Epistle to the Romans written (Rom. 15: 25-28; 16: 21-23; Acts 20:4). Paul leaves Corinth — passes through Macedonia — sails from Philippi —

preaches at Troas — addresses the elders at Miletus — visits Tyre and Caesarea (Acts 20; 21: 1-14).

58-60. — Paul's **Fifth Visit** to Jerusalem before Pentecost. He is arrested in the Temple — brought before Ananias and the Sanhedrim — sent by Lysias to Caesarea, where he is kept in bonds two years.

60. — Paul heard by Felix and Festus. He appeals unto Caesar — preaches before Agrippa Bernice, and the men of Caesarea. [*Autumn*]. Paul sails for Italy. [*Winter*]. Shipwrecked at Malta (Acts 27).

61. — [*Spring*]. Arrives at Rome — dwells two years in his own hired house.

62. — [*Spring*]. Epistles to Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians written. [*Autumn*]. Epistle to the Philippians written.

63. — [*Spring*]. Paul acquitted and released. Epistle to the Hebrews written. Paul takes another journey, intending to visit Asia Minor and Greece (Philemon 22; Phil. 2:24).

64. — Visits Crete and leaves Titus there — exhorts Timothy to abide at Ephesus. First Epistle to Timothy written. Epistle to Titus written.

64-67. — Intends to winter at Nicopolis (Titus 3:12). Visits Troas, Corinth, Miletum (2 Tim. 4: 13-20). Paul arrested and sent to Rome. Deserted and solitary — having only Luke, of his old associates, with him. Second Epistle to Timothy written, probably not long before his death. These journeys and events are generally supposed to cover a period of about three years.

67. — Paul's martyrdom.

SHORT PAPERS ON CHURCH HISTORY

CHAPTER 7

THE BURNING OF ROME

As our two great apostles **Peter** and **Paul** suffered martyrdom during the **First** imperial persecution, it may be interesting to many of our readers to know something of the particulars which led to this cruel edict.

But here, however reluctantly, we must turn from the sure word of God to the uncertain writings of men. We pass, just at this point, from the firm and solid ground of inspiration to the insecure footing of Roman historians and ecclesiastical history. Nevertheless, *all* historians, both ancient and modern, pagan and christian, are agreed as to the main facts of the burning of Rome, and the persecution of the Christians.

In the month of July A.D. 64 a great fire broke out in the Circus, which continued to spread until it laid in ruins all the ancient grandeur of the imperial city. The flames extended with great rapidity, and Rome being a city of long narrow streets, and of hills and valleys, the fire gathered force from the winds, and soon became a general conflagration. In a short time the whole city seemed wrapped in one sheet of burning flame.

Tacitus, a Roman historian of that day, and considered one of the most accurate of his time, tells us: — “Of the fourteen quarters into which Rome was divided four only were left entire, three were reduced to ashes, and the remaining seven presented nothing better than a heap of shattered houses half in ruins.” The fire raged furiously for six days and seven nights. Palaces, temples, monuments, the mansions of the rich, and the dwellings of the poor perished in this fatal fire. But these were nothing compared with the sufferings of the inhabitants. The infirmities of age, the weakness of the young, the helplessness of the sick, the wild screams and lamentations of women, added to the miseries of this dreadful scene. Some endeavoured to provide for themselves, others to save their friends, but no place of safety could be found. Which way to turn, or what way to do, no one could tell; the fire raged on every side, so that numbers fell prostrate in the street, embraced a voluntary death, and perished in the flames.

The important question, as to how the fire originated, was now discussed everywhere. That the city was set on fire by incendiaries, and by the orders of Nero himself, nearly all believed. It was certain that a number of men were seen extending instead of extinguishing the flames; and they boldly affirmed that they had authority for doing so. It was also generally reported that, while Rome was in a blaze, the inhuman monster Nero stood on a tower where he

could watch its progress, and amused himself by singing the fall of Troy to his favourite guitar.

Many of our readers will no doubt wonder what object he could have in burning down the greater part of Rome? His object we believe was that he might rebuild the city on a scale of greater magnificence, and call it by his own name. And this he attempted immediately in the grandest way. But everything he did failed to restore him to popular favour, or remove the infamous charge of having set the city on fire. And when all hope was gone of propitiating either the people or the gods, he fell upon the plan of shifting the imputation from himself to others. He knew enough of the unpopularity of the Christians, both with the Jews and the heathen, to fix on them as his sin-bearers. A rumour was soon spread that the incendiaries had been discovered, and that the Christians were the criminals. Numbers were immediately arrested that they might be brought to condign punishment, and satisfy the popular indignation. And now we arrive at

THE FIRST PERSECUTION UNDER THE EMPERORS

But here we may pause for a moment, and contemplate the progress of Christianity, and the state of the **church in Rome** at this time. At a very early period, and without the aid of any apostle, Christianity had found its way to Rome. It was no doubt first carried thither by some who had been converted under Peter's preaching on the day of Pentecost. Amongst his hearers we have expressly mentioned "strangers of Rome, Jews, and proselytes." And Paul, in his Epistle to that church, thanks God that their "faith was spoken of throughout the whole world." And in his salutations he speaks of "Andronicus and Junia," his kinsmen and fellow-prisoners, who were chief men among the apostles and whose conversion was of an earlier date than his own. But great wonders had been wrought by the gospel in the course of thirty years. Christians had become a marked, a separate, a peculiar people. They were now known as perfectly distinct from the Jews, and bitterly disclaimed by them.

The labours of Paul and his companions, during the two years of his imprisonment, were no doubt blessed of the Lord to the conversion of great numbers. So that the Christians were by this time no secret or inconsiderable community, but were known to embrace in their numbers both Jews and Gentiles of all ranks and conditions, from the imperial household to the runaway slave. But their present suffering, as we have seen, was not for their Christianity. They were really sacrificed by Nero to appease the popular fury of the people, and to reconcile their offended deities.

This was the **first legal persecution** of the Christians; and in some of its features it stands alone in the annals of human barbarity. Inventive cruelty sought out new ways of torture to satiate the blood-thirsty Nero — the most ruthless Emperor that ever reigned. The gentle, peaceful, unoffending

followers of the Lord Jesus were sewn in the skins of wild beasts, and torn by dogs; others were wrapped in a kind of dress smeared with wax, with pitch, and other combustible matter, with a stake under the chin to keep them upright, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights in the public gardens of popular amusements. Nero lent his own gardens for these exhibitions, and gave entertainments for the people. He took an active part in the games himself; sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the awful spectacle from his chariot. But, accustomed as these people were to public executions and gladiatorial shows, they were moved to pity by the unexampled cruelties inflicted on the Christians. They began to see that the Christians suffered, not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of a monster. But fearful as their death was, it was soon over, and to them, no doubt, the happiest moment of their existence. Long, long before the lights were quenched in Nero's garden, the martyrs had found their home and rest above — in the blooming garden of God's eternal delights. This precious truth we learn from what the Saviour said to the penitent thief on the cross — "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23)

Although historians are not agreed either as to the extent or the duration of this terrible persecution, there is too good reason to believe that it spread **throughout the empire**, and lasted till the end of the tyrant's life. He died by his own hand in utter wretchedness and despair, in A.D. 68, about four years after the burning of Rome, and one year after the martyrdom of **Peter** and **Paul**. Towards the end of his reign the Christians were required, under the heaviest penalties, even that of death, to offer sacrifices to the emperor and to the heathen gods. While such edicts were in force the persecution must have continued.

After the death of Nero the persecution ceased, and the followers of Jesus enjoyed comparative peace until the reign of Domitian, an emperor little behind Nero in wickedness. But meanwhile we must turn aside for a moment and notice the accomplishment of the Lord's most solemn warnings, in

THE DOWNFALL OF JERUSALEM

A.D. 70

The dispersion of the Jews, and the total destruction of their city and temple, are the next events of consideration in the remainder of the first century, though, strictly speaking, that fearful catastrophe is no part of church history; it belongs to the history of the Jews. But as it was a literal fulfilment of the Saviour's prophecy, and immediately affected those who were Christians, it deserves a place in our history.

The disciples, before the death and resurrection of Christ were strongly Jewish in all their thoughts and associations. They connected the Messiah and the temple together. Their thought was that He should deliver them from the

power of the Romans, and that all the prophecies about the land, the tribes, the city and the temple would be accomplished. But the Jews rejected the Messiah Himself, and, consequently, all their own hopes and promises in Him. Most significant and weighty are the opening words of Matthew 24, "And Jesus went out and departed from the temple." It was now empty indeed in the sight of God. All that gave it value to Him was gone. "Behold *your* house is left unto you desolate." It was now ripe for destruction.

"And his disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple." They were still occupied with the outward greatness and glory of these things. "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you *There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*" These words were literally accomplished by the Romans about forty years after they were spoken, and in the very way that the Lord predicted. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." (Luke 19:43, 44)

After the Romans had experienced many disappointments and defeats in attempting to make a breach in the walls, through **the desperate resistance** of the insurgent Jews, even until little hope was left of taking the city, Titus summoned a council of war. Three plans were discussed: to storm the city immediately, to repair the works and rebuild the engines; or to blockade and starve the city to surrender. The last was preferred, and the whole army was set to work "to cast a trench" around the city. But the siege was long and difficult. It lasted from the spring till September. And during all that time, the most unexampled miseries of every kind were experienced by the besieged. But at last the end came, when both the city and the temple were in the hands of the Romans. Titus was anxious to save the magnificent temple and its treasures. But, contrary to his orders, a soldier, mounting on the shoulders of one of his comrades threw a blazing brand into a small gilded door in the outer building or porch. The flames sprang up at once. Titus, observing this, rushed to the spot with the utmost speed; he shouted, he made signs to his soldiers to quench the fire; but his voice was drowned, and his signs unnoticed in the fearful confusion. The splendour of the interior filled him with wonder. And as the flames had not yet reached the holy place, he made a last effort to save it, and exhorted the soldiers to stay the conflagration; but it was too late. Blazing brands were flying in all directions, and the fierce excitement of battle, with the insatiable hope of plunder had reached its highest pitch. Titus little knew that a greater than he had said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The word of the Lord, not the commands of Titus, must be obeyed. The whole was thoroughly levelled, and razed to the foundations, according to the word of the Lord.

For nearly every particular of this terrible siege, we are indebted to **Josephus**, who was in the Roman camp, and near the person of Titus at the time. He acted as interpreter when terms were talked of between Titus and the insurgents. The walls and bulwarks of Zion seemed impregnable to the Roman, and he felt most anxious to come to terms of peace; but the Jews rejected every proposal, and the Romans at length triumphed. On entering the city, Josephus tells us, Titus was struck with wonder at its strength, indeed when he contemplated the solid altitude of the towers, the magnitude of the several stones, and the accuracy of their joinings, and saw how great was their breadth, how vast their height, "Surely," he exclaimed, "we fought with God on our side; and God it was who brought the Jews down from these bulwarks, for what could human hands or engines avail against these towers?" Such were the confessions of the heathen general. It certainly was the most terrible siege that the whole history of the world records.

The accounts given by Josephus of the sufferings of the Jews during the siege are too awful to be transferred to our pages. The numbers that perished under Vespasian in the country, and under Titus in the city, from A.D. 67-70, by famine, internal factions, and the Roman sword, were one million three hundred and fifty thousand four hundred and sixty, besides one hundred thousand sold into slavery.²⁹ Such alas! alas! were the awful consequences of disbelieving and disregarding the solemn, earnest, and affectionate entreaties of their own Messiah. Need we wonder at the Redeemer's tears, shed over the infatuated city? And need we wonder at the preacher's tears now, as he appeals to infatuated sinners, in view of coming and eternal judgments? Surely the wonder is that so few tears are shed over thoughtless, careless, perishing sinners. Oh, for hearts to feel as the Saviour felt and eyes to weep like His!

The Christians, with whom we have more especially to do, remembering the Lord's warning, left Jerusalem in a body before the siege was formed. They journeyed to Pella, a village beyond the Jordan, where they remained till Hadrian permitted them to return to the ruins of their ancient city. And this brings us to **The Close of the First Century**.

During the milder reigns of **Vespasian** and his son **Titus** the number of Christians must have increased exceedingly. This we learn, not from any direct account that we have of their prosperity, but from incidental circumstances that prove it, and which we shall meet with immediately.

THE CRUEL REIGN OF DOMITIAN

Domitian, the younger brother of Titus, ascended the throne in A.D. 81. But he was of a temper totally different from his father and brother. *They* tolerated the Christians *he* persecuted them. His character was cowardly, suspicious and cruel. He raised a persecution against the Christians because of

²⁹ See Dean Milman's *History of the Jews*, vol. 2, book 16, page 380.

some vague and superstitious fear that he entertained of the appearance of a person born in Judea of the family of David, who was to obtain the empire of the world. But neither did he spare Romans of the most illustrious birth and station who had embraced Christianity. Some were martyred on the spot, others were banished to be martyred in their exile. His own niece, Domitilla, and his cousin Flavius Clemens, to whom she had been given in marriage were the victims of his cruelty for having embraced the gospel of Christ. Thus we see that Christianity, by the power of God, in spite of armies and emperors, fire and sword, was spreading, not only amongst the middle and lower, but also amongst the higher classes.

“Domitian,” says Eusebius, the father of ecclesiastical history, “having exercised his cruelty against many, and unjustly slain no small number of noble and illustrious men at Rome, and having, without cause, punished vast numbers of honourable men with exile and the confiscation of their property, at length established himself as the successor of Nero in his hatred and hostility to God.” He also followed Nero in deifying himself. He commanded his own statue to be worshipped as a god, revived the law of treason, and put in fearful force its terrible provisions: under these circumstances, surrounded as he was with spies and informers what must this *second* persecution of the Christians have been!³⁰

But the end of this weak, vain, and despicable tyrant drew near. He was in the habit of writing on a roll the names of those persons whom he designed to put to death, keeping it carefully in his own possession. And in order to throw such off their guard, he treated them with the most flattering attention. But this fatal roll was one day taken from under a cushion on which he was reclining asleep, by a child who was playing in the apartment, and who carried it to the Empress. She was struck with astonishment and alarm at finding her own name on the dark list, together with the names of others apparently high in his favour. To such the Empress communicated the knowledge of their danger, and notwithstanding all the precaution that cowardice and cunning could suggest, he was dispatched by two officers of his own household.

THE SHORT BUT PEACEFUL REIGN OF NERVA

On the very day of Domitian’s death, Nerva was chosen by the Senate to be Emperor, September 18th, A.D. 96. He was a man of blameless reputation. The character of his reign was most favourable to the peace and prosperity of the church of God. The Christians who had been banished by Domitian were recalled, and recovered their confiscated property. The Apostle John returned from his banishment in the isle of Patmos, and resumed his place of service among the churches in Asia. He survived till the reign of Trajan, when, at the advanced age of about 100 years, he fell asleep in Jesus.

³⁰ See Roman History, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 19, page 406.

Nerva commenced his reign by redressing grievances, repealing iniquitous statutes, enacting good laws, and dispensing favours with great liberality. But feeling unequal to the duties of his position, he adopted Trajan as his colleague and successor to the empire, and died in 98.

THE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS DURING THE REIGN OF TRAJAN

A.D. 98-117

As the outward history of the church was then affected by the will of one man, it will therefore be necessary to notice, however briefly, the disposition or ruling passion of the reigning prince. Thus it was that the condition of the Christians everywhere depended to a great extent, on him who was master of the Roman world, and in a certain sense of the whole world. Still, God was and is over all.

Trajan was an emperor of great renown. Perhaps none more so ever sat on the throne of the Caesars. The Roman *earth* or world, it is said, reached its widest limits by his victories. He caused the terror of the Roman arms and the Roman discipline to be felt on the frontier as none before him had done. He was thus a great general and a military sovereign; and being possessed of a large and vigorous mind he was an able ruler, and Rome flourished under his sway. But in the history of the church his character appears in a less favourable light. He had a confirmed prejudice against Christianity, and sanctioned the persecution of Christians. Some say that he meditated the extinction of the name. This is the deepest stain which rests on the memory of Trajan.

But Christianity, in spite of Roman emperors, and Roman prisons, and Roman executions, pursued its silent steady course. In little more than seventy years after the death of Christ, it had made such rapid progress in some places as to threaten the downfall of paganism. The heathen temples were deserted, the worship of the gods was neglected, and victims for sacrifices were rarely purchased. This naturally raised a popular cry against Christianity, such as we had at Ephesus: "This our craft is in danger to be set at nought, and the temple of the great goddess Diana to be despised." Those whose livelihood depended on the worship of the heathen deities, laid many and grievous complaints against the Christians before the governors. This was especially so in the Asiatic provinces where Christianity was most prevalent.

About the year 110 many Christians were thus brought before the tribunal of **Pliny the younger**, the governor of Bithynia and Pontus. But Pliny, being naturally a wise, candid, and humane man, took pains to inform himself of the principles and practices of the Christians. And when he found that many of them were put to death who could not be convicted of any public crime, he was greatly embarrassed. He had not taken any part in such matters before,

and no settled law on the subject then existed. The edicts of Nero had been repealed by the Senate, and those of Domitian by his successor, Nerva. Under these circumstances, Pliny applied for advice to his master, the Emperor Trajan. The letters which then passed between them, being justly considered as the most valuable record of the history of the church during that period, deserve a place in our “Short Papers.” But we can only transcribe a portion of Pliny’s celebrated epistle, and chiefly those parts which refer to the character of Christians, and the extension of Christianity.

C. PLINY TO TRAJAN EMPEROR

“Health. — It is my usual custom, sire, to refer all things, of which I harbour any doubt, to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its hesitation, or instruct my understanding in its ignorance? I never had the fortune to be present at any examination of Christians before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loss to determine what is the usual object either of inquiry or of punishment, and to what length either of them is to be carried... In the meantime this has been my method with respect to those who were brought before me as Christians. I asked them whether they were Christians: if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them — a second and a third time — with a menace of capital punishment. In case of obstinate perseverance, I ordered them to be executed... An anonymous ‘Libel’ was published, containing the names of many who denied that they were, or had been, Christians, and invoked the gods, as I prescribed, and prayed to your image, with incense and wine, and moreover reviled Christ none of which things I am told a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. So I thought proper to dismiss them... The whole of the crime or error of the Christians lay in this — they were accustomed on a certain day to meet before daylight, and to sing among themselves a hymn to Christ, as a god, and to bind themselves by an oath not to commit any wickedness; not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When these things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a harmless meal, of which they partook in common without any disorder; but this last practice they have ceased to attend to since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I prohibited assemblies.

“After this account, I judged it the more necessary to examine, and that *by torture*, two females who were said to be deaconesses, but I have discovered nothing except a bad and excessive superstition. Suspending, therefore, all judicial proceedings, I have recourse to you for advice. The number of the accused is so great as to call for serious consultation. Many persons are informed against, of every age and rank, and of both sexes; and many more will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country: nevertheless, it seems to me that it may be restrained and corrected. It is certain that the *temples which were almost forsaken* begin to be more frequented; and the sacred

solemnities, after a long intermission, are revived. Victims likewise are everywhere bought up, whereas for a time there were few purchasers. Whence it is easy to imagine what numbers of them might be reclaimed if pardon were granted to those who repent.”

TRAJAN TO PLINY

“You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning Christians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down which will apply itself to all cases. These people must not be sought after: if they are brought before you and convicted, let them be capitally punished; yet with this restriction, that if any one renounce Christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, let him on his repentance obtain pardon. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to: for it is a very dangerous precedent, and perfectly incongruous with the maxims of our age.”

The clear and unsuspected testimony of these two letters awakens thoughts and feelings of the deepest interest in the Christian’s mind of today. The First Epistle of St. Peter was addressed to the fathers of these holy sufferers, and possibly to some of themselves then alive; and it is not unlikely that Peter laboured amongst them personally. Thus were they taught and encouraged beforehand to give to the Roman governor “a reason for the hope that was in them with meekness and fear.” Indeed the whole of the first Epistle seems divinely fitted to strengthen these unoffending Christians against the unjust and unreasonable course of Pliny. “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” Peter contemplates in his epistle the family of faith as on a journey through the wilderness, and God as the supreme Governor ruling over all — believers and unbelievers. “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” With such a scene before us, and such witnesses, making allowance for the position of Trajan and Pliny as heathen statesmen, it may be well to inquire at this early stage of our history, What was and is

THE REAL CAUSE OF PERSECUTION

Although different reasons may be given by different persons and governments for persecuting Christians, yet we believe that the real cause is the heart’s enmity against Christ and His truth, as seen in the godly lives of His people. Besides, their light makes manifest the darkness around, and exposes and reproveth the inconsistencies of false professors, and the godless lives of the wicked. The enemy, taking occasion by these things, stirs up the cruel passions of those in power to quench the light by persecuting the light-bearer. “For every one that doeth evil hateth the light.” Such has been the experience of all Christians, in all ages, both in times of peace and in times of trouble. There is no exemption from persecution, secretly or openly, if we

live according to the Spirit and truth of Christ. Amongst the last words that the great apostle wrote were these: “Yea, and *all* that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Tim. 3:12)

These divine truths, given for the instruction and guidance of the church in all ages, were strikingly illustrated in the case of Pliny and the Christians of Bithynia. He is spoken of by all historians as one of the most enlightened, virtuous, and accomplished men of antiquity. He was also possessed of great wealth, and he had the reputation of being most liberal and benevolent in private life. Why then, it may be asked, as a Roman statesman and governor, did he become such a persecutor of the Christians? This question he answers in his own letter. It was simply for their faith in Christ — nothing else. It had been proved to him, both by friends and foes that the Christians were guilty of no evil, either morally, socially, or politically. Having thrice asked the question, “*Are you Christians?*” if they stedfastly affirmed that they were, he condemned them to death. The only pretext which he gave to cover the injustice of his conduct as a governor, was the fact that the Christians were obstinate professors of a religion not established by the laws of the empire.

Many, from private malice and other reasons, were at this time *anonymously* accused of being Christians, who were not really so. These were tested by being called upon to deny the faith, offer incense to the gods, worship the image of the emperor, and revile Christ. All who complied with these terms were dismissed. *But none of those things*, Pliny is made to witness, *can those who are true Christians ever be compelled to do*. He next had recourse to the brutal custom of examining innocent persons by torture. Two females, noted servants of the church, were thus examined. But, instead of the expected disclosures as to the rumoured seditious and licentious character of their meetings, nothing unfavourable to the christian community could be tortured out of them. The governor could detect nothing by every means he tried, except what he calls “a perverse and extravagant superstition.”

It must also be borne in mind, both to the credit and also to the deeper guilt of Pliny, that he did not proceed against the Christians from mere popular prejudice — unlike his friend Tacitus, who allowed himself to be carried away by prevailing rumours, and without further inquiry, to write against Christianity in the most unreasonable and disgraceful manner. But Pliny considered it his duty to enter into a careful investigation of the whole matter before giving his judgment. How then can we account for such a man, apparently desirous of acting impartially, persecuting to death a blameless people? To answer this question, we must inquire into the outward, or ostensible causes of persecution.

THE OSTENSIBLE CAUSES OF PERSECUTION

The Romans professed to tolerate all religions, from which the commonwealth had nothing to fear. This was their boasted liberality. Even the

Jews were allowed to live according to their own laws. What was it then, we may well ask, that could have caused all their severity to the Christians? Had the commonwealth anything to fear from them? Had it anything to fear from those whose lives were blameless, whose doctrines were the pure truth of heaven, and whose religion was conducive to the people's welfare, both publicly and privately?

The following may be considered as some of the unavoidable causes of persecution, looking at both sides of the question:

1. Christianity, unlike all other religions that preceded it, was *aggressive* in its character. Judaism was exclusive; the religion of one nation; Christianity was proclaimed as the religion of mankind or the whole world. This was an entirely new thing on the earth. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the Lord's command to the disciples. They were to go forth and make war with error, in every form and in all its workings. The conquest to be made was the heart for Christ. "The weapons of our warfare," says the apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:4, 5) In this war of aggression with existing institutions, and with the corrupt habits of the heathen, the disciples of Jesus had little to expect but resistance, persecution, and suffering.

2. The pagan religion, which Christianity was rapidly undermining and destined to overthrow, was an **institution of the State**. It was so closely interwoven with the entire civil and social systems, that to attack the religion was to be brought into conflict with both the civil and the social. And this was exactly what took place. Had the primitive church been as accommodating to the world as Christendom is now, much persecution might have been avoided. But the time had not come for such lax accommodation. The gospel which the Christians then preached, and the purity of doctrine and life which they maintained, shook to the very foundation the old and deeply rooted religion of the State.

3. The Christians naturally withdrew themselves from the pagans. They became a **separate and distinct people**. They could not but condemn and abhor *polytheism*, as utterly opposed to the one living and true God, and to the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ; This gave the Romans the idea that Christians were unfriendly to the human race, seeing they condemned all religions but their own. Hence they were called "Atheists," because they did not believe in the heathen deities, and derided the heathen worship.

4. **Simplicity and humility** characterised the Christians' worship. They peaceably came together before sunrise or after sunset, to avoid giving offence. They sang hymns to Christ as to God, they broke bread in

remembrance of His love in dying for them, they edified one another and pledged themselves to a life of holiness. But they had no fine temples, no statues, no order of priests, and no victims to offer in sacrifice. The contrast between their worship and that of all others in the empire became most manifest. The heathen, in their ignorance, concluded that the Christians had no religion at all, and that their secret meetings were for the worst of purposes. The world *now*, as *then*, would say of those who worship God in spirit and in truth, that “these people have **no religion at all.**” Christian worship, in true simplicity, without the aid of temples and priests, rites and ceremonies, is not much better understood now by professing Christendom than it was then by pagan Rome. Still it is true “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

5. By the progress of Christianity the **temporal interests** of a great number of persons were seriously affected. This was a fruitful and bitter source of persecution. A countless throng of priests, image-makers, dealers, soothsayers, augurs, and artisans, found good livings in connection with the worship of so many deities.

6. All these, seeing their craft in danger, rose up in united strength against the Christians, and sought by every means to arrest the progress of Christianity. They invented and disseminated the vilest calumnies against everything christian. The cunning priests and the artful soothsayers easily persuaded the vulgar, and the public mind in general, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases that afflicted mankind, were sent upon them by the angry gods, because the Christians who despised their authority were everywhere tolerated.³¹

Many other things might be mentioned, but these were everywhere the daily causes of the christians' sufferings, both publicly and privately. Of the truth of this a moment's reflection will convince every reader. But faith could see the Lord's hand and hear His voice in it all: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves:... they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles... Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” (Matthew 10)

This much having been said as to the great opposition which the early church had to contend against, it will be necessary to glance for a moment at the real cause of causes and means of

³¹ See Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1, page 67. Cave's *Primitive Christianity*; early chapters.

THE RAPID PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY

Doubtless the causes and the means were divine. They proved themselves to be so. The Spirit of God, who descended in power on the day of Pentecost, and who had taken up His abode in the church and in the individual Christian, is the true source of all success in preaching the gospel, in the conversion of souls, and in testimony for Christ against evil. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.” Besides, the Lord has promised to be with His people at all times. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” (Zech. 4:6, 7; Matt. 28: 18-20) But our object at present is to look at things historically, and not merely according to the assurance of faith.

1. One great cause of the rapid spread of Christianity is its **perfect adaptation to man in every age**, in every country, and in every condition. It addresses all as *lost*, and supposes a like want in all. Thus it suits the Jew and the Gentile, the king and the subject, the priest and the people, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the moral and the profligate. It is God’s religion for the *heart*, and there asserts His sovereignty, and His only. It announces itself as the “power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” It proposes to raise man from the deepest depths of degradation to the loftiest heights of eternal glory. Who can estimate, in spite of every prejudice, the effect of the proclamation of such a gospel to miserable and benighted heathen? Thousands, millions, tired of a worthless and worn-out religion, responded to its heavenly voice gathered around the name of Jesus, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and were ready to suffer for His sake. Love ruled in the new religion, hatred in the old.

2. **Its sanction and maintenance of all earthly relations**, according to God, were other reasons for the acceptance of the gospel among the heathen. Each one was exhorted to remain in these relationships, and seek to glorify God therein. The blessings of Christianity to wives, children and servants, are unspeakable. Their love, happiness, and comfort were an astonishment to the heathen, and a new thing amongst them. Yet all was natural and orderly. A Christian, who is said to have lived about this time — the early part of the second century — thus describes his contemporaries: “The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves, they do not use a different language, or affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks, and of the barbarians, each where his lot has been cast: and while they conform to the usages of the country, in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They obey the existing laws, and conquer the laws by their own living.”³²

³² Neander’s *Church History*, vol. 1, p. 95.

3. The **blameless lives of the Christians**, the divine purity of their doctrines, their patient, cheerful endurance of sufferings worse than death, as well as death itself, their disregard for all the objects of ordinary ambition, their boldness in the faith at the risk of life, credit and property, were chief means in the rapid spread of Christianity. “For who,” says Tertullian, “that beholds these things, is not impelled to inquire into the cause? And who, when he has inquired, does not embrace Christianity, and when he has embraced it, does not himself wish to suffer for it?”

These few particulars will enable the reader to form a more definite judgment as to what it was that tended on the one hand to hinder, and on the other to further the progress of the gospel of Christ. Nothing can be more interesting to the christian mind than the study of this great and glorious work. The Lord’s workmen, for the most part, were plain unlettered men; they were poor, friendless and destitute of all human aid; and yet, in a short time, they persuaded a great part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors, and to embrace a new religion which is opposed to the natural dispositions of men, the pleasures of the world, and the established customs of ages. Who could question the *inward power* of Christianity with such *outward facts* before them? Surely it was the Spirit of God who clothed with power the words of these early preachers! Surely their force on the minds of men was divine. A complete change was produced: they were born again — created anew in Christ Jesus.

In less than **a hundred years from the day of Pentecost** the gospel had penetrated into most of the provinces of the Roman empire, and was widely diffused in many of them. In our brief outline of the life of St. Paul, and in the chronological table of his missions, we have traced the first planting of many churches, and the propagation of the truth in many quarters. In large central cities, such as Antioch in Syria, Ephesus in Asia, and Corinth in Greece, we have seen Christianity well established, and spreading its rich blessings among the surrounding towns and villages.

We also learn from ecclesiastical antiquity, that what these cities were to Syria, Asia, and Greece, Carthage was to Africa. When Scapula, the president of Carthage, threatened the Christians with severe and cruel treatment, Tertullian, in one of his pointed appeals, bids him bethink himself. “What wilt thou do,” he says, “with so many thousands of men and women of every age and dignity as will freely offer themselves? What fires, what swords, wilt thou stand in need of! What is Carthage itself likely to suffer if decimated by thee: when every one there shall find his near kindred and neighbours, and shall see there matrons, and men perhaps of thine own rank and order, and the most principal persons, and either the kindred or friends of those who are thy nearest friends? Spare then, therefore, for thy sake, if not for ours.”³³

³³ *Cave’s Primitive Christianity*, p. 20.

We now resume the narrative of events, and the next in order to be related is

THE MARTYRDOM OF IGNATIUS

There is no fact in early church history more sacredly preserved than the martyrdom of Ignatius the bishop of Antioch; and there is no narrative more celebrated than his journey, as a prisoner in chains, from Antioch to Rome.

According to the general opinion of historians, the Emperor Trajan when on his way to the Parthian war in the year 107, visited Antioch. From what cause it is difficult to say, but it appears that the Christians were threatened with persecution by his orders. Ignatius, therefore, being concerned for the church in Antioch, desired to be introduced to Trajan's presence. His great object was to prevent, if possible, the threatened persecution. With this end in view, he set forth to the Emperor the true character and condition of the Christians, and offered himself to suffer in their stead.

The details of this remarkable interview are given in many church histories, but there is such an air of suspicion about them that we forbear inserting them. It ended, however, in the condemnation of Ignatius. He was sentenced by the Emperor to be carried to Rome, and thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people. He welcomed the severe sentence, and gladly submitted to be bound, believing it was for his faith in Christ and as a sacrifice for the saints.

Ignatius was now committed to the charge of ten soldiers, who appear to have disregarded his age and to have treated him with great harshness. He had been bishop of Antioch for nearly forty years, and so must have been an old man. But they hurried him over a long journey, both by sea and land, in order to reach Rome before the games were ended. He arrived on the last day of the festival, and was carried at once to the amphitheatre, where he suffered according to his sentence in the sight of the assembled spectators. And thus the weary pilgrim found rest from the fatigues of his long journey in the blessed repose of the paradise of God.

It has been asked, Why was Ignatius taken all the way **from Antioch to Rome** to suffer martyrdom? The answer can only be conjecture. It may have been with the intention of striking fear into other Christians, by the spectacle of one so eminent, and so well-known, brought in chains to a dreadful and degrading death. But if this was the Emperor's expectation he was entirely disappointed. It had just the opposite effect. The report of his sentence and of his intended route spread far and wide, and deputations from the surrounding churches were sent to meet him at convenient points. He was thus cheered and greeted with the warmest congratulations of his brethren; and they, in return, were delighted to see the venerable bishop and to receive his parting blessing. Many of the saints would be encouraged to brave, if not desire, a martyr's death and a martyr's crown. Among the number who met him by the way was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who, like Ignatius, had been a disciple of St.

John, and was destined to be a martyr for the gospel. But besides these personal interviews, he is said to have written seven letters on this journey, which have been preserved in the providence of God and handed down to us. Great interest has ever been, and still is attached to these letters.

THE WRITINGS OF THE FATHERS AND SCRIPTURE

But however worthy of all honour Ignatius may be as a holy man of God, and as a noble martyr for Christ, we must ever remember that his letters are not the word of God. They may interest and instruct us, but they cannot command our faith. This can only stand on the solid ground of the word of God, never on the infirm ground of tradition. “Scripture stands alone,” as one has said, “in majestic isolation, preeminent in instruction, and separated by unapproachable excellence from everything written by the apostolic fathers: so that those who follow close to the apostles have left us writings which are more for our warning than our edification.” At the same time these early christian writers have every claim to the respect and veneration with which antiquity invests them. They were the contemporaries of the apostles, they enjoyed the privilege of hearing their instruction they shared with them the labours of the gospel, and freely conversed with them from day to day. Paul speaks of a Clement — a so-called apostolic father — as his “fellow-labourer, whose name is in the book of life;” and what he says of Timothy may have been at least partly true of many others, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience persecutions, and afflictions.” (Phil. 4:3; 2 Tim. 3:10, 11)

From those who were so highly privileged we should naturally expect **sound apostolic doctrine** — a faithful repetition of the truths and instructions which were delivered to them by the inspired apostles. But such alas! is not the case. Ignatius was one of the earliest of the apostolic fathers. He became bishop of Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, about the year 70. He was a disciple of the apostle John, and survived him only about seven years. Surely from such a one we might have expected a close resemblance to the apostle’s teaching but it is not so. The definite and absolute statements of scripture, as coming direct from God to the soul, are widely different from the writings of Ignatius and of all the Fathers Our only safe and sure guide is the word of God. How seasonable then is that word in the First Epistle of John “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” (1 John 2:24) This passage evidently refers more especially to the *person* of Christ, and consequently to the scriptures of the New Testament, in which we have the display of the Father in the Son and made known to us by the Holy Spirit. In Paul’s Epistles, we have more fully revealed the counsels of God concerning the *church Israel, and the Gentiles*, so that we must go further back than “*the Fathers*” to find a true ground of faith; we must go back to that which existed from “**The Beginning.**” Nothing has direct divine authority for the believer, but that which was from

“the beginning.” This alone secures our continuing “in the Son and in the Father.”

The Epistles of Ignatius have been long esteemed by Episcopalians as the chief authority for the system of the English church; and this must be our excuse for referring so fully to this “Father.” Nearly all their arguments in favour of episcopacy are founded on his letters. So strongly does he press submission to the episcopal authority, and so highly does he extol it, that some have been induced to question their genuineness altogether, and others have supposed that they must have been largely interpolated to serve the prelatical interest. But with the controversy on these points we have nothing to do in our “Short Papers.”³⁴

We will now resume our history from the death of Trajan in the year 117, and briefly glance at the condition of the church during

THE REIGNS OF HADRIAN AND THE ANTONINES

FROM A.D. 117 TO 180

Although it would be unjust to class Hadrian and the first Antonine with the systematic persecutors of the church nevertheless Christians were often exposed to the most violent sufferings and death during their dominion. The cruel custom of ascribing all public calamities to the Christians, and of calling for their blood as an atonement to the offended deities, still continued, and was generally yielded to by the local governors, and unchecked by the indifferent emperors. But under the reign of the second Antonine, **Marcus Aurelius**, the evil spirit of persecution greatly increased. It was no longer confined to the outbursts of popular fury, but was encouraged by the highest authorities. The slender protection which the ambiguous edicts of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antoninus afforded the Christians was withdrawn, and the excited passions of the idolatrous pagans were unrestrained by the government. It is most interesting to the student of scripture history to see how this could take place under the reign of a prince who was distinguished for learning, philosophy, and general mildness of character.

The past sixty years of comparative peace had opened a wide field for the propagation of the gospel. During that period it made rapid progress in many ways. Christian congregations increased in numbers, influence, and wealth throughout every quarter of the Roman dominions. Many of the rich, being filled with divine love, distributed their substance to the poor, travelled into regions which as yet had not heard the sound of the gospel, and, having planted Christianity, passed on to other countries. The Holy Spirit could not thus work without awakening the jealousy and stirring up all the enmity of the supporters of the national religion. Aurelius saw with an evil eye the superior

³⁴ See *The Genuine Epistles of Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Barnabas*, by Ab. Wake, 6th ed. Bagster.

power of Christianity over men's minds compared with his own heathen philosophy. He then became an intolerant persecutor, and encouraged the provincial authorities to crush what he considered a contumacious spirit of resistance to his authority. But the gospel of the grace of God was far beyond the reach of Aurelius, and neither his sword nor his lions could arrest its triumphant career. In spite of the bloody persecutions which he excited or sanctioned, Christianity was propagated throughout the known world.

But here we must pause for a little, and look around us. There is something deeper far in the change of government towards the church than the merely historical eye can discern. We believe that we are now come to

THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST PERIOD AND THE OPENING OF THE SECOND

The **Ephesian** condition of the church, looking at it in this light, may be said to have ended with the death of Antoninus Pius, in the year 161; and the Smyranean condition to have commenced with the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The persecution in Asia broke out with great violence in the year 167, under the new edicts of this Emperor; and Smyrna especially suffered greatly: the justly esteemed Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, suffered martyrdom at this time. But in order to prove the view we have taken, it will be necessary to glance briefly at the addresses to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna. And first,

THE ADDRESS TO THE CHURCH OF EPHESUS

REVELATION 2: 1-7

The grand object of the church in this world was to be "the pillar and ground of the truth." It was set up to be a light-bearer for God. It is thus symbolised by a "golden candlestick" — a vessel which bears the light. It ought to have been a true witness of what God had manifested in Jesus on the earth, and of what He is now when Christ is in heaven. We further learn from this address, that the church, as a vessel of testimony in this world, is threatened with being set aside unless its first estate is maintained. But alas! it fails, as the creature always does. The angels, Adam, Israel, and the church kept not their first estate. "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee," saith the Lord, "because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly; and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

There was still, however, much that He could praise, and He does praise all that He can. As an assembly, they had patience, they had laboured and not fainted they could not bear "evil men," or those who were seeking the highest place in the church. Nevertheless He feels the departure from Himself. "Thou hast left thy first love." He speaks as one disappointed. They had ceased to delight in His love to them and hence their own love to Him declined. "First love" is the happy fruit of our appreciation of the Lord's love to us. "Outward

testimony might go on,” as one has said, “but that is not what the Lord most values, though value it He does, so far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, and kept pure for Him from the world and its ways God has called us for this: not only for salvation, and for a witness to Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ — a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last, and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ, and He at least has proved the fulness and faithfulness of His love to us! But what of ours!”³⁵

It was this state of things in Ephesus, and in the church at large, that called for the intervention of the Lord in faithful discipline. The church, as planted by Paul, had already fallen from its first estate. “All seek their own,” he says, “not the things of Jesus Christ’s,” And again, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me.” Hence the tribulation spoken of in the address to the church in Smyrna. Though the Lord is full of grace and love in all His ways towards His fallen and failing church, still He is righteous withal, and must judge evil. He is not seen in these addresses as the Head in heaven of the one body, nor as the Bridegroom of His church, but in His judicial character, walking in the midst of the candlesticks, having the attributes of a judge. See chapter 1.

It will be observed by the reader, that there is a measured distance and reserve in the style of His address to the church at Ephesus. This is in keeping with the place He takes in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He writes to the *angel* of the church, not to “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus,” as in the Epistle by Paul.

There have been many disputes about “who is meant by the angel.” He was a person we believe, so identified morally with the assembly, that he represented it, and characterised it. The Lord addresses the angel, not the church immediately. “The angel,” therefore, gives the idea of representation. For example, in the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah, the angel of the covenant, and in the New we have the angels of the little children, and so of Peter in Acts 12, they said, “It is his angel.”

We will now briefly glance at

THE ADDRESS TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

REVELATION 2: 8-11

Our interest in the history of the church is greatly increased when we see that the Lord has distinctly marked its successive epochs. The outward condition

³⁵ *Lectures on the Revelation*, by W.K.

of the church down to the death of the first Antonine — so far as it can be ascertained from the most authentic histories — answers in a remarkable way to what we learn from scripture, and especially from the address to Ephesus. There was outward consistency and zeal; they were unwearied. It is also evident that there was charity, purity, devotedness, holy courage, even to the greatest readiness to suffer in every way for the Lord's sake. At the same time it is clear, from both scripture and history, that false doctrine was making its way, and that many were manifesting a most unworthy zeal for official pre-eminence in the church. That forgetfulness of self, and that care for Christ and His glory, which are the firstfruits of His grace, were gone. Historically we now come to the Smyranean period. For the convenience of the reader we will give the address entire.

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” Here the Lord meets the declension by sore tribulation. Milder means had not answered the end. This is no uncommon case though *they* may have thought that some strange thing had happened to them. But all their afflictions were known to the Lord, measured by Him, and ever under His control. “Ye shall have tribulation *ten days*.” The period of their sufferings is exactly specified. And He speaks to them as one that had known the depths of tribulation Himself. “These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead, and is alive.” He had gone through the deepest sorrow, and through death itself — He had died for them, and was alive again. They had this blessed One to flee to in all their trials. And as He looks on, and walks in the midst of His suffering ones, He says, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Thus He holds in His hand the martyr's crown, ready to place it on the head of His faithful overcomer.

We will now turn to our history, and mark its resemblance to the above Epistle.

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY

COMMENCED ABOUT A.D. 167

The reign of **Aurelius** is marked, under the providence of God, by many and great public calamities. We see the hand of the Lord in faithful love chastening His own redeemed and beloved people, but His anger was kindled against their enemies. The eastern army, under Verus, returning from the

Parthian war, brought with it to Rome the infliction of a pestilential disease which was then raging in Asia, and which soon spread its ravages through almost the whole of the Roman empire. There was also a great inundation of the Tiber, which laid a large part of the city under water, and swept away immense quantities of grain from the fields and public storehouses. These disasters were naturally followed by a famine, which consumed great numbers.

Such events could not fail to increase the hostility of the heathen against the Christians. They ascribed all their troubles to the wrath of the gods, which the new religion was supposed to have provoked. Thus it was that the persecution of the Christians in the Roman empire began with the populace. The outcry against them rose up from the people to the governors. **“Throw the Christians to the lions!”** “Throw the Christians to the lions!” was the general outcry: and the names of the most prominent in the community were demanded with the same uncontrollable hostility. A weak or superstitious magistrate would tremble before the voice of the people, and lend himself as the instrument of their will.

But we will now take a nearer view, under the guidance of the various histories that are before us, of the manner of these persecutions, and of the behaviour of the Christians under them.

THE PERSECUTION IN ASIA

A.D. 167

In Asia Minor the persecution broke out with great violence, such as had never been before. Christianity was now treated as a direct **crime against the State**. This changed the face of everything. Contrary to the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of still milder emperors, Hadrian and Antonine, the Christians were to be sought for as common criminals. They were torn from their homes by the violence of the people, and subjected to the severest tortures. If they obstinately refused to sacrifice to the gods, they were condemned. The wild beast, the cross, the stake, and the axe were the cruel forms of death that met the Lord’s faithful ones everywhere.

The prudent and dignified **Melito**, bishop of Sardis, was so moved by these unheard-of-barbarities, that he appeared before the emperor as the Christians’ advocate. His address throws much light both on the law and on the conduct of the public authorities. It is as follows: — “The race of God’s worshippers in this country are persecuted, as they never were before, by *new edicts*; for the shameless sycophants, greedy of the possessions of others — since they are furnished by these edicts with an opportunity of so doing — plunder their innocent victims day and night. And let it be right if it is done by your command, since a just emperor will never resolve on any unjust measure, and we will cheerfully bear the honourable lot of such a death. Yet we would

submit this single petition, that you would inform yourself respecting the people who excite the contention, and impartially decide whether they deserve punishment and death, or deliverance and peace. But if this resolve, and this new edict — an edict which ought not so to be issued even against hostile barbarians — comes from yourself, we pray you the more not to leave us exposed to such public robbery.”³⁶

There is, we fear, no ground to believe that this noble appeal brought any direct relief to the Christians. The character and ways of Aurelius have perplexed the historians. He was a philosopher of the sect of the Stoics, but naturally humane, benevolent, gentle and pious, even childlike in his disposition, some say, from the influence of his mother’s training; yet he was an implacable persecutor of the Christians for nearly twenty years. And the perplexity is increased when we look to Asia, for the proconsul at this time was not personally opposed to the Christians. Still he yielded to the popular fury and the demands of the law. But faith sees beyond the emperors, governors, and people; it sees the prince of darkness ruling these wicked men, and the Lord Jesus overruling all. “I know thy works and tribulation... Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer... Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

Aurelius, with all his philosophy, was an utter stranger to the sweetness and power of that Name which alone can meet and satisfy the longings of the human heart. All the speculations and boastings of philosophy have never done this. Hence the enmity of the human heart to the gospel. Self-sufficiency, which leads to pride and self-importance, is the principal part of the Stoic’s religion. With these views there could be no humility, no sense of sin, and no idea of a Saviour. And the more earnest he was in his own religion, the more bitter and vehement would he be against Christianity.

In a **circular-letter** addressed by the church of Smyrna to other christian churches, we have a detailed account of the sufferings of the faithful unto death. “They made it evident to us all” says the church, “that in the midst of those sufferings they were absent from the body, or rather, that the Lord stood by them, and walked in the midst of them, and staying themselves on the grace of Christ, they bid defiance to the torments of the world.” Some, with a strange momentary enthusiasm, rushed in self-confidence to the tribunal, declared themselves to be Christians; but when the magistrate pressed them, wrought upon their fears, showed them the wild beasts they yielded and offered incense to the gods. “We therefore,” adds the church, “praise not those who voluntarily surrendered themselves, for so are we not taught in the gospel.” Nothing less than the presence of the Lord Jesus could strengthen the soul to endure with tranquillity and composure the most agonising torments, and the most frightful deaths. But thousands did bear with meekness

³⁶ Neander’s *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1, p. 142.

cheerfulness, and even with joyfulness, the utmost that the power of darkness and the fourth beast of Daniel could do. The pagan bystanders were often moved to pity by their sufferings, but never could understand their calmness of mind, love to their enemies, and willingness to die.

We will now conclude this general account of the persecution in Asia, and notice particularly the two most eminent persons who suffered death at this time; namely, Justin and Polycarp.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JUSTIN, SURNAMED MARTYR

Justin was born at Neapolis, in Samaria, of Gentile parents. He carefully studied in his youth the different philosophical sects; but not finding the satisfaction which his heart longed for, he was induced to hear the gospel. In it he found, through God's blessing, a perfect rest for his soul, and every desire of his heart fully met. He became an earnest Christian, and a celebrated writer in defence of Christianity.

Early in the reign of Aurelius, **Justin was a marked man.** Information was laid against him by one Crescens. He was apprehended with six of his companions, and all were brought before the prefect. They were asked to sacrifice to the gods. "No man," replied Justin, "whose understanding is sound, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety." "Unless you comply," said the prefect, "you shall be tormented without mercy." "We desire nothing more sincerely," he replied, "than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ." The rest assented, and said, "We are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols." The governor then pronounced sentence — "As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded, according to the laws." The martyrs rejoiced, and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were scourged, and afterwards beheaded. This took place at Rome about the year 165. Thus slept in Jesus one of the early Fathers, and earned the glorious title, "Martyr," which usually accompanies his name. His writings have been carefully examined by many, and great importance is attached to them.

LINES ON THE MARTYRDOM OF A ROMAN CENTURION

"Give the Christian to the lion!"
Wildly cry the Roman throng
"Yes, to Afric's tawny lion!"
Shout the warriors bold and strong.
"Let the hungry lion tear him!"
Echoed glad the laughing crowd;
"Fling him — fling him to the lion!"
Shrieked the noble matron loud.

"Give the Christian to the lion!"
Spake in accents grave and slow,

From their curule seats of honour,
Senators in goodly row.
Then from flight to flight, redouble
Shout, and cheer, and laughter peal
Till the giant Coliseum
Neath the tumult seemed to reel;

And the clamours of the people
Through the Arch of Titus roll,
All adown the Roman forum,
To the towering Capitol,
Then a pause — but hush, and listen
Whence that wild and savage yell;
Tis the lion of Sahara,
Raging in his grated cell!

Fierce with famine and with fetter,
Shaketh he his tawny mane!
For his living prey impatient,
Struggling 'gainst his bar and chain.
But a voice is stealing faintly
From the next cell, chill and dim;
Tis the death-doomed Christian chanting
Soft and low his dying hymn!

With uplifted hands he prayeth
For the men that ask his blood!
With a holy faith he pleadeth
For that shouting multitude.
They are waiting! Lift the grating
Comes he forth, serene to die:
With a radiance around his forehead,
And a lustre in his eye.

Never! when midst Roman legions,
With the helmet on his brow
Press'd he to the front of battle
With a firmer step than now.
Lift the grating! He is waiting.
Let the savage lion come!
He can only rend a passage
For the soul to reach her home!

THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP

The behaviour of the venerable bishop of Smyrna, in view of his martyrdom, was most christian and noble in its bearing. He was prepared and ready for

his persecutors, without being rash or imprudent, as some at times, through excitement, had been. When he heard the shouts of the people demanding his death, it was his intention to remain quietly in the city, and await the issue which God might ordain for him. But, by the entreaties of the church, he suffered himself to be persuaded to take refuge in a neighbouring village. Here he spent the time, with a few friends, occupied, night and day, in praying for all the churches throughout the world. But his pursuers soon discovered his retreat. When told that the public officers were at the door, he invited them in, ordered meat and drink to be set before them, and requested that they would indulge him with one hour of quiet prayer. But the fulness of his heart carried him through two hours. His devotions, age, and appearance greatly affected the pagans. He must have been over ninety years of age.

The time being now come, he was conveyed to the city. The proconsul does not appear to have been personally hostile to the Christians. He evidently felt for the aged Polycarp, and did what he could to save him. He urged him to swear by the genius of the emperor, and give proof of his penitence. But Polycarp was calm and firm, with his eyes uplifted to heaven. The proconsul again urged him, saying, **“Reville Christ, and I will release thee.”** The old man now replied “Six and eighty years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good; and how could I revile Him, my Lord and Saviour?” The governor finding that both promises and threatenings were in vain, he caused it to be proclaimed by the herald in the circus, “Polycarp has declared himself to be a Christian.” The heathen populace, with an infuriated shout, replied, “This is the teacher of atheism, the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods, by whom so many have been turned away from offering sacrifices.” The governor having yielded to the demands of the people, that Polycarp should die at the stake, Jews and pagans hastened together to bring wood for that purpose. As they were about to fasten him with nails to the stake of the pile, he said, “Leave me thus: He who has strengthened me to encounter the flames, will also enable me to stand firm at the stake.” Before the fire was lighted he prayed, “Lord, Almighty God, Father of Thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received from Thee the knowledge of Thyself; God of angels, and of the whole creation, of the human race, and of the just that live in Thy presence, I praise Thee that Thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to take part in the number of Thy witnesses, in the cup of Thy Christ.”

The fire was now kindled, but the flames played around the body, forming the appearance of a sail filled with wind. The superstitious Romans, fearing that the fire would not consume him, plunged a spear into his side: and Polycarp was crowned with victory.

These are but short extracts from the accounts that have been handed down to us of the martyrdom of the revered and venerable bishop. The martyrologies are full of particulars. But the Lord greatly blessed the Christlike way in which he suffered for the good of the church. The rage of the people cooled

down, as if satisfied with revenge; and their thirst for blood seemed quenched for the time. The proconsul, too, being wearied with such slaughter, absolutely refused to have any more Christians brought before his tribunal. How manifest is the hand of the Lord in this wonderful and sudden change! He had limited the days of their tribulation before they were cast into the furnace, and now they are accomplished: and no power on earth or in hell can prolong them another hour. They had been faithful unto death, and received the crown of life.

THE PERSECUTIONS IN FRANCE

A.D. 177

We will now turn to the scene of the *second persecution* under this emperor's reign. It took place in France, and exactly *ten years* after the persecution in Asia. There may have been other persecutions during these ten years, but, so far as we know, there are no authentic records of any till 177. The source from which we derive our knowledge of the details of this latter persecution is a circular letter from the churches of Lyon and Vienne to the churches in Asia. Whether there be any allusion to these ten historical years in the words of the Lord to the church at Smyrna, we cannot say. Scripture does not say there is. Comparing the history with the epistle, the thought is likely to be suggested. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." In other parts of this mystical book, a day being taken for a year, so it may be in the Epistle to Smyrna. History gives us the beginning and the end as to time, and the east and west as to breadth of scene. But we will now look at some of the details, in which the resemblance may be more manifest.

Imprisonment was one of the main features of their sufferings. Many died from the suffocating air of the noisome dungeons. In this respect it differed from the persecution in Asia. The popular excitement rose even higher than at Smyrna. The Christians were insulted and abused whenever they appeared abroad, and even plundered in their own houses. As this popular fury burst forth during the absence of the governor, many were thrown into prison by the inferior magistrates to await his return. But the spirit of persecution on this occasion, though it sprang from the populace, was not confined to them. The governor, on his arrival, seems to have been infected with the fanaticism of the lower classes. To his dishonour as a magistrate, he began the examination of the prisoners with tortures. And the testimony of slaves, contrary to an ancient law in Rome, was not only received against their masters but wrung from them by the severest sufferings. Consequently they were ready to say what they were required, to escape the whip and the rack. Having proved, as they said, that the Christians practised the most unnatural and worst of crimes in their meetings, they now believed that it was right to indulge themselves in every cruelty. No kindred, no condition, no age, nor sex was spared.

Vettius, a young man of birth and rank, and of great charity and fervency of spirit, on hearing that such charges were laid against his brethren, felt constrained to present himself before the governor as a witness of their innocence. He demanded a hearing; but the governor refused to listen and only asked him if he too was a Christian? When he distinctly affirmed that he was, the governor ordered him to be thrown into prison with the rest. He afterwards received the crown of martyrdom.

The aged bishop, **Pothinus**, now over ninety years of age, and probably the one who had brought the gospel to Lyon from Asia, was of course good prey for the lion of hell. He was afflicted with asthma and could scarcely breathe, but notwithstanding he must be seized and dragged before the authorities. “Who is the God of the Christians?” asked the governor. The old man quietly told him that he could only come to the knowledge of the true God by showing a right spirit. Those who surrounded the tribunal strove with each other in giving vent to their rage against the venerable bishop. He was ordered to prison, and after receiving many blows on his way thither, he was cast in among the rest, and in two days fell asleep in Jesus, in the arms of his suffering flock.

What a weight of comfort and encouragement the words of the blessed Lord must have been to these holy sufferers! “Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer” had been addressed to the church in Smyrna, and probably carried to the French churches in Lyon and Vienne by Pothinus. They were experiencing an exact fulfilment of this solemn and prophetic warning: “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried.” They knew who was the great enemy — the great persecutor — though emperors, governors, and mobs might be his instruments. But the Lord was with His beloved suffering ones. He not only sustained and comforted them, but He brought out, in the most blessed way, the power of His own presence in the feeblest forms of humanity. This was, we venture to say, a new thing on the earth. The superiority of the Christians to all the inflictions of tortures, and to all the terrors of death utterly astonished the multitude, stung to the quick their tormentors, and wounded the stoic pride of the Emperor. What could be done with a people who prayed for their persecutors, and manifested the composure and tranquillity of heaven, in the midst of the fires and wild beasts of the amphitheatre? Take one example of what we affirm — an example worthy of all praise, in all time and in all eternity — divine power displayed in human weakness.

Blandina, a female slave, was distinguished above the rest of the martyrs for the variety of tortures she endured. Her mistress, who also suffered martyrdom, feared lest the faith of her servant might give way under such trials. But it was not so, the Lord be praised! Firm as a rock, but peaceful and unpretending, she endured the most excruciating sufferings. Her tormentors urged her to deny Christ and confess that the private meetings of the Christians were only for their wicked practices, and they would cease their

tortures. But, no! her only reply was, “I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us.” The scourge, the rack, the heated iron chair, and the wild beasts, had lost their terror for her. Her heart was fixed on Christ, and He kept her in spirit near to Himself. Her character was fully formed, not by her social condition, of course — that was the most debased in those times — but by her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

Day after day she was brought forth as a public spectacle of suffering. Being a female and a slave, the heathen expected to force her to a denial of Christ, and to a confession that the Christians were guilty of the crimes reported against them. But it was all in vain. “I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us,” was her quiet but unvarying reply. Her constancy wearied out the inventive cruelty of her tormentors. They were astonished that she lived through the fearful succession of her sufferings. But in her greatest agonies she found strength and relief in looking to Jesus and witnessing for Him. “Blandina was endued with so much fortitude,” says the letter from the church at Lyon, written seventeen hundred years ago, “that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open.”³⁷

Before narrating the closing scene of her sufferings, we would notice what appears to us to be the secret of her great strength and constancy. Doubtless the Lord was sustaining her in a remarkable way as a witness for Him, and as a testimony to all ages of the power of Christianity over the human mind, compared with all the religions that then were or ever had been on the earth. Still, we would say particularly, that her *humility and godly fear* were the sure indications of her power against the enemy, and of her unfaltering fidelity to Christ. She was thus working out her own salvation — deliverance from the difficulties of the way — by a deep sense of her own conscious weakness, indicated by “fear and trembling.”

When on her way back from the amphitheatre to the prison, in company with her fellow-sufferers, they were surrounded by their sorrowing friends when they had an opportunity, and in their sympathy and love addressed them as “martyrs for Christ.” But this they instantly checked; saying, “We are not worthy of such an honour. The struggle is not over; and the dignified name of Martyr properly belongs to Him only who is the true and faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Prince of life, or, at least, only to those whose testimony Christ has sealed by their constancy to the end. We are but poor humble confessors.” With tears they besought their brethren to pray for them that they might be firm and true to the end. Thus their weakness was their strength, for it led them to lean on the mighty One. And so it always is, and

³⁷ For full details, see *Milner’s Church History*, vol. 1, p. 194.

ever has been, in small as well as in great trials. But a fresh sorrow awaited them on their return to the prison. They found some who had given way through natural fear, and had denied that they were Christians. But they had gained nothing thereby, Satan had not let them off. Under a charge of other crimes they were kept in prison. With these weak ones Blandina and the others prayed with many tears, that they might be restored and strengthened. The Lord answered their prayers; so that, when brought up again for further examination, they stedfastly confessed their faith in Christ, and thus passed sentence of death on themselves, and received the crown of martyrdom.

Nobler names, as men would say, than Blandina's had passed off the bloody scene; and honoured names too that had witnessed with great fortitude, such as Vettius, Pothinus, Sanctus, Natus, and Attalius; but the last day of her trial was come, and the last pain she was ever to feel, and the last tear she was ever to shed. She was brought up for her final examination with a youth of fifteen, named Ponticus. They were ordered to swear by the gods; they firmly refused, but were calm and unmoved. The multitude were incensed at their magnanimous patience. The whole round of barbarities was inflicted. Ponticus, though animated and strengthened by the prayers of his sister in Christ, soon sank under the tortures, and fell asleep in Jesus.

And now came the noble and blessed Blandina, as the church styles her. Like a mother who was needed to comfort and encourage her children, she was kept to the last day of the games. She had sent her children on before, and was now longing to follow after them. They had joined the noble army of martyrs above, and were resting with Jesus, as weary warriors rest, in the peaceful paradise of God. After she had endured stripes, she was seated in a hot iron chair, then she was enclosed in a net and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, a soldier plunged a spear into her side. No doubt she was dead long before the spear reached her, but in this she was honoured to be like her Lord and Master. Bright indeed will be the crown, amidst the many crowns in heaven, of the constant, humble, patient, enduring Blandina.

But the fierce and savage rage of the heathen, instigated by Satan, had not yet reached its height. They began a **new war with the dead bodies** of the saints. Their blood had not satiated them. They must have their ashes. Hence the mutilated bodies of the martyrs were collected and burned, and thrown into the river Rhone, with the fire that consumed them, lest a particle should be left to pollute the land. But rage, however fierce, will finally expend itself: and nature however savage, will become weary of bloodshed, and so many Christians survived this terrible persecution.

We have thus gone, more than usual, into details in speaking of the persecutions under Marcus Aurelius. So far they are a fulfilment, we believe, of the solemn and prophetic warnings of the address to Smyrna; and also, in a remarkable manner, of the Lord's promised grace. The sufferers were filled

and animated by His own Spirit. “Even their persecutors,” says Neander, “were never mentioned by them with resentment; but they prayed that God would forgive those who had subjected them to such cruel sufferings. They left a legacy to their brethren, not of strife and war, but of peace and joy, unanimity and love.”

Thou art home at last, each waymark past,
Thou hast sped to the goal before me;
And oh, my tears fall thick and fast
Like the hopes that had blossomed o’er thee.
My lips refuse to say, Farewell,
For our life-link nought can sever;
Thou’rt early gone with Christ to dwell,
Where we both shall be for ever.

THE POWER OF PRAYER

In tracing the *silver line* of God’s grace in His beloved people, we have now to notice a report which was widely spread among the Christians after the beginning of the third century. It occurred towards the close of the reign of Aurelius, and led him, it is said, to change the course of his policy towards the Christians. In one of his campaigns against the Germans and Sarmatians he was thrown into a situation of extreme peril. The burning sun shone full in the faces of his soldiers; they were hemmed in by the barbarians they were exhausted by wounds and fatigue, and parched with thirst: while, at the same time, the enemy was preparing to attack them. In this extremity the twelfth legion, said to be composed of Christians, stepped forward and knelt down in prayer, suddenly the sky was overspread with clouds, and the rain began to fall heavily. The Roman soldiers took off their helmets to catch the refreshing drops; but the shower speedily increased to a storm of hail, accompanied with thunder and lightning, which so alarmed the barbarians that the Romans gained an easy victory.

The Emperor, so struck with such a miraculous answer to prayer, acknowledged the interposition of the God of the Christians, conferred honours on the legion, and issued an edict in favour of their religion. After this, if not before, they were called “**the thundering legion.**” Historians, from Eusebius down, have noticed this remarkable occurrence.

But, like a tale that is often told, many things have been added to it. There is good reason to believe, however, that a providential answer in favour of the Romans was given to prayer. This much seems quite evident. And to faith there is nothing incredible in such an event; though some of the circumstances related are questionable. For example, a Roman legion at that time would probably number five thousand men: while there may have been a great many Christians in the twelfth, which was a distinguished legion, yet it would be hard to believe that they were all Christians.

On their return from the war, they no doubt related to their brethren the merciful intervention of God in answer to prayer, which the church would record and spread amongst the Christians to His praise and glory. But the facts are even more fully confirmed by the Romans. They also believed that the deliverance came from heaven, but in answer to the prayers of the Emperor to the gods. Hence the event was commemorated, after their usual manner, on columns, medals, and paintings. On these the Emperor is represented as stretching forth his hands in supplication; the army as catching the rain in their helmets; and Jupiter as launching forth his bolts on the barbarians, who lie slain on the ground.

A few years after this remarkable event Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher and the persecutor, died. Great changes quickly followed. The glory of the empire, and the effort to maintain the dignity of the old Roman religion, expired with himself, but Christianity made great and rapid advancement. Men of ability and learning were raised up about this time, who boldly and powerfully advocated its claims with their pens. These are called *Apologists*. **Tertullian**, an African, who is said to have been born in A.D. 160, may be considered as the ablest and the most perfect type of this class.

The more enlightened of the heathen now began to feel that, if their religion was to withstand the aggressive power of the gospel, it must be defended and reformed. Hence the controversy commenced; and one *Celsus*, an Epicurean philosopher, said to have been born in the same year as Tertullian, stood forth as the leader on the controversial side of paganism. From about this period — the closing years of the second century — church records become more interesting, because more definite and reliable. But before proceeding farther with the general history, it may be well to retrace our steps and glance briefly at the *internal* history of the church from the beginning. We shall thus see how some of the things which are still observed, and with which we are familiar, were first introduced.