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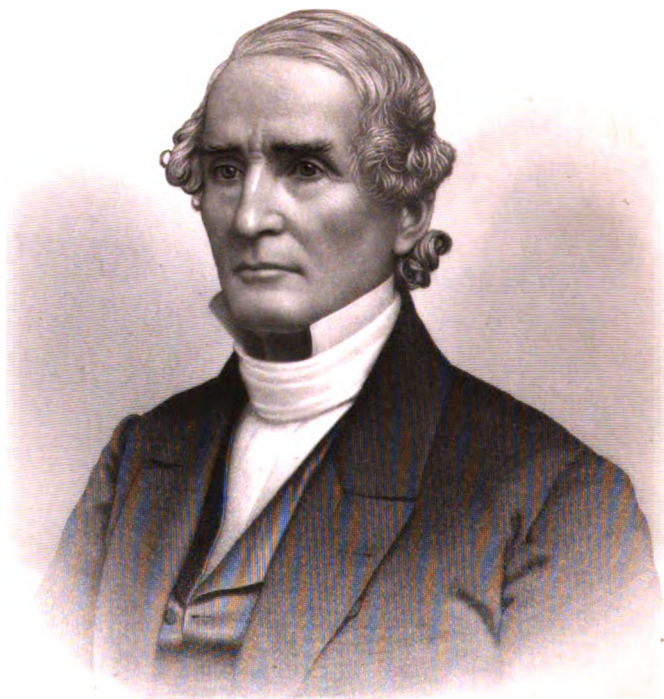


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SCENES AND INCIDENTS

IN THE LIFE OF

THE APOSTLE PAUL

VIEWED

AS ILLUSTRATING THE NATURE AND INFLUENCE
OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

BY

ALBERT BARNES.

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PREFACE.

THE design of this Volume is indicated, perhaps, with sufficient clearness, by its title. It is intended to illustrate some of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, and the nature of its influence in its first contact with the world, from the example of the most illustrious of the agents employed in its propagation.

The work is founded on the principle that the nature of true religion is fairly illustrated in the lives of its friends; and that *more* can be learned of its nature from the example of those whose lives are conformed to its requirements, than from a creed or a mere abstract statement of its doctrines. It is assumed, therefore, that the example of a good man, in the various situations in which he is placed in the world—the manner of his acting amid the trials, the duties, and the temptations of life—may incidentally illustrate the nature of religion, and that these accumulated records constitute a treasure of great value to the Church,—an argument of great force, in fact, in favour of the Divine origin of the religion itself. This constitutes the value of religious biography.

The most illustrious instance of this principle undoubtedly is found in the example of the Founder of Christianity Himself. The one who stands next to Him will probably be conceded by every one to be the Apostle Paul.

In the plan of the work it has been supposed that, from the character of this Apostle, and from the manner in which he was brought into contact with the world, there would be much of this nature that would always be of value to the Church; for he was made, in common with the other apostles, "a spectacle" (Marg. *theatre*; Gr. *θίατρον*—seen as those were who acted on a stage) "unto the world, and to angels, and to men" (1 Cor. iv. 9), and he "obtained mercy" that in him "*first*"—*πρῶτος*, *eminently*—"Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16).

Amid the trials which Paul had to meet in endeavouring to propagate the Christian religion, it could not but occur that he would often be placed in circumstances which might present very difficult points of inquiry as to what was proper to be done, and in which his conduct would furnish an important illustration of what is required by Christian duty.

It was supposed, also, that the events of his life might do much to illustrate the nature of Christianity as it came in contact with different classes of mind, and that an

important argument for its truth and its power might be found in its influence over those minds in turning them to God, and that those scenes might thus furnish valuable illustrations of human nature as the ministers of the Gospel are called to meet it from age to age. The contact of Christianity with the world now is substantially the same as in the age of the Apostles : the qualifications of the Christian ministry for its great work are substantially the same in every age and land as those which were found in Paul.

This work does not aspire to be a biography. Such notices of the personal history of Paul, however, are given as, it is hoped, may furnish a just and connected view of his character and life. For the notices of this kind which occur, I am largely indebted to the very valuable work of Messrs. Conybeare and Howson.¹ I have made free use of that book so far as the facts in the Life of Paul are concerned.

ALBERT BARNES.

¹ "The Life and Epistles of St. Paul. By the Rev. W. J. Conybeare, M.A., late Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge; and the Rev. J. S. Howson, M.A., Principal of the Collegiate Institution, Liverpool."

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I.

EARLY TRAINING OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Special men raised up at special times, and for special work.—Saul of Tarsus; his writings; their character; their influence.—His first appearance in history.—Inquiries as to his early Life.—*The character and position of his father.*—Importance of a father's influence.—Saul's father, a Pharisee.—Though a Jew, a Roman citizen.—*Saul's Birthplace.*—Tarsus, a Grecian city.—*His Training at Jerusalem.*—Gamaliel, a man of candour; of learning; of reverence for law; of zeal against apostates.—The moral character of Saul.—His consent to the death of Stephen.

B

“And the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death.”

ACTS vii. 58—60; viii. 1.



GROUND PLAN OF JERUSALEM.



WHAT a young man, "whose name was Saul," was present at the martyrdom of Stephen, is the first mention in history of a man who ultimately will be found to have exerted as wide an influence on human affairs as any one of the race that shall have lived. "The life of a great man, in a great period of the world's history, is a subject to command the attention of every thoughtful mind." Indeed, there is nothing *more* worthy of consideration than such a life; for there is nothing on which the progress of the world more depends, or which enters more into the great changes that mark the world's history. It is, in a great measure, by raising up and endowing great minds that God secures the advance of human affairs, and the accomplishment of His own plans on earth. All

minds have their origin in God ; and great minds seem to be created by Him as "He creates great oceans, great mountains, great worlds," as proofs of His own greatness,—and under an arrangement, also, not less fitted to the relations of things, and to His own purposes, than are such great oceans, mountains, and worlds. The earth's history has made progress not merely by slow developement, by quiet and steady growth, by the silent accumulations of experience and observation digested into rules to guide and govern the future, but (in connexion with these things) by bringing upon the stage from time to time some mind qualified by high original endowment to give a new impulse to human affairs; to lift up the race to a higher level; and to perform, in a single generation, what might have been otherwise the slow work of centuries, or what might not have been done at all. Some great thought is to be suggested, containing "the seeds of things," some new discovery is to be made, or some new invention to be struck out, which shall at once place the world far in advance of what it was, and shall materially and permanently affect the affairs of mankind. Such a mind is created *for* the occasion ; though to human view it seems to be made *by* the occasion. It appears just at the time when it is needed, accomplishes the work which is needed, and then passes away. But not so the invention, the discovery, the great thought that has marked the age. These become the property of mankind,—the enlarged "capital" which constitutes a basis for the new enterprize of the world.

Saul of Tarsus was one of those men. Christianity needed such a mind; and the world had reached a point where it needed such a mind. Christianity was in such a state that it was *desirable*—may we not say, *indispensable*—that there should be some such mind employed in its propagation and its defence. Saul of Tarsus has exerted more influence in spreading Christianity, in explaining and vindicating its doctrines, in adapting it to the world (if the expression may be allowed) and the world to it, in developing its great principles, in giving to it systematic form, in settling and establishing the faith of mankind for all coming time, than any other of the apostles, or perhaps than all of them combined. One of the entire books of the New Testament—"The Acts of the Apostles"—is to a great extent a mere record of his travels, sermons, and labours; no less than thirteen, and probably fourteen out of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written by him, or at his dictation.

The character of those books, also, is as remarkable as is their relative place in the New Testament. They are not historical;—for the historical records of Christianity—the life of the Author, and the history of the early propagation of Christianity, are found elsewhere. They are not a collection of public discourses, or orations in defence of the new system of religion,—for we have none of those except what are preserved by the fellow-traveller of Paul, in the Acts of the Apostles. They are, in the main, an explanation and defence of the *doctrines* of Christianity; the most full, able, and

comprehensive, that we have in the New Testament. They are an inspired exposition of the great plan of the Author of the Christian system, which He did not Himself choose fully to unfold, but which He left to be explained by him who was called to be a disciple and an apostle after His own death. A full defence and an illustration of what was intended to be accomplished by that death—by the atonement—could not be so well made *before* He died as *afterwards*, since the statement could be made more clear, and could be more easily comprehended after the great facts had occurred on which the statement was to rest, than before. That statement He chose should be made, in the main, by Saul of Tarsus—a man who, so far as we know, had never seen Jesus of Nazareth; a man, therefore, who could testify to nothing from his personal observation; a man who had not had the advantage of the long training, under His own eye, which had been afforded to the immediate apostles whom the Lord Jesus had chosen. It is remarkable that they were not selected to be the instruments in explaining His religion; and yet, perhaps, a reason for this may be found in the character, the training, the learning of Saul of Tarsus.

Certain it is, however the fact may be accounted for, that if we were to take from the New Testament all that was written by Saul of Tarsus, we should remove no small part of that which has gone to form the religious opinions of mankind. Certain it is that we should leave the system as it is in the remaining books of the New Testament, difficult of explanation, arrange-

ment, and comprehension. It could, indeed, by no means be said that the system *could* not be comprehended, or that knowledge enough could not be derived from the Gospels, from the Acts of the Apostles, and from the Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude, to answer the great question, "What shall I do to be saved?" but it would still be true that we should feel the need of some such full and comprehensive exposition of those doctrines as we have now in the epistles of Paul, and that the faith of mankind in the doctrines of Christianity (or the shape which that faith would take) would be far different from what it is now. One thing is clear—that there has been no one of our race who has done so much to determine the *theological* opinions of mankind as Paul has done.

A similar remark may be made in regard to the influence of his opinions on the world at large. He has already influenced more minds than Plato ever did; in the end, he will have influenced far more than Plato, and Bacon, and Kant, and Locke, combined:—than all the Greek, the Persian, the Egyptian, the Roman priests and sages united. In his own day he came in contact on more points with the mind of the world than any other living man. He travelled farther than Herodotus had done; he sought more than any other man the great central points of influence in the world; and at Jerusalem, at Damascus, at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Philippi, at Athens, at Corinth, at Rome, he left impressions of his presence and power such as no other man made, and destined to be of longer con-

tinuance than any opinions which influenced the men of that generation. He came in contact with human bigotry, superstition, philosophy; with the pride, the wickedness, and the voluptuousness of the world; with heathen customs and laws sanctioned by ages; and more than any other man, he contributed to the inauguration of a new system of things, the results of which are to be seen in the yet future history of mankind, extending onward to the consummation of all things.

As he appears before us, as described in Acts vii., he is a young man; and in an attitude fitted to rivet the attention, yet painful to contemplate. It is a scene of fury, rage, and violence. A man guilty of no crime,—who had done nothing to provoke this outburst of wrath,—who had merely stood up for the defence of a new system of religion,—who had said nothing which prophets had not said before,—who had affirmed that he had seen, whether in reality or in fancy, “the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,”—was assailed by a mob (stopping their ears, as if they would not hear such blasphemy), was dragged violently out of the city, and stoned to death. It was the first martyrdom under the Christian religion. Saul of Tarsus was there;—why, we know not. He looked calmly on. He took no part in the affray. He threw not a stone. He said not a word. If he was a young man of violent passions, he restrained them. If he sympathized with these murderers, he said nothing to encourage them. If there was then that in him which at some future time might manifest itself in a form of perse-

cution more violent than this, it was held in check. So far as the record goes, there was not a word, a look, an action, which could lead any man to infer that in a few days he would himself be one of the most furious of persecutors, and would surpass all living men in the energy, the fire, the zeal, and the ability, with which he would endeavour to extinguish the new religion. Yet he was manifestly regarding this deed of violence with interest and with approbation; he approved the *thing*, whatever might be his views of the *mode*. Those who were engaged in the act of persecution knew him. They understood somehow that his heart was with them, so that they might safely lay down their "clothes" at his feet,—the outer "garments" laid aside on such an occasion. Many years afterwards he refers to this scene, and says, as if he had at the time been a *real* participator in the persecution of Stephen, "I also was standing by, *and consenting unto his death*, and kept the raiment of them that slew him" (Acts xxii. 20).

Even if the matter ended here, and we knew no more of that young man, we could not but feel an interest in inquiring, Who was he? what had been his training? what were the principles which he held? why had he such a real and well-understood sympathy with these murderers? and why was he then restrained from expressing that sympathy by joining with them in those deeds of violence and blood? The question also would probably occur to our minds, What would he be *likely* to do, if such scenes were to be often repeated?

What is left to us of his early history, as gathered

from intimations made in his subsequent life, may perhaps enable us to answer each of these questions. Let us place ourselves, therefore, at this "stand-point"—this his first appearance in history—and see if we can find anything in his early training which will account for the fact that he sympathized at heart with this work of death, and nevertheless was restrained then from all active participation in it; which may explain the reason why he so soon became an active persecutor himself; and which, at the same time, under the overruling providence of God, and in the accomplishment of the Divine purposes, was secretly fitting him for the great work that he was to do as the most eminent among the apostles.

There are three things bearing on this subject among the incidental intimations which we have in respect to the early history of Saul, viz.:—the character and position of his father; his own early training in a Grecian city; and his subsequent training under Gamaliel at Jerusalem.

I. *The character and position of his father.* In a speech which he subsequently made in his own defence (Acts xxiii. 6), he says, with emphasis, and as if he attached much importance to the assertion, "I am a Pharisee, *the son of a Pharisee.*" Of his father's name, indeed, we know nothing. Of his rank, as we shall see presently, we have information which may be of importance in determining some things in regard to Paul himself. But we are now to inquire what would be the influence of his being trained up under the guidance of a father who was a strict and conscientious *Pharisee.*

It would, indeed, assist us much in estimating the character of Saul of Tarsus, if some knowledge had been left us of his early training under the influence of a mother. But it is remarkable that in all his writings he makes no mention of her. He speaks of himself as set apart by God "from his mother's womb" (Gal. i. 15, 16); but this is the only allusion to his mother which occurs. We have notices of a sister, for we read of his "sister's son" who rendered him important aid in a time of peril (Acts xxiii. 16), and of some more distant kinsmen who were converted to the Christian faith (Rom. xvi. 7, 11, 21); but we know nothing of that relative upon whose influence on the opinions and conduct so much commonly depends.

It is, doubtless, true that the influence of a mother, as it is the earliest, is also the most material and important of the things which go to form the character of a man. It is, doubtless, true that a large proportion of those who have become eminent for piety and usefulness have been able to trace that effect to the example, the prayers, the instruction, the influence of a pious mother. The instances are innumerable where the influence of *such* early training has gone into the entire subsequent life, and where a mother, kept by her position and the proprieties of life from open and active service in the Church, has sent forth a son as her representative, imbued with her spirit, taught by her life, and converted in answer to her prayers, to accomplish great effects on the theatre of human affairs, giving direction to talent and influence of

inestimable advantage to the Church and the world. It would be very easy to refer to a long catalogue of illustrious names, among the *most* illustrious in the Church,—embracing (if not beginning with) the great name of Augustine,—the value of whose influence, and consequently the value of the influence of a *mother*, no one can now estimate. It is needless to state on what this depends. She, the mother, has the first moulding of the mind of the child. She is constantly with him. She wins his heart by a thousand tender offices and kindnesses. She hears his little stories of trouble when perhaps the father would not; she listens to all his statements if he is injured, or fancies himself to be so; she comforts him in what seem to him to be great sorrows; she opens her ears and her heart to things which, perhaps, even *he* would not regard as of sufficient importance to trouble his father with; she teaches him to kneel down and pray; she watches beside him by day and by night when he is sick; in her heart he has always a sanctuary and a home,—a place to which he may flee, and where he will be sure to find sympathy and pity, whoever may despise him, or wrong him, or ridicule him, or neglect him. We are not to be surprised, therefore, that God has committed early religious training, in a great measure, to a mother; nor that, in so many instances, we can trace eminent piety and usefulness in subsequent life directly to her influence and prayers.

But it is also to be said that there *are* cases where the influence of a father is much more direct and material in forming the character. It may be exerted in a more

advanced period of boyhood, but may be such as effectually to mould all the future of the man. The mind of the father may be more comprehensive and better informed than that of the mother; the elements of his character may be more decided; there may be more that the son would *wish* to incorporate into his own future life. Firm, calm, thoughtful, sagacious, his example comes prominently before the mind of the boy just at the time when the *real* character is forming in reference to the world. The *nursery* character *has* been formed. The lessons of religion in childhood have been learned. For domestic life—for home—for boyhood—the character *is* moulded and matured. But the character requisite for the great world—for the profession—for the warfare of life—for the race of ambition—for wealth—for permanent distinction—is now to be formed, and the boy may now come wholly under the influence of the *father* with reference to the opinions and conduct that shall go to make up that struggle and warfare. If *his* principles coincide with those of the mother, all will be well; if they differ, he may now counteract much or all of her teaching; and even when they *do* coincide, *he* may do more than *she* has done in making the future man what he is to be.

Of the character of Paul's *father* in this respect—whether as coinciding with that of the mother, or not—whether as fitted to carry out the early lessons which she inculcated, or not—whether as being more adapted to mould such a mind as that of Saul of Tarsus when a boy, or not,—we can now know nothing. We know only that

Paul himself referred with emphasis, and, it would seem, with a significant emphasis, to the fact that he was "the son of a Pharisee." What would this lead to? Can we find any influence *from* this which will serve to explain the position in which he first appears?

What was a Pharisee? A man in whom the sentiment of *religion*, or *religiosity*, was most deeply imbedded; a man who was a firm believer in revelation; a man who was a stern advocate for the authority of law, and consequently of government; a man who, by theory at least, was opposed to irregular outbreaks of passion; a man who professed to aim at strict morality, and to be guided by its rules; a man who was a zealous propagandist in religion; a man who was bigoted in his attachment to his own opinions, to the traditions of the fathers, to all that pertained to religion, in its forms, its ceremonies, its doctrines; a man who was intolerant of the opinions of others, but who, if he carried out his principles, would be a persecutor only in accordance with *law*, and not under the force of popular excitement. Such was the paternal influence under which Saul of Tarsus was trained; whom we now see, not actively employed in persecution, but "keeping the raiment" of those who, regardless of all forms of law, were engaged in a furious work of death.

There was another thing pertaining to his father, which may do something to explain what occurred in the subsequent life of Paul. It was the relation which he sustained to the Roman government. Though he was a Jew, most pure in his descent, so that Paul

- could say afterwards of himself that he was "an Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. iii. 6), yet (as was not then uncommon for a foreigner) his father had obtained the rights of a Roman citizen; and therefore, when appealing to the Roman authority as a protection from persecution by his own countrymen, he could say, "I was free born,"—or, I was born with this right of protection by the Roman law, (Acts xxii. 28.) In what way this right had been obtained by his father, whether, as in the case of the "chief captain," to whom Paul appealed in the case just referred to, it had been "purchased," or whether it had been bestowed (as is most probable) on account of some service rendered to the Roman cause during the civil wars, is unknown, and cannot now be determined. In whatever way it had been acquired, it evidently was regarded as an honourable distinction for a Jew; it was a ground of protection in time of danger; and it gave a security (similar to what is now derived from a "passport" in foreign lands) in any part of the Roman empire. Paul more than once appealed to this as a ground of protection; and in virtue of this, he ultimately took his own cause away from Hebrew tribunals, and even from proconsular tribunals, and carried it at once up to the Emperor himself, Acts xvi. 37; xxii. 25—29; xxv. 10, 11.

II. *His birthplace.* Another fact to be noticed as to the training of Saul, and as bearing on the work to which he had been designated in the Divine purposes, was that he received his early education in a Grecian

city. Tarsus in Cilicia, on the banks of the river Cydnus, by which it maintained an extensive commerce, was a distinguished seat of Greek philosophy and literature, and, from the number of its schools and learned men, is ranked by Strabo (xiv. pp. 673, 674), with Athens and Alexandria. Though now a poor and decayed town inhabited by Turks, not numbering more than thirty thousand, yet it was, in the time of Paul's youth, a busy haunt of commerce. St. Basil has recorded that "Tarsus was a point of union for Syrians, Cilicians, Isaurians, and Cappadocians." It was the resort of Greek and Roman merchants; and the youthful Saul, on the wharves of the Cydnus, would mingle with men, in different costumes, from almost every part of the then known world.

He was indeed a Jewish boy, and would doubtless be trained and educated in Jewish schools, and under Jewish influence. But there is another kind of education than that which a boy obtains in school. It is the education of the place; of associates; of playmates; of the language which is spoken around him; of the books which he reads. You cannot separate the one from the other. You cannot tell how much of the one or the other has gone into the character of the educated youth; but often that which is derived from *without* is more important than that which is inculcated at the fire-side and in the school. Under the direction of a father who was a Hebrew, Saul would be taught Hebrew letters and Hebrew learning; in accordance with wise Jewish maxims, he was taught, as we know,

a "trade,"—in his case, that of a "tent-maker" (Acts xviii. 3);¹ but still he was among a Greek people; he would mingle with those who spoke the Greek language; and, directly or indirectly, he would become, to a greater or less extent, acquainted with Greek literature. The ready and appropriate manner in which he afterwards referred to Greek poets (Acts xvii. 28; Titus i. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 33), shows that in early life he was not a stranger to Greek learning.

It is easy to see the bearing of this on his future life as an apostle. The Greek was spoken in almost all the countries in which he was to travel. His public discourses were mostly to be in that language. All that he would write, to be preserved to the Church and to the world, was to be in that language. He was to meet Greeks everywhere; to preach to them, to explain to them, and to defend before them, the new system of religion. He was to stand amidst their sages; he was to "encounter" their philosophers in the very

¹ "It was a custom among the Jews that all boys should learn a trade. 'What is commanded of a father towards his son?' asks a Talmudic writer. 'To circumcise him, to teach him the law, to teach him a trade.' Rabbi Judah saith, 'He that teacheth not his son a trade, doth the same as if he taught him to be a thief;' and Rabban Gamaliel saith, 'He that hath a trade in his hand, to what is he like? he is like a vineyard that is fenced.' And if in compliance with this good and useful custom of the Jews, the father of the young Cilician sought to make choice of a trade, which might fortify his son against idleness or against adversity, none would occur to him more naturally than the profitable occupation of the making of tents, the material of which was hair-cloth, supplied by the goats of his native province, and sold in the markets of the Levant by the well-known name of *cilicium*."—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. p. 46.

seat of their influence and power (Acts xvii. 18); and what is most material, he was (as we have seen) more than any others of the apostles, to make a permanent record of the doctrines of the Christian religion. It cannot have been without design on the part of Him who directs all things by His Providence, that the early years of Saul should have been spent where that language, learning, and philosophy prevailed.

III. There is a third thing to be noticed in regard to the early life of Saul—*his training under Gamaliel.*

He himself tells us (Acts xxii. 3), that he was “*brought up*,”—ἀνατεθραμμένος, nurtured, educated—in Jerusalem “at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers.” This language would imply that he had been placed there at quite an early period of his life. The same thing is implied also in another expression which he uses (Acts xxvi. 4), when he says, “My manner of life *from my youth*”—ἐκ νεότητος—“which was at the first,”—ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, *from the beginning*—“among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews.” At the age of *thirteen*, a Jewish maxim required that children should be taught the “law.”

We know the reason for which he was sent to Jerusalem. It was the act of a Jewish father, a “Pharisee,” designing that his son should be trained up in the most perfect knowledge of the law, and placing him, for that purpose, under the instruction of the most celebrated Jewish teacher of his time,—for Gamaliel was to the Jews what Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and

Donaventura, were among the Schoolmen, and as the titles "Angelic doctor," and "Seraphic doctor," were conferred on such illustrious men, so the title "the Beauty of the Law," had been conferred on Gamaliel. Possibly, also, it might have been the wish of his father to separate him, at the forming period of his life, from influences in a Greek city that might tend to weaken his attachment to the Hebrew faith.

We know what the character of Gamaliel was; and we can estimate what would be the nature of *his* influence on the mind of a young man like Saul of Tarsus.

(*a.*) Gamaliel was a man characterized by candour and coolness of judgment. A remarkable instance of this occurs in his defence of the Apostles, as recorded in Acts v. 34—40. The Sanhedrim were determined to condemn the apostles to death, and it required no small degree of firmness to stand up even to *argue* the case, and to subject oneself to the charge of being their friend; but the character of Gamaliel, his ability, his position, commanded respect; and his counsel was eminently prudent, wise, sensible. He stilled the rage of the Sanhedrim; he secured the discharge of the persecuted men. He was, indeed, a Pharisee. But he was not trammelled by the narrow prejudices of his party. He dared to act from principles of justice and truth. As such a man he had secured in an eminent degree the confidence of his countrymen, and we are not surprised to be told that he was "had in reputation among all the people" (Acts v. 34). He was of the class to whom Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus

belonged:—a man thoroughly religious; thoroughly a Jew; thoroughly, and on principle, a Pharisee, as opposed to other Jewish sects; yet a man of noble principles, and well fitted as an instructor to form a mind to large and liberal views.

(*b.*) Tradition has described him as a man who was distinguished above most of his countrymen by his attainments in Greek learning, and by his respect for it. If so, his own mind would be liberalized by those studies; and the influence of that fact on one who had been trained in his childhood in a Greek city, and who had known something of Greek authors, may be readily imagined. No one can fail to see what may have been the effect of this on one who was to spend so large a portion of his active public life in the very centres of Greek philosophy, learning, and power.

(*c.*) As a Pharisee, most eminent, he had a high regard for *authority*. He was a teacher of law. He was an expounder of law. He was a Jew to the heart's core. But, as opposed to all the excitements of passion, to all tumults springing out of such excitements, to unjust and tyrannical measures prompted by mere will and by popular feeling, he was a man who would stand firm to the principles of law and of order.

(*d.*) He did not, as far as we know, become a Christian. With all his candour, with all his learning, with all that there was of liberal influence on his mind, derived from Greek literature, it could not be affirmed that Gamaliel would never justify persecution. There is even a prayer on record which is supposed to have been

written by him, or to have received his sanction, and which, if it was his, shows that he approved the destruction of apostates.¹ But if ever he were to be engaged in persecution, we know that it would be only as justified by *law*, and conducted by public *authority*.

It is easy to trace the influence of these traits of character on the whole of Saul's public life—alike as a Jewish persecutor, and as a defender of the faith which he at first laboured to destroy. We can see how he would be likely to sympathize in heart with persecutors; how confidence could be reposed in him in that respect; how he would abstain from acts of open violence and lawlessness,—and yet how, under the sanction of law, he might become (as he was) one of the most violent and dreaded of the enemies of the Church.

There is always danger to a young man in regard to his morals when, for the sake of education, or in the pursuit of wealth or honour, he leaves the restraints and influences of the domestic circle. Saul of Tarsus would be exposed to such perils in leaving the home of his

¹ "Lightfoot's *Exercitations on Acts v. 34*; Otho's *Lexicon Rabbinicum*, sub voc. Gamaliel. The prayer is given in Mr. Horne's *Introduction to the Scriptures*, 8th ed. vol. iii. p. 261, as follows: 'Let there be no hope to them who apostatise from the true religion; and let heretics, how many soever they be, all perish as in a moment. And let the kingdom of pride be speedily rooted out and broken in our days. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, who destroyest the wicked, and bringest down the proud.' This prayer is attributed by some to 'Samuel the Little,' who lived in the time of Gamaliel. There is a story that this Samuel the Little was the Apostle Paul himself, 'Paulus' meaning 'little,' and 'Samuel' being contracted into 'Saul.' See Basnage, bk. iii. ch. i. §§ 12, 13."—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. p. 56.

childhood; in being separated from a father's presence and immediate authority; in visiting even Jerusalem. Many young men, religiously trained, are ruined in such changes; but *more* young men—great as is the absolute number of those who are ruined—are safe. Their early virtue, their religious principles, their respect for law and for religion, are successful and triumphant in the new scene of trial. Saul of Tarsus was of that number. In his old age, and when he regarded it as possible that he would soon be put to death,—looking back to this period,—he could say of his moral character all through his youth, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, BLAMELESS" (Phil. iii. 6).

Such had been the influence of his early training. Such was he, as he now appears in the persecution of Stephen;—a Jew; a Pharisee, a young man, conscientious, religious, moral; one restrained now, as he ever would be afterwards, from deeds of lawless violence, yet ready to engage most furiously in persecution whenever it could be done under the authority of law. It was not so done in the case of Stephen, for this was the violence of a mob; yet his *heart* was there. In how many things done by others, of which we secretly approve, are we restrained from active participation, either by prudence, or the principles of our education, or because they are not done in the *manner* which we approve; and yet *our heart is there!* The raiment of the evil-doers would be safe in our keeping!

II.

SAUL, A PERSECUTOR.

Sanction obtained.—Young men less apt to persecute than the old are.—
Reasons for this.—Saul an exception.—Persecution at Jerusalem.—Intended persecution at Damascus.—Persecutions common to science and religion.—*Causes* of persecution: war of opinions; existence of vested interests; depraved passions of the human heart; natural aversion to holiness.—*Effects* of persecution: nothing good or true is destroyed; it serves as a test; it works out adequate results.

“ And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.”

ACTS ix. 1, 2.



MODERN JERUSALEM.



HE rage of Saul of Tarsus in persecution was like pent-up fires when they burst forth, or floods that break through their barriers. No sooner could the sanction of law be obtained for the persecution of Christians, than he became the most furious of persecutors.

From his character, and from his conduct in regard to the death of Stephen, we have reason to believe that he *never* engaged in the work of persecution without the approval of those in power, and without a commission to do it. Thus, when it is said Acts viii. 3 (*before* he had received a sanction to prosecute the work in *Damascus*,) that he "made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison," it is fair to infer that he had obtained leave from the public autho-

rities to do so. In fact, this is more than implied in the language used—"committed them to prison,"—since it cannot be supposed that he would do this on his private responsibility. It is certain that when he entered on his great work of persecution,—when he went forth to a foreign city to lay waste the Church formed there,—he had the express sanction of the high priest.

We are now, therefore, to contemplate Saul of Tarsus as a persecutor under the sanction and authority of law.

He was a *young* man. He had finished his education, and was about to enter on the public work of life. We may find something of interest in this fact itself. That a young man, an educated young man, should engage in the work of persecution strikes us at once as contrary to what we expect to find at that period of life, and in one that had been brought under the liberalizing influence of education. It is at the same time anomalous, unnatural, and shocking; and it is all the worse, when by a vigorous self-discipline such an one restrains himself from the outbreak of passion until he can give indulgence to it under the forms and the protection of law. Young men, if I apprehend human nature aright, are not as likely to be engaged in persecution for opinion's sake as those of more advanced years. In them we naturally expect a frank concession of the right of others to think for themselves, and to utter freely their sentiments. We look for generous impulses; for that which is noble and magnanimous; for a readiness to fly to the aid of the injured; for high and chivalrous deeds, even verging on disregard of law, and

outside of settled creeds, if so the wronged may be rescued, and truth may be advanced. We expect to find them in the foremost ranks in the defence of great rights, and ranging freely the regions of imagination beyond the fixed boundaries of thought, if perchance beyond these limits of creeds and systems they may find new and unexplored spheres of truth,—as the young are in advance in visiting unknown lands and seas, if they may make new discoveries there,—disregarding the old barriers within which all is explored, if perchance they may lay open something new to mankind;—as the astronomer in a clear night directs his glass into regions of space beyond the defined bounds of the universe, if perchance he may discover a planet, star, or nebula on which the eye of man has never looked.

In religion, as in other things, we are not much surprised when we find men advanced, or advancing in life, intolerant in regard to the opinions of others, or disposed to repress freedom of inquiry and of speech, even by persecution. Candour and liberality are not always taught by age; for age is conservative, and may be narrow and bigoted. The ideas of such men are fixed, and are commonly unchangeable. Their opinions have often been adopted after much examination, and when they seemed to themselves to have the whole field before them. They have grown with their growth, and strengthened with their strength. They are a part or themselves; are what they themselves are; are all that is now of value to them. Too old, or too feeble, or too much in love with ease and

repose, they become incapable of pursuing inquiries into truth, or become envious of those who possess superior energy and power, and who purpose to carry the torch of inquiry into regions which their fathers never explored. Moreover, they do not keep up with the world in the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge; they fall behind; they have not before their minds the facts and principles on which a new generation is forming its opinions; and they regard that as heresy which may be only the natural result of enlarged thought, and an attempt to adjust the old forms of belief to new disclosures of truth. Pride, bigotry, obstinacy, envy, ignorance, may combine to induce them to look with distrust on new views, and to feel that such as advance those views are showing them personal disrespect, or doing them a personal wrong. They have not themselves the patience which they once had in the discussion of a new subject, or in examining opinions long held in the world; nor, as they advance in years, have they the fondness which they once had for new opinions—opinions verging on heresy or tending to paradox; nor do they now, as they once did, aim to secure a reputation for independence of thought by attacking the opinions which are commonly held by mankind. They are also more liable to be irritated by opposition or contradiction than they formerly were, for at their time of life they desire not to have the foundations of the belief which they cherish, and on which they have built their personal hopes in regard to the future, called in question. Unable, moreover, or indisposed so to apply their minds as

to keep pace with the progress of all around them, or to appreciate the real advances which are being made, they look upon every new idea as a dangerous innovation, and often regard the waning of their own power, and the inevitable decline of their own influence, as an evidence that the world is going backward; while the views and feelings which spring out of these circumstances of declining years, they mistake for a love of pure and unchangeable standards of belief. Hence the almost universal opinion among aged men that the world is growing worse,—that superstition, crime, and error are more prevalent than in their early years.

Young men are often sceptical, or semi-sceptical; they are often unsettled in their opinions; they question with a daring spirit the correctness of doctrines long held to be true; they employ themselves (and sometimes with a hazardous proximity to error and unbelief) in adjusting the new discoveries in science to the received articles of the creed; they start new and bold theories, and in these ways they seem to be engaged in pulling down what the world with infinite toil has reared. But the very nature of this process tends to make one young man liberal towards another; for he cannot deny to others the liberty he claims for himself—nor, in persecuting them, can he engage in a practical warfare with himself. Old men are confirmed believers or unbelievers; and in them is concentrated no small part of the bigotry and illiberality of the world. The Sanhedrim at Jerusalem that condemned the Saviour was composed in a great part of the “elders” of the nation—aged men. The

“Council” that condemned Stephen was made up of the same old men; the General of the Inquisition, and the principal functionaries of the “holy office,” were commonly men of advanced years; and, in all ages, from the same source originates most of the opposition which is made to new suggestions in theology, and most of the alarm which is expressed in view of changes in the forms of established belief.

Yet few men, young or old, have been so furious in persecution as was Saul of Tarsus; and the fact that he, so young, entered on the work of persecution in the *manner* in which he did—“breathing out threatenings and slaughter”—is one of the things that strike us as most remarkable in his career. He “made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women,” he tore them from their homes, and “committed them to prison” (Acts viii. 3). He engaged in this work under the influence of *conscience*, as a service which he felt he was bound to render to God, putting forth all his energies because he thought that he “*ought* to do many things”—these things—“contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts xxvi. 9). He “punished” that is, scourged them “in every synagogue”—in the very places of public worship; he used every effort to make them “blaspheme” or revile the sacred name of their Redeemer; he became “exceedingly mad against them,” and drove them from town to town—away from their own homes “to strange cities;” he was present when they were sentenced to death, and he “gave” his “voice against them” (Acts xxvi. 9—11).

Three times the fact is especially adverted to, that his fury raged against *women* as well as men (Acts viii. 3; ix. 2; xxii. 4), thus making war on all that is tender and delicate in domestic relations, and spreading everywhere the terror of his name. It was not without reason that, in later years, he remembered with deep repentance how he had "persecuted the church of God and wasted it" (Gal. i. 13; I Tim. i. 13; I Cor. xv. 9).

The Sanhedrim at Jerusalem claimed jurisdiction in religious matters over the Jews in foreign climes. In Damascus the number of Jews was very great; and as the Christians on the persecution of Stephen had been scattered abroad everywhere, it was possible, nay, probable, that some of them had fled to that city; and having fled there, it was possible, nay, probable, that they would spread their sentiments there as they had done in Jerusalem. It was important to prevent this, and Saul obtained a commission to do it. Judæa and expiring Judaism had no agent who would be more likely to accomplish the task.

The manner in which new views and opinions in philosophy and religion have been received in our world is one of the most remarkable things in history. The tears, the public tears of Pericles, the dictator of Athens, were necessary to save a feeble woman, Aspasia, suspected of philosophy; but all his eloquence could not save his friend Anaxagoras, who was condemned to imprisonment (which was changed in old age to perpetual exile) for having taught that there was an intel-

ligent Cause of all things. Socrates was persecuted, and condemned to death, for teaching the same thing, and for (as was alleged) "corrupting the youth of Athens" by his views of religion. Aristotle had difficulty in saving his own life, and fled in a stealthy manner to Chalcis, in order, as he said, to save the Athenians a new crime against philosophy. Plato was twice thrown into prison, and once sold as a slave. (*Cousin*, i. 305). In later times, Galileo was imprisoned for maintaining that the sun is the centre of the system of the universe, and that the earth and other planets revolve around it. The Saviour of the world was put to death on a cross, and His followers were compelled to flee from their country for announcing that fact there, and were subjected to every form of torture for announcing it in the lands to which they were driven. In Jerusalem, Derbe, Lystra, Philippi; in the Coliseum and the gardens of Nero at Rome; in the vallies of Piedmont, in the Netherlands, Spain, Venice, Italy, France, England, Scotland, Goa,—in all these places the pure religion of Christ has somehow encountered the opposition of men, and secured a triumph only as the result of a baptism of blood and fire.

In every case of persecution, whether in science or religion, the CAUSES are to be sought in something peculiar in the views advanced, as bearing on received opinions and on the state of the world; but there are general principles involved, which demand only a slight modification to enable us to understand why *Christianity*

has been, from the beginning, compelled to make its way through scenes of suffering.

(1.) There is, first, *the war of opinion*; the conflict of sentiments; the tenacity with which men hold their views; and the feelings which are aroused when, from any cause those views are attacked. A man's opinions are a part of himself, and they become as dear to him as life or liberty. They constitute for all valuable purposes, and in the estimation of his friends and of the world, *the man*. They are the measure of his reputation and of his influence. They are the result of all his experience, his studies, his observation in the world; they are what he has accumulated in his progress through life that is of special and permanent value. They are what gives him a standing among his neighbours. To attack *them* is, therefore, to attack himself; to overthrow *them* is to take away all which he has that constitutes his claim to notice while living, or to remembrance when dead.

In the nature of the case, therefore, all new views in philosophy or religion encounter whatever there may be in the community as the result of experience, thought, study. Hence, the progress of opinion is slow, and new sentiments make their way only by many conflicts.

This remark has additional force, if the matter in any way affects important interests, and especially if it is connected with *religion*, and involves our conscience and our immortal hopes. To attack such things is to assail that which must be dearest of all to the heart of man; for to destroy or change opinions long cherished,

on which the hope of eternal happiness is founded, may be to leave man in a world indisputably wretched with no hope of a better. Religious opinions, therefore, have been among the slowest to make progress in the world; the strife in regard to these has been more bitter than in regard to any others; and freedom of speech on religious subjects has been among the last of the victories secured by the conflicts of past ages.

(2.) There are *vested interests* connected with opinions. There are institutions sustained by law, which are founded on forms of belief; there are endowments which are identified with modes of faith; there are orders of men whose position and influence are dependent on the received articles of a creed; there are customs and usages connected with society that grow out of forms of doctrine; there is often a connexion between Religion and the State so close that to assail the one is construed as rebellion against the other.

All the religions of ancient, as well as most of the religions of modern times, were sustained by law. One nation indeed recognized the religions of other nations, and the gods of all people might find a place in the Pantheon; but then it was a great principle that while each country recognized the religion of other lands, it allowed no attack on its own. When, therefore, Christianity, in violation of this universally admitted principle, attacked and denounced all forms of idolatry, that is, all the religions of the world,—when it refused to recognize *any* of the Pagan gods as entitled to homage,—when it demanded practically that every

altar, Jewish and Pagan, should be overthrown,—that every temple of worship should be closed, that every fire on Jewish and heathen altars should be put out for ever, that every priest, Jewish, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, should be disrobed, and be no longer acknowledged as an authorized minister of heaven,—that augurs, soothsayers, and vestal virgins should be dismissed for ever,—it arrayed against itself all the malice of an enraged and mighty priesthood, and all the power of the State ; and the result is well known.

(3.) There were, and have been, few of the false religions of the world which did not, under the sanction of religion, sustain, and pander to, some of the foulest *corruptions of the human heart*. There is scarcely a form of human passion, however debasing or vile, which has not been countenanced by the forms of religion, and the indulgence of which has not been connected with the prevalence of an existing form of worship. One leading feature of the plan of that mighty Agent who has tyrannized over mankind—the Prince of darkness—has been to secure the sanctions of religion for the indulgence of gross and licentious passions ; and to do this, so as not to shock the moral sense of mankind, has been the consummation of the highest forms of superstition that the world has known. This purpose had a foundation and a form under every Pagan system of worship ; it has had its culmination in that corrupt and debased Christianity that has spread its influence over a large part of the earth. Hence to attack vice, as true Christianity always does, is to

attack the system which upholds it ; to endeavour to carry a pure morality over the world was to array against itself the power of all the religions of the earth.

(4) To all this, another cause—more potent than all these, and giving strength to all these—is to be added. It is undeniable—(History will not allow us to deny it any more than will the Bible)—that there is in the human heart by nature a fixed *aversion* to such *holiness* as that which enters into the character of God, and such as He requires of man ; that the scheme of salvation by a Redeemer is repulsive to the mass of mankind ; that the preaching of the Cross is an “offence” to one class, and a “stumbling-block” to another ; that the doctrines of human depravity, of salvation by grace, of justification by faith, of a just and changeless future retribution, grates hard on the natural feelings of mankind ; that the requirement to renounce the world and to lead a holy life—a life of prayer, and self-denial, and benevolence—finds no response in the unconverted human heart ; that to demand of men, as the first condition of eternal life, that they shall renounce all confidence in their own morality and good works, give up all trust in their own righteousness, and sit down humbly at the foot of the cross, depending solely for salvation on the blood of One who was crucified, is to array against those who promulgate this doctrine all that there is of accumulated self-love as derived from a life of outward integrity, or from dependence on the forms of religion, and all that there is of pride in the human heart.

It is not difficult, therefore, to account for the fact of persecution as pertaining to the history of the world; it is not difficult to see how all these things were concentrated in such a mind as that of Saul of Tarsus.

It is a very interesting and material inquiry in regard to the real progress which the world has made in morals, in liberty, in philosophy, in religion,—What has, on the whole, been the EFFECT of persecution on these great interests? Has it, on the whole, tended to retard the progress of society, or has it been connected with its advancement? Would the world have been in as good a condition now, if persecutions had never occurred, as it actually is at the present time? Has persecution, with all that there has been of pain, and sorrow, and tears, and scenes of horror, been really a calamity to mankind—to the race at large—for which there has been no adequate compensation? Could those things which have been secured *by* it have been as soon or as well secured, if secured at all, *without* it? Has the world gained enough in liberty and religion to be an equivalent for all the cost?

The world is now old enough, and the results have been sufficiently marked, to enable us, in part at least, to answer these questions.

(1.) It has become, as the result of these trials, a settled principle that *nothing* which is good and true can be *destroyed* by persecution, but that the effect ultimately is to establish more firmly, and to spread more widely, that which it was designed to overthrow. There

is, manifestly, some principle in human nature which leads men to look with attention and favour on that which is persecuted and opposed; there is a deep conviction that a right has been violated; there is that which awakens the original sympathies of our nature in favour of the suffering and the wronged; there is something in the patient endurance of the persecuted which leads men to inquire in regard to the sentiments held; there is something, be it what it may, which makes the persecuted more firmly attached to their principles, and more eloquent in their defence. It is not known that any opinions on any subject have been driven from the world by persecution; or that any doctrine, on the whole, has spread less extensively as the consequence of an attempt to suppress it by violence. It has long since passed into a proverb that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." In a special manner the principle has been settled in regard to Christianity, that it cannot be driven from the world by persecution. Imperial power has done all that it could do to destroy it; every device of human ingenuity has been resorted to in order to extinguish it; there can be no new engines to prolong torture, or to render it acute, more ingenious and effective than those which have already been employed; and it may be assumed now—it *is* assumed—that if Christianity is to become extinct in the world, it must be by some other means than by persecution.

(2.) In like manner, persecution becomes a *test* of the reality of religion; of its reality as a system; of its reality in regard to the sufferers. It is not, indeed, a

direct demonstration of the truth of religion. It is undeniable that the advocates of other systems than Christianity have borne persecution patiently. Pagans, Philosophers, Mohammedans, Buddhists, sceptics, infidels, atheists, have adhered to their opinions on the rack or at the stake. Does this prove that their opinions were well founded, and that they were suffering for the truth, or that all other systems were false but theirs? These questions may be answered in the negative; and yet it may be still true that the mass of men will somehow see in the endurances of Christian martyrs an argument for the Divine origin of their religion. It was no forced or unphilosophical utterance, when the Roman centurion said, in view of the sufferings of Jesus of Nazareth, "Truly this was the Son of God." His manner of suffering was so in accordance with what might be expected in a favourite of the Most High; His sufferings were so in unison with His teachings and His life, that the impression was one which would force itself upon a candid and liberal mind, that all this could be accounted for only by the supposition that He was what He claimed to be. The history of the Christian martyrs has impressed the world with the same conviction in regard to the truth of their religion. The number has been so great,—they have borne their sufferings so patiently,—they have been persons of so varied character, rank, age, sex, condition, yet all manifesting the same spirit,—they have met death so calmly,—so many of them have been distinguished for intelligence,—and so many of them, in the early stages of martyr-

dom, were simple *witnesses* of what they affirmed to be true, and bore testimony to what is properly the subject of testimony (*facts* which they said they had observed—that the general impression on mankind is, and must be, that sufferings so varied, so protracted, so meekly borne, could be only in the cause of truth, and that beneath all this there *was* truth.

(3.) Once more; the results of persecution are *worth* all which they cost. The results of the imprisonment of Galileo are more than a compensation for all that he suffered. The results of the discovery of America are more than a compensation to the world for all that Columbus endured in arousing the world to a belief that there might be such a “new world;” for all the perils of a voyage in unknown seas; for his struggling with sailors in mutiny; for the denial of his rights; and for his neglect and poverty, after he had disclosed the new continent to mankind. The sacrifices made at Bunker Hill, at the Valley Forge, and in all the perils and privations of the war of Independence, have been already more than repaid in the prosperity of this great nation. Thus, also, the happiness which has been conferred on the world by Christianity since the fires of persecution were first kindled against it, and that which the world will yet enjoy when it shall be diffused over all the earth—the blessings which it scatters here, and the bliss of heaven hereafter—have been and will be, more than a compensation for all the sufferings of all the martyrs.

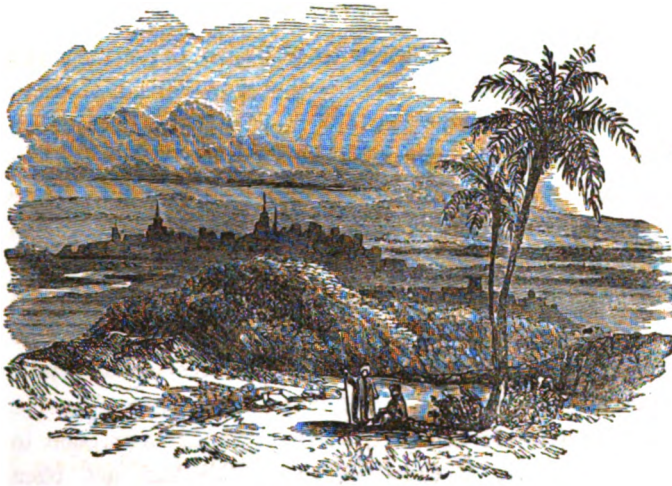
III.

CONVERSION OF SAUL OF TARSUS.

Conversion of great minds and weak.—Saul of Tarsus converted.—*Undeniableness* of the change.—*Nature* of it.—A new direction given to the character.—As before, so after conversion, Saul evinced respect for law; conscientiousness; zeal for God; desire of proselytism; energy of purpose.—*Sincerity* of the change; evinced by sacrifices involved.—*Manner* of the change.—The narrative accepted by Christians.—Answers to sceptics.—Not a falsehood; not an imposture; not fanaticism; not enthusiasm; not self-deception; not desire for posthumous fame.

“And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying 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: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, What wilt thou have me to do? . . . Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.”

ACTS ix. 1—20.



DAMASCUS.

THE conversion of a great mind may be an event more important than the capture of a city, or the founding of an empire. The city may not be materially affected in its order or its prosperity by a change of masters; and the empire that is founded will decay.

It is mind that effects the great changes in human things; and the influence of a single mind may be such that, while all other things change and decay, *that* will never die. The cities and empires founded by Semiramis, Cyrus, Alexander, Tamerlane, have long since ceased to exist; the influence of Plato still lives.

Changes of a radical character in truly great minds do not often occur; perhaps rarely, except on the subject of religion,—or that which constitutes a transition from sin to holiness; from infidelity to faith; from a

high purpose of ambition to a desire of serving the Redeemer; from schemes of conquest to plans of charity; from some absorbing worldly passion to zeal for doing good. Augustine, Chrysostom, Origen, Martin Luther, Henry Martyn, furnish examples of such changes. They were men, who in worldly pursuits would have been great, but who abandoned what was brilliant in prospect for another service—a service which equally demanded all their powers; a service which (while such was no longer the leading purpose of their lives) *would* make them widely known,—*would* make them “great” in the new department of effort, as they would have been in another sphere if their course of life had not been changed.

There are minds, indeed, of a lower order, in relation to which we can argue almost nothing from any change, except their own imbecility, flexibility, weakness. There are minds that are naturally weak, vacillating, unsettled; with no strength of purpose or character; with no great aim in life; with no strong prejudices of education or of feeling to be conquered; with no deeply-rooted principles to resist any change. Such minds are swayed, as the tops of the ears of corn, and the surface of the lake are moved, by every passing breeze. The fickle multitude—the masses of men—are often thus swayed. Sudden excitement, popular frenzy, bursts of passion, eloquent appeals, move them easily in one direction, to be moved as easily in another, when the gale shall set from an opposite quarter. A change in such minds on the subject of religion may be real, and

may be of infinite and eternal importance to the individual; but we draw no great conclusions from the turning of such minds in regard to the falsehood of the system abandoned, or the truth of that which is adopted. We may not doubt its genuineness; we may not be disposed to underrate its value; but we do not see in it an *argument* as to the truth or falsehood of the opinions abandoned or of those embraced.

It is not so when a change, radical, entire, permanent, occurs in one of great strength of character, of high intellectual endowments, of fixed principles; in one who has established a reputation; in one who has a high social position; in one to whom an honourable career lies open; in one who sees before him in the line which he is pursuing what would gratify any purpose of ambition,—but who voluntarily abandons all this for a life of poverty, shame, self-sacrifice, peril, and toil, with no hope of an earthly reward. Such a change in the governing purpose of the life (especially if it involves persecution, contempt, suffering; if it demands a breaking away from old friends and old pursuits; if it is accompanied with a radical revolution of character and life), from a career of vice to a career of virtue,—from harshness, severity, and cruelty, to gentleness, benignity, and charity,—cannot but arrest attention as to its cause. Hence it is natural and not unphilosophical, to ask what is the force of an argument derived from the fact of *such* a change in regard to the falsehood of that which is given up, and the truth of that which is embraced.

Such changes of life and opinion have an important

effect on the world. They are not like *death*, which simply arrests influence by removing the man; they are the transfer of so much power to the other side of an "equation." A commander, if killed in battle, is simply *removed*. As his country loses nothing but the withdrawing of so much talent and generalship from its armies (though that may be much), so the enemy gains nothing by any new accession of experience and generalship to its own side. If, however, such a man abandons his standard; if he proves false to his country; if, from being loyal, he becomes disloyal; if he goes over and joins the ranks of the foe, his country not merely loses his service, as it would if he had been shot down, but the enemy gains that which may decide the battle, and determine the war. Saul of Tarsus *might* have been struck dead by the flash which blinded him, and then there would have been only so much withdrawn from the persecuting power. But he was not killed; he was carried over "to the other side of the equation." Luther *might* have been struck dead by the flash which killed his companion by his side, instead of being convicted of sin, as he was, by that display of Divine power and sovereignty; and then there would have been simply but just so much undeveloped talent withdrawn from the world. He became a Christian man; and all his influence and power were transferred to Christianity.

Saul of Tarsus entered on his career with uncommon advantages. He was endowed by nature with talents fitted to conduct him to eminence in any cause in which

he might embark. He was a bold, ardent, impetuous, independent, indefatigable young man. He was a patriot in the highest sense in which that term could be used in Judea. He possessed uncommon talent for reasoning; he was capable of the severest invective; he had the power of withering sarcasm; he understood the force of cutting irony; he was able to soar into the highest regions of imagination; and though with some decided defects as a public speaker, yet so eloquent was he that he was numbered by Longinus among the celebrated Grecian orators. He was a *Jew* to the heart's core; an Hebrew of the Hebrews, body and soul; as bigoted and furious as any Jew ever was. He was a religionist of the highest order; and never had the sentiment of *religion*, as he understood it, acquired a more stern dominion over a man's soul, than over his. He was a young man of irreproachable morals, true to the highest standards of virtue which had then been set up in the world.

The influence of such a man must have been vast. His ambition, his energy, and his eloquence must have placed his name among those whose lives have most deeply affected, for good or for evil, the destiny of mankind. Amidst the ruins of the empire of Herod the Great,—the fragments of empire over which he once ruled, now crushed beneath the Roman yoke,—and amidst the revolutions which were occurring in the Roman empire itself, there was as fine a field for the display of talent as the world has ever furnished. Being a Roman citizen, every department of effort and of

influence was open to him; and as Agrippa, a Jew, had played his part in the conflicts of Octavianus, Lepidus, and Antony, no one can tell what part Saul of Tarsus might have been destined to fill; for we have no reason to suppose that he would have hesitated to avail himself of the opportunities for distinction which were thus accessible to him.

At the time to which our attention is now called, he had embarked on a great enterprize, in his view essential to the preservation of true religion, and to the salvation of his country. A new religion had appeared,—a religion which, in the apprehension of such a mind as that of Saul, was not to be despised. It had elements of greatness and power which were not to be overlooked. The highest authority in the nation had been called into requisition to suppress it; the Author of the new religion had been put to death; the Sanhedrim had prohibited the promulgation of its doctrines in the most solemn manner. But in vain. It gained strength by every new attempt to crush it. It threatened the extinction of the national religion; the entire abolition of the sacred rites of the temple; the subversion of laws and customs hallowed for ages.

Saul saw whither all this was tending, and his great powers were summoned to the suppression of the new faith. A blow had been struck in Jerusalem by the death of Stephen, and by the persecutions connected with that. The “disciples” had been “scattered abroad,” and it was hoped that the “pestilent heresy” might be suppressed altogether there. Yet a light, lurid like a

meteor, was seen to gleam in the North. From Damascus, whither the new doctrines had been carried, they might spread as well as from Jerusalem; and it was of importance to suppress them there also. Saul was commissioned to do it, and was on his way to carry out the purpose.

Suddenly, according to his own account of the matter, a light appeared in his path, above the brightness of the sun. It bewildered him; blinded him; smote him to the earth. A voice addressed him, "Why persecutest thou me?" It said, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 14—18.)

This is the brief account in the New Testament of one of the most remarkable changes which ever occurred in a human mind, and connected materially—perhaps, essentially—with one of the most marked and important of the revolutions that have taken place in the progress of human events,—the establishment of the Christian religion in the world. A time had arrived when, on the supposition that the religion was true, it had become necessary to summon some such well-

endowed and disciplined mind to accomplish the object contemplated by it.

There is every mark of reality, genuineness, and thoroughness in this conversion, whatever may be said about the cause of it—a point which we shall afterwards have occasion to examine. I mean, when I speak of the “reality, the genuineness, and the thoroughness,” of his conversion, that it was sincere; that it was not feigned. No one who gives credit to the history at all, or to any history, can doubt that a *change* occurred, in Saul’s views, purposes, feelings, and aims, and that it extended its influence over his entire subsequent life. He ceased to be a persecutor; he became the friend of the cause which he had persecuted. He sought no longer to destroy the religion which he had opposed; but he laboured most earnestly to spread it abroad throughout the world. The injury which he had done to the cause he endeavoured to counteract. He could not indeed undo the wrong that he had done; he could not bring back to life those who had been put to death when he “gave” his “voice against them;” he could not blot out the record of the sorrows which he had caused, and the tears which he had made to flow. When murder has been committed, no change in the murderer can recall the murdered man to life; when sentiments of infidelity have been scattered abroad, no act of the penitent sceptic can gather them up again; when morals and faith have been corrupted, no tears, no efforts of him who has done it, can rescue and restore the victims; when innocence has been ruined, the con-

version of the betrayer and the seducer does not recall the seduced and the wronged from the low haunts of vice, or from the grave. But the penitent and regenerated man may, in some degree, repair the evil which he has done to *society*. Saul did this; he lived to diffuse the Christian religion with a zeal corresponding to that which he had exerted to destroy it. And this fact is as clearly attested as any other fact of ancient history. That Cæsar crossed the Rubicon, or fell in the Senate House, is not more certainly established than this.

The question as to the sincerity, the reality, the genuineness of the change involves *two* inquiries:—What *was* the change itself? What was the *evidence* that it was real, genuine, sincere?

(1.) What *was* the change? It was substantially that which always occurs in conversion. It was a change in the governing purpose of the soul; in the great aim and object of the life;—a change of the will, of the heart, of the affections. It was a change from a hatred of the new system, to the love of it; from a rejection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, to a cordial reception of Him as such; from trust in his own righteousness for salvation, to reliance on the merits of the Saviour; from zeal in serving God under Judaism, to zeal in serving Him under the form of Christianity; from pride and self-confidence, to humility and a renunciation of self; from the bigoted and narrow spirit of a Pharisee, to a love and charity which embraced all mankind, because all were made of “one blood,” and because Christ had died for all.

It is material in understanding this case in itself, and as an illustration of the nature of regeneration or the new birth, to remark that the change was in the *will*, the *affections*, the governing purpose of the man; not immediately on his intellect, his mental capacity, his distinguishing characteristics. In conversion, the same great elements of character, the same mental peculiarities, remain as before. It is only the *new direction* which the powers take that constitutes the change. The individuality of every man that has been converted is preserved; the mental characteristics are retained; the constitutional powers are *intensified*, and turned in a new direction. John and Peter, Luther and Melancthon, carry with them into their religious life what distinguished them in their former life. From what Luther and Melancthon were as Christians, there is no difficulty in determining what they had been in their mental characteristics before they became such. Of Saul of Tarsus, therefore, as of every other man who is converted, we have two views of constitutional character, or of the individual,—that before his conversion, and that after his conversion. From the one we could anticipate what the other *would* be; from the other we could *re-construct* his character, and show what he *was*, as the naturalist can the animal from a single fossil bone. Of all which characterized Paul as an apostle, we should find the elements in his character as a Pharisee and as a persecutor. In all (save the heart, the purpose, the will), that made him great as a defender and propagator of Christianity, we should find that

which would have made him great in acting his part on the theatre of human affairs, if he had lived and died a Pharisee.

(*a.*) There was, before his conversion, a stern regard for law—a respect for law so great that it would not permit him to take an active part even in persecution unless under legal sanction and authority. That regard for law ran through all his life as a Christian apostle—in his maintenance of his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts xvi. 37; xxii. 25; xxv. 11); in his demanding of the Jewish high-priest that he should not cause him to be smitten contrary to the law (Acts xxiii. 3); in his willingness to be punished—even to *die*—if he had been an offender (Acts xxv. 11); and in the respect which he everywhere and always enjoined for civil rulers, and civil government, even when Nero was on the throne (Rom. xiii. 1—7).

(*b.*) There was, before his conversion, a most rigid conscientiousness—that conscientiousness which attended him even in the work of persecution, when he “verily thought” that he “*ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts xxvi. 9); which justified him in saying, when arraigned before the Sanhedrim, “I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts xxiii. 1); and which enabled him, even after his conversion, to say of his early life, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phil. iii. 6). So thoroughly was this conscientiousness carried into his life *after* his conversion that he could say to his countrymen, “And

herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts xxiv. 16), and could make the solemn asseveration in the review of his life,—“For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world" (2 Cor. i. 12).

(c.) There was before his conversion a zeal for God,—a zeal which made him willing to make any sacrifice to promote what he regarded as the Divine honour. The change in his conversion was not in the *intensity* of his zeal; it was in its *direction*. Under both systems there was the same underlying constitutional ardour,—an ardour which might, indeed, become under either system more intense, and which was *in* either, so intense and characteristic that knowing what it was in the one, we might infer what it would be in the other.

(d.) As a Pharisee, there was, before his conversion, an intense spirit of propagandism—for this was of the very essence of the religion of the Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte (Matt. xxiii. 15). After his conversion, this also took another direction; his zeal for propagating the new faith sprang from a higher motive, and he had the consciousness that this would be for a better influence on the character; but there was still the same earnest desire to bring men to the same faith with himself;—a conformity to be secured by all his powers and endowments, and by every measure of effort which he was capable

of putting forth. There was essentially the same man, acting in a different form.

(*e.*) Paul was, before his conversion, daring, energetic, ready for any lofty enterprize; a man who would shrink from no danger, and be turned back by no obstacles in accomplishing an object; a man who would encounter any peril, by land or by sea, in carrying out his purposes. We recognize the same man, with his energies turned into a new channel, when we hear him recount the events and endurances of his life (2 Cor. xi. 24—27).

(2.) If we are asked, then, what *evidence* we have that there was really such a change in the will, the purpose, the affections of the man, as might be properly designated by the words *conversion, regeneration, a new creature, a new man*, we do not point to any thing in his mental characteristics, but to the course of his subsequent life. How do we judge, in any such case, of a man's sincerity, and of the genuineness of his professions? There is, there can be, no better criterion than when he sacrifices much by the change; when he gives up brilliant prospects with nothing now before him as an equivalent; when he is compelled to part with old friends, or to make bitter foes of them; when he abandons all that had been instilled into his mind by a careful education; when he departs from the sentiments cherished by father, mother, friends; when he submits to poverty, contempt, and scorn; when he exposes himself to fines, or scourging, or imprisonment; when his career is to be one of peril and toil, with no

prospect of earthly recompense ; when death, perhaps in its most horrid form, is to be the consequence of the change.

Saul of Tarsus gave up hopes and prospects perhaps as brilliant as any ever cherished by an aspiring young man ; he subjected himself to the bitter hatred and scorn of his kindred ; he embraced a religion then the most unpopular of any on the earth ; he exposed himself to every form of persecution ; he became poor, an outcast, and a wanderer ; he set before him one great object of life—if “by all means he might save some ;” he shunned no danger, was appalled by no obstacle, asked no reward, was checked by no opposition ; he avowed his principles everywhere,—seeking to assert and defend them in places of intelligence, influence, and power,—where men were best qualified to judge of truth, and where a sensitive and noble-minded man would feel it most keenly if his sentiments were held in contempt,—when confronted with philosophers at Athens, and when arraigned on trial for his life before Nero ; never wavering, never shrinking, never breathing out one sigh of regret, never concealing his new views ; exulting, triumphing, rejoicing to the end of life that he *had* abandoned all for Christ (Phil. iii. 8). Such a change could not be otherwise than sincere, real, genuine. It has never been doubted, however it may be explained.

A very material point here occurs as to the bearing of this change on the evidences of the truth of the Christian religion.

Beyond all question—all possibility of debate—if this change actually occurred in the form and manner recorded in the New Testament, the Christian religion is true. If Jesus of Nazareth actually appeared to Saul of Tarsus, then it follows that He had risen from the dead; that He had ascended to heaven; that He still lived; that He still reigned. If it were admitted that Christ rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven, then there would be, with no class of men, any further ground of doubt as to the fact that He was from God.

The evidence in the case, therefore, in favour of the truth of the Christian religion, would not be the mere fact that Saul was converted, but it would be the fact that he was converted *in the manner* stated by himself, and the proof thus furnished that Christ was actually raised from the dead.

There are two classes of men who have a deep interest in the point thus suggested;—those who already believe it true; and those who doubt it.

To the former of these—to Christians—the account of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is a straightforward account. There is nothing in it to stagger their faith; there is nothing which is not in unison with their views of the rank, the dignity, and the power of Christ, or with what, in their apprehension, would be likely to occur, or might occur. Christ, in their view, is Divine. He is, in a sense in which the language can be applied to no other being, “the Son of God,” the “brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” To Him, as the Son of God, as Mediator

between God and man, has been given "all power in heaven and in earth." That power he manifested, when on earth, by curing diseases, by casting out devils, by raising the dead. Risen from the grave, and seated at the right hand of God, He is now invested with all the power, and encompassed with all the glories of heaven. There, as Mediator, He administers the affairs of the universe, so far as they bear on the interests of redemption. He has control over all the agencies necessary to carry forward His work on earth, and to secure the reconciliation of the world to God.

In the narrative, therefore, of His appearance to Saul of Tarsus, there is nothing inconsistent with the faith of Christians in regard to Him;—with what He did personally when on earth,—with His real rank and dignity,—or with the purpose for which He was raised. His appearing again on earth, with visible splendour and glory, to convert a great mind engaged in persecution, and to make that mind instrumental in carrying forward the work for which He had commissioned His apostles, while at the same time furnishing a visible proof to mankind of the reality of His ascension, was in harmony with all that the Christian believes of Him. The glory, the splendour, the exceeding brightness of the light,—“above the brightness of the sun,” and that at mid-day,—is in accordance with all that the believer regards as appropriate to the Son of God in the glories of heaven.

To the other class—to unbelievers—the subject presents itself under a different aspect, and is to be disposed

of in a different manner. It *should be* disposed of,—and disposed of in such a way as to be satisfactory to any candid mind.

There are such ways as the following in which men seek to dispose of it ; there are, as far as I can see, no other, save that which admits the narrative to be true, and the religion to be from God.

First. That the whole narrative is false. Such a supposition would, of course, dispose of it. But it would be impossible to *prove* this. In the narrative itself there is no essential absurdity ; there is nothing contradictory to what is affirmed elsewhere of the rank, the power, and the purpose of the Redeemer ; there is nothing which does not seem material in explaining the undoubted facts which occurred in the life of Saul of Tarsus. Some such change *did* occur in his life, as we have already seen ; and this statement will, better than any other, explain the fact.

Second. That the whole was on the part of Saul an imposture,—a story fabricated to impose on mankind ;—in other words, that he knew and believed the claims of Jesus to be unfounded, but yet resolved to pretend that the impostor had appeared to him as if risen from the grave, and had commissioned him to go and proclaim Him to the world as the Messiah. If a man should adopt *this* theory, it would be natural to ask, how he could explain conduct so strange,—so unlike what commonly influences the human mind ! What motive could Saul have had in devising this story ? What reason had he to believe that he could make his countrymen or the

world believe it? How could he hope to convince those who were travelling with him on the career of persecution, that this had occurred? How could he so deceive them, or so induce them to be *silent* concerning the whole affair, as to prevent their testifying that nothing of the kind had occurred? And, if successful in this, what could he hope to gain by this change in his opinions and pursuits, and by an attempt to propagate such an imposture, in compensation for what he would be compelled to surrender—his bright prospects—his friends—his principles of early training—and for what he could not but foresee must be encountered in poverty, toils, and persecution? They who can believe that Saul of Tarsus *meant* to make use of one imposture, by adding another to it for his own purposes, will furnish to the world one of the best evidences that all credulity is *not* with such as believe that he acted under the convictions of truth, and was sincere in his change.

Third. That he was a fanatic; and that his change, and all which was consequent on it, could be accounted for on this supposition. But, apart from the fact that such a supposition is quite contrary to all that is recorded respecting his character—that is, the whole account of him, given in the Acts of the Apostles, and traced in the Epistles ascribed to him,—the question would still occur which involves the whole difficulty, *How came he to be fanatical in this cause at all?* How did he suppose that he would find in his becoming a follower of Jesus of Nazareth a suitable field *for* fanaticism? Men become *fanatics* on an opinion already embraced; they do not

embrace an opinion *for the sake* of being fanatics, or *because* any one department of human effort is particularly *favourable* to fanaticism. Men become fanatics on the subject of slavery; on the subject of abolition; on some particular doctrine of religion; on the subject of human rights; on some point of reformation; on some real or imaginary wrong;—but it is an abuse of language—it is contrary to fact—to say that they *embrace* such views because they *are* fanatics, or with a design to *display* their fanaticism. Moreover, if it should be admitted that this was a characteristic of the Apostle Paul, still it is to be said that of all the religions ever proposed to mankind, the pure and simple Gospel of Jesus was the least adapted of all to any such purpose. As a Jew—a Pharisee—Saul would have found his early religion far more appropriate for the developement of such a trait of character than the Gospel of Christ.

Fourth. That he was an *enthusiast*. Admitting here, for the time, that this *was* the character of Saul of Tarsus,—or admitting that he ever *became* an enthusiast—still the question would be, How would this account for his conversion? What new elements were there in the Christian religion, as it appeared then, which could not be found in the religion wherein he had been trained, to induce an “enthusiast” to embrace it? Here, also, it is to be remarked that men become enthusiasts *in* the faith which they hold; *in* the doctrine in which they have been nurtured; *in* the objects which they have to accomplish: they do not embrace a new form of faith *in order* to furnish a new field for enthu-

siasm. Enthusiasm, like fanaticism, so far as it exists at all, would rather be a reason for *not* changing, than *for* changing; and, indeed, one of the most serious obstacles to the conversion of men to Christianity is the fact that they *are* fanatics and enthusiasts in some form of superstition or idolatry, and that this cannot be overcome so as to allow the conscience and the sober reason to operate freely. If Saul of Tarsus was converted under the influence of mere enthusiasm, it must be regarded as a solitary instance in the whole history of conversion to a new form of belief.

Fifth. That he was himself deceived; that a flash of lightning blinded him, or that a meteor crossed his path; and that through fear, through an ardent imagination, and through the conviction of conscience, he *thought* that this was Jesus of Nazareth, and that He seemed audibly to address him, to rebuke him, to call him to a different life. It cannot be denied that conscience, when a man is doing wrong, *might* take this direction; that a peal of thunder, a flash of lightning, the explosion of a meteor, *might* arrest the attention of a sinner, and fill him with apprehensions of a judgment to come, and be so far, as in the case of Luther, a means of his conversion. But it is to be observed, in the first place, that this mode of accounting for what occurred, would supersede all the others which have been suggested, and would make any further argument in regard to *them* unnecessary. Then, it is to be observed further, that we are to take in the *entire* statement:—that the immediate effect was to produce blindness (which indeed would not

be improbable); that Saul was restored from that state by the hands of a Christian disciple in Damascus (Acts ix. 17); that this disciple professed to have been sent by an express command addressed to him in a "vision," (Acts ix. 10); that he had come in obedience to that, and a miracle was performed on Saul's restoration to sight, as if "scales" had fallen from his eyes (Acts ix. 18). Now, here is more than *one man*. This was not a mere effect of a flash of lightning, or of a meteor. It required a distinct agency in arresting Saul; and at the same time another distinct and remote agency in preparing one to meet him, to restore him to sight, and to acquaint him with the purpose for which he had been arrested.

Sixth. There is still another supposition. It is that Saul of Tarsus had sagacity enough to see what could be *made out* of Christianity, so that if he abandoned his old religion, and embraced this, he would more certainly achieve what was the great and leading purpose of his ambition,—a remembrance after he was dead; an influence that would increase and grow in all coming ages; a reputation that would convey his name down to the end of the world. This, in fact, would be true, as a result of his embracing the new religion. As a persecutor—a Jew—his name would have perished,—or, *if* remembered, it would have been only, as the names of persecutors are, remembered to be execrated in future ages, and to become more and more infamous as the world advances. But as a Christian and an apostle, the name of Paul will go down to the latest periods of

the world's history, and will be mentioned only with honour. But to suppose that he *saw* all this,—that he acted on this supposition,—that the change in his opinions and life was produced by this anticipation,—that he was willing to give up fame, comfort, reputation, during his life, for the sake of posthumous honour and applause,—that because he *saw* all this, he was willing to encounter the poverty, obloquy, shame, toil, and persecution, which he must have foreseen *would* follow such a change,—is to attribute to him a measure of sagacity that no man ever yet possessed.

There remains, then, only the supposition that the change in Saul of Tarsus was real, and that the account of his conversion in the Acts of the Apostles is true;—a supposition, which demonstrates at the same time the truth of Christianity,—the power of the Gospel in changing the most obdurate heart,—and the wisdom of the Saviour in calling a man of such endowments into His service.

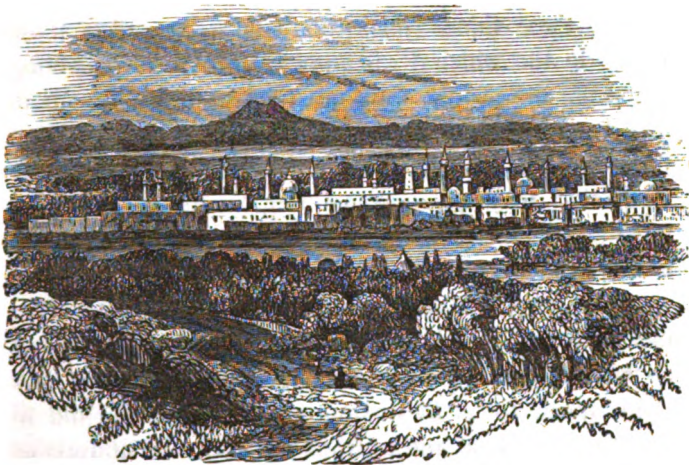
IV.

PAUL'S OBEDIENCE TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.

Soul of Tarsus addressed by a voice from heaven.—Such communications still possible, but no longer to be expected.—*How* does God now teach us His will? By the revelations of His word; the dictates of reason; the voice of conscience; the events of providence; the preaching of the gospel; casual appeals; the influences of the Spirit.—*What* does God enjoin on us? The forsaking of sin; faith in Christ; preparation for death; consecration to the service of God.—Duty of obeying His call.—**Results** of neglecting it.—**Results** of heeding it.

**“Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly
vision.”**

ACTS xxvi. 19.



DAMASCUS: VIEW OF THE PRESENT CITY.



ISHING to make a profitable use of the history of Saul's conversion, I shall here refer to the manner in which God addresses mankind, or indicates His will to them; the purposes for which He addresses or calls them; and the importance of obeying such a "call" or "vision."

The will of God was made known to Saul of Tarsus by a direct communication from the Redeemer Himself. The "vision" which appeared to him was such that he could not doubt that it was Divine. He who spoke announced Himself to be the Saviour of the world, and the purpose for which He thus addressed Saul was distinctly made known to him: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness

both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee, delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts xxvi. 16—18.)

Thus, also, God *could* address each one of the human race as an individual and by name, and thus indicate to us His will as to what we should believe and do. He could speak to us by dreams or visions, as He did to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Eliphaz ; He could address us by a voice, as He did Samuel ; He could send a special messenger to us, as He did to Ahaz, to Ahab, to David, and to Hezekiah ; He could direct an angel to convey a message to us, as He did to Daniel, to Zacharias, and to the Virgin Mary ; He could call us to His service by an internal voice which we could not disregard, as He did Jeremiah and Ezekiel ; or He could speak to us in His majesty and glory, as He did to Isaiah in the temple, to Saul on the way to Damascus, or to John in Patmos. The Father of spirits could thus keep up a constant communication with men in such a way that they could not doubt that He addressed them, and in such a way that in yielding they could not doubt that they were obeying His will.

There were reasons, however, why this should not be the usual method by which He addressed mankind. Such a mode of address, while it might have the advantage

of determining at once the question of duty, would render in a great measure useless the faculties with which He has endowed us, and would change almost entirely the order of things now existing on the earth. To a great extent it would render useless the faculty of reason, designed to aid us in investigating truth; it would take away the stimulus to human effort in the search after what is right; it would render man indolent and unconcerned until the voice should come with a distinct announcement of the will of God; it would destroy not a few of the motives which now prompt us to action; it would be a departure from the great principles on which men are governed in other things than religion; it would materially affect the whole subject of moral government, and make the progress of the world dependent rather on supernatural impulses than on settled and regular laws.

We are, therefore, to put these things out of view, in reference to the question how the will of God is to be ascertained. Even on the most momentous questions of our existence, on the truths most important to be known, in situations most perplexing, in doubts and difficulties most appalling, in the most fervid, earnest aspirations of the soul after knowledge of the truth, we are to lay aside all expectations of a voice from heaven; of a vision; of a dream; of the sending of an angel to instruct us, to warn us, to point out the path of duty, to teach us what to do.

But is there no way in which the mind of God is now indicated to *us*? Is it impossible for God now so to

communicate His will to the soul of an individual that he shall be in no danger of error as to what he should do? Are there no leadings of the hand of God, no methods by which He reveals His will, no appeals which He makes to the soul, no warnings, no admonitions, no invitations, no encouragements? Are there no promises addressed to man in his pilgrimage that he may regard as a voice direct from God to him? Has God so withdrawn from the world, or has He so bound Himself by the physical laws which He has imposed on created things, and so limited the exercise of His omnipotence within those laws, that He has reserved to Himself no way now of making known to an individual traveller to another world what He would have *him* to do? As we cannot rely on dreams, and visions, and voices, and the visitations of angelic beings to guide us, what methods are there by which our Maker makes known His will to us?

There is, *first*, His holy Word, the volume of Revelation, containing the standing and permanent intimations of his will. The Bible does not—for it could not—address each one of the race by name, but it gives directions and counsels adapted to our common nature, and applicable to all the situations in which man can be placed:—directions and counsels applicable to the aged and the young; to princes and their subjects; to masters and servants; to parents and children; to those in affluence and those in poverty; to those in health and those in sickness; to those inquiring what man shall *do* as the great business of this life, and what

he shall *do* to prepare for the life to come. On the great truths most desirable for every man to know, and on the question which man so often asks, how he may be saved, the communications are as explicit, and are as distinctly adapted to each one, as though they were an original communication from God to him alone; and in the various circumstances of human life, with all the endless variety of these circumstances, it is probable that a case has never occurred in relation to which some *principle* could not be found by a careful study of the Bible that would be a true and certain indication of the will of God.

There is, *secondly*, the rational nature which God has given us,—in like manner, within its proper limits, furnishing a safe intimation of the will of God. This rational nature is often, indeed, put sadly out of place, and abused by mankind. But we cannot suppose that God would so endow man with reason as to lead him astray; or so that its just decisions would be contrary to truth; or so that in its fair applications it would beguile, mislead, and destroy. Nor can we suppose that He would so constitute man in his rational nature that any direct statements from Himself by a revelation would be contradictory to what man's reason compels him to regard as true: for there is but one God, and under the government of that one God the deductions of reason,—that reason with which He has endowed us,—can no more contradict the higher truths which He might directly reveal, than the revelations of the natural eye would contradict the revelations of the telescope. In

its proper place, reason is as true to its Maker as was the voice which addressed Isaiah in the temple, or the "vision" which appeared to Saul of Tarsus. It never lends its voice in favour of irreligion, vice, or crime. When, indeed, reason attempts to penetrate the counsels of the Almighty without the aid of revelation, and to intrude into the mysteries of the Divine nature beyond what is revealed,—when it attempts to form a system of religion which shall supersede that of revelation,—when it attempts to supply the place of all communications from heaven, it always errs, for it has departed from its appropriate sphere. But it does *not* err when it speaks of the obligations of virtue, justice, and truth; when it directs the mind up through His works to God Himself; when it appeals to man in favour of God and religion by considerations drawn from the immortality of the soul, and the solemnities of a future existence; when it presses upon man the duty of preparing for another world. If a man will honestly consult his own reason on points like these, he will have no more doubt what is the will of God than Saul of Tarsus had when the "vision" appeared to him on the way to Damascus. Whatever may be the *feelings* of men on the great subject of religion, we are sure that we always have their *reason* with us when we urge them to forsake their sins and to give themselves to the service of their Maker.

There is, *thirdly*, the voice of conscience;—true also to its Author and Lord; true to the purpose of indicating His will in the sphere in which He has appointed it to operate. Its province, indeed, is often mistaken;

and hence, like reason, man *makes* it an unsafe guide. It is not given to him to *be* a revelation, nor to supersede the necessity of a revelation, for it communicates no new truth. In its own place, however, it is a method by which God communicates His will to man, and is as true to its office as the magnet to the pole. It urges to the performance of duty; it condemns that which is wrong. It prompts us to do that which ought to be done, when interest would *seem* to lead in another direction, when the decisions of reason would be too slow, or when passion would drive us on to vice and ruin; and, when we have done that which is right, it expresses approbation in a manner which we cannot but regard as the voice of God Himself. It can never be made to lift its voice in favour of the neglect of religion; of impenitence; of the indulgence of guilty passions; of disregard of the counsels which require us to prepare for eternity. It is among the most admirable of the arrangements of the Divine administration,—an arrangement which cannot be explained except on the supposition that there is a God, and that God is the friend of virtue, and the enemy of vice; the friend of truth, and the enemy of error; the friend, and not the enemy of the soul. It is a way in which God is speaking to hundreds of millions of men at each moment; and in such a manner, that if they would follow His counsels according to the laws of this arrangement, we may again affirm that they would be in no more danger of erring than was Saul of Tarsus when he yielded obedience to the heavenly vision.

There are, *fourthly*, the events of Divine Providence;

often among the clearest methods by which God communicates His will to men. The sparrow falls not to the ground without God; and the minutest events in a man's life are under His direction. Every one may find in his own life, if he chooses, not a few events that were *designed* to indicate to him what was the will of God. The Providence which commits to his care an aged and helpless parent,—which entrusts to him an unprotected sister,—which lays at his door the afflicted, the wounded, the dying,—which consumes the dwelling of his neighbour, leaving a family unprotected in the cold of a winter's night,—which directs to his dwelling him who has fled from oppression, and who pants for freedom,—so speaks to him that he is in no danger of mistaking, in such a case, the Divine will. The Providence, too, which has given to a man talents fitted to promote the progress of society and the welfare of mankind, or wealth that may extensively promote the interests of humanity and religion, or learning adapted to enlighten and guide others,—or which opens a world of sorrow, oppression, and sadness to his access,—is an intimation of the Divine will that need not be mistaken. The Providence, also, that takes away an endeared object of earthly affection which stood between the heart and God, and which seized upon the affections with idolatrous power, is to the soul an intimation of the will of God as clear as if the lesson were written with a sunbeam. So a man in one pursuit in life finds his plans blasted, sees some unexpected obstacle always in his way, encounters obstructions thrown across his path which he can neither

anticipate nor remove; and he may find in *these* things an intimation that he is in a wrong path as clear as was that in the case of Saul the persecutor when he was arrested by the Saviour on his way to Damascus. Such checks and restraints have been laid in every man's life; and, if they were heeded, it would never be difficult for a man to ascertain the way-marks which the Great Director of human affairs has set up to guide us.

There are, *fifthly*, the calls of the Gospel; the admonitions of the living preacher; the counsels and entreaties of the Christian pastor. The Christian ministry is God's "great ordinance" for securing the reconciliation of men to God; for calling them to repentance and salvation; for applying great permanent truths and principles to the ever-varying circumstances of human existence. The voice of the minister of religion, so far as his appeals accord with the revealed truth of God, and so far as those appeals are adapted to the particular circumstances of a people, *may be*—and, so far as I can see, *should be*—regarded as the message of God Himself to the soul;—a message, here, again, we may say, as distinct, and as little capable of misapprehension, as was the voice that addressed Saul of Tarsus. This statement will not be misunderstood. We who are ministers of the Gospel do not claim to be inspired. We make pretensions to no superiority in mental, moral, or spiritual excellence above our fellow-men. We arrogate no power of peculiar insight into Divine things. We sustain no peculiar relation to God. We assert for ourselves no peculiar sanctity or immunity on account

of our office ; and no power, in virtue of the office, to impart grace to the soul. But, regarding the ministry as an appointment of God, and as a wise arrangement for bringing His truth before the minds of men, we believe that it is designed as a means of keeping up a communication between God and the world, and as a method of expressing the Divine will, not only in respect to abstract truth, but to the duty of individual men ; as an arrangement intended to convey the calls and the warnings of the Creator to the world ; and as in fact one of the most important means by which He addresses the children of men. When in obedience to His commission, the minister of religion brings before a man truth, undoubted truth,—when he presents it in such a form as to be adapted to the particular circumstances, to the time of life, to the state of mind, to the peculiar temptations of that man, to the enquiries which are awakened in his soul from other sources in regard to truth and duty,—we know not why this should not be regarded as in fact a method by which God Himself addresses that man, as really as Saul of Tarsus was addressed from heaven.

A *sixth* method in which God speaks to men is by the voice of a stranger. So it was when the eunuch of Ethiopia was addressed by Philip, and directed to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. So to thousands the Apostle Paul went as a stranger, and announced the message of life and salvation. And so, now, in a stage-coach,—on a steam-boat,—on a rail-road car,—in a remote hut where a traveller may tarry for a night,—

on the ocean,—in a foreign land,—in a hospital, far away from home and friends, from mother, sister, daughter, pastor,—in a Christian sanctuary which may be casually attended,—the voice of a stranger may be heard ; and shall it be deemed extravagant to believe that the feet of the stranger may have been guided in order that he might speak to that soul about the way of salvation ?

And there is still a *seventh* method, universal in its nature, by which God addresses the children of men. It is by the influences of the Holy Spirit: a teaching and a guidance 'superadded to all the others, and without which which none of them would be effectual. This is not a new revelation, for it imparts no new truth. It is not inspiration. It is a silent secret influence on the soul, prompting it to duty ; awakening the conscience ; alarming the fears ; restraining from sin ; seasonably recalling truth to the memory ; inclining the heart to prayer ; disposing the soul to meditate on death, judgment, and eternity, and prompting to the formation of better plans and purposes ; "convincing," according to the language of the Saviour, "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." It is an arrangement to which the world owes all its religion, and no small part of the restraints of virtue and law, and of the promptings of humanity. I believe that God thus communicates, in some measure, His will to every human soul ; that this is a "light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." Life, if we would mark it, is made up of thousands of *suggestions* from some unseen quarter,

prompting us to duty ; starting some thought of what is wise, and right, and just, and good ; inclining us to thoughtfulness, to meditation, to prayer ; making the soul dissatisfied with its present course, and drawing it along in the path of duty, benevolence, and peace. Sometimes these suggestions come to the soul with the gentleness of the evening zephyr—and *in* the evening ; sometimes with the fury and violence of the storm—and *in* the storm ; sometimes when we are alone ; sometimes in the crowded place of business ; sometimes when we are made sad by affliction ; sometimes under the preaching of the Gospel ; and sometimes when there are no apparent causes giving a new direction to the thoughts. And shall we doubt that there *is* such an influence really abroad in the world,—an influence which converts men from the error of their ways, and which prompts to great and generous deeds ? Can any one on any other supposition than this explain how it was that Saul of Tarsus, that Augustine, that Luther, that Bunyan, that John Newton were converted ? Can any mere *philosopher* explain how it was that John Howard, an English gentleman of affluence, was led to conceive and execute the purpose of spending his life in breathing the pestilential air of the dungeons of Europe, that he might relieve the sufferings of the prisoners ? Is it fanaticism to suppose that *God* pitied the prisoner whose “soul was bound in affliction and iron,” and that He meant in this way to open the heart of humanity to a much-neglected portion of the race, and so moved by His Spirit the heart of Howard that

he was not "disobedient unto the heavenly vision?" Can any mere philosopher explain how it was that the minds of Clarkson and Wilberforce were directed to the evils of the African slave-trade, and how they were led to identify themselves with the great cause of universal emancipation? Is it fanaticism to suppose that *God* looked down with an eye of pity on injured Africa, and that He meant thus to awaken in the souls of men everywhere a sense of the wrongs done to an entire quarter of the globe? And can we be in danger of error in supposing that the same Spirit breathed into the hearts of Morrison, and Schwartz, and Henry Martyn, a desire for the conversion of the world, and made them willing to go forth and publish salvation to those who were "sitting in the region and shadow of death?" And can we be wrong in supposing that God by His Spirit appeals now to the sinner; that He awakens him to a sense of his condition; that He makes him dissatisfied with the world and with sin; that He creates a desire in his soul to find a better portion than earth can give; that He calls him to virtue, to religion, and to a new life, by a voice as real as that which addressed Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus?

But *to* what does God call us in these various methods by which He appeals to us? Is it possible to ascertain what is His purpose and design with regard to *us*? Is the voice so distinct, that we may know what is the will of God,—so clear, that in following it we may be sure we shall not be in danger of falling into a mistake? Is it possible for us in our own case to obtain an answer to

the question which Saul of Tarsus asked with so much sincerity and solemnity respecting himself: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6).

Let us learn from the example of Saul of Tarsus; let us see whether the answer to the question may not be as clear in our case as it was in his.

First, as in his case, so now, God calls the sinner to forsake the ways of sin. He summoned Saul of Tarsus to abandon his purposes of persecution;—and in like manner He calls on the wicked to "forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (Isa. lv. 7). This would involve the forsaking of every form of transgression; of every purpose of life that is at variance with the law of God. Whatever may be the form of wickedness; whatever pleasure or profit may attend it; whatever honour may be supposed to result from it, yet the voice of God calls on men to abandon that course of life, and to turn to the ways of virtue and truth. Be it the persecution of the friends of God, as in the case of Saul,—be it unbelief,—be it worldliness,—be it ambition,—be it low sensuality,—be it the love of pleasure,—be it a life of gaiety,—no matter in each case what may be the sacrifice involved in relinquishing it, and no matter what the number or the social position of those whose friendship must be lost, or whose hatred incurred,—the course required is a plain course; the command is a plain command. Everything combines in the summons which God thus addresses to the soul,—His word; our reason; our conscience; the dealings of God's Providence; the influences of His Spirit; the

voice of the pastor, and the voice of the stranger. No man in reference to this can make a mistake as to the will of God ; no man can take a single additional step in the course of iniquity without *knowing* that he does it in the face of God's great message to his soul.

Secondly. He calls men to faith in that Saviour in whom Saul of Tarsus was called to believe, and whom he was commissioned to make known to the world. Saul had sought to make his way to heaven *without* a Saviour ; he had despised the Redeemer's cross, His sacrifice, His tomb ; he had rejected all the evidences which had been furnished to the world that Jesus came from God ; all the proofs drawn from His marvellous power, His wisdom, and His goodness, that He was sent from heaven ; all the evidences in His life and His death that He was the promised Messiah. All that Saul had done in relation to Him might be traced to the simple fact that he was an *unbeliever* ; all would have been different if he had been a *believer* in Jesus.

Thus the sinner is addressed now. He has lived, and is living without a Saviour. He has refused to receive Christ as a Redeemer. He has been determined not to feel or acknowledge his *need* of a Saviour. He has by his conduct identified himself with those who rejected and crucified Jesus. His whole life has been that of an *unbeliever*. God now calls him to believe in Jesus Christ *as* a Saviour ; as *his* Saviour ;—to receive Him ; to rely on Him ; to live to Him ; to love Him ; to follow Him. Here, too, all the methods of God's appeals to men combine in enforcing the call. To secure

this, all the various methods whereby God speaks to the soul have been originated and arranged. His word; reason; conscience; Providential dealings; the warning voice of a pastor, or of a stranger; the influences of the Spirit of God,—all these are in the same direction and all tend to the same end—to call men to embrace the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

Thirdly. God calls men to prepare for another world; to be ready to give up their account to Him. It is impossible, in respect to this, to misinterpret the Divine will. In the voice which comes to men from the Bible, from reason, from conscience, from the events of Providence, from the pulpit, from the stranger, and from the influences of the Holy Spirit, there is, in this respect, no uncertain sound; no ambiguity. In all the voices that come to men from heaven by day or by night, there is none that calls them to a life of gaiety or ambition; that calls upon them to make “gold” their hope, or to “say to the fine gold, Thou art my confidence.” Hear what was said in ancient “visions” to the children of men:—“God speaketh once, yea, twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream; in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, *that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man*” (Job xxxiii. 15—17). How often now does God thus speak! How often does He admonish men that they are mortal, and call upon them to prepare for another life! Does one day pass in the life of any man, in which death is not, if he would heed it, brought before

his mind by his Maker; in which there is not some distinct admonition to be prepared to die? Will any man be able to allege, when he is called before God, that he has never been fairly warned; that he has not been summoned to prepare for the future world; that he has not been urged to flee from the wrath to come?

Fourthly. God calls men to devote themselves to His cause; to give themselves to a life of usefulness; to live so as to promote His glory in the world; to labour to advance the great interests of truth and righteousness; to be the patrons and friends of whatever will elevate the race, and to diffuse abroad that religion which is identified with the welfare of man:—to give back to Him, in His service, the result—the fruit—of the talents, the learning, and the influence which He has conferred on them.

Saul of Tarsus had been endowed with great talents. He could not fail, for good or for evil, to exert a vast influence on mankind. He was so created that, however selfish and wicked he might be, he could *not* “live unto himself.” He *must* influence others. He contributed largely in shaping the events of that age of the world. Those talents he had abused. He had employed them against the cause of Christ. But he was now called by an audible voice to devote those talents *to* Christ, and to His cause:—and well he answered and obeyed the summons.

So it is with you;—with each one;—with all. The talents with which you are by nature endowed,—the learning which you possess,—the influence which you may have in the world,—the wealth which you have

gained,—belong to God; and He asks that all these may be devoted to the great ends for which they were bestowed upon you. He made you what you are in mental endowment. He redeemed you. He keeps you. The vigour of body which you possess is His gift. Your power of reasoning, your genius, your eloquence, are His. The place which you occupy in the world, morally, intellectually, socially, has been assigned by Him. The circumstances of your life have been ordered by Him. And He calls you—alike by Scripture, by your reason, by your conscience, by the events of His Providence, by heavenly influences,—to consecrate all you have to His service and to the good of man. Heaven appeals to you, and the world appeals to you, not to live in vain.

It remains now to notice, in few words, the duty of obeying such a heavenly call or “vision.”

(1.) Contemplate the effect on a man's character of *not* yielding to the calls of duty, and of *resisting* the influences which would draw him along in the way of virtue, of purity, and of usefulness; the effect on a man's character when, in order to pursue a chosen course, it is necessary for him to go against the decisions of reason, the generous impulses of his nature, the voice of conscience, the warnings of Providence, the admonitions of God in His word, by His ministers, and by His Spirit. “It is hard,” said the Saviour to Saul of Tarsus, “to kick against the pricks:”—hard for the ox that resists, that treads back on the *goads* which would urge him on. In a forward movement,—in patient and gentle and

proper toil, he feels not their sharp piercings in his flesh; it is only when he resists, and presses backward, that he feels them; and then the more he presses back, the more keenly he feels their sharpness. So it is with the various appeals of God. It is easy for one disposed to do his duty to go forward: for he yields to all that urges him on; and reason, and conscience, and truth, and God's Spirit, have no sharp "goads" with which to pierce and penetrate his soul. But it is hard for a man to go against all these. Life then becomes a warfare,—a warfare more fierce and dreadful than is that of the man of God against "principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness," for the sinner has to fight his way down to ruin,—at war with the Bible; at war with his reason; at war with his conscience; at war with God's Providences; at war with the Spirit of God; at war with his pastor; at war with his best friends; a warfare never to cease until he achieves a disastrous victory over all that is generous and noble in his own nature,—a victory in hell!

(2.) Contemplate the feelings of one who has yielded to the summons which called him to leave the ways of sin, and to devote himself to God. Such a man was Saul of Tarsus, when he uttered the words which have been selected as a motto for the present chapter. He had nearly finished his course. With conscious gratification he then reflected that he had been "*not* disobedient unto the heavenly vision," but had promptly obeyed, and had faithfully carried out the command to the utmost extent of his power. Time had only con-

firmed him in the conviction that this call was from heaven; and, although it had been attended with many sacrifices, privations, and trials, it grieved him not that he had, in the cause of the Saviour, given up the brilliant prospects of his early life, and gone cheerfully where the "heavenly vision" led him.

God calls each one of us to repentance from sin; to faith in the Redeemer; to preparation for the world to come; to a life of usefulness. We shall die,—all die. From the borders of the eternal world, *we* shall look over the present life. The road which we now travel we can travel but once; and a mistake in the great purposes of life cannot be repaired. There are two ways in which men close life; two classes of reflections which occur on the bed of death. The one is like that of Paul, when with a good conscience, a man can say that he has endeavoured in all things to obey the call of God; the other the reflection of one who then feels that every voice from heaven has been rejected, disregarded, or resisted; who feels that through all the journey of life he has made war on the word of God, on his reason, on his conscience; that he has resisted the appeals made by the Providence of God, by the ministers of religion, and by the influences of the Spirit; that he has slighted the counsels of father, mother, sister, pastor, friends. For myself, when I die, I desire the former of these. May God give us grace, one and all, that we may not be disobedient unto "the heavenly vision."

V.

RESIDENCE OF PAUL IN ARABIA.

The Interval between the selection of a profession or calling, and the entrance on its active duties.

Length of Paul's residence in Arabia.—Its locality.—Its purpose.—Lesson suggested to those entering on active life.—*Professions or callings open before men.*—Variety of occupations.—Variety of talents.—The same ends to be sought in all.—*Principles on which the choice should be made.*—It must be in accordance with the will of God; and therefore (1) such as best secures the purposes of life; (2) such as best meets the circumstances of life; (3) such as best suits individual endowments; (4) such as is strictly honourable; (5) such as presents fewest temptations; (6) such as most promotes the welfare of society; (7) such as will not hinder the interests of the soul.—*Interval between the choice of a profession and entrance on it.*—Time for preparation not lost time.—Preparation, special and general.—Training for this life subordinate to preparation for eternity.

“ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace, 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. Then, ~~after~~ three years I went up to Jerusalem.”

GAL. I. 15—18.



A SCENE IN THE DESERT.



T is a fair interpretation of the statement made by Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that he spent *three* years in Arabia, before he returned to Damascus on his way to Jerusalem. It might, indeed, from the mere *language* be suggested as a matter of doubt or uncertainty, whether after having been compelled to flee for a time, he did not soon return to Damascus, and whether some considerable part of these three years may not have been spent *there* before he went up to Jerusalem; but we are to bear in mind that although the language *might* bear this construction, yet it is not the necessary or the most obvious one; and, further, we are to remember that the same causes which may have made it necessary for him to flee from Damascus, would have probably prevented his speedy return there with any view of preaching the

Gospel. We are not to suppose that those who were his enemies, and the enemies of the Gospel there, would have been soon calmed down so as to welcome his return; nor are we to suppose that the authorities at Jerusalem, whose commission he had disregarded, would have failed to send men with ample powers to arrest and punish one whom they could not but deem one of the worst apostates. The narrative, therefore, fairly requires us to understand this as affirming that the three years were spent in some part of Arabia.

This is the most obscure, and indeed may be regarded as the *only* obscure portion of the life of Paul after his conversion. Of any other three years of his apostolic history we could give a more satisfactory account than we can of these; for, after this, we can trace his course with a good degree of certainty through perhaps *every* year of his life. But a singular uncertainty rests on this entire journey. To what part of the great country known (in ancient times or now) as Arabia, he went; why he went there at all; how he was employed; why he did not at once enter on his public work in connexion with the other apostles; why he did not immediately "repor himself" at Jerusalem to be recognized as an apostle; and what was the bearing of this season of retirement and meditation, if such it was, on his future life,—all these are points on which we are left entirely to conjecture, and on which conjecture is wholly useless. The word "Arabia" has always been a term very vague in its application. "Sometimes it includes Damascus; sometimes it ranges over the Lebanon itself, and extends

over to the borders of Cilicia. The native geographers usually reckon that stony district of which Petra was the capital, as belonging to *Egypt*,—and that wide desert towards the Euphrates, where the Bedouins of all ages have lived in tents, as belonging to *Syria*,—and have limited the name [Arabia] to the peninsula between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, where Jemen, or ‘Araby the Blest,’ is secluded on the south. In the threefold division of Ptolemy, which remains in our popular language when we speak of this still untravelled region, both the first and second of these districts were included under the name of the third.”¹

Into which of these parts of Arabia Paul went, we have not the means of determining. If he went into that part which was near Syria, he may not have gone very far from Damascus. If, however, he went into Arabia Petræa, “then perhaps his steps were turned to those mountain heights by the Red Sea, which Moses and Elijah had trodden before him.”

We are not told his reason for going into Arabia, nor his employment when there. His mind would naturally long for solitude; and, in view of the work before him, he may have felt that by a season of calm contemplation, of prayer, of profound meditation on that new system which he had embraced, and which he had been so suddenly called to make known to the nations of the earth, he might be better qualified for his great mission. It may give some confirmation of this view to remember that the great Hebrew lawgiver, Moses, spent years in the

¹ Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. p. 94.

desert of Midian before he was prepared for his great work of leading forth and delivering the people of God; that Elijah, the great prophet, wandered in such deserts before he came forth to *his* great work; that the fore-runner of Messiah—John the Baptist—“was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel,” and there grew and waxed strong in spirit; and that the Redeemer himself was “led by the Spirit into the wilderness” to be tempted and tried, after His baptism, and before He entered on His public work as the Messiah.

With these examples before us, we shall not probably err in supposing that the time spent by Paul in Arabia was passed with some reference to his future life, as preparatory to his great work, in meditation and occupations which tended to qualify him for prosecuting it to the best advantage. It is to be remembered that the other apostles were three years under the instructions of the Great Teacher himself; and, in like manner, these three years may have been spent by Saul of Tarsus in some way best adapted to make his subsequent life what it was. He had been called to the apostleship, and his future course had been designated; but there *might* have been an important work of self-culture, of prayer, of meditation, of communion with God, necessary *before* he entered fully on his work. He was yet a young man; he had been trained for one profession or calling, as a Pharisee; he was now to prepare himself for another and a very different calling, as a minister of the despised Jesus of Nazareth,—as a preacher to the Gentiles,—as an apostle to the world.

The point thus suggested is *the interval between the choice of a profession or calling in life and the entrance on the public duties of that profession or calling*. No period of human life is more important than this; and if I can bring forward any thoughts which will be of use to any *in* that period of life, I may be rendering to them an important service for all their future course.

To place the whole subject before the mind, it would be necessary to contemplate these points: the professions or callings which are open before those who are in early life; the principles on which the choice of a profession or calling should be made; and the manner in which the interval between the choice of a profession or calling and the entrance on its active duties should be spent. This latter is, indeed, the main point; but a few remarks on the two former will aid us in its contemplation. Although they do not arise directly from my subject, they are appropriate as preparing *for* that.

I. The first point relates to *the professions or callings which may be properly regarded as presenting themselves to one who is about to embark on life*.

(1) The first thing which strikes us on this point is *the great variety of things to be done* in the world, during any one generation; or, the variety of the fields for exertion and employment. Among the problems which we may suppose to have been before the mind of the Creator when about to make living beings, this could not but have been a material one, how to give *employment* or *occupation* to the numberless creatures which He purposed to bring on the stage,—as it is still a most

important problem, and one which it is beyond the power of created intellect to solve, how such employment shall be given to countless myriads of minds that are to exist *for ever*,—how the eternity of our being shall be occupied. There would have been no kindness—there would have been the utmost want of kindness—in creating minds for which *no employment* had been arranged. With the highest wisdom, and with the most benevolent adaptation to the necessities of created mind, and to the varied endowments of men, an arrangement has been made for this in our world; and we cannot doubt that a similar arrangement will be made in eternity. On our earth, with the vast numbers that people it at any time, and with the almost endless diversity of talents, tastes, powers, and individual propensities that exist among men, there is enough to be *done*, in any one generation, to keep that generation occupied; there is a sufficient *variety* of things to be done, to meet the peculiar endowments of the numberless individuals in each generation. No one has undertaken to estimate the number of things *to be done*; the number of the professions, pursuits, or callings, which may occupy the attention of men. No one, who is about to make choice of an avocation, would undertake to enumerate or compare them, so that he could have them *all* before him in making his selection. The choice is, in fact, commonly made within very narrow limits; but these by no means *exhaust* the fields of occupation, or define the range of the human powers. Agriculture, commerce, the mechanic arts, the fine arts, literature, the learned professions, civil life, the service

of the army or the navy,—these are the callings which commonly occur to the mind as constituting those from which the young are to choose. But how small a part of the actual things *to be done*, and that *are done*, in each generation is embraced under these general terms. In any *one* of these callings, moreover, what a variety of things there may be to be done. In agriculture, what a variety of employments are actually included. How many men may be employed on the different parts of making a gun, or a locomotive engine, or even a *pin*,—and that with so distinct an occupation as to be in itself a calling. In building a ship, or in navigating it,—in the manufacture of cloth,—in domestic arrangements,—in war,—in peace,—in travel,—in the arts,—in the business of a great city,—in the employments of a country life,—what an endless variety of things is to be done at any one time;—*so* endless, that when we contemplate it, we see that the problem *has* been in fact solved in regard to our world, and that there is *enough* to be accomplished to occupy all who at any time may dwell on our globe.

(2.) The next point, under this head, relates to *the variety of endowments among men*, as adapted to these various occupations,—endowments such that these various ends are *in fact* secured, and such that at the same time they are secured *voluntarily*, or so that men enter on their different pursuits not by force or compulsion, but of preference and choice. While there is, in any one generation, enough for all to do, there is at the same time talent enough upon the earth to do all that needs to be done in that generation. There are men

enough to subdue and cultivate the earth; there are enough to maintain the interests of commerce, to navigate distant seas, to ply the mechanic's tools, to constitute armies, and to man ships of war, to occupy the seats of learning, to push the discoveries of science, to occupy the positions of trust and responsibility in civil life, to perform the work of legislation, and to administer the laws; there are enough for even the most humble and lowly occupations in life. If a new invention is required to promote the progress of human affairs at a quicker rate than ordinary, some Arkwright, or Fulton, or Morse, is endowed by the Creator with genius to strike out the invention; if some new and great discovery is to be made in science, some Kepler or Newton is endowed for that purpose; if unknown lands are to be discovered and explored, some Columbus or Cook is endowed to undertake the task, and disclose the existence of islands or continents to the rest of mankind.

And thus it is, also, in those professions and callings which would seem to be most perilous and least inviting. Commerce is needful for the world; and it is evidently a part of the Divine arrangement that, in the best state of human affairs, there should be an exchange of the commodities of different climes and regions, involving the dangers and hardships of a seafaring life. If this were left to parents, it could not be accomplished,—for no parent would be likely to select the profession of a *sailor* for his son. If there were no special propensity in the minds of any, it could not be accomplished,—for the perils of the sea are so great, and the rewards of a

seafaring life are so small, that under ordinary impulses men would not undertake it. But God has arranged this so as to secure the end. In each generation there is about the same relative number endowed with the desire of a mariner's life,—as many as are needful to accomplish the purposes of commerce in that generation. It is an early propensity in the mind of the boy; it is among the most fixed of all propensities; it is so settled that ordinarily when it seizes upon the mind, the boy cannot be diverted from it. It is *God's* purpose that the seas shall be navigated, and the world united by commercial relations. "A poet must be born a poet,"¹ and so a sailor must be born a sailor. In this way ordinarily God fills up the ranks of seamen by implanting this strong propensity in the mind, and bringing about what could be accomplished in no other way.

(3.) A third remark under this head; *the ends of life may be secured, the purposes of society advanced, and God may be honoured, in any one of these occupations and employments.* Those on the ocean serve Him as really as they do who are on the land; those in humble life, as really as those in an exalted rank; those who perform menial offices, as well as their employers; those who are private citizens, as well as those on thrones, invested with state, and pomp, and power; those whose names perish as soon as they die, as really as those whose names are blazoned abroad, or preserved in ever-enduring brass. "Art thou called," says the apostle, "being

¹ Poeta nascitur.

a servant? Care not for it; for he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman" (1 Cor. vii. 21, 22). "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1. Cor. xii. 21).

Within this range, this wide range of employment,—with these varied natural propensities and endowments,—and with this assurance that in *any* of these employments the purpose of life for which we are individually designed may be accomplished, and that within *any* of these professions or callings, life may be honourable and useful, and the Creator acceptably served,—*the profession which is to determine our condition on earth is to be chosen.*

II. In the next place, we have to inquire *on what principles should such a profession or calling be chosen?*

In the case of Saul of Tarsus, it was determined by the declared purpose of the Redeemer (Acts xxvi. 16—18). Young men now cannot hope for any such direct and infallible guidance. Are there any principles which will be a sufficient guide to them in the choice of a profession or calling? If so, what are those principles?

It is important to remark here that every one *should* be able to make it clear to his own mind that in selecting a profession or calling, he is acting in accordance with the will of God. We speak of ministers of the Gospel as having a "call" to the ministry, and of its being improper for them to engage in that work without evidence that they *are* so called. It *is*, indeed, true that ministers of the Gospel should have such a "call" to their work;

but if it be meant that this is of the nature of a miracle, or is a distinct voice from heaven, addressed to them on the subject, then that is demanded in their case for which there is no authority, and for which there is no special necessity. It remains yet to be shown that there is any thing in their case which does not exist in the case of every other man and every other profession. The great question for each one, taking into view his qualifications, circumstances, and endowments, and the wants of the world, is,—how he can make the most of his life for the purpose for which life was given him,—how he can best serve his Maker,—and how he can best promote the great interests needful to be promoted in the world in his generation. The merchant, the artizan, the mariner, the soldier, the man of letters or science, *should* be able to make it clear to his own conscience that his is the course of life in which his Maker intended that he should walk; or, that he has a “call” to that, as really as the minister of the Gospel has a call to preach the word.

What, then, are the principles on which such a choice should be made, or which are to guide us in the choice?

I shall here suggest a few things on this point which it seems to me—as I now view life, looking back on it when I have passed over most of the journey—are just views, and which might be adopted by those in early life, *as rules* in determining on the course to be chosen.

(1.) The first is, that *the profession or calling should be selected in which the most can be made of life for its proper purposes; or, in which life can be turned to the best*

account. Life, though transitory, short, uncertain, *has* its purpose. There is an end for which we were made ; for which we have been endowed as we are ; for which we were brought on the stage at the time when we were ; for which we were placed in the circumstances in which we have been placed. If we can find out *that*, and can follow it, we shall make the most of life. If we err in that—if we take a wrong direction,—if we attempt what we cannot accomplish,—if we fail to accomplish what we might,—life with us will be wasted ; its great purpose will be frustrated.

(2.) The second principle which I mention is, that, consequently, *when there is a fitness for either of two or more courses of life, that should be chosen which under the circumstances will be most adapted to secure the ends of life.* Within a certain range—which is in fact quite limited—a man might be equally adapted to two or more callings. It may not be strictly true that he would even within this range, succeed in one as well as in another of these ; but still he is so constituted that if the condition of society should be such that he could not find an opening in that calling for which he is *best* fitted, there may be another, or perhaps more than one other, which he could enter, and in which the great ends of life would be substantially secured. This “*play*,” if I may use a term drawn from one of the mechanic arts,¹ was arranged for in the endowments of men, that no one might be thrown out of all employment, or that

¹ “*Play*—room for motion ; the play of a wheel or piston.”—*Webster*.

there might be opportunity for a *choice* between such different employments as might promise almost equal success; and, at the same time, that there might be at any one period genius and talent enough upon the earth, as above stated, for all the purposes to be accomplished. Now, the principle which I am laying down is, that *within* this range—this room for choice—this “play” in the endowments of our nature, the selection of a profession should be made, and that a man should not attempt to *force* himself into a condition or calling for which he was never designed; nor should he envy those who are differently endowed.

(3.) A third rule would be, that *the profession or calling should be chosen which will be best adapted to develop the peculiar endowments of the mind*, or which will be in the line of those endowments. We cannot originate or create endowments of the mind; we cannot, by any culture or training, create a talent for music, where the germ of it does not exist in the soul; nor can we originate a talent for painting, or sculpture, or the mechanic arts; nor can we give to ourselves high mathematical endowments, or the power of invention, or a brilliant imagination. To a certain extent, most of these exist in every mind, so far as to enable us to find enjoyment in what is done by others of richer genius; but it would be vain for us to endeavour to make them the basis of our own purposes of living. They struggle in vain who attempt to be distinguished in that for which nature has not endowed them. He who would *succeed* in life must make it a point to put forth his efforts *in the line* of his native

endowments. Thus carrying out the purposes of God, life is easy ; toil becomes a pleasure ; the vessel moves, not against a current and against obstructions, but it is moved *by* the current, and the course of life is gentle, tranquil, prosperous, and happy.

(4.) A fourth thing which is vital to any just views of life, to a *proper* choice of a profession, is, that *that only should be chosen which is just and honourable*; which is itself right, and is consistent with the highest standard of morality ; and which can be pursued in all its ramifications, and always, and in all respects, on the principles of honesty, truth, justice, and fairness. There *are* sufficient employments of this nature ; and those are the only employments which *God* has set before men, or to which *He* ever calls any of the human race. There *are* employments, indeed, founded wholly on the idea of injustice and falsehood ; which involve, in all their stages, corruption, perjury, dishonesty ; which secure no success except as others are defrauded of their rights ; which require the employment of cunning, trick, concealment, as essential to their prosecution,—employments, not unlike the occupations of those who kindle false lights on a dangerous coast, that they may allure vessels in a storm to a rocky shore, and who gather the rich cargoes of the vessels thus decoyed to ruin. But, on the other hand, there are employments numerous enough to occupy *all* the talent of the world, whose beginning is honourable, and which may be honourably prosecuted to the utmost extent. Such, for example, is agriculture—the primitive employment of man—which may be

carried on in all its departments—from the purchase of the soil; the levelling of the forests; the enclosing of the fields; the ploughing, the sowing, the harvest, the threshing, the sale,—on principles of entire honesty; where, through the whole course, there is not necessarily involved, at any stage, or in reference to any department, the idea of dishonesty or fraud. Such, too, are the mechanic arts; such the operations of commerce; and such, too, may be the employments of those in the learned professions. Such, and such only, is the course of life which a young man should choose.

(5.) A fifth principle is that *that course should be chosen in which there are the fewest temptations to evil*. We cannot, in our world, place ourselves absolutely and certainly beyond the reach of temptation; for all are liable to it. If the Saviour of the world was tempted, we may be certain that no man, however pure and honest he may be, can be sure that he will be beyond its reach. But, at the same time, it is obvious that, of two callings in life, one may clearly be much nearer to dangerous temptations than another; that one will be comparatively free from danger, while the other will be in fact a voluntary warfare with the most enticing forms of evil. The one, too, may be a course where the associates and companions will be naturally among the pure and the good; the other, where they will be the crafty, the unprincipled, and the corrupt. All wise young men will foresee this, and will make it an element in determining their choice. He calculates much on the strength of his own virtue, and commonly reposes in it a degree of con-

fidence to which it is not entitled, who puts himself deliberately in the way of temptation, or who exposes himself needlessly to it. One of the best maxims in determining our course of life is, to select, at the outset, that in which virtue and principle will be least likely to be put to a test, and in which, from the nature of the calling, a man may bring around him such associations and influences as will be an auxiliary in keeping him in the paths of virtue.

(6.) A sixth principle is, that a young man should choose *that which while it will conduce to his own individual interest and to the purpose of his life, will, at the same time, promote the general good of society, and contribute to the advancement of the race;* which will not interfere with the happiness of others, but will add to those influences that tend to secure liberty, civilization, moral and intellectual culture, and religion. "None of us liveth to himself." For good or for evil, the life of every man will affect the interests of others. Every just and proper employment, while it promotes the welfare of him who pursues it, will, at the same time, subserve the progress of society at large;—like the insect which, while it performs its little part for itself, aids in the common work of raising the coral reef higher and higher, until it lifts itself above the surface of the waters, and becomes the abode of higher orders of beings. Society is organized on the principle that any lawful and proper employment will not injure, but will advance the interests of the whole community;—as the movement of each wheel in a well-constructed machine

will not only not embarrass, but will promote the harmonious and regular operation of every other part. Every man *might* be his own blacksmith or shoemaker; but it is an advantage to the farmer and the professional man that these should be distinct departments of labour. It is a *saving* of time and expense to a community that there should be men *trained* to these callings. So it is with all other lawful occupations. There *are* callings which *cannot* be pursued without ruin to others. The individual engaged in the pursuit may be, for a time, prospered; but in *his* prosperity, and just in proportion to his prosperity, he is scattering poverty, and woe, and tears, and broken hearts, around him:—making men's houses the abodes of crime and sorrow; filling almshouses, and prisons, and graves. Such, always, is the result of the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks. The distinction between a lawful and an unlawful employment, in its tending to good or evil, should *always* be a consideration in influencing a man what profession to choose.

(7.) A seventh principle may be added. It is, that *that calling should be selected which will not interfere with, but which will best aid the preparation for another world.* There are employments which are necessarily inconsistent with such preparation; there are those, otherwise lawful and proper, which will greatly embarrass a man in it; there are those, which are directly in the line of that, and which will tend to promote it. Our chief interests are beyond the grave, and all that we do in this life should have a bearing on the life to come.

Obviously, then, it is a just principle that those interests should not be jeopardied by our avocations in this life; but that while we seek to fill up life in a way that will best secure the ends of our existence here, our whole plan and course of life should be such as will not hinder but serve our preparation for a future world.

It would be easy greatly to extend these remarks, but the above rules embody the main principles which should guide those who are forming their plans for life.

III. These remarks and suggestions will enable us, in the third place, to answer the main inquiry with which we started,—*In what way shall the interval between the choosing of a profession and the entrance on its active duties be employed?* The point was suggested by the supposition that, in some way now unknown to us, in the deserts or towns of Arabia,—by prayer, by meditation, by some active discipline,—the three years spent there by Paul were designed to fit him for the better performance of the vast and the untried duties of the apostleship.

A very few simple hints will be all that it will now be necessary to suggest.

(1.) The first is, *That time enough should be taken to prepare for the profession or calling which has been selected.* It might seem to be a waste of life to spend so many years in the mere work of *preparation* for future life; and doubtless many would say that, on the supposition that Saul of Tarsus, after all his previous training, spent these three years in prayer, or meditation, or study, it is

unaccountable that so much of life should have been wasted when the world was perishing for lack of the Gospel which he was appointed to preach. But on the same principle, also, it would seem unaccountable that, by the arrangements of God Himself, so much time should be spent in helpless infancy; so much in childhood; so much in the studies of youth, in the schools, and in practice of the mechanic arts:—one-third of life, even when life reaches its longest allotted limits,—ordinarily, more than half of life,—often, more than three-fourths of the whole of existence here on earth, thus spent in mere *preparation*. There is undoubtedly a tendency in these times, in all the professions and callings, to abridge the period of training for the future work in which a man is to be engaged. So short does life seem, so unprofitable appears the time spent in preparation, so vast seems the work to be done, that they who are to engage in the active duties of life become impatient and restless, and leave the place of preparation only half-furnished for their work. Thus it is often difficult to retain youths in our colleges during the time usually prescribed for an academic course; thus young men, destined to the work of the ministry, pant to be engaged in their great work, and feel as if in their studies, they were wasting time that might be employed in winning souls to the Saviour.

Yet all this is based on a false principle, and a false view of life. He does not accomplish most who enters earliest on his work, but he who is best trained and prepared. The raw recruit is of little service in battle; the

long, and minute, and tedious process of *drilling* is not lost; but all the time spent in that is a gain when the battle comes. The contest among the Grecian wrestlers, boxers, racers, lasted usually but a few moments—certainly not beyond a few hours,—and to many the long previous training and discipline might seem to have been wasted;—yet to one who should have acted on that principle, the contest would have ended in defeat, and the crown would have passed into the hands of another. More by far was accomplished *by* that previous training than would have been, or could have been, without it. So it is in the battle, the race, the struggle, the conflict of human life. He does most who is best prepared; he usually carries away the palm who has given himself to the most thorough discipline.

Take another view of the matter. Not only is life itself short,—short *in* itself, and short in reference to the objects to be gained,—but *professional* life is very short. The average life in a profession or in any calling,—as physician, lawyer, clergyman, farmer, mechanic—is not much, if any, above twenty years; and *in* that time a man is to do what he has to do for this world and the next. The real question, then, would be, whether—in view of this brevity of professional life—this moral certainty that it cannot ordinarily be more than twenty or thirty years—it would be better to enter on it at thirty, *well prepared*, or to enter on it at twenty, or earlier, with a very imperfect preparation, or with none at all. Now, the period from thirty to fifty, and even sixty, is ordinarily the best period; the period of most vigour, of

most maturity, of most practical wisdom;—a better period altogether for securing what men have to secure, than an earlier period of life. How short were the public lives of Chatham, of Fox, of Burke, of Curran, of Patrick Henry, of Daniel Webster! How short was the period when Demosthenes stood conspicuously before the world! Yet who would venture to say that the long previous and careful self-training of the orator—the use of his voice beside the roaring ocean—the filling of his mouth with pebbles to correct a defect in his speech—was lost and wasted time?

(2). Secondly; *The studies should obviously have reference to the future calling.* No man is a “universal genius;” no man can hope to be master of all arts, and to become possessed of all knowledge. The duty of one, therefore, who is preparing to be a farmer, is to perfect himself in *that* calling; the duty of one who is to be a machinist, is to make himself master of the mysteries of his trade; the duty of one who is to be a merchant, is to perfect himself in what pertains to commerce; the duty of one who is preparing for either of the learned professions, is to make himself master of that *one* which he has chosen, and not to prepare for *all* professions or callings. He must feel that this is to be *the* business of life; this is what is to constitute *his* life; this is what *he* is to make of life. A man will feel the importance of this when he reflects that what constitutes life *to him* is to be found in *that* calling. This idea concentrates *on that preparation* all that there is to him of greatness, of solemnity, and of responsibility in life itself. If he were

to spend his life in varied and different employments, then this idea of solemnity, responsibility, and greatness might be diffused over them all. If he could be a farmer, *and* a mechanic, *and* a merchant, *and* a soldier, *and* a sailor, *and* a physician, lawyer, clergyman, then his idea of life would embrace all these ; and no one calling, in this view, would have any special or supreme importance. But he is *not* to be all these. He is to be a farmer, *or* a mechanic, *or* a merchant, *or* a soldier, *or* a sailor, *or* a physician, lawyer, clergyman ; and all that there is of life to *him* is to be concentrated in that *one* calling. Others are to fill up life, and make it to themselves what it will be in some one of the other callings ;—life to him is to be what it will be in that profession alone. By that, he is to be known ; by that, he is to be remembered, if remembered at all. How momentous, therefore, does the time of preparation for a profession become ! How solemn must this thought have been to Saul of Tarsus, when he abandoned, at the call of the Saviour, his former course of life, so brilliant to him in the prospect, and now felt that to him the *whole* of life was embodied in the idea of his being an apostle of Christ !

This remark is so obvious that I need not enlarge on it. There is, however, an observation connected with this point, so important, and so often overlooked, that I may be permitted to dwell on it a moment. It is, that every man, while he aims to perfect himself in his particular calling, should seek to cultivate his mind in all respects, and to know all that he can, consistently with his main purpose, on all that belongs to the

subjects of human inquiry. In the course of a professional life it will be found that nothing which a man has learned on any subject is useless. Occasions will occur in which, in his regular calling, all that he has acquired will find an appropriate place, and will aid him in his work. But, besides, every man is to be more than a *mere professional* man. He is a husband, a father, a neighbour, a voter, a citizen; he is to be one of a generation, and to move and act with it; he is to be a patron of schools, and colleges, and institutions of benevolence; he is to be identified with the interests of learning, liberty, and religion; he is a traveller to another world, and has great interests beside those which relate to his mere calling. He is, or should be, a Christian man, and is to act, or should act, with Christians in their efforts to save the world. Life is narrowed down almost to nothing when a man is *merely* a business man.

(3.) One thought only remains. It is, that *the preparation for that profession should be*—as the choice of the profession, and the profession itself should be,—*subordinate to the life to come—to the preparation for eternity.* The one will not interfere with the other. No man is impeded in his proper business by prayer; no man is injured in any calling by seeking to obtain instruction daily from the Bible; no man is hindered in intellectual pursuits, by cultivating the pure affections of the heart, by exercising love to God, love to the Saviour, love to men,—by cultivating a spirit of gentleness, conscientiousness, purity, kindness; no man is injured in his

prospects for this life by cherishing the hope of the life to come. It should not be forgotten, also, that the *real* preparation which a man is at any time making *may be* for the eternal world. He may not live to enter on his chosen profession; long before the anticipated time shall arrive for entering on that, a more material question may be before his mind and heart,—whether he is prepared for the unchanging world.

Life is great if properly viewed in any respect; it is mainly great when viewed in connexion with the world to come. Its most momentous period is that which we have been considering; the results of the manner in which that period is spent, will reach beyond the skies.

VI.

SAUL BROUGHT TO ANTIOCH.

Buried talent called forth to its appropriate field of labour.

Saul's journey to Arabia not recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.—Its effect on the disciples at Jerusalem.—Saul's reception by Barnabas.—Saul numbered with the apostles.—In danger from the Grecians.—Sent to Tarsus.—Sought by Barnabas.—*Occasion of his call to Antioch.*—The gospel not for Jews only.—The gospel successfully preached to Greeks.—The name "Christian" first used.—*The field of labour open*; Antioch; and the world.—*General arrangements for calling forth talent.*—Talent existing in various forms.—Talent a creation, not a development.—Talent conferred as it is needed.—Talent adapted to the demand for it.—Scope for the exercise of talent.—Emergencies arise to call it forth.

“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul : and when he had found him he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”

ACTS xi. 25, 26.



ANTI OCH.



HE have seen that Saul of Tarsus, after he had spent sufficient time in Damascus to show the reality of his conversion, and to proclaim there the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, retired before the opposition of the Jews, and went into Arabia, where he spent three years.

On his return to Jerusalem it is said of him that "he assayed to join himself to the disciples;" that is, he sought to be recognized as a follower of the Saviour; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple (Acts ix. 26). They remembered him as a Jew; as a most devoted, zealous, and bigoted Pharisee. They feared that there had been some deception about the report of his conversion, and were slow to

believe that a man who had been so infuriated, and who had done so much to destroy the Church, had become a sincere disciple of Jesus.

It is a very remarkable fact that the journey into Arabia is not referred to by Luke, in his account of Paul in the Acts of the Apostles. From the narrative there, (Acts ix. 19—26), the inference might be that Saul had gone at once from Damascus to Jerusalem; and that his assaying to join himself to the disciples had occurred very soon after his conversion. And it might seem probable, also, *if* so long an interval as three years had occurred between his conversion and his going to Jerusalem, that the sacred historian would not have passed it over in silence.

The enemies of Christianity have not failed to urge this as an instance of an irreconcilable contradiction between the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Galatians. But, in reply to this, it may be said, that (apart from the general fact that *any* historian, however minute and accurate his account may be, *must* pass over many facts, which may be in themselves important, and which might be mentioned by others), the account in Luke, as it is, is *best* explained by the supposition that such a journey *did* take place, and indeed is not easily explained *except* on such a supposition. (a.) If there *had* been no such interval,—if Saul had gone up to Jerusalem immediately after his conversion, and after the zeal which he had shown in Damascus in preaching Christ as the Messiah,—it is morally certain that the disciples would have welcomed him at once, and without suspicion.

In Damascus he had given all the evidence which could be desired of the reality of his conversion. He had abandoned the purpose for which he had gone there. He had engaged in the work of preaching the Gospel. He had done this with all the ardour which was characteristic of the man, and with so much zeal as to arouse the wrath of the Jews residing there (Acts ix. 22). All this must have been known to the Christians at Jerusalem ; and had he come *at once* among them, it cannot be supposed that their fears would have been excited, or that they would have had any suspicion about the sincerity of his conversion. (*b.*) But on the supposition that he had been absent "three years" in Arabia, all this might be changed, and that very fact might lead to suspicion and apprehension in regard to him. In that long time the freshness of the impression produced by his conversion would have passed away. The very fact of his absence, of his silence, of his *doing nothing* (so far as known) in the cause of Christianity, might have prepared their minds for suspicion and doubt. Where had he been ? What had been his employment ? Why had he so soon ceased to defend the cause of Christianity, and so soon withdrawn from public view ? Why had he not come at once to Jerusalem ? and *there*, in the very centre of opposition to Christianity, and on the very spot where the Messiah had been put to death, why had he not stood up as a new witness for that Saviour who was said to have appeared to him on the way to Damascus ? How natural—how almost unavoidable—on the supposition that he had gone to Arabia, and had

been there for three long years, would be the impression that he had lost his interest in the cause of Christianity; that he had ceased to be a professed disciple; that he had returned to his former faith; and that now, in seeking to unite himself with them, there must be some sinister motive, and that his coming among them might be regarded as the act of an insidious and dangerous enemy.

These considerations may, perhaps, show that the fact of Luke's *not* mentioning the journey into Arabia, is so far from being an objection to the truth of his narrative, that the supposition of Paul's having gone there is necessary to an explanation of the facts which the historian *has* stated,—or that what he has stated would not have been so likely to have taken place, if there had been no such journey. If it is so, then this may be regarded as one of what Paley calls “undesigned coincidences,” showing that the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle to the Galatians are both genuine. An impostor—a fabricator—would not have thought of such a device. Such things occur only in real history; not in attempts to impose on the world.

The difficulty to which I have now adverted in regard to the reception of Saul by the disciples at Jerusalem, was met by Barnabas. He, somehow, and from some cause not explained, had formed a strong attachment for Saul. Possibly he may have been informed of the fact that Saul had gone into Arabia, and of the manner in which he had spent those three years of absence. With the fullest confidence in his character, he “brought

him to the Apostles, and declared unto them," that is, reminded 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" (Acts ix. 27). He dwelt on this as fully proving the reality of his conversion; and showed them that there could be no just ground of suspicion respecting his future career. They were satisfied, and received him as one of their number.

But here a new difficulty arose, and Saul was again in danger. "He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him" (Acts ix. 29). These Grecians—*Hellenists* (Ἑλληνιστάς)—foreign proselytes—probably held some opinions which Saul regarded as dangerous, and which he felt himself bound to oppose; and the result was, as often happened to him afterwards from similar causes, that his life was in danger. To secure his safety, and perhaps also to introduce him to a field of labour where it might be hoped he would be most successful, it was resolved to send him to *Tarsus*.

How he was employed in Tarsus, we have no means of ascertaining. It was the home of his childhood; it was a place where he would be surrounded by the friends of his early years, by the members of his own family; a place where he *might* come in contact with distinguished Pagan philosophers and men of learning.¹ We cannot well doubt that the young convert would seek to bring the claims of Christianity before as many of these sages as possible; we cannot doubt that in the

¹ Conybeare and Howson—"Life of St. Paul"—vol. i. p. 104.

synagogue there, as he afterwards did elsewhere, he would urge the proofs that Jesus was the Messiah; nor can we doubt that his labours there would be attended with some measure of success.¹

But he was in obscurity. His talent there was comparatively buried talent. He was endowed alike by native talent, by his education, and by the grace imparted to him at his conversion, for a far larger sphere; and he had been called to the apostleship that he might occupy a wider field. The time had come when he was to be called forth to the great business of his life. A "work of grace" had commenced in Antioch, the capital of Syria, a city second in importance to none in the East, and in its position and influence second only to Rome. So much importance had this work assumed in the view of the Apostles at Jerusalem, that Barnabas, one of their most valued fellow-labourers, had been sent there. So extensive was the field of labour in Antioch, so much need was there of additional help, and so deeply did Barnabas himself feel the necessity of counsel in this great undertaking, that, calling to mind the eminent gifts of his friend, Saul of Tarsus, he resolved to call him to his aid. The work required one *like* Saul of Tarsus, and would be ample for the employment of all his special qualifications for the ministry. In our age a telegraphic despatch would have sum-

¹ "In his own family, we may well imagine that some of those Christian "kinsmen" whose names are handed down to us (Rom. xvi.)—possibly his sister, the playmate of his childhood, and his sister's son, who afterwards saved his life (Acts xxiii. 16—22)—were at this time, by his exertions, gathered into the fold of Christ."—*Conybeare and Howson, ut sup.*

moned him to Antioch at once; but in a difficult and dangerous journey, Barnabas himself had to go and find him: "Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch."

The theme, then, before us, as will be seen by this explanation of the circumstances of the case, is THE CALLING OF THIS OBSCURE AND BURIED TALENT INTO A WIDER AND MORE APPROPRIATE FIELD OF LABOUR AND USEFULNESS,—THE FIELD OF LABOUR NOW OPENED BY THE NEW EMERGENCY IN THE CHURCH AND BY THE ENLARGED VIEWS OF THE NATURE AND DESIGN OF THE NEW RELIGION. The point of general interest to which we shall be led by the facts here adverted to in the case of Saul of Tarsus, will relate to the arrangements by which God prepares talent for wide and useful employment, and the methods by which that talent is called forth to accomplish His designs. In illustrating this, I would notice—

I. *The emergency or occasion which had then occurred in the Christian Church.* And here we may observe three things:

(1.) The ideas of Christians up to that time had been limited. It was a slow process by which the attention of the apostles and other Christians was directed to the regions beyond Palestine, and even when their thoughts were directed to other lands, it was rather to the scattered Hebrews than to the heathen; to the synagogue, rather than to the "Porch," the "Lyceum," the

“Academy,” or the Pagan temple of worship.¹ Their affections clustered and lingered around Palestine—the land of their fathers, the seat of the national religion; their remembrances were of the Hebrew people as the “covenant” people of God; they met everywhere, in their views as derived from the ancient religion, the barriers which had been set up between the Hebrews and other nations. Slowly were their early Jewish prejudices overcome; slowly did they learn the lessons

¹ “Hitherto the history of the Christian Church has been confined within Jewish limits. . . . If any traveller from a distant country has been admitted into the community of believers, the place of his baptism has not been more remote than the ‘desert’ of Gaza. If any ‘aliens from the commonwealth of Israel’ have been admitted to the citizenship of the spiritual Israelites, they have been ‘strangers’ who dwell among the hills of Samaria. But the time is rapidly approaching when the knowledge of Christ must spread more rapidly,—when those who possessed not that Book, which caused perplexity on the road to Ethiopia, will hear and adore His name,—and greater strangers than those who drew water from the well of Sychar will come nigh to the Fountain of Life. The same dispersion which gathered in the Samaritans, will gather in the Gentiles also. The ‘middle wall of partition’ being utterly broken down, all will be called by the new and glorious name of ‘Christian.’

“And as we follow the progress of events, and find that all movements in the Church begin to have more and more reference to the heathen, we observe that these movements begin to circulate more and more round a new centre of activity. Not Jerusalem, but Antioch, not the Holy City of God’s ancient people, but the profane city of the Greeks and Romans, is the place to which the student of sacred history is now directed. During the remainder of the Acts of the Apostles our attention is at least divided between Jerusalem and Antioch, until at last, after following St. Paul’s many journeys, we come with him to Rome. For some time Constantinople must remain a city of the future; but we are more than once reminded of the greatness of Alexandria; and thus even in the life of the apostle we find prophetic intimations of four of the five great centres of the early Catholic Church.”—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. p. 106.

which God meant to teach them by the things which were occurring.

(2.) The events which had now taken place at Antioch could not well be mistaken in their meaning, as bearing on this point. The Gospel had been preached there with great power and success. It had been attended with the same results which had been produced when it was proclaimed in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. What was particularly remarkable was, that while those who "were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen," though they went to "Phenice [Phenicia], and Cyprus, and *Antioch*," preached "to none but unto *the Jews only*" (Acts xi. 19), men from other places—"Cyprus, and *Cyrene*" (in distant Africa)—preached also, and preached to the "*Grecians*"—*πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλλημιστὰς*—so that "a great number believed, and turned to the Lord" (Acts xi. 20, 21). This to the Church was a new idea. The Gospel was to be preached *beyond* the bounds of Palestine. It was to be preached by those who had not gone *from* Palestine. It was to be preached to those who were not of Hebrew descent. The Gospel was securing a firm hold on a large Pagan city—one of the great capitals of the world. It, therefore, was *not* to be confined to Judæa or the Jews, but was to extend to every land; to embrace all people. Henceforward this was to become a fixed idea in all their conceptions of the nature of Christianity; in all their views of the Church; in all their doctrines of Christian fellowship; in all their plans for spreading their religion.

(3.) The name by which they would be called was to be the name *Christian*,—a name given for the first time at Antioch ; a name conferred and adopted just as this enlarged view of the nature of their religion was becoming the common view of the Church ; a name more expressive and significant under this new view of their religion than any other could have been.

Its origin is not known. On this point I may be allowed to give the following extract :—“ It is not likely that they received this name from the Jews. The ‘ children of Abraham ’ employed a term much more expressive of hatred and contempt. They called them ‘ the sect of the Nazarenes.’ These disciples of Jesus traced their origin to Nazareth in Galilee ; and it was a proverb, that nothing good could come from Nazareth. Besides this, there was a further reason why the Jews would not have called the disciples of Jesus by the name of ‘ Christians.’ The word ‘ Christ ’ has the same meaning with ‘ Messiah.’ And the Jews, however blinded and prejudiced on this subject, would never have used so sacred a word to point an expression of mockery and derision ; and they could not have used it in grave and serious earnest, to designate those whom they held to be the followers of a false Messiah, a fictitious Christ. Nor is it likely that the ‘ Christians ’ gave this name to themselves. In the Acts of the Apostles, and in their own letters, we find them designating themselves as ‘ brethren,’ ‘ disciples,’ ‘ believers,’ ‘ saints.’ Only in two places (Acts xxvi. 28 ; I Peter iv. 16), do we find the term ‘ Christians ;’ and in both instances it is implied to

be a term used by those who are without. There is little doubt that the name originated with the Gentiles, who began now to see that this new sect was so far distinct from the Jews, that they might naturally receive a new designation. And the form of the word implies that it came from the Romans, not from the Greeks. The word 'Christ' was often in the conversation of the believers, as we know it to have been constantly in their letters. 'Christ' was the title of Him whom they avowed as their leader and their chief. They confessed that this Christ had been crucified, but they asserted that He was risen from the dead, and that He guided them by His invisible power. Thus 'Christian' was the name which naturally found its place in the reproachful language of their enemies. In the first instance we have every reason to believe that it was a term of ridicule and derision. And it is remarkable that the people of Antioch were notorious for inventing names of derision, and for turning their wit into the channels of ridicule."¹

The name "Christian" was well fitted to be the name of the followers of the Redeemer in all ages, and in all lands,—binding all in one, and becoming a common appellation by which they would be known and recognized in all parts of the world. As the idea had at length sprung up in the Church, and was now spreading, that the religion of the Saviour was designed to be universal as well as perpetual, so this name was appro-

¹ Conybeare and Howson, vol. I. pp. 116, 117.

prate to that idea, and would serve to keep it up in all future times. The name was not Jewish in its nature ; it had nothing local ; it sprang from no national peculiarity ; it indicated nothing in regard to tribes, clans, languages, complexions, or to the peculiar laws or customs of any people ; it indicated only *a relation to Christ*—a relation to be sustained alike and equally by all, in all lands and in all ages, who would be brought to believe on Him. It was, therefore, a name in which the appellation Jew or Greek,—European, Asiatic, or African,—Caucasian, Mongolian, or Ethiopian,—nay, in which the then unknown names American, Hawaiian, Australian, might be ultimately lost,—the higher appellation of CHRISTIAN uniting the whole world in one great brotherhood. In speaking of human beings, the names *man* and *Christian* are those only which express universality. The first regards the race as *one* ; the other, as *redeemed*. All other names are local ; all others tend to divide, not to unite nations ; all others are more or less at the foundation of rival interests, of alienation, of war, of conquest. The names *man* and *Christian* alone lie at the foundation of universal love, concord, equal rights, and peace.

II. *The ample field, on which the talents of Saul, now summoned from obscurity, might act.* That field was, first, Antioch itself, as a point of influence in the world ; and second, the whole world, as now open to his efforts.

(1.) *Antioch itself.* Antioch was one of the most prominent points of influence then existing among the

nations. Babylon and Nineveh had lost their importance ; Constantinople had not yet been founded ; Paris and London were merely a collection of huts. Jerusalem, Alexandria, Ephesus, Antioch, Athens, Corinth, Philippi, Rome—these were the centres of influence and power ;—Rome *the* centre, and all these subordinate to that. A founder or a defender of a new religion, who sought the widest sphere for propagating it, would direct his attention to those first-named cities, with the purpose, sooner or later, of reaching the imperial city—the capital of all.

Antioch, the capital of Syria, by its situation, its wealth, its commerce, its accessibility, its communication with the other parts of the world, its numbers, and the fact that, for purposes of commerce, there were multitudes gathered there from every other part of the world, was *one* of the most important centres of influence ; and we may readily understand, therefore, why he was called, by the Providence of God, to labour in that city.¹

¹ “ Antioch and Alexandria had become the metropolitan centres of commercial and civilized life in the East. . . . Their histories are no unimportant chapters in the history of the world. Both of them were connected with St. Paul : one indirectly, as the birthplace of Apollos ; the other directly, as the scene of some of the most important passages of the apostle’s own life. Both abounded in Jews from their first foundation. Both became the residences of Roman governors, and both were patriarchates of the primitive Church. But before they had received either the Roman discipline or the Christian doctrine, they had served their appointed purpose of spreading the Greek language and habits, of creating new lines of commercial intercourse by land and sea, and of centralising in themselves the mercantile life of the Levant. Even the Acts of the Apostles remind

(2.) *The world itself* would be suggested as a field of Christian effort, for which Saul was especially qualified, and which, in his call to the apostolic office, he had been designated to occupy. The new idea which had been started, and which led to the propagation of Christianity beyond the bounds of Judæa at all, was one which could not be confined in its operations to Antioch. It was too large and comprehensive to be hemmed in by so narrow limits ; for the principles which made it proper to preach the Gospel in *Antioch*, and to those who were *not* Jews, made it proper to preach it *everywhere*, and to *all* people. The events now occurring in that heathen capital could not but suggest to a mind like that of Saul, the fact that the whole world was to be visited by like influences of the Spirit of God.

Thus were his great talents called forth and placed in the field which from the beginning it had been determined that he should occupy. Thus, too, was furnished one illustrious instance of the manner in which God qualifies particular men for some great work to be

us of the traffic of Antioch with Cyprus and the neighbouring coasts, and of the sailing of Alexandrian corn-ships to the more distant harbours of Malta and Puteoli. Of all the Greek elements which the cities of Antioch and Alexandria were the means of circulating, the spread of the language is the most important. Its connection with the whole system of Christian doctrine—with many of the controversies and divisions of the Church—is very momentous. That language, which is the richest and most delicate that the world has seen, became the language of theology. The Greek tongue became to the Christian more than it had been to the Roman or the Jew.”—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. pp. 9, 10.

For a full description of Antioch, see *Ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 118—122.

performed, and of the manner in which, in due time, talent is called from obscurity.

III. We may notice, as a great *general* truth in the progress of the world, *the arrangements for calling talent forth to accomplish the Divine purposes*. On this subject, the following remarks may be made:—

(1.) The talent which exists at any one time in the world, is found in one of these forms: (*a.*) Talent in preparation for the future; (*b.*) Talent in obscurity, or not called forth; (*c.*) Talent employed in a purpose corresponding to the design for which it was created; (*d.*) Talent perverted and abused. These forms may exist separately, or two of them may be combined. Thus talent in preparation, and as yet in obscurity, may be combined, for the occasion may not yet have arisen to call it forth. We have no reason to doubt that while Saul was in Arabia, and while he was in Tarsus,—in both cases in comparative obscurity,—he was actually preparing for the great work to which his life was to be devoted.

(2.) There is talent *created* in each age of the world, for all the purposes of that age. It is brought into being by God's power. It is not developed from the past; it is not the production of the mere laws of nature; it is not derived from any quality in the parents or the ancestry of those thus endowed; it is as much a new *creation* as would be the introduction of a new world into the system of worlds already made. There was nothing in the little village of Stratford-on-Avon that could pro-

duce the mind of Shakespeare; nor was there anything in the mind of his father, the "glover" and "furrer" residing there, of which "Lear," and "Hamlet," and "Othello," could be regarded as the *developement*. The mind of Shakespeare was as really an act of creation as the creation of a world. There was nothing in the birthplace of Cardinal Wolsey, or in the character of the butcher his father, of which his great genius could be considered as the developement. So with Johnson, Milton, Addison, Cowper, Burns, Michael Angelo, West, Fulton. These minds were made of such capacity, such power, such adaptedness to a particular end, as God pleased; and were brought upon the earth at such a time, and in such circumstances, as He saw best. There is a difference, in this respect, between the arrangements which God has made for the *physical* wants of the world, and for its mental and moral wants. In the former case, long before man was upon the earth, in the very beginning, He had created, and had deposited in the earth, all the gold and silver, the iron and the lead, that the race which was to be made would need in all its history,—not to be created anew, as it might be required—and not to be exhausted. Mind, on the contrary, He brings upon the earth *as it is wanted*,—creating from age to age, as those which have acted their parts are removed, *new* minds to carry forward the great purposes which have to be accomplished.

Mind, thus created, is designed to meet the *wants* of a particular age. At every period there is a class of minds needed to carry the world forward in its *ordinary*

course,—in the regular developement of things ; in working the fields already cultivated ; in finishing the roads, canals, and houses already begun ; in maintaining the institutions of learning and of charity which have been already founded ; and in gathering up and transmitting to future times the results of observation and experience in that generation. As, however, the most marked advances which the world makes are not by a steady and easy ascent, but rather *per saltum*—by being suddenly raised from a low level to a higher steppe, plateau, or elevation, along which it is to move, until some new occasion shall arrive to elevate the race to a higher level still,—so (when the time arrives for such a new elevation) God creates the mind or minds fitted to the occasion. Thus some great law-giver appears ; some splendid genius in poetry or painting ; some man endowed with eminent military talents ; some patient, plodding student ; some profound philosopher. Such men as Moses—Solon—Lycurgus—lay the foundation for new epochs, and such “epochs” really constitute the history of the *progress* of the world.

(3.) Under this arrangement, much talent may be obscure and hidden ; much may be in a state of *almost unconscious* preparation for the part which it is to act. How little did Washington dream, amid the quiet scenes at Mount Vernon, of the great things which he was really preparing to accomplish ! how little did Oliver Cromwell, on his farm, dream of the great part which he was to act in the history of the world ! The emergency came. There was enough for those great

men to do, and God had endowed them with talent sufficient to do all that was needful to be accomplished in their age.

(4.) Emergencies *do* arise to call forth the talent which God has conferred. When liberty is endangered, when a country is invaded, when a new mode of government is to be instituted, when reforms are to be effected, when the world is prepared for some new and signal advance, then talent before hidden and unknown, but in a state of ample preparation, is brought forward to do its work. Such—in a more eminent degree than aught else (and indeed in a degree so eminent and so sacred as to make it seem almost profane even to allude to it at all, in the way of comparison with the ordinary progress of human affairs)—was the period when, after so long a preparation, and when “the fulness of the time was come,” the Son of God was called from His obscurity in darkened Galilee, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost was solemnly consecrated to His work as the Messiah; for then the affairs of the whole world were to be put on a new footing, and the race was to be raised to a permanently higher level. Such also,—subordinate to that higher purpose, but still so marked in its character as to constitute a new epoch in the world's history,—was the fact which we have been contemplating, the calling forth of Saul of Tarsus from his obscurity to act his part on the great theatre of human affairs.

VII.

SAUL AND BARNABAS SENT FORTH.

Christianity assuming the form of Missions to the Heathen.

Missionary work the predestined sphere of Paul's labour.—Duty of civilized nations to the uncivilized.—*Barriers which hinder the attempt to spread a new religion.*—Differences of nationality.—Distinctions of caste.—Diversities of colour.—Existence of separate religious beliefs.—*Difficulty of overcoming these barriers.*—Unwillingness of the more favoured to proclaim truth to the less favoured;—and of the less favoured to receive it.—*The teachings by which Christianity triumphs over these obstacles.*—It declares (1) the unity of mankind; (2) an atonement made for all; (3) Gospel hope the same for all; (4) the way of salvation open to all; and (5) the same natural rights possessed by all.—What the Gospel has done for us, and can do for others.

“ As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.”

ACTS xiii. 2.



TARSUS.



HE original destination of Saul of Tarsus, when he was called to the apostleship, was to the Gentiles, or the heathen,—or, as we should now say, to a missionary life. Thus the Saviour said to Ananias at Damascus, “Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings” (Acts ix. 15). There can be little doubt that Ananias would in some form communicate this to Saul, and that thus the idea would take early possession of his mind.¹ The same idea had been communicated to the mind of Saul at Jerusalem, and in a manner which could not be forgotten. In a vision or “trance” the Lord Jesus appeared to him, and said, “Make haste, and get thee quickly out of

¹ Comp. Acts xxvi. 17.

Jerusalem ; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me,"—and added, "Depart ; for I will send thee far hence unto *the Gentiles*"—unto the nations—*εἰς ἔθνη*, the heathen nations (Acts xxii. 17—21). Subsequently referring to that which distinguished him peculiarly from the other apostles, that which constituted the *idea* of the apostleship in his own case, he more than once alludes to this, glorying in the fact that he was "the apostle of the Gentiles," and rejoicing in the honour of the commission (Gal. ii. 8 ; Rom. xi. 13 ; Gal. i. 16 ; Eph. iii. 8).

The early Christian church, as we have seen, was gradually, but slowly learning to admit, as an element in its interpretation of the last command of the Saviour—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature"—the idea that the message of salvation was to be sent, without distinction of nationality, of rank, of lineage, of colour, of political organizations, or of religion, to all the dwellers on the earth. Saul and Barnabas were now set apart, by special designation of the Holy Ghost, to labour in carrying out that idea.

The appointment of Saul and Barnabas to this work among the heathen was an important event in each of their lives, determining their own future course. It was important as the manifestation of a more just view of Christianity itself ; it was the first development of the idea which has since gone so essentially and so far into the civilization of the world : viz., that ENLIGHTENED AND CIVILIZED NATIONS SHOULD SEND TO THOSE WHICH ARE BARBAROUS AND UNCIVILIZED A KNOWLEDGE OF THAT TO WHICH THEY OWE THEIR OWN

ELEVATION. It is the idea of light radiating from a centre on regions of surrounding darkness; and it will justify, to the end of the world, or to the time when all nations shall be evangelized, the arrangements and organizations which distinctly contemplate the spread of the Gospel by missionary efforts.

Paul and Barnabas started from Antioch with the idea, then fresh and new, that a religion fitted to be universal had been revealed; and that a period had arrived when there was to be "neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female," but when all should be "one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28); when there was to be "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free," but Christ was to be "all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

The following points here occur as proper to be illustrated: the barriers which exist among the nations as hindrances to all effort to spread a new religion; the difficulty of overcoming those barriers; and the manner in which Christianity overcomes that difficulty, and lays the foundation for the spread of a universal religion.

I. The barriers which exist among the nations as hindrances to all effort to spread a new religion. We have to consider these as obstacles which the Christian religion at first encountered, and which exist still as hindrances in the attempt to diffuse it among the nations of the earth.

(1.) There is that, then, which springs from a different *nationality*, no matter what it may be that constitutes the nationality,—no matter what has been the history

of the nation,—and no matter how its boundaries have been determined, whether by natural limits of rivers, seas, and mountains, or whether as the result of conquest, conventions, or treaties.

“Mountains interposed make enemies of nations,
Which else like kindred drops had mingled into one.”

Where nations belong to different races, and have sprung from different ancestors,—where their independence of other nations has been established as the result of bloody wars,—where they speak diverse languages,—where they have different religions,—where they have peculiar manners and customs,—where the interests of commerce, industry, and the arts are different,—where they are rivals in trade,—where one is warlike and another peaceful,—all these, and kindred things, constitute barriers not easy to overcome. Thus to the ancient Jews, the whole world was divided, not improperly so far as the terms employed to designate them were concerned, into two great classes, “Jews and Gentiles,”—yet in fact producing in their minds the feeling that they were the peculiar favourites of heaven, and that all others were outcasts. Thus, in a similar manner, the Greeks divided the world into “Greeks and Barbarians,”—using a *term*, indeed, as applied to others, less respectful than the Jews used (for the Jews employed no such term in application to others as “Barbarian”), but producing among the Greeks a *feeling* much less exclusive than that entertained by the Jews. In modern times, a similar instance occurs among the Chinese, who regard themselves as the children of heaven, the “Celestials,”—and all others, as “outside

Barbarians." In a world thus divided into distinct nationalities, any new religion that is sought to be conveyed from one land to another, and that claims to be a universal religion, must find serious obstructions to its reception and diffusion.

(2.) The distinctions in social life—of *rank* and "*caste*"—constitute everywhere a barrier to the propagation of a new religion. These exist *within* a nation—in its own bosom; dividing a community (itself separated from *other* communities or nations) into distinctions of its own. These distinctions are found between the rich and the poor,—the learned and the ignorant,—the bond and the free; or they are distinctions based on a derivation from royal blood, an aristocracy, or a priesthood. In all lands, there has been a struggle of one class to climb to some eminence whence they might look down on the rest of mankind, and to create in their own minds, and in the minds of others, the impression that they are the favourites of heaven, and that others are aliens or outcasts. Part endeavour to persuade themselves that they were born to occupy thrones, and that the millions are born to be their subjects. Part seek to cherish the thought that they were born to be rich; that this fact was designed by heaven to exalt them over the humbler poor, and that those beneath them were born to be menials and vassals. Part strive to believe that they were born to live in indolence and affluence, sustained by an inferior class or race who were created to be their slaves. Part lay claim to the sacredness and inviolability of a priestly office, regard themselves as by birth and

rank more holy than other men, and claim to be the channels through which grace is conveyed to mankind. For these favoured ones, the world stands; the sun shines; the winds blow; the heavens and the earth were made. Rank, liberty, property, salvation, is theirs; penury, vassalage, ignorance, debasement, bondage, is the inheritance of the rest. The prince, heaven-appointed, is to reign; the mass are to lie at his feet.

(3.) In an eminent degree this distinction is made in regard to *colour and complexion*,—constituting, in many cases, a barrier in society which the highest forms of civilization, culture, and religion have not been able entirely to overcome. It has been among the most cherished opinions of the class favoured with what they deem a fairer complexion, that this fact elevates them nearer to heaven, and constitutes, even in the eye of the Eternal Father, a distinction between them and the dark and dusky portions of mankind. They have, therefore, not only sought to enslave those of a different colour, but they have been slow to believe that, even in the eye of Him who looks upon the heart rather than the outward appearance, a dark skin is not an emblem of a darker and more dreadful debasement than is found under a white one, and seem to imagine that even if the blood of the atonement is sprinkled on them as on themselves, it fails to efface the distinction, and to place them in any manner on a level. Far more formidable, in some respects, than the barrier which separated the Jews from the Gentiles,—than that which alienates nation from nation,—than that which divides princes

and people, nobles and serfs,—than that which separates the different castes in India,—is the prejudice which arises from *colour*, connected as that prejudice is with the degrading practice of slavery.

(4) Still more difficult is it to overcome the barrier which exists among nations as caused by a difference of *religion*. The idea has prevailed extensively in the world, and still prevails, that the existing religion of each nation is, by the purpose of the Creator, their own,—*designed* like their laws, their manners, their customs, their climate, their rivers, lakes, and mountains, to separate them from other people,—a religion good for them; adapted to them; intended for them; and not to be changed for the religion of another country. Their religion is not, indeed, claimed to be a religion for the world; it is for *them*;—it is not to be carried abroad to other lands, but it is to be cultivated and sustained in their own;—it is not to be conveyed by conquest to supplant the religion of another nation, but it is to be protected by law in their own. And as it is not to be propagated in other lands, so the religions of other lands are not to be propagated there.

Such are some of the barriers which exist among the nations, and which have to be encountered by all who go forth to carry the Gospel into heathen lands.

II. The second point which I proposed to illustrate was *the difficulty of overcoming these barriers*.

This difficulty exists substantially in two forms:

(1.) In leading those who regard themselves as of

the more favoured class, and who look with contempt and disdain on those of a different rank, colour, or condition, to *offer* to others the same privileges as themselves, or to admit the idea that others are to be addressed as on the same level. To counteract the narrow feeling in the minds of His own apostles required all the skill of the Saviour Himself. He taught His disciples, indeed, that the Gospel was designed for all men, and was to be preached to all the world; but He taught this truth even to *them* in such a way as not to alarm their Jewish prejudices,—and, when He declared it to the Jews, He did it always by parables, in such a manner that it might be gradually and insensibly *insinuated* into their minds, as one of the least palatable truths which he had to communicate to them. To do good to the Syro-Phenician woman *as* a Gentile, it was necessary to brave all the established sentiments of the nation, who regarded such as “dogs,” and as entitled to none of the favours provided for the “children” of God (Matt. xv. 26). Strange as it may seem in the case of one who had been three years under the direct teaching of the Saviour, it required a special revelation to convince Peter that he should go and carry the Gospel to a Gentile,—though a man of rank, and though belonging to a nation which had conquered the world, and to which even the country of the Jews was subject (Acts x. 14, 15).

(2.) A still more serious difficulty is found in men's unwillingness to *receive* a communication or a message, in favour of a new religion, from one of inferior rank or condition. This would occur in the time of the

apostles ; and it occurs in all ages. Who is ignorant of the scorn with which the Athenian sage and Roman philosopher looked upon all that emanated from Judæa ? Who knows not what a mighty obstacle this was when the Gospel was preached at Athens, at Ephesus, at Antioch, at Rome ? The Jew was indeed *known* in most lands ;—for to most lands he had gone as a captive and a slave. But he was regarded with a singular mixture of hatred and contempt. He was *hated* on account of his religion ; for his bigotry, his narrow-mindedness, and because he was supposed to be a “hater of mankind.”¹ As destitute of science, literature, philosophy, and the arts,—and as a slave,—he was *despised*. How natural was it that Greeks and Romans should turn away from those who came out of Judæa to instruct the nations in the knowledge of God, the nature of the human soul, the doctrine of the resurrection, the way of salvation ! How hard it is for a *master* to be willing to receive the lessons of religion from one who has been or is his *slave*,—a prince, from one of his own subjects,—a rich man, clothed in purple and fine linen, from the beggar at his gate ; a philosopher, from one learned in no science, occupied in the humbler arts of life, acquainted only with the plough, or the anvil, or the loom, or the shoemaker’s bench ! With what contempt would a Brahmin

¹ So Tacitus says of the Christians who were put to death in the time of Nero, and who were in the public estimation identified with Jews ;—“Therefore they were first seized who made confession [who professed to be Christians], and then a great multitude who were pointed out by them, who were convicted not so much for the crime of burning the city, as because they were enemies of the human race.”—*Tac. Ann.* xv. 44.

turn away from one of humbler "caste" who should undertake to teach him the nature of true religion ; or a priest ministering in gorgeous robes at a Pagan altar, from one of the lowest of the people ! How slow would be an Englishman, a Frenchman, an American, trained in the schools of learning, to listen on the subject of religion to one sent from the Fiji Islands, or from Caffraria. In respect to social position, to science, to literature, to the arts, the apostles could never claim to be on a level with the nations to whom they were sent ; everywhere they had to encounter and surmount this difficulty, that while they professed to come to elevate the people of other lands in respect to religion, they were far below them in things which those nations most valued, and on which they most prided themselves.

The relative condition of nations has changed in our times, and the missionary goes out under better auspices. He goes now *from* a land of civilization, and science, and art, *to* those lands where such things are unknown ; he carries with him the printing-press, the quadrant, the telescope ; he goes *from* nations which, under the influence in a great measure of the religion which he proclaims, have risen high in wealth, in manufactures, in commerce, and in refinement, *to* lands still sunk in barbarism. Yet still this difficulty exists. Take, for illustration, the Chinese. Proud of their numbers, their antiquity, their laws, their imagined central position, their arts,—secluded from the rest of the world by their customs and their institutions,—fancying that the whole

world is dependent on them for their agricultural and mechanical productions,—they have disdained alike the arts, the science, and the religion of foreigners. An obstacle exists in their case to a great extent quite as stern in its nature as was the proud philosophy of Athens or Rome, and far more formidable in the numbers of those who are influenced by it. When it shall be said, as it *will* be, that that barrier is surmounted, and when the Gospel is preached throughout the territories occupied by those hundreds of millions, and when they welcome the religion of the Cross as they once did the foreign religion of the Buddhists, *then* there will be furnished another demonstration (not less impressive than that which occurred in the early ages of the Church) of the power of that religion which subdued the pride of Greek philosophers, and sat down triumphantly “on the throne of the Cæsars.”

III. *The way in which these obstacles are surmounted.* This will lead us to notice the truths by which the different barriers between nations and classes have been broken down, and by which Christianity has shown itself worthy the attention of the most enlightened nations of the earth.

(1.) There is, first, the distinct revelation of the truth that *mankind are one race*; the children of a common parent; on a level before God. No truth more vital, more far-reaching, more powerful in its bearing on human rights and human liberty, more potent in elevating man, has ever been proclaimed to the world.

The belief of this has had a very imperfect hold on the human mind; and the disbelief of it has led to some of the most tyrannous acts in ancient or modern times. But Christianity admits of no doubt on that subject. The doctrine of the unity and the equality of the race lies at the foundation of all its revelations, its claims, its promises; nor does it ever admit the idea that differences of climate, of complexion, of temperament, or of habits and customs, constitute any argument for an essential diversity of races. Revelation describes the creation of man as the creation of a single pair. It follows down the history of the descendants of that one pair alone. It records the scattering of their descendants over the world. It declares that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts xvii. 26). The doctrine of depravity which it urges, is a doctrine which pertains to men everywhere, as derived from the fall of that one pair; and it makes no exception when it says that "*all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." As it was on that one pair that sentence of death was passed on account of sin, so no one, prince or potentate, high or ignoble, learned or ignorant, can show that he is exempted from death as belonging to another race—for the graves of such men are scattered all over the earth,—and no one of the race lives always. The Redeemer gloried in the title "SON OF MAN," for He came not to take on Him the nature of the Mongolian, the Caucasian, the Ethiopian, or the American, as such,—but the nature of *man*. In whatever respect the incar-

nation of Christ bears on the destiny of those who dwell on the earth, it has respect to them *as men*—to each man—to every man;—and it is as proper for one human being as for another to say that when God was “manifest in the flesh” it was *his* nature that was honoured by being taken into permanent union with the Deity.

(2.) So, secondly, *the work of Christ* had respect to all men; and whatever there was in the atonement, as such, was designed for one as much as for another:—“One died for all.” “He, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man.” Whatever there is in the blood of Christ to secure the pardon of past sins, to deliver from death and hell, and to sanctify the human soul, is as applicable to one as another—to the peasant as to the prince; to the man of lowest “caste” as to the highest; to the slave as to his master;—to the Jew, to the Chinese, to the African,—to the Mongolian, the Caucasian, the Ethiopian, the aboriginal American. All have been atoned for alike; all have the offers salvation made to them alike; all are placed by the Gospel on the same level here; all may occupy the same rank in heaven. There is no higher argument that can be addressed to men to prove their equality, than to say to them that they all have been redeemed by the same blood—the blood of the Son of God.

(3.) So, thirdly, *the hopes* inspired by the Gospel are the same for every human being. When the Gospel reveals the doctrine of immortality to one man, it reveals it to all. When it makes known a heaven for one, it unfolds it for all. And it is a great thing to go

forth to the world—to a world where men are broken into ranks, and separated from each other by otherwise impassable barriers,—a world where nations and tribes are waging war with each other,—a world where one class seems hopelessly degraded, and another hopelessly arrogant,—and to say to them that, in the hope of immortality, they are all placed on the same level before their Maker.

(4.) So, fourthly, the *way of salvation* is the same for all. No one has any priority of claim by his rank, or enjoys any peculiar facilities for salvation by his titles or his wealth; and no one is excluded, or placed in less favourable circumstances, by his poverty, his ignorance, his servile condition. Neither ignorance, nor humble birth, nor complexion, shuts any man out of the kingdom of God. As all, no matter how high in rank, are to be saved, if saved at all, by faith in Christ Jesus, so all, no matter how humble in rank, *may* be saved by the same faith. As no one can adventure *nearer* the throne of God in virtue of his rank, his wealth, or his talent, so no one is kept *farther* from that throne by his low condition, or by his poverty of wealth, of learning, or of intellect. The prince and the sage are not more welcome to heaven than the poor and ignorant.

(5.) And so, fifthly, the gospel advances with the truth that all men are invested with the same *natural rights*;—the same right to the light of the sun, to cheer them and to guide their footsteps;—the same right to the tides, and the winds, and the stars, to conduct them and their cargoes across the ocean;—the same right to

limb, and liberty, and life;¹—the same right to the air, and to the productions of the teeming earth, and to a spot wherein to sleep the long sleep when they are dead. The Gospel cannot be preached in its purity without leaving this impression on the minds of men, and without sooner or later breaking down every custom and law that is opposed to it, for these rights *grow out* of the facts which have just been enumerated. You cannot preach the Gospel in its purity over the world, without proclaiming the doctrine of civil and religious liberty,—without overthrowing the barriers reared between nations and clans and classes of men,—without ultimately undermining the thrones of despots, and breaking off the shackles of slavery,—without making men everywhere free!

These remarks may illustrate the truth which I suggested at the commencement of this chapter, that the idea of preaching the Gospel to all nations alike, regardless of nationality, of internal divisions as to rank, and colour, complexion, and religion, constituted the beginning of a new era in history. Nothing has occurred in times *past*, so fitted to change the condition of the world as this truth viewed in all its bearings. And there is *now* no other element of power which will work so important changes in overturning thrones of tyranny, loosening the fetters of bondmen, opening prisons,

¹ “We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”—*Declaration of American Independence.*

putting an end to war, annihilating caste, and scattering abroad the blessings of freedom. We, as Christians, have that in our possession, which, without impoverishing us, would diffuse over the world prosperity and peace; which would elevate the race, enlighten the ignorant, comfort the afflicted, release the captive; which would make the wilderness and the solitary place glad, and the desert bud and blossom as the rose.

Christians, admire and adore the goodness of that Universal Father who has broken down every barrier, and sent the messages of grace to you, so that you are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Our ancestors were Gentiles, heathens, savages. They worshipped idols of wood or stone, and groaned under debasing superstition. To them the Gospel was preached; the Gospel raised them from their low condition; wherein we differ from them, the Gospel has made us what we are; and as long as we hold the doctrines of that Gospel in their purity, no man can wrest our liberties from us. Be it ours to spread the religion to which we owe so much. Other nations have a right to it; and it would elevate them as it has done our fathers and ourselves.

VIII.

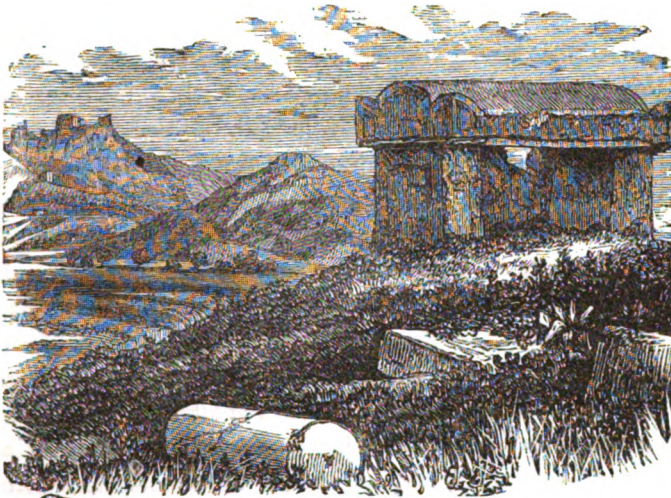
PAUL AND SILAS AT PHILIPPI.

The Assertion of our Rights.

The demand made by Paul.—The wrong done to him could not be undone. —But it could be openly acknowledged.—*The rights which Paul had as a Roman citizen.*—The advantages thus secured to him by law.—*The violation of these rights.*—Philippi, a Roman colony.—Christian Church formed.—The possessed woman.—Results of her cure.—Paul had thereby done no wrong.—The unjust treatment he endured.—*The propriety of his demand.*—How to be reconciled with the teachings of Christianity?—(1.) By the example of Christ Himself.—(2.) By the value of good laws; the struggle it has cost to establish them; and the duty of striving to maintain them.—(3.) By the important influence of character, as bearing on the claims of Christianity itself.

“ But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison ; and now do they thrust us out privily ? nay, verily ; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out.”

ACTS xvi. 37.



RUINS AT PHILIPPI.



It is my purpose now to consider an assertion, on the part of the apostle Paul, that his rights as a Roman citizen had been violated by those who pretended to act under Roman authority, and a demand on his part for a public acknowledgment of that wrong.

Made sensible by reflection, and by the remarkable events which had occurred during the night when Paul and Silas were imprisoned, that injustice had been done to these men, the magistrates—*οἱ στρατηγοὶ*—the Roman *praetors*—those entrusted with the civil administration at Philippi, “sent the serjeants”—*τοὺς ῥαβδούχους*—literally, the “rod-holders,” the *lictors*—or, as we should say, the *constables*,—directing that the prisoners should be discharged (ver. 35). This was done “privily”—*λάθρα*, *secretly*,—without any public proclamation; with no open

avowal that wrong had been done. If Paul had accepted this, and had been discharged in such a manner, he would have gone forth safely indeed, but under the prejudice against him produced by the fact that he had been condemned by the magistrates; that he had been scourged for crime; that he had been imprisoned on a charge of violating the laws of the empire; and, consequently, with all the *presumption* against him that this was a just sentence, and that he had been actually guilty. So far as the judicial sentence of a Roman magistrate could operate (and it might affect him wherever he went—even in Rome itself,—for the sentence of a magistrate was *presumed* to be in accordance with justice), he might suffer from the effect of this condemnation, scourging, and imprisonment. He resolved, therefore, not to accept of a discharge on these conditions, but to demand a public assertion, on the part of the magistrates, that an act of injustice had been committed. He wished that the influence of their *retraction* should go as far as the influence of the condemnation had done; in other words, that the one should counteract the other. The wrong could not, indeed, be undone. The truth that he had been condemned could not cease *to be* a truth. The fact that from him and Silas their clothes had been “rent off;” that “many stripes” had been laid on them; that they had been “thrust into the inner prison;” that their feet had been “made fast in the stocks;” that they had been treated in a harsh and unfeeling manner by a jailor in the service of the Roman magistrates; that (thus suffering) they had been left un-

pitied in a dark and gloomy dungeon, could not cease to *be* a fact in their history. But Paul and Silas, as Roman citizens, could demand as a right that the magistrates who had injured them should publicly confess the wrong, that they themselves might be publicly acquitted, and allowed to go to their work without any prejudice against them in the public mind from what had occurred at Philippi. This was done. The magistrates feared when they heard that they were Romans ; and they came and “besought them”—*παρεκάλεισαν*—entreated them—begged them—“and brought them out,” (vers. 38, 39.)

The subject which is suggested for our consideration by this portion of the history of the apostle Paul, *viz.* THE ASSERTION OR VINDICATION OF OUR RIGHTS, is not without practical importance, though it is not without difficulty. The questions arise, how far is this proper? when is it proper? with what motives should it be done? how can this be reconciled with the requirements of meekness and a spirit of forgiveness? For a proper illustration of these points, it will be necessary to consider—

I. The rights which Paul had as a Roman citizen.

In what way Paul had become possessed of these rights, whether in virtue of his birth at Tarsus as a “free city,” or in consequence of some service rendered by his father to the Roman government, is not of importance. He did not hesitate to avail himself of it ; and the appeal in each case, when he made it, was recognized and allowed. To Paul this right was invaluable. It was in

itself an honour, and would be everywhere so regarded. It gave to him who enjoyed it, the protection of the best system of laws known among men,—for there can be no doubt that the Romans had advanced far beyond other nations in their jurisprudence. In any part of the world, moreover, where the Roman power extended, it conceded that right. Thus Cicero says (*against Verres*, v. 57) “That declaration and appeal, ‘*I am a Roman citizen*,’ has often brought aid and safety even among the barbarians in most distant lands.” There were also *special* rights conferred by this. A Roman citizen might not be crucified; a Roman citizen might not be scourged. The laws especially protected a Roman citizen from being beaten.¹ Some of the most powerful appeals of Cicero in his orations were in cases where the laws, which protected Roman citizens from such insult, had been disregarded by Roman prætors (*Orations against Verres*, v. 62, 66). The privilege of Roman citizenship also secured the right of a *public* trial. No man could be legally condemned, even for the slightest offence, without the formality of such a trial (*Cicero*, *as above*, i. 9). This tended, in an eminent degree, to maintain justice. Of all the ancient nations the Romans were most eminent for the *sternness* with which justice was administered. Brutus, with the approval and applause of the whole nation, condemned his own son to death for crime,—on the general principle that *all* private and personal feelings were to be sacrificed to justice in any and every case.

¹ The Valerian law, and the Porcian law.—*Livy*, ii. 8, and iv. 9.

II. We have to notice *the manner in which these rights had been violated* in the case of Paul and Silas at Philippi. The consideration of this will make it necessary to describe the causes which gave offence on the part of Paul and Silas; the opposition which was aroused; and the countenance lent to an excited mob by the Roman magistrates.

It is proper to remark, first, that Philippi was a place where Paul might have presumed on the protection of the Roman laws, no less than in Rome itself. The author of the Acts of the Apostles describes it as "the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony"—*κολωνία* (Acts xvi. 12). The term was used in this instance with the strictest propriety, and it implied much more than the term "colony" does now with us.¹ In such a place, Paul and his fellow traveller, as possessing the rights of citizenship—and even, as strangers,—might have looked for security from wrong. Either the fact that they were Roman citizens had not before been made known to the magistrates, or, if it had been made known, it had been disregarded.

Paul and Silas commenced their work in Philippi as

¹ "A Roman colony was no mere mercantile factory, such as those which the Phœnicians established in Spain, or on those very shores of Macedonia with which we are now engaged; or such as modern nations have founded in the Hudson's Bay territory, or on the coast of India. Still less was it like those incoherent aggregates of human beings which we have thrown, without care or system, on distant islands and continents. It did not even go forth, as a young Greek republic left its parent state, carrying with it, indeed, the respect of a daughter for a mother, but entering upon a new and independent existence. . . . The colonists went out with all the pride of Roman citizens, to represent and reproduce the city in the midst of an alien population. They proceeded to their destina-

quietly as possible. There were Jews in the city, but the number was small, and (unlike most other places, in heathen countries, where there were Jews) no synagogue was found in it. There was, however, on the banks of the river which flowed near the city, one of those humble and temporary structures which the Jews frequently erected, when too poor or too few to erect a synagogue, called *proseuchæ*—places of prayer. These were slight structures—mere enclosures—open usually to the sky. To that place, Paul and his companion resorted, and addressed the few—mostly women—who were accustomed to resort thither. The heart of one of them, Lydia, a native of Thyatira, a seller of purple, the Lord opened, and she was converted; her house became the home of the travellers; and a church was gradually formed. A bitter persecution, however, unexpectedly arose.

The circumstance that gave rise to it, was one in which Christianity came in contact with heathenism, in one of its prevalent forms, and in a form in which (as afterwards at Ephesus, Acts xix. 23—34), the

tion like an army with its standards; and the limits of the new city were marked out by the plough. Their names were still enrolled in one of the Roman tribes. Every traveller who passed through a *colonia* saw there the insignia of Rome. He heard the Latin language, and was amenable, in the strictest sense, to the Roman law. The coinage of the city, even if it were in a Greek province, had Latin inscriptions. . . . The colonists were entirely free from any intrusion by the governor of the province. Their affairs were regulated by their own magistrates. These officers were named *Duumviri*; and they took a pride in calling themselves by the Roman title of *Prætors* (*στρατηγοί*).”—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. pp. 269, 270.

contact would be likely to produce most excitement and opposition. It was an instance in which pecuniary interest was involved, or in which Christianity came into conflict with the means by which men obtained a subsistence.

The case here was that of a female, perhaps partially insane, and partly an impostor, whose ravings were taken advantage of by certain persons, represented as her "masters."¹ For several days she followed Paul and his companions, exclaiming, "These men are the servants of the most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Fearing, no doubt, lest the cause of truth should suffer through testimony from such a source, and touched with pity for the poor woman herself, Paul "being grieved," turned and said to the evil spirit which possessed her, "I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her."

The effect, which followed the casting out of the spirit, was such as might have been anticipated. The "masters" whose gains were "gone," appealed to the passions and prejudices of the people. They charged Paul and Silas with troubling the city, and with introducing "customs" contrary to the Roman laws. The popular feeling against the strangers was too strong for

¹ "She was the property of more than one master, who kept her for the purpose of practising on the credulity of the Philippians, and realised 'much profit' in this way. We all know the kind of sacredness with which the ravings of common insanity are apt to be invested by the ignorant; and we can easily understand the notoriety which the gestures and words of this demonic would obtain in Philippi."—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. p. 277.

the magistrates to resist; and, perhaps, they did not care to resist it. The Jews were objects of hatred everywhere; and it could not be supposed that such consequences would follow from anything that might be done to these two strangers as to affect the position of those in power. Regardless, therefore, of their duty as Roman magistrates,—without inquiry into the real nature of the offence,—and without affording them any opportunity of defence,—the prætors acted at once on the demands of the mob, and commanded them to be beaten and thrown into prison.

In forming an estimate of the wrong done to Paul and Silas, it is not necessary to make any inquiry as to the reality of demoniacal possessions. Such “possessions” are assumed everywhere in the New Testament to have been real; and they would, if real, be not less likely to be found in heathen nations than in Judæa, and not less likely in Greece than elsewhere.¹ Whatever might be true on this point, Paul had done no wrong in healing a much-afflicted woman; in preventing what would be likely to discredit the Gospel, *as if* it derived its success from such influences, and was identified with the impositions of “soothsaying;” in breaking up a scheme by which the people were deluded,

¹ “If in any region of heathendom the evil spirits had pre-eminent sway, it was in the mythological system of Greece, which, with all its beautiful imagery and all its ministrations to poetry and art, left man powerless against his passions, and only amused him while it helped him to be unholy. In the lively imagination of the Greeks, the whole visible and invisible world was peopled with spiritual powers.”—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. i. p. 275.

and by which bad men obtained a livelihood by imposing on the credulity of the weak. He does no wrong to the world who breaks up schemes of fraud ; who exposes the arts and tricks of imposture ; who, by the presentation of truth, or by a Divine influence attending his preaching, cuts off the gains of wicked men, and throws out of employment those who live by deluding their fellow-men. However it may affect the interests of individuals, he is a public benefactor who contributes anything to the abolition of gaming ; who closes the houses of licentiousness ; who checks the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks ; who makes any business that leads to the corruption of morals, or to the destruction of the bodies and souls of men, unpopular or hateful. Paul and Silas, therefore, were merely doing that which all the friends of religion and morality must be allowed to do.

The wrong done to them, therefore, was a palpable injustice. The treatment which they received, was, in all respects, at variance with the requirements of the Roman law. They were condemned unheard ; they were condemned under the excitement, and at the demand of a mob ; they were publicly whipped, though Roman citizens ; they were cast into prison, untried. Every one of these things was contrary to Roman law. They were committed, moreover, to the charge of a hard, harsh, severe, unfeeling, cruel man, who at once “ thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks ; ”—a man who had not sympathy enough to provide them food, or to wash their stripes,—

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but left them to lie unpitied, in a dark dungeon, on the cold earth, not knowing when, if ever, they would be released ; not knowing whether they would not be left there to die.

Such were the wrongs which they were called to endure ; such were the circumstances in view of which they now demanded that justice should be done them. This leads us, then, to consider—

III. *The propriety of the demand thus urged.* I have already adverted to the apparent difficulty of reconciling this with those requirements of the Gospel which enjoin meekness in the reception of injuries, and a spirit of forgiveness towards those by whom we have been wronged. The principles of the Gospel *seem* to require that we should bear injuries not only with no malice, no spirit of retaliation or revenge, no returning of evil for evil, but even with no resistance, no attempt to assert our rights in any form, or to bring in the authority of the law for our protection. “Resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also ; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also ; and whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain ” (Matt. v. 39—41). “Brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers ; now therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another ; why do ye not rather take wrong ? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded ?” (1 Cor. vi. 6—8).

In examining now the just principles of interpreting these passages, and stating the proper rules of Christian conduct, as illustrating and vindicating the conduct of Paul, I have three remarks to make.

(1.) The conduct of the Saviour, as has been often remarked, may be allowed to interpret His own words. As a matter of fact, in the numerous injuries which He suffered at the hands of *individuals*, He offered no resistance. He never returned injury for injury ; blow for blow ; taunt for taunt ; violence for violence. He never cherished the memory of an offence, or sought an opportunity for revenge. He never allowed ill-treatment received from others to prevent His doing them good at any future time. When betrayed, when arrested, when bound, when clothed with a mock robe of royalty, when made a subject of sport by the soldiers of Herod, when scourged, when spit upon, when derided and mocked on the cross, He uttered no language of reproach. Yet, in entire consistency with all this, when He came in contact with *the law*, and when, under the forms of *law*, injustice was about to be done, He demanded that the provisions of the law should not be violated ; He insisted on a just and proper trial. Thus, when standing before the Sanhedrim, and when "one of the officers which stood by struck Him with the palm of his hand,"—and did this not only unrebuked by the high priest, but evidently with his approval,—Jesus calmly yet firmly said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ?" (John xviii. 23).

(2.) This leads us to notice, then, the *value* of law for the protection of rights. That value was recognized by Paul, not only on this occasion at Philippi, but also in his solemn rebuke of the high priest Ananias, who had "commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth," and when he said to him, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" (Acts xxiii. 2, 3); and again, when, from the violence of a mob, and the injustice of an inferior court, he carried his cause up to the highest tribunal, and, as a last resort, brought it before that higher power, from whence all the laws of the Empire emanated (Acts xxv. 11).

The history of the world, in regard to law, has been little more than a succession of efforts or struggles to secure the rights of individuals against arbitrary power; and the points gained in that respect, each one the result of a single conflict, or of a series of conflicts, and often the result of bloody wars and revolutions, have been the beginning of new eras in the history of the world, each of these epochs sending its influence far into the future. All the guarantees which we now have for our personal liberty and rights can be traced back to some important period in the history of mankind, and have given its character to the age in which they were secured. Law itself, as we now have it, carefully defining crime, and specifying the proper punishment of crime, has been the slow growth of ages; and is the result of effort to save from arbitrary

punishment. Under wise provisions, in favour of general liberty and individual rights, we in this land are permitted to live. The law which demands that the accuser shall be known, and shall be confronted with the accused,—the law which demands the presence of witnesses in open court, and subjects them (under the solemnity of an oath) to a rigid and free examination,—the law which demands that the judgment in regard to the fact shall be submitted to a jury consisting of impartial men,—the law which forbids unreasonable searches and seizures,—the law, which secures from arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, and which secures a speedy trial,—these have gone into the constitution of the United States, and have each, in their history in this land and in other lands, been connected with some great struggle for freedom. These and kindred things, which are securities for personal liberty and rights in our time, are the growth of ages. They are the result of conflicts and wars. Few of them were known in the early periods of the world,—few at the time when Paul and Silas made their appeal to the Roman magistrates at Philippi,—few, comparatively, in Greece, in Egypt, in Babylon, in Rome,—few in the early periods of the English history; but, as society has *seized* upon one after another of these principles, it has held it with a tenacity such that no despotic power has been able to wrest it away.

Beyond these, there is now almost nothing to be desired for general liberty, or for securing the individual rights of men; and the business of the world now is to

protect and defend these principles, as the ground of security in all time to come. They are of inestimable worth, and it is every man's privilege and duty to appeal to them, and to demand (when his rights are invaded, as were those of Paul), that they shall be observed and enforced. No man can perform a more important duty to *society* than to demand, when his own rights are violated, that these great principles shall not be disregarded, and that under no plea whatever shall they in his own case be set aside. A nation has no higher interests than those which are involved in these principles; no man can do a more important service to his *country* than to see, as far as may be in *his* power, that they are not endangered. They are indispensable to liberty, to justice, to the rights of man, and to individual and public peace. All attempts to infringe them, therefore, are to be resisted; and he, who, in a conflict with arbitrary power, secures their observance when they are menaced, is to be reckoned among his country's greatest benefactors, and his name should go down to distant times, associated with those who have struggled and bled that they might be securely established. The names, not only of those who have striven to establish these principles, but also of the men who have been associated with them by wrongs threatened or done to themselves, obscure and unknown as these men might otherwise be, have acquired immortality. The name of Somerset, a coloured man—a slave—has thus become immortal, as leading to the great decision of Lord Mansfield in regard to freedom

under the British constitution ; the name of Dred Scott, a coloured man—a slave—has become immortal, also, as the result of an unrighteous decision in our own country, and as having been among the means by which this nation has been aroused to see the intrinsic evil of slavery. Pym and Hampden are immortal as having defended the great principles of liberty ; and Paul stands thus among the great benefactors of mankind for having asserted and maintained the right of an appeal to the law.

(3.) It remains only to remark, in vindication of the conduct of Paul, that the *character* of a good man belongs to the public, to virtue, to truth, to religion. As that character is the result of good principles, it belongs to a nation no less than the principles themselves, and is of equal value. The character which is formed by Christianity is a part of Christianity itself. It is formed by it ; it pertains to it ; it is that on which Christianity itself depends as a means of its own perpetuity, propagation, influence in the world. Paul had not only his own individual rights to maintain, but he was a representative man, entrusted with the rights pertaining to the Christian religion. All that he had endured in his imprisonment, he could privately and personally bear and forgive. But the public wrong which had been done was a wrong to justice ; and not only so, but a wrong also to religion :—a wrong to him *as* the minister of religion ; a wrong, which, if unacknowledged, might greatly hinder the success of his future labours. He was the ambassador and defender of Christianity.

His character was of inestimable worth to mankind, and as he went forth on his high message to the world, that character was a material part of that on which the success of religion itself depended. In demanding, then, that his character should be protected by law,—that justice should be publicly done him, as wrong had been publicly done him,—that they, who, sustaining an official position as representatives of the Roman power, had done him this wrong, should officially retract it,—he was urging one of the claims of Christianity itself, and demanding for his Master and Saviour what properly belonged to Him and His cause.

IX.

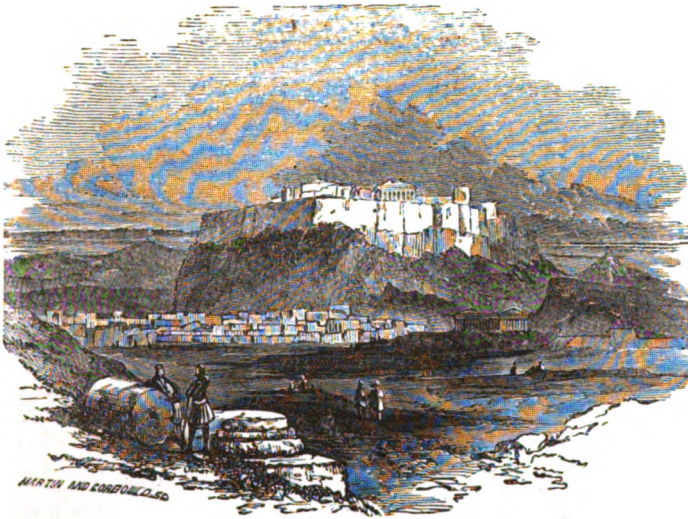
PAUL AT ATHENS.

Christianity in contact with cultivated mind.

Mars' Hill.—Paul's audience.—*Was his discourse on a subject worthy their attention?*—They considered it so.—Some regard religious truth as no concern of *theirs*.—Some only come *near* it.—Some have a *distaste* for it.—All truth ought to be investigated.—Religious truth is as important as any.—It is of personal importance.—Human scholarship exempts no man from its claim.—Socrates and Alcibiades.—*Was Paul's discourse in advance of what Greek philosophers knew?*—Prudence evinced in it;—he made no attack on their views; commended their zeal; referred to their perplexity; offered the knowledge they sought; argued from their own admitted principles.—His teachings, twofold: (1) those derivable from their own principles; (2) those peculiar to the Christian religion.—Christianity does not shrink from investigation.—It is still in advance of human philosophy.—It will always be so.—Argument for its Divine origin.—The Brahmin and the microscope.

“And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, which thou speakest, is? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know, therefore, what these things mean.”

ACTS xvii. 19, 20.



ATHENS.



HERE is, in history, scarcely any more interesting object of contemplation than Paul at Athens:—the man; the place; the religion which he came to announce; the persons by whom he was surrounded; the address which he delivered. It may be regarded as, in a manner, the contact of the Asiatic with the European mind; it was the contact of a Christian mind with the most cultivated heathen mind of the world, and was, if not the first, yet among the most striking instances in which Christianity has been brought into collision with highly cultivated intellect. Paul had often come in contact with *Jewish* mind, and with the forms of Jewish belief; he had travelled much in Arabia, in Syria, in Asia Minor, and had not unfrequently encountered *heathen* mind under various forms of idolatry;

he had recently passed into Europe, to convey the knowledge of Christianity,—the first to preach it in that quarter of the globe; and he was now in Greece,—at Athens—on Mars' Hill.

On no other spot on the earth could such an audience have been gathered around the apostle, as at the Areopagus.¹ In that place there could have been assembled, on such an occasion (and, for any thing that appears to the contrary, there *were* actually assembled there at that time), the mostly highly-cultivated minds of the world. The Greek mind was eminently acute and subtle; it had been profoundly engaged in examining the great questions pertaining to philosophy, morality, and religion; it had pushed these inquiries farther than any other class of minds had ever done, and probably as far as it would be possible for the human mind ever to do, without the assistance of revelation. They whom Paul here addressed belonged also to a people who were in possession of a language better fitted to the purposes of philosophy, oratory, history, dialectics, poetry, than any then spoken; a language better fitted than any other to convey abstract ideas, and to express subtle discriminations of thought.

Surrounded by such minds, it is a matter of interest to inquire what such a minister of Christ could say that would be in advance of the knowledge which his hearers themselves possessed,—in advance of the truths which the cultivated mind of Greece had been able to discover respecting God, and His government,

¹ On the place and the scene, see the remarks of Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. pp. 346—348.

and the conditions of His favour ; or, which is the same thing, what Christianity has to say in advance of what the mind of man can reach by its own independent inquiries. It is a claim which Christianity necessarily makes, that on a certain class of subjects, and those of more importance to man than any other, it is always able to give instruction to the minds of men, however highly cultivated and refined ; that it is always able to communicate that which “the world by wisdom” cannot find out. Not undervaluing what man can himself secure,—not rebuking him for applying his mind to those great subjects,—and not setting aside the results of human wisdom on the practical affairs of this life,—it yet claims the ability to impart to men, at any period of the world, new and higher views of truth than they can otherwise obtain, and to carry the mind upward to a region of thought lying wholly beyond the natural grasp of the human powers.

What, therefore, would the minister and representative of the Christian religion have to say on Mars' Hill ? We can readily conceive what he would have to say to the ignorant and down-trodden *slaves* in Attica ; we can readily understand what Christianity has to say to Caffrarians, and to the inhabitants of the Fiji Islands ; but what had its ambassador to communicate to philosophers at Athens ? what had he to say to a people among whom Plato, and Aristotle, and Socrates, and Zeno, and Pythagoras, had lived and taught ? what had he to reply when Stoics and Epicureans summoned him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new

doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? we would know what these things mean.”

There are two things implied when a preacher stands, as Paul did, before such classes of men. One is, that the subject on which he proposes to address them is worthy of their attention; the other is, that he is in possession of knowledge beyond what they possess, so that what he has to communicate will *instruct* them. On these two thoughts I propose here to dwell. The object before us, will be PAUL AT ATHENS; the general subject, CHRISTIANITY IN CONTACT WITH CULTIVATED MIND.

I. The first point to be illustrated is, that *the subject on which the minister of the Gospel addresses men is worthy of the attention of cultivated minds.*

There ought to be no occasion for arguing this point, for it should be apparent at once that the subject of religion is in itself of sufficient importance to claim the attention of such an audience as Paul had. It is important, however, to remark that it is more necessary to do this now than it was for Paul when he addressed the Athenians. In this respect there is a remarkable difference between heathen Athens and the communities where Christianity prevails. Paul felt himself under no necessity of showing to his hearers that the *subject* was worthy of their attention. They had already expressed their sense of the importance of the inquiry by *inviting* him to come to the most public place in their city:—the place where he could best address the people; the place where the people had been addressed a thousand times.

by the most celebrated orators of Greece, on occasions of deepest interest to liberty and law; and the place whence the opinions given by magistrates of highest rank and learning had gone forth to influence Greece and the world. We, on the contrary, are obliged to *awaken* inquiry in the minds of this class of men, and to show why it *is* worthy of their profound thought. Some of the *reasons* which make this especially proper and necessary are the following.

First. Among the class of persons that, in other respects, would be represented by the philosophers of Athens, *religion* does not come within the range of subjects to which they propose to direct *their* inquiries. The questions respecting religion, or theology, lie beyond or aside from the investigations which *they* design to pursue. They regard these as belonging to a separate department of knowledge, and as appertaining, in a great measure, to a distinct profession—*the clergy*. Despairing of being able to know everything, men have learned to think not only that there is to be a “division of labour,” but that this is to extend to the investigations of truth as well as to other kinds of toil; and, instead of regarding the great inquiries about religion as of common interest to all men, they have set them by themselves as appertaining only to those who feel themselves called to pursue such studies as a matter of professional interest. *Their* lives are devoted to other things. They are chemists, geologists, jurists, surgeons, critics, editors, philosophers, mathematicians, orators, poets, historians, not theologians. *Nature*, in the particular department which they have

selected, is to be their study, not the *Bible*; the working of physical forces, not the plan of salvation; the laws which rule in the material world, not the revealed laws of God. Extensively it is felt, by these classes of men, that one who is engaged in these pursuits need no more trouble himself about the subtleties of religion, than for example, a geologist should about the rules of Greek prosody, or the poetry of Homer, or the works of Rubens or Raphael. Every thing in its place, they say, and every man for his own chosen pursuit. So thought not the Athenians. By them the subject of religion was regarded as a matter in which they were as much interested as any others. Paul *found* this state of mind; it was not necessary for him to *create* it.

Second. From some cause, the great mass of men, when they are pursuing other inquiries, *stop short* when they approach the subject of religion in their investigations, even when it would appear impossible that they should not be led to see and to embrace its truths. In the history of the sciences and of the arts, it is often painfully affecting to see how *near* men have come to some brilliant discovery or invention that would have changed the aspect of the world, and that would have made their own names immortal;—but either they died just as the great result was about to be reached; or, for some unknown reason, their zeal died away, and they lost their interest in the matter. They approached it, and yet missed it; and we wonder that they could have been so near, and not have found it. Thus we often see how near some bold navigator has come to an undiscovered

country, and has just turned the prow of his vessel back, when, if he had kept on his way a little longer, he would have made his name immortal. Thus the Chinese long possessed the art of printing from solid wooden blocks, and all that was needed, in order to discover the art of printing as that term is used now, was to cut up their wooden blocks into separate and moveable letters ;—yet they never took this simple step. In like manner, they long understood the properties of the loadstone or the magnet, but it never occurred to them to apply these to the purposes of navigation. The Arabians, under the Caliphate at Bagdad, were on the verge of the most splendid discoveries in chemistry, but they paused just before they had attained them. So it has been in religion. Nothing can be more painful than to see how near to God men come in the pursuit of science, and then pause or turn away. One can hardly understand how it is possible that they should go *so* far, and not take the one step further, by which they would be led to the recognition of a Divine Being. In astronomy, for example, such men seem almost to look upon the throne of God ; but they will not allow their minds to take what would seem obviously to be the next step, and many an astronomer remains ignorant of Him who made the worlds. In anatomy, one can hardly imagine how it is that he who studies the human frame can fail to learn that there is a God, and yet many an one in that study comes up to the point where it seems impossible that he should not be convinced of this truth, and then pauses and turns aside.

Third. When men *do* come up to the point, and when the demonstration of the existence of a God, and of a moral government, and of the need of a revelation *is* forced upon them, they find the subject in an eminent degree *distasteful* to them. They see no beauty in what is disclosed to them, and perceive in it nothing to induce them to pursue the inquiry farther. They, in fact, see much that is repellent in these disclosures. They have come into a region where the ideas of obligation and duty,—the thoughts of eternity and retribution,—the subjects of prayer and repentance, of death and the judgment,—are likely to be predominant;—and they are not attracted by these themes. They reach that point referred to by the apostle Paul, when on another occasion, addressing Greeks, as he was now, he said, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Some of those very philosophers who had invited Paul to address them on Mars’ Hill, evinced this spirit when in his discourse he advanced to the higher truths of religion;—part openly “mocked,” and part, probably cherishing the same feeling, but designing to carry out the idea of Grecian courtesy, and not to give needless offence, though really showing how distasteful the subject had become, said, “We will hear thee again of this matter.”

It is *proper*, therefore, to show that the subject of religion is worthy the attention of this class of minds. In endeavouring to do so, we may observe—

(1.) That it is an avowed principle with such persons, that *all subjects are to be investigated*; that all truth is of importance, and has a claim to attention. In other words, it is a just maxim in philosophy, that truth is to be followed wherever it may lead us, and is to be yielded to in its proper influence, disclose what it may on any subject whatsoever. No man can be a philosopher in the true sense of the word,—no man can pursue science in the true spirit of science, who does not most strictly and rigidly act on this principle, that we are never to start back from the disclosures of truth,—that we are never to be deterred in our inquiries because what is disclosed may be distasteful to us, or because it may cross the path of our preconceived opinions, and even require of us the sacrifice of former views, or because it may demand of us the performance of painful duty, or because it may expose us to ridicule, or because it may interfere with our pleasures. Every man who has any pretensions to science, would condemn himself as destitute of the true spirit of a philosopher, if he should detect in himself a disposition to pause in his inquiries when he found himself approaching a conclusion that would overthrow a favourite theory which he had cherished, or even confirm the opinions of a rival. And why should the astronomer, whose glass penetrates the fields of ether, revealing new worlds and systems, refuse to follow out the revelation when the throne of God *seems* to stand before him, and admit that there *is* a God? Why should he who studies and admires the skill and wisdom displayed in the human

frame shrink back from the conclusion that it had an intelligent Contriver and Maker? Why should he hesitate to allow these disclosures to lead him up to that Great and Holy One, in whose being and perfections there is infinitely more to admire? Why should he always talk about "*Nature*," and never about "GOD?"

(2.) As mere abstract matters, the subjects of religion are *as* worthy of attention as any that can come before the minds of men. I do not now say, *more* worthy; but I content myself with saying that, in the range of human inquiries, the matters pertaining to religion are of *as much* importance as any other subjects of inquiry, and of as much importance to cultivated minds as to others. The Greeks, as a people, had evinced their own convictions of this truth, for more than most other nations they had turned their attention to these great inquiries. When the Athenians asked Paul to come to Mars' Hill, they were acting in accordance with all that had occurred in their own history. Stranger though he was, Jew though he was, a follower of the "Nazarene" though he was, yet the very *subject* of his discourses had, in their view, such an importance as to justify all attempts to learn from him something more about the nature of religion. When Grecian sages were thus leading a foreign Jew to the Areopagus to ask him what he had to say on this subject, no man in Athens would feel that this was an unworthy act in the city where Socrates, Zeno, Pythagoras, and Plato had taught; no one would feel that this was a departure from the national character. Wherever else such an

act, or such an inquiry, might excite contempt or ridicule, it would not be in Athens. No man, no people, no class of people, however learned, exalted, or advanced in civilization and in the arts of life, act contrary to the dictates of the highest wisdom, when they give themselves to earnest thought about the Creator of the world ; the origin of man ; the methods of the Divine administration ; the redemption and immortality of the soul ; the question about the resurrection of the dead, and the future state. And when men, weary with their inquiries into nature, and saddened with the few intelligent answers which nature gives to the questions that agitate their souls, return to their homes from the laboratory or the dissecting-room, and, in the presence of their families, or alone in their closets, take the Bible to ascertain what it says, or kneel before the Father of lights, and ask guidance on these great subjects from on high, they are doing nothing of which any man should be ashamed. If these great subjects are *not* important for man, what subjects *can be* ?

(3.) The subject of religion pertains, as a *personal* matter, as really to cultivated men as to the rest of mankind. It is not merely a thing abstractly of interest and importance. It does not merely open great questions relating to the welfare of society, to refinement of manners, to the happiness of domestic life ; but it is a subject of personal importance to each individual. Every one of the Athenian philosophers who invited and accompanied Paul to Mars' Hill, whether Stoic or Epicurean, and whether he realized it or not,

had personally as deep an interest in the matters which were to be discussed as Paul himself had,—as deep as any member of the human family could ever have. That interest, moreover, was not at all *lessened*, but rather augmented, by any claims to profound talent, to metaphysical acuteness, to exalted rank, to rich and varied learning, or to refined and polished manners, which any of them might have, or might suppose they had.

It is greatly to be wished that the class of persons now referred to, would disabuse themselves, or allow others to disabuse them, of a deception—almost a hallucination—into which they seem unconsciously to fall, as founded on the idea that they are somehow exempt from the claims and requirements of religion. It would be much—very much—if they could be brought to feel that great talents are not, before God, a substitute for love to Himself; that the possession of a profound intellect does not free any man from the obligations resting on the heart for purity and holiness; that a reputation for attainments in science does not settle the question whether he is righteous before his Maker; that refined manners are not, in the sight of God, a substitute for the graces of the Spirit; that God does not justify men on the ground of human learning; and that attainments in chemistry, anatomy, geology, botany, astronomy,—or skill in sculpture and painting,—do not prepare a man to die. Paul would have said to Epicurus or Zeno, that dialectical skill does not necessarily commend a man to the favour of God;—to Phidias

and Praxiteles, that the productions of the chisel, though they may secure immortal fame on earth, do not make immortal blessedness certain beyond the grave ;—to Leonidas and his brave Spartans, that great military bravery, and great services rendered to one's native land, though these may secure the plaudits of men, even in remote futurity, do not necessarily secure the approbation of Him who shall judge the quick and the dead, and that laurels won on the battle-field are not always followed by an "incorruptible crown."

No more lamentable delusion has ever settled down on the misguided human mind than the notion that a man can be placed by the fortune of birth or talents, or by his own efforts, in a situation where he is released from the obligation to be, in the most thorough sense of the term, a *religious* man. Did not the same God make him, that has made others? Is not the law of God binding on him, as it is on others? Is he not to die, as well as others? Will not the grave be the same to him, as to the humblest of the race? Is he not to stand at the judgment-bar, as they are? Is he not, equally with them, responsible to his Maker? Can any one prove—can any one seriously imagine—that by wealth, or rank, or learning, or accomplishments, he can place himself beyond the reach of moral obligation, or that in the sight of his Maker, these things can be a substitute for obedience to Him? To ask these questions is enough. There can be but one answer,—that in proportion as men raise themselves up by their talents and acquirements, in that proportion do they augment their

responsibility, and in that proportion also make it equally criminal and dangerous to live without God.

In this connexion it may not be improper to venture a remark, of a speculative character, on what *might* have occurred if it had been the lot of Socrates to meet with Jesus of Nazareth. With the known character of Socrates as an inquirer after truth,—with his earnest searchings after what was true, wherever he found it,—with his love for the pure in morals and the true in religion,—with the acknowledged perplexity of his own mind in regard to the great questions which pertain to God, and to the human soul, and to the future state,—and with his thorough conviction that the system of religion in his own country was false, and the worship of the gods of Greece a vain service,—is it too much to believe that in the presence of such a Teacher as Jesus was, so humble, so pure, so wise, so familiar with these great questions, and uttering truths so far in advance of all that the world had known, the Grecian sage would have seated himself at His feet as a learner? Socrates is represented by Plato, in his Dialogue on Prayer, as telling Alcibiades that we do not know what we ought to pray for, and adding “We must, therefore, wait till such time as we may learn how to behave towards the gods, and towards men.”—“But when will that time come?” says Alcibiades, “and who is it that will instruct us? for I would see this man, who he is.”—“It is one,” replies Socrates, “who takes care of you; but . . . the darkness that hangs over your mind must be removed before you are able to discern what is good

and what is evil."—"Let him remove from my mind, the darkness, and what else he pleases," rejoins Alcibiades; "I am determined to refuse nothing he shall order me, whoever he is, so that I may become the better for it."¹ With what profound respect (may we suppose) *such* a man would have listened to the teachings of Him who spake as never man spake.

II. We are to illustrate the fact that *Paul was in possession of knowledge on these subjects which was in advance of what these philosophers possessed*; or that the religion which he came to communicate was of a nature to impart instruction to them. It taught truths which they knew not; it answered questions which the unaided human mind is not able to answer. In considering this, we may notice,

1. The *manner* in which Paul approached the subject of his peculiar doctrines.² The wisdom which the apostle evinced, in circumstances of so much difficulty,

¹ Addison's "Spectator," No. 207.

² In our common Version, there are, in the rendering of Paul's discourse at Athens, a few infelicities of expression. For language more exactly expressing the sense, I would refer to the translation by Conybeare and Howson ("Life of St. Paul," vol. i. pp. 350, 351). Of this discourse, in general, as bearing on the manner in which Paul introduced his subject, I may extract the following remarks from the same volume:—"We observe, also, how the whole course of the oration was regulated by his own peculiar prudence. He was brought into a position, when he might easily have been ensnared into the use of words, which would have brought down upon him the indignation of all the city. Had he begun by attacking the national gods in the midst of their sanctuaries, and with the Areopagites on the seats near him, he would have been in almost as great danger as Socrates before him. Yet he not only avoids the snare, but uses the very difficulty

and on an occasion of so much importance, deserve a somewhat particular notice. The following points are worthy of attention :—

(a.) He made no direct *attack* on their religion. He did not even advert to the evil of idolatry, or to its necessary influence. He did not awaken their prejudices, and alarm their fears, as if his mission among them was to overturn their altars, to destroy their temples, to disrobe their priests, or to effect sudden and violent changes in their social organization.

(b.) He commended their zeal in religion as *real* zeal in a *great* cause; and he referred, without any unkind reflections, to the evidence of that zeal exhibited on every hand. The city was full of altars and temples, on which all the skill of sculpture had been lavished, and which won the admiration of all travellers—illustrating an uncommon zeal in the cause of religion, and showing how the public mind estimated the value

of his position to make a road to the convictions of those who heard him. He becomes a heathen to the heathen. He does not say that he is introducing new divinities. He rather implies the contrary, and gently draws his hearers away from polytheism, by telling them that he was making known the God whom they themselves were ignorantly endeavouring to worship. And if the speech is characterised by St. Paul's prudence, it is marked by that wisdom of his Divine Master, which is the pattern of all Christian teaching. As our blessed Lord used the tribute-money for the instruction of his disciples, and drew living lessons from the water in the well of Samaria, so the apostle of the Gentiles employed the familiar objects of Athenian life to tell them of what was close to them, and yet they knew not. He had carefully observed the outward appearance of the city. He had seen an altar with an expressive, though humiliating inscription. And, using this inscription as a text, he spoke to them . . . the words of Eternal Wisdom."—*Ibid.* p. 349.

and importance of Divine worship. He *found* a city evincing that very interest in the general subject, which he regarded as appropriate for man, and which he therefore desired to secure everywhere.

(c.) He referred to their acknowledged *difficulties*,—to the avowal of their own ignorance or uncertainty, as recorded on an altar which they had themselves reared in so prominent a place as to attract the attention (even among the multitude of altars and temples) of a passing stranger:—TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Such an altar in fact existed. It was reared on an occasion when the city had been suddenly delivered from pestilence. That the deliverance was the work of divinity—of a “God”—all their rational convictions led them to believe; and their ideas of propriety led them to believe, also, that the act should be recorded and commemorated on some appropriate monument, or by some appropriate memorial. As they had avowed openly that they knew not what God it was, it could not be uncourteous for a stranger to refer to the doubts of which they made no concealment.

(d.) He proposed to reveal the God whom they thus unconsciously adored; to lead them up to the real source of every blessing. It could offend none of their prejudices to do this; it would be doing no dishonour, in their view, to the claims of any other God. Here was a field wholly *vacant*, in respect to which, if Paul had any knowledge, it could not but be supposed that it would be acceptable to them. It was, moreover, taking no unfair advantage. It was no mere art of a

rhetorician. It was *true* in all the senses in which he urged it, that the God whom he proclaimed *was* that God who had interposed in the time of the pestilence.

(e.) Paul agreed, as far as possible, with the philosophers who heard him; and he reasoned from their own admitted principles. In fact what he stated in this discourse is little more than what they would readily see must be fair conclusions from the doctrines which they themselves held. As he availed himself on other occasions of the principles held by those with whom he was reasoning,—as, according to his own statement elsewhere (1 Cor. ix. 20—23), and in accordance with what is allowed everywhere, he sought to win men by every proper concession, and every proper compliance with their habits and views,—so, here, he makes use of the principles held by his hearers, as a ground of appeal. He argues as they argued. He agrees with them as far as he can. He avails himself of admitted truths to prepare the way for the statement of truths from which he might apprehend that they would recoil. He, therefore, quotes their own poets,—thus showing that he was not averse to what they so much prided themselves on, and that he was familiar with the writings which had made them illustrious. A truth found in their poetry, though it was heathen poetry, was not the *less* a truth because it had had such an origin, and because it was not found in the inspired writings of the Jews.

So far he was successful. He did not excite their fears. He did not expose himself to contempt. He

secured, as he had hoped to do, their profound attention.

2. We are prepared, then, to consider the *doctrines* which he made known to them.

These were of two kinds :—those which were *based* on principles that they themselves held, or which might be urged as *derived* from those principles ; and those which were peculiar to the Christian system.

(a.) Those which were based on principles that they themselves held,—though in advance of their views. These were such as the following :—

(1.) The existence of a God :—to them the “unknown God.” By rearing the altar in their city with this inscription, they admitted the fact that there *was* such a Being. Paul affirmed that it was so, and proceeded to disclose to them His character, attributes, and claims. The statement, that there was a “God,” though “unknown” to them, was, in fact, though not in form, a denial of the whole doctrine of idolatry, and was doubtless designed by Paul to be such, though he meant to present it in such a manner as not needlessly to shock them. The inference was suggested more directly and clearly in the subsequent part of the discourse, when he declared that this was the Maker of the world, who had made of one blood all the nations of men. This assertion, then, though founded on principles admitted by them, went far beyond the doctrines held in Greece, or in any part of the heathen world ; for the belief of the Greeks, as of other nations, had been, not that there was *one* God, but that there were *many* gods.

(2.) The fact that this "unknown" God was the Creator of the world: "God that made the world, and all things therein." This, too, was a statement in advance of all that was held on the subject of the existence and origin of the universe by the men who had invited him to state his views, though here again the statement was so made as not to shock their prejudices. Part among them—the Stoics—held that all things were originated and controlled by "Fate;" part—the Epicureans—that all things were originated and controlled by *chance*;—part resolved the origin of the world into a "fortuitous concourse of atoms;" part acknowledged nothing higher than physical laws; part supposed that the universe had its origin in the creative power of subordinate divinities. None of the gods that were worshipped in Greece corresponded with the idea of One Infinite and Eternal Being, as Creator of the universe.

(3.) The immensity of God: He "dwelleth not in temples made with hands." He is too great, too exalted, too unlimited in His being and perfections, to have His abode in a temple of human structure. This, too, was an idea in advance of any that was held in Athens, and would vitally affect all their notions of religion. The gods which they worshipped, did, in their apprehension, dwell in the temples which human hands had reared. In each of those temples, there was a sacred recess—a dark, retired, solitary room—where the god was supposed to reside, and which was his abode. This was the idea which made the temples sacred, and clothed with sanctity those who officiated at their altars. The

idea of Paul, if embraced by these Athenians, would at once have changed their conceptions in regard to the numerous temples which surrounded him, and which adorned the city on every side.

(4.) The independence of God : “ Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” This, too, struck at a favourite doctrine of idolatry, and was quite in advance of the views which prevailed even in Greece. It was a doctrine, nearly universal in the heathen world, that the gods were sustained by the food offered in sacrifice ; that that food was actually consumed by them ; that they were thus dependent on their worshippers, and “ needed ” the service thus rendered by mortals,—being not less dependent on men than men were dependent on them.

(5.) The unity of the human race : “ And hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” No more far-reaching principle, perhaps, could have been stated than this ; none more in advance of the prevalent belief of those whom Paul addressed ; none more deeply affecting the faith and the conduct of mankind ; none that would ultimately do more to promote liberty, to break the bonds of slavery, to dethrone tyrants, and to lay the foundation for just views of government—a truth in advance of any held even in Greece. It was a truth far in advance of that age,—for then, as too often now, the disposition prevailed to divide the world into races, castes, and clans, and to regard one portion accordingly as inferior and

subordinate to another. Eighteen hundred years have passed away, and it is, in many respects, a truth still in advance of the age in which we live.

(6.) The grand purpose for which certain arrangements had been made in respect to the human race: "And ordained to each the appointed seasons of their existence, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." He has so fixed the boundaries of the nations,—so assigned and arranged their nationality,—so broken up the one great family into different communities,—so separated them from each other, by their lineage, their languages, and their manners, or by lakes, mountains, seas, rivers, and deserts,—that the whole race should be in the best circumstances to seek and to find their Maker, and that all separate and independent inquiries among the nations might tend to the one result, leading them to find out God. In this arrangement there may be a depth of wisdom which we, even now, are little able to comprehend; and Paul *may* have stated a principle here, not only far in advance of any view as to the origin of nations which prevailed in Greece, but far beyond any which we are yet able to fathom in regard to the arrangements by which the one great race is broken up into nations, tribes, clans, and families. Perverted as the arrangement may have been, and seems to have been, by having been made the occasion of war among rival nations, or by having been made the pretext by which one nation has reduced another to slavery, yet (if it had *not* been thus perverted) it might have been the

wisest and best arrangement to lead men up to God. We can see an illustration of its wisdom, on a small scale, as manifested in the *smallest* of those divisions,—that of the *family*. Is there any arrangement *conceivable* which could be made more conducive to the great purposes of religion than this? On a larger scale, *may* there not have been some similar advantage as derived from the division into tribes and nations? ¹

(7.) The spirituality of God and of religion: “Forasmuch as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” Paul, in Athens, saw around him gods that *were* made of gold, and silver, and stone, graven with the highest perfection of art, *as if* the divinity *could* be represented by molten and graven images. Greece, too, in this respect, represented and reflected the universal sentiment of mankind. How far in advance of that sentiment was the declaration thus made by a Christian apostle on Mars’ Hill, and in the very presence of these idolaters!

Thus far Paul had advanced sentiments founded on their own principles, or fairly derived from principles held by them. We turn then to the second class of truths advanced by him.

(b.) The doctrines which were *peculiar* to the Christian system; those which might be regarded as among the “strange things” which (they said) had been brought “to their ears,” and in reference to which particularly they

¹ This is a mere suggestion. It would, I think, if carried out, furnish material for an entire treatise in illustrating the wisdom of God.

had asked an explanation from his own lips. We are to remember here that Paul was interrupted—rudely interrupted—in his discourse, even in Athens (ver. 32, 33),—and that we have but a fragment of what he intended to say, and for which he had been preparing the way, so that he could say it in a manner which would give the least offence. Yet we have a statement which he was permitted to make *before* he was interrupted,—a statement of the utmost importance to the class of men gathered on Mars' Hill, and to all other men. That statement consists of the following particulars.

(1.) God now commands and requires universal repentance. This was the great doctrine with which John the Baptist and the Saviour of the world had both commenced their ministry,—a doctrine not new in the sense that men do not understand the nature of repentance, or that they never feel its obligation—(for these things are laid in the very nature of man),—but new in the sense that, being now proclaimed by God as a matter of *obligation*, it is implied that the penitent may find pardon. Of this, man can never be assured by the mere light of nature, for repentance does not repair the evils of the past, or make atonement for sin ; it does not bring back health ruined by dissipation, or property wasted in vice, or reputation lost by crime ; nor does it heal the broken heart of a parent, crushed by the folly and sin of a son or a daughter ; nor restore innocence to the seduced ; nor recall the murdered from the grave. How, then, *can* man by the light of nature know that the favour of God may be secured, and past sins forgiven ?

(2.) That God will judge the world. This doctrine was not absolutely new to the world, for all men have, in a certain sense, apprehended it,—but new in the assurance that a particular “*day*” had been appointed for the purpose; and in the statement—a statement which would be so startling to an Athenian philosopher,—that it was to be done by a “*man*”—by one in human form;—a statement suggesting the inquiry who he could be, and what would be the extraordinary character and rank on account of which he would be elevated to that high office.

(3.) The doctrine that there would be a resurrection of the dead;—as derived from the fact that God had raised from the dead Him who was to judge the world,—implying that He had been laid in the grave, and opening the way for a statement of the reasons *why* He had been put to death. All this would be new to the Athenians; it would be deemed by them to be incredible and absurd. Yet it suggested a great truth in *advance* of all that they had learned, and it disclosed what by their philosophy they could never have learned. In all their speculations—(and *their* minds had been more given to that point than the minds of any other people)—they had never been able to satisfy themselves that even the soul would continue to exist after death; and it seems never to have occurred to them, as a subject even demanding inquiry, that the *body* would be raised from the grave. Even, those among them who had dared to hope that the soul might be immortal, had never been able to suggest arguments in proof of it which convinced either them-

selves or others. Cicero said that when he read the arguments of Plato on the subject, they seemed for the time to make some impression on him, but as soon as he laid down the book, the impression wholly glided away. It may be safely affirmed that the arguments of Plato—the profoundest that the world has ever discovered—on the immortality of the soul, would convince no man now. We are not to be surprised, therefore, that when Paul stated it as a fact that this had actually occurred,—that one who had been dead *had* been restored to life again,—part turned away in disgust, and part politely left him, saying that they would hear him again of that matter.

What Paul *would* have said, if he had been allowed to proceed, we can have no difficulty in ascertaining, for we have abundant evidence in his writings of what his faith was. We have only, therefore, to take the system which he has at leisure disclosed to us in the Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, to the Ephesians, and to the Hebrews, in order to understand what must have been the substance of those “strange things” which he brought to the people of Athens;—the great plan of redemption by the sacrifice on the Cross; the incarnation of the Son of God; the atonement made for sin; the doctrine of justification by faith; the Divine purposes or decrees; the native and universal depravity of man; the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Ghost; and the offer to all mankind of a free and full pardon. These doctrines were immeasurably in advance of all that Greek philosophy had discovered. On these great

themes Christian apostles claimed to be able to instruct the wisest of men.

The lessons which are suggested by the view which has been taken of Paul's discourse on Mars' Hill, are the following:—

First. Christianity does not shrink from investigation. Paul manifested no reluctance to accede to the request when invited to go to a place so conspicuous and so celebrated, and where he was certain to be surrounded by the most eminent philosophers in the world, but evidently rejoiced in the opportunity thus furnished of proclaiming the truths of the Gospel where they would be most likely to be subjected to a thorough examination. If there was any place in the world which an impostor might have dreaded, it was Athens; if there was any spot in Athens where he would be most likely to be appalled, it would be that to which Paul was conducted. Yet we have in this case an illustration of a very marked feature in the character of those to whom the Saviour had entrusted the business of propagating His religion. Their Master had said that "repentance and remission of sins" should be "preached among all nations, *beginning at Jerusalem*;" and they understood it to be fairly implied in this that while they were to visit places and people the most obscure and uncivilized, they should, also, seek to make His Gospel known in the chief seats of influence, of learning, and of power, where its claims would undergo the strictest scrutiny.

Second. The history of the world, since Paul stood on

Mars' Hill, has made no difference in the relation of Christianity to the world in the matter under consideration. It *claimed* then to be in advance of the world on subjects of the highest interest to mankind; on these same subjects, it claims to be now not less in advance of the world than it was then. The world has, indeed, made great progress in these eighteen hundred years. In civilization, in arts, in science, in all that promotes comfort as pertaining to this life, it is immeasurably in advance of what Corinth, Athens, and Rome, at that time were. But the world has made no material advances in the knowledge of the great truths of religion by the aid of science or philosophy. There are truths which science and philosophy do not disclose. The astronomer through his telescope sees millions of distant worlds that could not be discovered by the naked eye,—but he does not see God. The electrical machine throws out vivid sparks—a blaze of light,—but it does not reveal God. The chemist analyzes nature, resolves the world around into primitive elements, combines and compounds those elements anew, but he does not see God. From none of these things do we obtain an answer to the great questions which man asks about the moral character of his Maker; about the soul and its immortality; about the future state; about redemption from sin; about the way of pardon. On these subjects the world has made no progress. Science and philosophy have made no new disclosures; and even now, a man desirous of learning all that he *can* learn *without* revelation—would not direct his steps to the

observatory of the astronomer, or the laboratory of the modern chemist, but would set himself to the study of what was taught in the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Porch at Athens. It is true, therefore, that on these points, of so much interest to man, Christianity is still as much in advance of what the human mind can discover by its own unaided efforts, as it was when Paul stood on Mars' Hill.

Third. If Christianity was then, and is now, ahead of the world on these subjects, it may be presumed that it *will* ever retain this advanced position. If it stood in advance of human wisdom in Greece, and if the discoveries of eighteen hundred years have not, in this respect, changed the relations of the two, it may be *presumed* that Christianity will ever onward maintain this advanced position, and be fitted still, in the remotest ages, to *instruct* mankind about God, and the human soul, and the way of salvation. Progress will still doubtless be made in science, civilization, and the arts. Nature has doubtless many more things to reveal to mankind. It would be presumption to deny that discoveries *may* yet be made, as much in advance of the mariner's compass, the art of printing, the telescope, and the microscope, or the marvels of the magnetic telegraph, as these were in advance of what was known in Greece or in the middle ages. But as these things, so wonderful, have not superseded Christianity in its proper sphere, or shed such light on the unsolved questions of religion as to supersede the Bible and the Cross, it may be presumed that Christianity, in its own proper

sphere, will still remain in advance of all the discoveries of man.

Fourth. This furnishes a strong proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. System after system of philosophy and religion has disappeared. Not a vestige now remains of what Mr. Gibbon calls "the elegant mythology of Greece;" not a vestige of the religion of ancient Rome. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy has passed away, never to be revived. The philosophy of the Stoics and Epicureans has to a great extent perished. But Christianity survives. It has lived through all these changes; and, in its original structure, had evidently anticipated all the discoveries which man could make, so that it would not interfere essentially with those discoveries, but readily combine with them. In Pagan systems the religion and the science are blended; and the one is as sacred as the other. The assertions respecting science in the religious books of the Hindus are held to be as sacred as the assertions about the gods; and the overthrow of the former would be the overthrow of the latter. The Brahmin reasoned correctly when he threw the microscope to the ground, and exclaimed that if its revelations were true, his religion was false. But after all the discoveries and developments of the last eighteen centuries,—after all that has seemed to *conflict* with the Bible (or in reference to which it has been *affirmed* that it is in conflict with the Bible),—the hold of Christianity on the world is stronger now, and the belief that the Bible is true is more widespread and deep, than in any past age.

X.

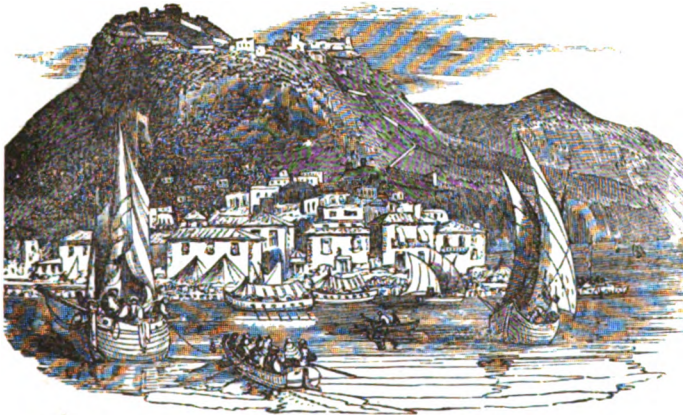
PAUL AT CORINTH.

Christianity in contact with gaiety, luxury, and refined sensuality.

Athens and Corinth contrasted.—Character of the Corinthians.—The Apostle's purpose.—*The theme he selected.*—Unlikely to be received.—The speaker a Jew.—The Saviour, also, a Jew.—The truth, about a cross.—That cross made known for men's salvation.—To the Greeks, "folly."—*The adaptedness of this theme to secure the end sought.*—The Gospel claims this power.—Difficulty of making the claim understood.—Impossibility of denying that the Gospel, and that alone, has such power.—Explanations of the fact.—(1.) The gift of a Saviour, the highest proof of love.—(2.) The sufferings of the Saviour, the clearest exhibition of the evil of sin.—(3.) Necessity for His sufferings, the strongest evidence of the sinner's danger.

“ 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.”

ACTS xviii. 9—11.



CORINTH.

COMPLI-NTIRELY successful in delivering an address that was worthy of the place and the audience, but unsuccessful in convincing many of his hearers of the Divine origin of Christianity, or bringing them to the knowledge of the true God,—and not seeing sufficient encouragement to attempt to found a church in Athens,—Paul turned his steps to the neighbouring city, Corinth. Here it was the *Greek* mind still that was to be encountered, but under a new phase; not, as in Athens, devoted to science, to eloquence, to literature, but given to gaiety and effeminate luxury. Paul, standing on Mars' Hill, saw one class of objects,—the altars, the temples, the Lyceum, the Porch, the Academy, all indicative of the prevailing intellectual and religious tendencies of the Athenians;—approaching Corinth, the most conspicuous

object was not, as in Athens, the Parthenon, dedicated to the goddess of wisdom, but the temple of Venus erected on its acropolis, and towering high above the city, as illustrative of the taste and the character of the Corinthians. Theirs was indeed (as just remarked) the Greek mind—active, quick, penetrating, powerful—needing only proper objects to enable it to do all that mind can be made to do, capable of producing the wonderful beauties of thought, poetry, eloquence, and wisdom displayed by Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Phidias, Homer, Demosthenes, Pericles,—just as the French mind has been developed in the powers of Massillon, Laplace, Cuvier, and Lavoisier,—but in this case (as too extensively with the French mind) turned to purposes of pleasure and gaiety. The great names of Greece are associated with Athens, not with Corinth. The warriors, the orators, the poets, the statesmen, the sages, found a home in the former; we do not associate their names with the latter.

Hence, in Athens, we contemplated Christianity in contact with cultivated intellect, with proud philosophy, with idolatry in its most mature, intellectual, artistic, and refined developements;—in Corinth we are to contemplate it in contact with all that art could devise for the amusement of life; with all that was adapted to nourish the habits of voluptuousness; with all, refined or gross, that could be made to minister to the pleasures of sense. In Athens, we saw the Christian apostle in contact with men devoted to abstract dialectics and subtle argumentation;—in Corinth, we are to see the

same apostle in contact with the pleasure-seeking and the gay. If not the first instance (as it certainly was not the last) in which Christianity encountered this class of persons, it was at least one of the most strongly-marked cases of what it has to encounter in a world where men are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." It may not be unprofitable, therefore, to contemplate the aim, and the purpose, and the preaching of the great representative of the Christian religion, when he stood amidst the people of such a city. Our subject for the present is, accordingly, PAUL AT CORINTH; or, CHRISTIANITY IN CONTACT WITH GAIETY, LUXURY, AND REFINED SENSUALITY.

Corinth, unlike Athens, was a commercial city, and derived its principal importance, its wealth, and its characteristics, from trade. It was the capital of Achaia; and, being situated on the isthmus which divided the Peloponnesus from Attica, it was the highway between Northern and Southern Greece. The merchandize of Italy, Sicily, and the Western nations generally, was landed at one of its ports; that from the islands of the Ægean Sea, from the coasts of Asia Minor, from Phenicia, and from the nations of the East, at the other. It became the mart of Asia and of Europe, bringing thither a multitude of strangers, increasing the wealth of the state, and leading to the habits of luxury consequent on wealth. We must add, also, to the fact of its being so favourably situated for commerce, that, on the very isthmus on which the city was built, were celebrated the games which derived their name from that fact—the

Isthmian Games,—and which drew together vast numbers of people from the other parts of Greece, and from foreign lands.

Corinth became thus not only one of the most populous and wealthy cities of Greece, but one of the most luxurious, effeminate, ostentatious, and dissolute cities of the world. It was one of the few cities where licentiousness has been sanctioned and sustained by law and religion, having been not only practised and allowed, but consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth of the city having been derived from the offerings made in the very temple of this goddess. No city of ancient times, perhaps none of modern times, has been or is more profligate. In the art of refining upon the pleasures of sense, Corinth was in the ancient world what Paris is in the modern,—the seat of splendour, gaiety, magnificence, sensuality.¹

What were the feelings with which a Christian apostle approached such a city, what was the purpose which he sought to accomplish there, and what were the means by which he proposed to secure his object, are most

¹ On this point it would not be proper to go into the details which the subject would admit of, and which, indeed, would be necessary in order to a *full* understanding of the difficulties which the Gospel had to encounter in that city. It may be sufficient to give the following statement from Anarcharsis (vol. iii. p. 378):—“The women of Corinth are distinguished by their beauty; the men, by their love of gain and of pleasure. They ruin their health by convivial debauches; and love, with them, is only licentious passion. Far from blushing at their sensuality, they attempt to justify it by an institution which seems to prescribe it as their duty. Venus is their principal deity; to her they have consecrated a number of courtezans for the purpose of interceding in their behalf; in time of public

interesting questions. It is not difficult to imagine the emotions of such a man, when looking for the first time on that beautiful city, remembering the purpose of his high mission, recalling his want of success in Athens, and asking what there was in his message which could be made to interest that gay and profligate people, and secure their conversion to the Saviour. That he should feel solicitude and anxiety would not be unnatural; and we know that he *did* experience these feelings. Writing to the Corinthians afterwards, he says of the time when he first came among them, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling" (1 Cor. ii. 3). It was to relieve this solicitude that the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "*Be not afraid*, but speak, and hold not thy peace," etc.

The purpose of the apostle was deliberately formed. He resolved what to do; what to aim at; what to rely on as the ground of success. His fixed resolution, then formed, was stated afterwards in an epistle addressed to them: "I determined not to know any thing among

calamity and imminent danger, these women attend at the sacrifices, and walk in the procession with other citizens, singing sacred hymns. When Xerxes invaded Greece, recourse was had to their intercession; and I have seen the picture in which they are represented, addressing their prayer to the goddess,—and some verses of Simonides, at the bottom of the painting, which ascribe to them the glory of having preserved the Greeks. A triumph so illustrious multiplied the number of these priestesses. Individuals, to ensure the success of their undertakings, vow to present to Venus a certain number of courtezans, whom they send for to different countries. They attract hither the foreign merchants, and in a few days ruin them and their whole retinue:—hence the proverb, 'It is not for every one to go to Corinth.'

you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 1, 2). His purpose was to have but one object of interest and of thought as pertaining to himself, and to endeavour to secure but one object in reference to them. Amidst the works of art and beauty which might be supposed to be interesting to a stranger visiting Corinth, he resolved to show that there was something more attractive in his view; and even among that gay and pleasure-loving people, he would seek to introduce it as an object which would become more attractive to *them* than all the splendours and all the vanities around them. That object was a crucified Saviour, as able to impart more genuine happiness to the mind than all the pleasures of earth, however varied, multiplied, and refined; as more efficacious in turning men from sin than all the rules of morality and philosophy; as the only thing that would secure reconciliation with God.

To understand the Apostle's purpose, as thus declared, and to elucidate our subject—Christianity in contact with gaiety, luxury, and sensuality—it will be necessary to consider how the new topic of thought which Paul determined to introduce there, would be likely to be received; and then, the adaptedness of this theme to secure his object. These points suggest inquiry as to the purpose of the gospel in respect to the salvation of the world, and will bring before us more important, and, in some respects, more difficult questions than any which elsewhere come before the minds of men. It seems strange to many that Paul should have selected *such a theme*; it seems absurd to them that he should

have hoped for any success in dwelling on such a theme in *such a place*; it is difficult for them now to see how the "cross" *can* become attractive to the gay and the worldly, or how it can change the entire purpose of their lives.

I. *The new topic of thought which Paul proposed to introduce into Corinth, and on which alone he proposed to dwell,—Christ, and Him crucified.*

In attempting now to show how this would be likely to strike the Corinthian mind, we shall have an illustration of a *general* fact in regard to the manner in which such a topic appears to the gay and the voluptuous; to those intent on pleasure; and to the great mass of men, whatever may be their pursuits, in every age, and in every land. To see this, it is necessary, as far as possible, to put ourselves in the situation of the Corinthians, and then to ask how they would be likely to regard this foreign Jew and his message.

Either as the result of experience, or of inspiration, this same apostle, in a letter subsequently sent to the Corinthians, has stated how the cross of Christ is naturally regarded by that class of minds. "The preaching of the cross," he says, "is to them that perish, foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 18). "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23). "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21.)

The circumstances of the case were such as the following ;—

(1.) He who came to them to preach this doctrine was a Jew; and, as such, would be able to advance but feeble claims to a hearing from an assembly of Greeks. The Jew had almost no science, and no literature, except his sacred books. His country had produced no philosophers celebrated like those of Greece. To this subject allusion has already been made, and it is a circumstance important to be borne in mind.

(2.) He of whom Paul came to speak—"Christ"—was a Jew also. He was of lowly origin; had lived mostly in an obscure part of his own country; had enjoyed almost no advantages of education; had laboured at a humble mechanical employment; had been associated mainly with fishermen; had been rejected as an impostor by his own countrymen. What claims had He to the attention of foreign nations? His fame had not reached Corinth before Paul went there; but at every step an interest was to be *created for Him*, if it was to exist at all. Why should an inhabitant of Corinth feel any interest in a poor and unknown man, who had dwelt in Nazareth, and been crucified at Jerusalem?

(3.) The theme was one that was little likely to be attractive to those who lived in Corinth. (*a.*) Paul could not have hoped that the mere fact that one had been thus *crucified* would interest and arouse them, for occurrences of that kind were not uncommon, and why (among the hundreds who had been crucified in Judæa under the Roman government) should *this* particular case be

selected as having a claim to universal attention? (*b.*) It could not have been supposed that this would interest them because a great *wrong* had been done to Him as a Roman citizen, for Jesus was *not* a Roman citizen, and did not claim to be such. (*c.*) It could not have been hoped that an interest would be awakened in Him as a *martyr*, for there had been others in Judæa, who, it might be said, were not less eminent *as* martyrs than He was; and there had been martyrs in Greece, in the cause of liberty, justice, and truth, whom the Corinthians would be likely to regard as not *less* worthy of honour than any who had suffered martyrdom in other lands.

The "cross," moreover, little as it has *now* to make it attractive to the gay and the worldly, had *then* everything that could make the mention of it repulsive. Even in our day, there is almost nothing more incongruous and uncongenial to the prevailing tastes and feelings of that class of persons than the topics connected with a crucified Saviour. In the social intercourse of those whose feelings and condition of life would be represented by the Corinthians, there is almost no subject so seldom introduced in conversation, and none whose introduction would be regarded as more out of place, or more offensive, than a reference to Christ and His cross. By common consent the subject is banished from such circles. Who will venture to make an allusion to it in a ball-room? Who, at the opera? Who, in the theatre? No one could introduce a topic that would be regarded as more out of place; more repellent; more certain to give offence.

And this topic would have been much *more* unattractive—much *more* repellent—in Corinth, than it would be in such circles among us. The human heart has not, indeed, been changed in its aversion to the cross, nor will it ever be except by the grace of God; but there has been a change, in some respects, in regard to the way in which it is contemplated by the world at large. It is impossible to put ourselves, even in imagination, in the condition of those to whom the Gospel was first preached. There has been such a sacredness thrown around the cross,—there are such hallowed associations connected with it,—the world has learned to regard the very name, “the cross,” as so identified with all that is sacred, with all that is self-denying, that even the votaries of gaiety and vanity might be shocked by such a statement as would place the reality before their minds. The cross, even in popular estimation, has become the symbol of honour, of glory, of goodness, and of mercy. We have read of it as a standard in war, under which armies have marched to victory; it is embalmed in the sweetest poetry; it is found in magnificent cathedrals; it is a sacred emblem on the altars of churches; it is engraven on the marble which affection rears to mark the graves of those we loved; it is often worn by beauty and piety as an ornament near the heart; it is associated with all that is pure in love, great in self-sacrifice, and sacred in religion. As a mode of punishment, it is now unknown; and when *we* think of the cross, it is not of the multitude of slaves, and thieves, and robbers, and vagabonds, who have died on it, but

of the one great Victim whose death has ennobled even this instrument of torture, and encircled it with a halo of glory. But at the time when Paul resolved to know nothing but "Christ crucified,"—at the time when he said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. vi. 14), the word had but *one* idea attached to it, and was regarded as more dishonourable than are now the words, "guillotine," "block," "gallows," "gibbet." To say among such people as were found in Corinth that *he* thought of nothing else, and desired *them* to think of nothing else,—that he would mention nothing else, and glory in nothing else,—had more in it to shock, and repel, and offend, and *disgust* than there would be now in saying to a similar assembly that he resolved to think of nothing, to know nothing, to commend to them nothing but the gibbet—the gallows,—the unknown foreigner, of a despised race, who had been put to death as slaves, and thieves, and robbers, and vagabonds were,—as actually dying between two such men, put to death in the same way at the same time,—and as dying there because it was believed, even by his own countrymen, that by eminence of guilt He *deserved* the central place. How could it be hoped by Paul that the gay citizens of Corinth could be made to overcome this revulsion of feeling, and to find an object of attraction in a cross?

(4) The cross was to be made known to them as a method of salvation; as an instrument in turning the wicked from their ways; as a means of inducing the gay and the worldly to forsake their vanities and follies.

It was *this alone* which it was Paul's object to proclaim. It was not that He who had been crucified had a claim to glory that might be compared with the fame of Grecian warriors on a battle field; it was not that He had been, like many of their own countrymen, a sufferer in the cause of liberty, and that His name on that account was worthy to be enrolled with theirs; it was not that He had suggested new truths in philosophy which might interest a Greek mind; it was not the announcement that new sources of pleasure had been opened to vary the scenes of sensual enjoyment, and to give new attractiveness to social life; it was not the discovery of new methods to prolong the gratifications of sense, or to repair the wasted vigour of those who had been enervated by carnal indulgences. Any or all of these things might have been matters of interest to the inhabitants of Corinth. But it was solely with reference to religion—to salvation—to a method of securing the favour of God,—that Paul sought to make the cross attractive to those whom he purposed to address. And it was on this alone that he relied for success. It was not grace of manner, or attractive rhetoric, or balanced periods and rounded sentences; it was not philosophy, or argument, or dialectical skill; it was the theme itself, however presented—the truth—the fact of the crucifixion—the “power” that there was in the cross,—and that alone. “My speech and my preaching,” said he to them, afterwards, “was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. ii. 4). “Christ sent me to preach

the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect" (1 Cor. i. 17).

It was easy to see (and Paul has not left us to doubt that *he* saw) how this would be likely to appear to dwellers in Greece. He has, in writing to the Corinthians, stated with philosophical accuracy, precisely *how* this would strike their mind. "We preach Christ crucified," said he,—"*unto the Greeks foolishness*"—*μωπλαν*,—folly; in their estimation, absolute unqualified *folly*. This word expresses exactly the idea; it describes precisely the impression which the attempt would make on the mind of a Greek. The word "folly" is thus defined: "weakness of intellect; imbecility of mind; want of understanding;—a weak or absurd act; an act inconsistent with the dictates of reason, or the ordinary rules of prudence" (*Webster*). All this would to a Greek appear to be true of the Gospel. To his apprehension, there would be, there could be, *no* adaptedness in the idea of a "cross" to the work of salvation; to the elevation of the race; to the reformation of mankind. He would see no connexion between the one and the other; no fitness in the means for the end. The Greeks had their own ideas of what was necessary to raise, to civilize, to reform, to save men. It was to be done by truth; by philosophy; by teaching; by knowledge. Between these things and the end proposed, they saw, or thought they saw, a close connexion. If men were instructed, if pure morality were inculcated, if there were just and equal laws, if right principles of philosophy prevailed, they hoped—they believed—that

the world might be elevated, that prevailing evils might be removed, that the debased might be exalted; that the corrupt might be reformed. To attempt this was *wise*,—was *wisdom*. But what connexion *could* there be between the idea of a cross, or a crucified man, and the attainment of such an end? What relation could the one have to the other? What element of power, which would be apparent to a Greek mind, could there be connected with that instrument of cruelty and death, to reclaim the intemperate, to render the gay serious, to make the corrupt pure, or elevate the degraded? A Greek philosopher would ask these questions, as philosophers do now; the gay and the voluptuous of Corinth, if their attention could be arrested at all, would ask this question, just as the frivolous and worldly-minded do now.

II. This leads us to notice *the adaptedness of this topic to arrest the minds of the gay, the refined, and the worldly; to secure the conversion and salvation of those who live for pleasure, or who are sunk in gross sensuality.*

(I.) I begin this part of my subject by remarking that the Gospel *claims* this to be the only effectual mode of reforming and recovering sinners of all grades and classes. Thus Paul afterwards says to the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness, but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 23, 24);

—and to the Romans, he says (i. 16), “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” This claim lies at the very foundation of the Gospel, for it is based on the idea that all other schemes of reforming and saving men have failed, and that this is the last hope of man.

(2.) Yet it is to be remarked that there is not in the whole compass of the Christian theology any one point more difficult of explanation than this; one which is less understood by unconverted men; one which it is more difficult to make them comprehend. It is probable that even Paul, while he resolved to know only this theme among the Corinthians,—while he relied on this alone as the means of the renovation and conversion of the inhabitants of that gay and guilty city,—while he expected to be able to arrest their attention by this, and to lead them, like himself, to glory only in the cross of Christ, —would have despaired of being able to state to them (so that *they* would have comprehended it) how this was to be done, or to show them (so that *they* could appreciate it) what was the real power of that cross, or what was the source of that power. It is certain that a gay and thoughtless world sees no such wisdom in that Gospel now, and equally certain that we cannot so explain it to them that *they* will perceive it. As a means to an end, as adapted to convert and save, as having any inherent power, as fitted for the salvation of mankind, they now regard it, as the Greek philosophers of Athens and as the gay inhabitants of Corinth did,—as “foolishness;”—

foolishness, in the sense that, in their apprehension, it has *no* adaptedness to such a result. And there is no "wisdom of words" which we can employ that will so explain it to unconverted men that they will understand it, until they are led to see it, as these Corinthians did, by the result of experience, and then it will become to them, as it did to the Corinthians, "the wisdom of God, and the power of God" "unto salvation."

(3.) While, however, there is this difficulty, or this impossibility of *explaining* it, there cannot be any real doubt of the *fact*. Nothing is better established in history than that the Gospel of Christ—the preaching of the cross—is an effectual means of leading the sinner to abandon his sins and to turn to God. No fact, moreover, is better established than that this is the *only* means on which reliance can be placed for producing a permanent reformation, and for saving sinners. For (*a*) Law, as such, cannot effect this. It checks; it restrains; it rebukes; it punishes; but it does not melt the heart; it does not reform and save. If a condemned and punished man *is* reformed, it is not by the sentence of the law, or by imprisonment, or by stripes. It is by a *side* influence introduced into his dungeon; by some visitation of mercy, of kindness, of compassion. It is by the minister or teacher of religion, not by the officer of the law. (*b.*) The Greek philosophy saved and reformed none. It failed to raise up the abject; to change the corrupt heart; to call back the trifler and the wanderer to seriousness and truth; to lead any up to

God. When Paul was at Athens and at Corinth, all had been done which philosophy could accomplish, and the result was seen in the universal idolatry of the one, and the universal profligacy of the other. (c.) It is equally true that science, literature, and art, are insufficient. The lessons of morality are feeble in the attempt to restrain men from sin,—else such a man as Chalmers (in his early ministry *before* conversion) would not have found them powerless; and the rewards which virtue has to offer to men are ineffectual in overcoming the power of temptation, and recovering the intemperate, the dissolute, and the profane. The realms of science have no truths or revelations in answer to the great questions which men ask about themselves, about God, about a fallen world. Who goes into the laboratory of the chemist to find an answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” Who goes into the dissecting-room of the anatomist to learn how an atonement may be made for sin? Who looks through a telescope with any hope that he may see God? Who studies the “safety-lamp” of the miner to learn how he may escape from hell?

As a matter of fact, therefore, while all other things have failed, the Gospel of Christ has proved the effectual means of the conversion and the salvation of sinners. By its effects in Antioch, in Ephesus, in Philippi, in Corinth, in Rome,—by its influence on the world now for eighteen hundred years,—it has shown that there *is* power, whether it can be explained or not, in the preaching of Christ crucified, to restrain, to reform, to save.

This power was illustrated, in the case of the Corinthians themselves, by an appeal which could not be called in question,—“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; *and such were some of you*; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. vi. 9—11). In Corinth Paul did what he could not do in Athens; he founded a church; he won the hearts of many to the love of Christ. His preaching in Athens and in Corinth illustrated what has indeed been illustrated everywhere, that there is more in a proud philosophy to oppose the Gospel than there is in even the love of pleasure. To such a class of men, substantially, as Paul found in Athens, the Saviour said, “Verily, I say unto you that publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you;” and it is true everywhere that while the Gospel may be preached before Epicureans and Stoics in vain, there may be hope even in such a place as Corinth, and that amidst the gay and dissipated some may listen to the history of the cross, and turn to God.

(4) With all that is discouraging, and apparently hopeless, in endeavouring to explain this so that it will be appreciated by an unrenewed heart, there *are* things which are in fact *really* explanatory of this power.

(a) The gift of a Saviour was the highest possible

expression of *love*—of the love of the universal Father for man. There is no higher love than that which gives up a son to die. No man evinces a higher love for his country than that, for he has no higher sacrifice which he could make. Even God Himself could manifest no higher love for the world than to give His own Son to die. That fact conveys to men the deepest possible expression of His sense of the danger of the sinner; of the worth of the soul; of the necessity of religion; of the vanity of worldly pursuits. Nothing could be better fitted to arrest the *attention* of mankind than this; nothing more adapted to cause the wicked, the gay, and the worldly to pause in their career, and to fix their thoughts on higher things than those which pertain to this fleeting world of shadows. It could be for no trifling object that the Son of God became incarnate; that the Incarnate One was subjected to poverty and sorrow; that He lived on earth a wanderer; that He died on a cross; that He was laid in a tomb. Admitting these things to be true, what expression of love *higher* than this could even the Eternal Father make? what is there which even God could do, that would, when appreciated, be more likely to arrest the attention of mankind?

(b) The *evil of sin* is most clearly seen, and most deeply felt when it is viewed in connexion with the cross of Christ, and with the fact that this was the cause, the sole cause of His death, and that His unspeakable sufferings were the proper expression and measure of its ill-desert. For (1.) He suffered (as far as

the nature of the case would allow) what sin deserves, and what the sinner would himself suffer if he were to endure in his own person the penalty of God's violated law. (2.) We feel the evil of a wrong course of life more deeply when it brings calamity on the innocent, than when it brings woe upon ourselves. An intemperate man will be more likely to be affected by the sufferings which he brings on his family than by the consequences which he brings on himself. To the loss of property, of health, of reputation,—to sickness and disgrace,—he may be insensible. He can bear all this. But not so with the tears and pleadings of those whose hearts are crushed by his misconduct,—the aged parent, sad and sorrowful; the weeping, broken-hearted wife; the pale and drooping daughter or sister; the sorrow and desolation of what was once his cheerful and happy home. In like manner, if the heart of man ever feels the evil of sin, if the eyes ever weep over the consequences of depravity, it is when the sinner contemplates the Saviour enduring the sorrows of Gethsemane and of the cross, as the effect of *his* iniquity; as made *necessary* by the fact that *he* is a sinner.

(c.) The deepest sense of the *danger* of the sinner is produced by the contemplation of the cross of Christ. "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If these sufferings came on the innocent Son of God as a substitute for the guilty, then the sinner, if his sin is *not* pardoned, must endure in his own person what will be a proper expression of the Divine sense of the evil of the transgression. If, when

the innocent Redeemer approached the last scenes,—if when in the garden of Gethsemane He besought so earnestly that the cup might pass away,—if, when He shrank back from the horrors of death as an expiation for sin,—the Eternal Father did not interpose and rescue His own Son, His innocent and spotless Son, when about to die for human guilt,—then how shall the sinner escape when the wrath of God is coming on his own soul? No man can be safe in sin, in a life of gaiety, vanity, sensuality, pollution, when it was necessary that the Son of God should bleed and die to save the lost; and just in proportion as the sinner contemplates the sufferings of the Redeemer, just in that proportion will he see his own danger.

I have been speaking of Corinth, a city of pleasure, of gaiety, of fashion. Its inhabitants lived for these objects, and had no other aim. How many, in like manner, are now living for no other end,—the sum total of whose present existence, and modes of living, would all be comprised in the single word *pleasure*. In show and splendour, in amusements and pastimes, or in more ignoble forms, this word would comprehend all that they think of as making up “life.” Here is their end of being. Here their morning, their mid-day, their evening thought. O, ye triflers, who live only for pleasure and vanity, what think you of Christ? What think you of His cross? Is the soul so precious that it demanded such a sacrifice,—is eternity so important that it made proper such an incarnation,—is hell so fearful that it

demanded such tears and blood to redeem us from it,—and have you nothing else to do but to live for vanity, and spend your days in mirthfulness and folly? When a Saviour bleeds and groans and dies, can you pass by His sorrows unheeded, and live and die as if there were no Saviour, and no hell, and no heaven? I entreat you to devote one solemn hour of thought to a crucified Saviour—a Saviour expiring in the bitterest agony. Think of the cross, the nails, the open wounds, the anguish of His soul. Think how the Son of God became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, that you might live for ever. Think, as you lie down upon your beds to rest, how your Saviour was lifted up from the earth to die. Think, amid your plans and anticipations of future gaiety, what the redemption of your soul has cost, and how the dying Saviour would wish you to act. His wounds plead that you will live for better things.

XI.

PAUL AT EPHEBUS.

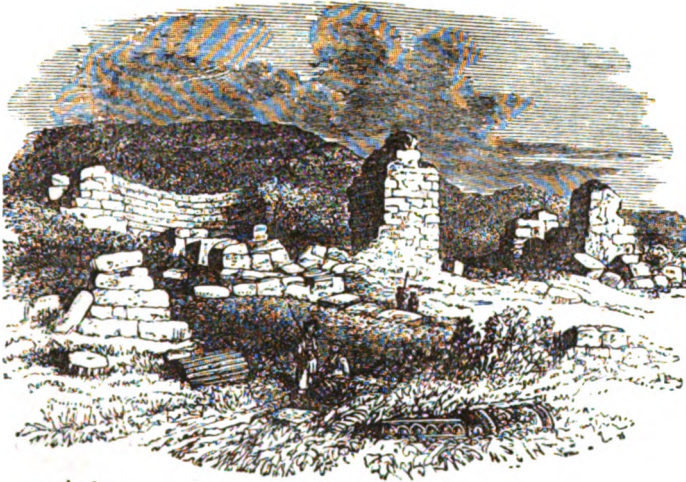
Christianity in contact with idolatry and with unlawful gain.

Paul at Ephesus.—*Difficulties encountered.*—Judaism fixed, but Paganism variable.—Religion itself a power; and receives augmented power from other sources.—Ephesian idolatry.—Ephesian magic.—Temple of Diana.—Traffic in shrines.—*Preparation made for Christianity.*—Disciples of John.—Preaching of Apollos.—Gift of the Holy Ghost.—*Manner of Paul's labours.*—Tender.—Faithful.—Public.—Domestic.—Evangelical.—*Success of his work.*—A church formed.—Its number.—Its government.—Its piety, as evinced in a sacrifice which was voluntary; conscientious; costly; unreserved; and proper to be imitated.—Its advanced doctrinal belief.—*Opposition aroused.*—Based on personal interest; and on national religion.—Christianity promotes the welfare of the world.—In so doing, it condemns wrong sources of gain.—Commutations may ensue, but society is a gainer in the end.

Q

“ And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing, and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

ACTS xix. 8—10.



EPHESUS.

THE subject now before us is Paul at Ephesus. The peculiar aspect in which we shall be led to contemplate this part of his history will be the contact of Christianity with idolatry, particularly as sustained by superstition, by national pride, and by the love of gain. At the same time, the subject will illustrate similar difficulties everywhere to be overcome in spreading the Gospel, and the power of true religion in making men willing to sacrifice their gains, and to abandon a lucrative calling when seen to be contrary to the will of God.

The points which it will be necessary to consider, will be the difficulties which Paul encountered in Ephesus as arising from the peculiar form of the idolatry there; the preparation which had been made for the introduction of the Gospel there, before his arrival; Paul's own labours

in that city ; the results of his preaching ; and the effect of Christianity in its bearing on an important source of gain.

I. The difficulties encountered in Ephesus, arising from the peculiar form of idolatry there.

In the prosecution of his purpose, Ephesus, as a centre of influence and power, could not fail to attract the attention of Paul. As the capital of the province *in Asia Minor* called "Asia;" as the capital *of Asia Minor* itself; as one of the cities of beautiful Ionia, embracing much of the civilization and cultivation of the Ionian colonies, and developing the best form of the Greek mind; as favourably situated for commerce, and as visited for purposes of commerce by strangers from all parts of the world; as a city of wealth and power; and, above all, as the seat of the most magnificent form of idolatrous worship then existing, it could not but demand the labours of the apostles.

Its wealth, its splendour, its power, its temple, and its church, have long since passed away, and it is a scene of ruin. Travellers search in vain for the certain site of its most celebrated public or private edifices, even the temple of Diana itself; but, in the time of Paul, it was among the most distinguished cities of the world.

The two obstacles which the apostles everywhere encountered in the spread of the Gospel were, of course, Judaism and Paganism. In perhaps all the countries which they visited, they found Jews; and, in almost every great city, Jewish synagogues. Everywhere out

of Judæa they found idolators, and temples devoted to the worship of idols.

The *Jewish* religion was a fixed religion. Everywhere it presented the same front as opposed to Christianity, was sustained by the same prejudices, and was characterized by the same bitter spirit. No form of philosophy ever modified it ; nor had contact with the prevailing forms of the Pagan religion, or with Pagan civilization, rendered it more charitable or more mild, or made those who were devoted to it more disposed to abandon it, and to embrace a new religion. What Paul himself had been before his conversion, he found every Jew to be that he encountered ; and what he had meted out to others in the days when he dragged men and women to prison, or when he "persecuted that way unto the death," he was prepared to expect would be meted out to him at the hands of his countrymen everywhere. As far, also, as the Jews had any philosophy, *that* would be likely to be a hindrance to the reception of the Gospel. They conformed as little to the *philosophy* of the Gentiles as they did to their *religion*. In Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Philippi, in Thessalonica, at Lystra, at Derbe, and in Ephesus, the opposition to the Gospel was of the same type ; the arguments to be used in overcoming that opposition were everywhere the same.

But, while Judaism was thus fixed and unchanging, the *heathen* systems were variable ; and the form of their opposition to Christianity varied with the character of the gods that were worshipped ; with the philosophy which prevailed ; with the intelligence or barbarism of the

people. It is only by a correct understanding of these that we can appreciate the nature of the difficulties to be overcome in any particular place, or the nature of the opposition which the Gospel encountered there. At one time, and in one place, heathenism was connected with the most gross profligacy of morals, and with the deepest degradation and debasement of manners ; at another, it was connected with the most subtle and profound philosophy, so that all the arguments in support of that philosophy had to be met and refuted before Christianity could secure assent to its distinctive doctrines. At one place, it was blended with all that was beautiful in architecture, in sculpture, in painting, in poetry ; at another, with all that could make life gay or voluptuous ; at another, with the severest forms of superstition ; at another, with national pride ; at another, with the callings which men pursued in life ; at another, with the power of the state. All these, in their varied forms, were to be overcome, before Christianity could displace the false religions of the world, and secure its own ascendancy over the minds of men.

In all countries, religion itself, in any and every form, is *the* most powerful principle that controls the human mind. (a) In its very nature it is supreme as a principle in governing men. In all true forms of religion, this ascendancy is always maintained ; in all false forms, this tribute is paid to its original design and power, as being, though *in* a false form, the supreme affection of the soul. Whether true or false, religion is a *power*. There is power in attachment to one's country, to friends, to

property, to liberty, to life ; but the power of religion, as such, is superior to all these, for men are willing to sacrifice them all in honour of their religion. There have been martyrs to false religions, as well as to the true religion ; and he who can control the *religious* principles of men can control everything. (b.) In addition to this, there is a power derived from the fact that religion is incorporated with the customs, the opinions, the traditions, the employments, the professions, the lucrative pursuits of men, as well as with laws, with vested rights, with caste and rank, with civil and sacred offices. Both these sources of power in religion existed at Ephesus, in forms most difficult to overcome.

(1.) The religious principle *itself* existed there in a form *as* mighty as in any other part of the world. All the religious affections of the people were absorbed in the worship of *one* divinity. There was one temple ; one goddess ; one altar ; one supreme divine power. All over the world, as far as the names of Ephesus and Diana were known at all, they were known as united. The one suggested the other. The Ephesians faithfully kept the trust committed to them—"the image which fell down from Jupiter;" they enshrined it in the most magnificent temple of religion in the ancient world, reared by the gifts of princes and kings, and more costly, if not more beautiful in its architectural proportions, than even the Parthenon at Athens.

(2.) The natural power of religion was, in their case, combined with all that could add to its hold upon the mind.

(a.) It was closely combined with the practice of magic (Acts xix. 19). The following is the account given by Messrs. Conybeare and Howson: "Though Ephesus was a Greek city, like Athens or Corinth, the manners of its inhabitants were half oriental. . . . The worship of Diana and the practice of magic were closely connected together. Eustathius says, that the mysterious symbols, called 'Ephesian Letters,' were engraved on the crown, the girdle, and the feet of the goddess. These Ephesian letters or monograms have been compared to the Runic characters of the north. When pronounced, they were regarded as a charm; and were directed to be used especially by those who were in the power of evil spirits. When written, they were carried about as amulets. Curious stories are told of their influence. Croesus is related to have repeated the mystic syllables when on his funeral pile; and an Ephesian wrestler is said to have always struggled successfully against an antagonist from Miletus until he lost the scroll, which before had been like a talisman. The study of these symbols was an elaborate science; and books, both numerous and costly, were compiled by its professors."¹

(b.) At the same time, the religion of Ephesus was closely combined with national pride; with all that made the city itself distinguished in the ancient world. The temple of Diana constituted the chief glory of the city; and, around that, all that there was of patriotism and of

¹ Vol. ii. p. 13.

pride would be concentrated. The sumptuousness of that temple, than which "the sun in his course is said to have seen nothing more magnificent," has been often described; and a recollection of its antiquity, its vast extent, its graceful columns, its costly decorations, is necessary in order to understand the events which occurred there in the attempt to displace idolatry, and to substitute the worship of the true God.¹

(c.) The worship of Diana was closely connected with the wealth of the city, and furnished employment to a considerable portion of its inhabitants. "One of the idolatrous customs of the ancient world," say Conybeare and Howson (vol. ii. pp. 78, 79), "was the use of portable images or shrines, which were little models of the more celebrated objects of devotion. They were carried in processions, on journeys and military expeditions, and sometimes set up as household gods in private houses. Pliny says that this was the case with the Temple of the Cnidian Venus; and other heathen writers make allusion to the 'shrines' of the Ephesian Diana, which are mentioned in the Acts (xix. 24). The material might be wood, or gold, or 'silver.' The latter material was that which employed the hands of the workmen of Demetrius. From the expressions used by St. Luke, it is evident that an extensive and lucrative trade grew up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of these shrines. Few of those who came to Ephesus would willingly go away without a memorial of the goddess, and a model of her

¹ Perhaps no better description can be given of that temple than the one furnished by Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii. pp. 75—77.

temple ; and from the wide circulation of these works of art over the shores of the Mediterranean, and far into the interior, it might be said, with little exaggeration, that her worship was recognised by the 'whole world.'"

II. We have now to inquire *what preparation, if any, had been made for introducing the Gospel into this idolatrous city ;* or, what there was that in any way might facilitate the labours of the apostle.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that, unlike most other places which Paul visited, Ephesus *had* had a kind of preparation for the introduction of the Gospel ; and the nature of that preparation was as remarkable as the fact itself. It had a striking resemblance to that which was made for the manifestation of the Redeemer Himself, by the preaching of the forerunner ; and was, in fact, if the phrase may be allowed, a "*John the Baptist*" preparation for the preaching of the Gospel.¹

The doctrines of John had been brought to Ephesus ; they had been enforced by the eloquence of Apollos ;

¹ "Many Jews from other countries received from the Baptist their knowledge of the Messiah, and carried with them this knowledge on their return from Palestine. We read of a heretical sect, at a much later period, who held John the Baptist to have been himself the Messiah. But in a position intermediate between this deluded party, and those who were travelling as teachers of the full and perfect Gospel, there were doubtless many, among the floating Jewish population of the empire, whose knowledge of Christ extended only to that which had been preached on the banks of the Jordan. That such persons should be found at Ephesus, the natural meeting-place of all religious sects and opinions, is what we might have supposed *à priori*. Their own connection with Judæa, or the connection of their teachers with Judæa, had been broken before the day of Pentecost. Thus their Christianity was at the same point at which it had

they were commended by the fact that they came from Alexandria, a city then eminent in learning, and of vast influence. A little band of disciples—twelve in number—instructed only in the knowledge which John the Baptist had communicated, were apparently waiting for the coming of the Messiah, and for the announcement of His appearing. Of His advent they had not yet heard; of His work they were ignorant; the wonders of the day of Pentecost had never reached their ears; of the very existence of the Holy Ghost, as distinct from the Eternal Father, and of His agency in the work of human salvation, they had no knowledge.

Yet it illustrates their sincerity of character, their desire of serving God, their purpose to welcome the truth from whatever quarter it might come, their wish to receive the full knowledge of that which John came to introduce into the world, (and, at the same time, it demonstrates the fitness of the teaching of John to prepare men to welcome the Messiah,) that when these twelve

stood at the commencement of our Lord's ministry. . . . Whether from the Baptist himself, or from some of those who travelled into other lands with his teaching as their possession, Apollos had received full and accurate instruction in the 'way of the Lord.' We are further told that his character was marked by a fervent zeal for spreading the truth. Thus we may conceive of him as travelling, like a second Baptist, beyond the frontiers of Judæa,—expounding the prophecies of the Old Testament, announcing that the times of the Messiah were come, and calling the Jews to repentance in the spirit of Elias. Hence he was, like his great teacher, diligently 'preparing the way of the Lord.' Though ignorant of the momentous facts which had succeeded the Resurrection and Ascension, he was turning the hearts of the 'disobedient to the wisdom of the just,' and 'making ready a people for the Lord,' whom he was soon to know 'more perfectly.'"—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. p. 6, 7.

disciples were told by Paul what was the real purport of the doctrines of John—viz., that men should “believe on Him who should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus” (Acts xix. 4), they welcomed the announcement, they “were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (ver. 5); and they embraced at once the doctrine respecting the Holy Spirit. On them as on the apostles at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, “the Holy Ghost” now “came, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied” (ver. 6).

God had thus, in a remarkable manner, prepared the way for the preaching of Paul in Ephesus, so that he came there with all the advantage which could be derived from the labours of the eloquent Apollos, and from the preparation in the heart of these disciples to welcome the doctrine of Christ as a Saviour; and he entered on his work in that great city with the assistance of believers equal in number to the original apostles, and endowed with the like power of speaking languages. In no other city or country had such a preparation been made for the introduction of the Gospel.

III. We now proceed to consider *the manner of Paul's labours at Ephesus*. In respect to this, we have a most interesting fragment of his history in the account which he subsequently gave to the elders of the church at Ephesus, whom he summoned to meet him at Miletus. “Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the

lying in wait of the Jews ; and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 18—21).

Here is the secret of his power ; and here is revealed the source of his success.

(1.) Paul had a tender heart ; a heart made for love ; a heart warmed with love. He wept much ; for he saw the condition of lost men,—their guilt ; their danger ; their insensibility ; their folly. So his Master wept over Jerusalem. So David said, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because they keep not thy law." So Jeremiah said, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people." And so Paul elsewhere said, "I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 2, 3).

(2.) He kept back nothing that was "profitable" to them,—none of the things which would conduce to their welfare ; which would contribute to their happiness ; which would promote their salvation. The word used by the apostle (*συμφερόντων*) would be applicable to anything which was for their good ; their profit ; their advantage. It was *their* benefit—*their* good—not his own advantage, fame, or ease, that was the aim of his labours. The means of securing that object was not

that which might please and gratify them, not that which would be in accordance with their natural tastes or their feelings, but that which *he* judged would conduce to their welfare. Painful it might be to them, contrary it might be to their prejudices, unlike it might be to what they would expect to find in a plan of salvation,—demanding sacrifices difficult to make, or requiring them to abandon employments on which their very livelihood may have depended,—yet the *truth* was delivered, the command of God was urged, the sacrifice was demanded.

(3.) He did this “publicly.” In the synagogue; in the place of public concourse, in the markets, in the streets, in the open air,—wherever men were accustomed to be assembled, he gave utterance to these truths, regardless of personal danger, and anxious only that they might be made to reach as many of the population of the city as possible.

(4.) He taught these truths “from house to house.” He went from family to family. In the free and familiar intercourse of the domestic circle,—in times of prosperity and of adversity,—when a member of the family was sick (for there was sickness there as well as elsewhere),—when a member of the family was dead (for death reigned there as it does everywhere else),—to each member of the family, father and mother, husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, he proclaimed these truths. By all the tender ties which united the family, by all that made them weep together or rejoice together, by the fact that they were all travellers to the grave, by the hope that they might live together in

another world, he urged on them the duties of religion, suggested its consolations, and sought to persuade them.

(5.) In reference to Ephesus, as to Corinth, we are made acquainted with the secret of Paul's success. That on which he relied, as the means of men's conversion, was not philosophy; it was not human learning; nor did he preach good works as the ground of reliance for salvation. What he did was to testify "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts xx. 21). Whatever result was produced in Ephesus, whether in the conversion of men, or in exciting opposition, was to be traced to this alone. He came armed with no other power than what was derived from this doctrine, to detach them from their idolatry; he advanced nothing else that would tend to disturb the peace of the city. It could not be pretended that he was a violator of their laws; that he had made an assault on their temple; that he had interfered directly with the labours of Demetrius and his fellowcraftsmen; that he had moved the people to deeds of violence and disorder. The only explanation of what occurred in Ephesus was to be found in the fact that this stranger called on men to repent of their sins, and to believe in a crucified Saviour.

IV. We can trace *the results which followed the Apostle's labours in this place.*

A church was established in Ephesus, among the most interesting of those whose history is recorded in the New Testament,—a church to which the Saviour subsequently

said, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars, and hast borne, and hast patience, and for My name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted" (Rev. ii. 2, 3).

In reference to this church, however, it is to be observed that we have no epistle which gives us information in regard to its internal character, to its numbers, or to its troubles, as in the case of the churches at Thessalonica and Corinth; for the "Epistle to the Ephesians" contains no special allusions, no reference by name to the members of the church, and no salutation addressed to individual members, as in the Epistle to the Romans, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon; nor does it supply any personal or local details. But from the above-mentioned address of Paul at Miletus, from the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, from general statements in Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, and from the epistle addressed by the Saviour to the church at Ephesus, as recorded in the Book of the Revelation, we can learn much in regard to its character.

(1.) It was not a small church. This may be inferred from the number of the elders of that church who met Paul at Miletus. The precise *number*, indeed, is not specified, but the entire scope of the narrative is such as to lead us to believe that the number was not small; and, consequently, it is fair to infer that the church was a large one. The same thing is rendered probable from the fact stated by Demetrius, that Paul had "turned

away much people" from the worship of Diana, not only in Ephesus, but in the province of "Asia," and that this was expressly alleged as a ground of apprehension that the worship of Diana would be broken up altogether; "so that not only this our craft," he said, "is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth" (Acts xix. 26, 27).

(2.) I think it is fairly to be inferred that the church in Ephesus was Presbyterian in its form. Those who were to meet him at Miletus as officers of the church, were summoned as *Elders* or *Presbyters*—*τοὺς πρεσβυτέρους*. The term thus used would apply equally to those who were "ruling" elders, or "teaching" elders; and the fair inference is, that the church had been organized with such a body of men, and that the instruction and discipline of the church were entrusted to them. It is remarkable, also, that there is no mention of "a bishop" in relation to that church, either in Paul's address delivered at Miletus, or in his Epistle to the Ephesians—a fact which cannot be explained on the supposition that a "bishop" had been appointed either over the church in Ephesus, or in the province of Asia. And it is equally remarkable that the very term *bishops* is given to the "elders" assembled at Miletus: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*,"—*ἐπισκόπους*, *bishops*,—"to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood (Acts xx. 28).

Whatever, therefore, in the primitive church pertained to the *episcopal* office, or to *bishops*, belonged to the "elders" or "presbyters" in the church at Ephesus; nor is it possible to explain the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles in regard to that church on the supposition that it was *prelatical*. If there had been a "prelate" or "bishop" in the church, it is inconceivable that on so solemn an occasion there should have been no allusion to him; and it is inconceivable also that Paul, in the copious statements which he made to the "elders" as to their duty to the church (Acts xx. 28—32), should have made no reference to their duty towards a "bishop," or to the proper subordination among the ranks of the clergy. The church at Ephesus furnishes at least *one* instance in which a church was organized by an apostle on the principles of government by presbyters; and if *that* church was so organized, may it not be presumed that the same principles existed in regard to others?

(3.) The religion which existed in the church at Ephesus was eminently a religion of principle. It was not a thing of mere feeling. It was not the result of temporary excitement. It led to such voluntary sacrifices as to show that it must have been founded on *principle*. A piety which leads to a voluntary sacrifice of *property*, and to the abandonment of a lucrative calling, even when such a step involves in fact a reduction to poverty, must be based on a firm conviction of the truth of religion, and not on mere feeling or excitement. In this respect there was no instance, in the early establishment of the church, more remarkable



ST. PAUL AT EPHESUS



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ST PAUL AT EPHESUS

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than that which occurred at Ephesus. The narrative is in these words: "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed" (Acts xix. 19, 20). The fact that "books" so celebrated, and so much valued, were thus publicly burned, is of use to us now, as illustrating the nature of religion; and it is with reference to this, doubtless, that the record is preserved. The features of the case which furnish such illustration were these:—(a) It was evidently a *voluntary* act; not done at the command of the Apostle Paul, or even at his suggestion. There was not in the case even that which occurred when the apostles, at the sea of Tiberias, abandoned their employments and "left their nets,"—for *they* did so by the express *command* of the Saviour. (b) The sacrifice of this property must have been made solely under the deep conviction that the employment was *wrong*, and that its continuance could not be reconciled with a good conscience. (c) The sacrifice was not small. "Such books from their very nature would be costly; and all books in that age bore a value which was far above any standard with which we are familiar." The amount sacrificed was large in itself,¹ and especially for men in their circumstances,—men who had no other

¹ If the Jewish shekel is meant, as Grotius supposes, the amount was not far from 25,000 dollars, or £5,420. If, as is more likely, it was the Greek *drachma* (about ninepence sterling, or not far from seventeen cents of our money), then the amount—much less, but still considerable—would be about 8,500 dollars, or £1,875.

employment. (*d*) It is to be observed, also, that they did not propose or attempt to *sell* this property. They did not allow it to pass into other hands to be used for the same end. It was of value *only* for the purposes of magic and imposture; to have passed it into other hands would have been to perpetuate the fraud, or to provide for its continuance, while they would have reaped the avails of the property, and would have suffered no loss. They evidently now regarded the business as *wrong*; as immoral; as contrary to all just views of religion; and, therefore, *as bad* in other hands as in their own. (*e*) The same principle is doubtless to be applied to all similar cases. If property, now applied to a wicked purpose, can be used for a good end,—if a house once rented for an immoral employment can be occupied for a business that is moral,—if a piece of machinery which has been employed for evil can be used in a lawful avocation,—if a vessel used before for piracy or in the slave trade, can be employed in legitimate commerce,—if a sword can be beaten into a ploughshare, or a spear into a pruning-hook, *then* principle would not require that these should be destroyed; but if no such lawful use of property can be made, then the principles of Christianity do not allow that it should be transferred to other hands, but that it should be destroyed at once. Christian honesty demands the sacrifice; a Christian conscience would prompt to it.

(4.) The church in Ephesus was characterized by the doctrines which were prominent in their belief. So far as we have any intimation in the New Testament, it

was—beyond any other founded by the apostles, except that at Rome—a church in whose creed the doctrines of grace (as they have been called)—the doctrine of predestination, of decrees, and of election—were prominent. A church must have been thoroughly imbued with these truths, beyond even most churches in our times, to have made such sentiments as those with which the apostle commences his address to them in the Epistle, palatable. From such expressions as the following, not a few churches in our day, even of those called “Calvinistic,” would have turned away;—“according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world;” “having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will;”—“being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. i. 4, 5, 11). What there had been in the instruction of Paul that made this doctrine prominent in the church, or what there was, if anything, in their mental character or training that led to it, we do not now know. It may be remarked, however, that this form of their faith *may* have been very closely connected with the fact that their religion was (as we have seen) a religion of principle, and led to the prompt sacrifice of all that was contrary to the sternest requirements of the will of God.

V. One other thing remains to be noticed: *the effect produced on the people of the city*; the tumult, the riot, the disorder, caused by Christianity in destroying the

business of a lucrative calling,—that of making the silver shrines of the goddess Diana.

The two grounds of appeal on which Demetrius relied, in the opposition made to Paul, were (1) the interest of the persons employed in the manufacture of the shrines; and (2) the national reverence for the goddess whom they worshipped. Both of these were of an inflammatory character, and it is not difficult to account, therefore, for the scenes which followed.

In reference to this excitement, without going into details, two remarks may be made:—

(1.) Christianity, as it moves along in the world, is the patron of whatever will *really* promote the interests of society; of all that, in its fair results, would add to the comfort, the wealth, and the prosperity of a people. Every branch of industry that really has such a tendency, every occupation that is consistent with good morals, every pursuit that would tend ultimately to increase the wealth of a people, it fosters and promotes. Thus it favours the interests of agriculture, of the mechanic arts, and of commerce between nations; it looks benignantly on those domestic arrangements which would be most conducive to the comfort of a family, and on the efforts made to provide food and raiment for a household; it promotes temperance, industry, economy, prudence,—virtues eminently necessary to public or private prosperity; it saves from those extravagances in living, and those habits of vice which exhaust a nation's wealth, or which tend to produce effeminacy and idleness; it opens new sources of employment,

favourable to prosperity and wealth. The world would still have enough to *do*, if it were at once converted to Christ; and what *would then* be done would tend much more to its welfare than what *is now done*.

(2.) The other remark is, that, from the necessity of the case, Christianity *must* come into conflict with many of the business arrangements of men, and with many things which are regarded as sources of gain. The prevalence of universal virtue at any time would throw multitudes out of employment, as men are now actually employed, for their "occupation" would be "gone." All the arrangements now existing for the prosecution of such employments would become useless, and all the capital invested in them would be worthless, unless it could be, without injury to society, transferred to other purposes. Thus, if universal temperance should prevail, it would at once destroy the business of multitudes of men, would throw out of employment all those who are engaged in the manufacture and sale of intoxicating drinks, and would render useless all the arrangements now based on such manufacture and sale. If gambling or card-playing should at once cease, multitudes of persons would be thrown out of work; if war should cease, and universal peace should prevail, the armies of the world might be disbanded; the ships of war be dismantled; and armories and arsenals would be rendered useless, or might be converted to other purposes.

It is unavoidable, therefore, that Christianity, should produce change, commotion, and tumult. It interferes with the existing institutions of society; it denounces

the objects at which many men aim ; it seeks to turn away multitudes of men from the avocations in which it finds them engaged. Nothing more, therefore, occurred at Ephesus than may be expected to occur anywhere, when the principles of a just morality or a holy religion are suddenly applied to the occupations of mankind. In such excitements and tumults, however, virtue and religion are not responsible ; for virtue and religion originate none of those employments, and they do nothing to foster the passions which prompt to them.

The world is a gainer by these changes. Sweeping away idolatry, as Christianity would, with all the sacrifices, altars, and temples of heathenism, it would plant, in its stead, a purer, a cheaper, a better religion. Putting a stop to war, it would change battle-ships to vessels of commerce ; and would release, for the employments of peace, the millions of men now constituting the armies of the world,—thus changing them from *consumers* to *producers*. Putting an end to intemperance, it would, discharge from an evil employment the men now sustained by it, to engage them in the honest arts of life, adding to the wealth of the nation, instead of destroying it,—and changing the scenes of desolation, the homes made wretched by the traffic, to abodes of virtue, contentment, and peace. Christianity may produce agitation, anger, tumult, as at Ephesus ; but the diffusion of the pure Gospel of Christ, and the establishment of the institutions of honesty and virtue, at whatever cost, is a blessing to mankind.

XII.

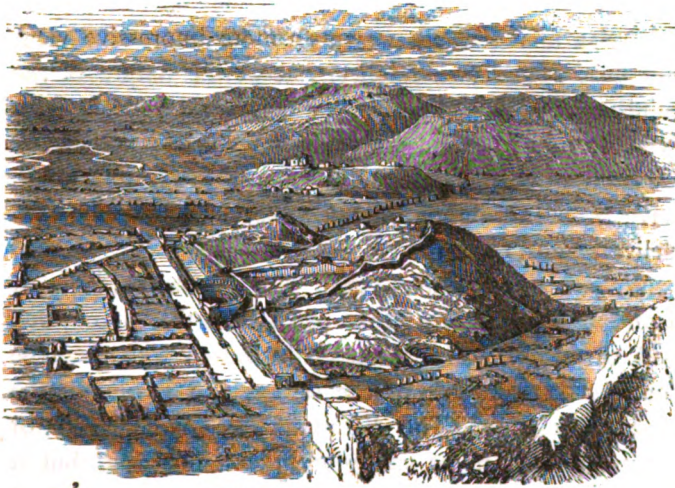
PAUL AT MILETUS.

A Pastor's review of his ministry.

Parting address to the elders from Ephesus.—Conscious fidelity in pastoral life.—Life reviewed from a turning-point.—*The pastoral work as a work of life.*—Self-questionings as to the wisdom of having chosen the work.—Remembrance of the hopes relinquished.—The choice not regretted.—*Paul's review of his pastoral work.*—He had done all he could for men's souls;—had suppressed no Divine truth;—had set an example of industry.—Claim of the ministry to support.—This claim may be foregone.—Good effects of ministerial diligence.—*Paul's calm contemplation of the future.*—Of that which *might* happen.—Of that which *would* happen.

“ And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”

ACTS xx. 25—27.



RUINS ON THE SITE OF EPHEBUS.



WHEN the Apostle Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus, assembled by his request at Miletus, he was on his way to Jerusalem. It was his purpose, if possible, to be there on the day of Pentecost. In order not to lose time, he had determined "to sail *by* Ephesus"—*παραπλεύσαι τὴν Ἐφεσον*,—that is, to pass it without stopping there.

The discourse which Paul delivered to them is one of the most tender, affecting, solemn, and instructive in the New Testament. It may be regarded as especially valuable, not only as describing his labours in Ephesus, and as, we may presume, giving a fair account of his usual modes of labour elsewhere; but, at the same time, as furnishing the most touching and beautiful delineation to be found anywhere of the true method of labour for a

Christian minister. It presents a more impressive view, not only of his own fidelity, but of the nature of the ministerial work, than any other connected portion of the New Testament ; and with this now in our possession, we cannot but feel that the Volume of inspiration would have been incomplete if such a discourse had not been delivered and recorded.

We are to remember, that Paul laboured longer at Ephesus than at any other place ; and this description will, therefore, furnish the best illustration which can be found in his own life of the design and nature of the pastoral relation. The discourse was not conceived or uttered in a spirit of vain-glorying or boasting, but it bears throughout marks of the deepest humility ; yet, at the same time, it evinces a consciousness of great fidelity on the part of the speaker, and is proof of the fact that he *had been* eminently faithful. A man must have lived in accordance with this representation ; he must have had a character to which no suspicion could be attached ; he must have been pure, industrious, and upright, to have been able to make such an appeal in the presence of those with whom he had been in familiar intercourse for three years, and who had had an abundant opportunity to know what his manner of life was, and what was the estimate entertained of him by the church and the surrounding world. Every minister—every Christian—*ought* to have a character so stainless and pure, to have a reputation so unmistakable for fidelity and uprightness, and to be so certain that his life is without just cause of reproach, as to be able to make such an appeal, with

the assurance that it will meet a response in the hearts of those who know him best; and any man *may* thus live, even in a world which is so unfavourable towards religion as ours is, and where there is so extensively a willingness to find in the lives of professed Christians that which is irreconcilable with the truth or the claims of their religion.

As Paul had been, in fact, to all intents and purposes, the pastor of the church in Ephesus for about three years—a longer time than had been spent by him in any other particular church—it may not be improper to take occasion for proposing as a subject for consideration,
A PASTOR'S REVIEW OF HIS MINISTRY.

This was not, indeed, the close of the life and ministry of the Apostle; nor is there reason to suppose that he so regarded it. But a review of the past is as proper in the *middle* of life as at its *close*; and it would be wise for Christian ministers, and for all men, to pause often in the midst of their way, and to consider what life has been *thus far*. It may be desirable to change our plans, or our manner of life; it may be that in the course which we are pursuing, we are not making the most of life; it may be that the remainder could be better spent than the past has been; it may be well, as far as possible, to "settle up the account" thus far; it may be well to go over the past in anticipation of that day when *all* must be reviewed in the presence of God. Besides, in any such review of life, whether at the end of a day, a week, a month, or a year, or whether in those *crises* or turning-points of life in which we pass from youth to manhood,

or from manhood to approaching age, it would be well to remember that we *may* be near the close, and that the review which we then take, may be, *in fact*, the final one.

In reference to a pastor's review of life, the points which naturally occur for consideration, are such as the following :—The work itself, *as* a work of life ; the proper duties of a pastor, as indicated by this address of Paul ; and the calm contemplation of the future, in view of a faithful performance of these duties.

I. *The work itself, as a work of life.*

This is not, indeed, in so many words, referred to in the address to the elders at Miletus ; but it is manifest *in* that address that Paul looked back upon his life in the ministry with approbation ; he felt that his own life in that “ profession ” had been well employed ; he had no painful recollections in having given up *for* that profession the bright hopes of his early years ; and he had now no longings for the honours which he might have secured from the world if he had pursued the career on which he had early embarked. It is on the basis of these facts, that I shall make a few remarks on the work of the ministry as it appears to a man, either when mid-way he pauses to contemplate it, or when he contemplates it at the close of life. In such a review, a comparison will naturally occur to a man between the ministry which he has chosen, and the course of life which he might have pursued, and the honours and emoluments which he might have obtained, in some other calling.

To all men there will be times of reflection on the wisdom of the course of life which they are pursuing ; to all men there are moments of discouragement and despondency in regard to the profession which they have chosen ; and to all men there are times when they will compare the reality in their actual course of life with the brilliant hopes which they cherished in their earlier days. In those dark moments, they cannot but ask themselves whether they might not have been happier in some other calling ; and, if they have changed an early purpose of life, whether they might not have done better to have pursued it.

There are moments in the life of a minister of the Gospel, when he *cannot* but ask himself whether he would not have done better to have been a lawyer, or a physician, or a merchant, or a banker, or a teacher, or a farmer. What might not John Wesley have been in wealth and fame and rank, if he had been a statesman instead of a Methodist preacher ! Could such a man, on the review of his life, doubt that he had *given up* much, very much of what the world calls great, for the privilege of preaching the Gospel and making the Saviour known to men ? It is but expressing the idea that Paul was a *man*, to suppose that to a mind like his even under the influence of the Gospel, a recollection must at times have occurred to him of what he had given up, and an inquiry as to what he had gained by the change.

It is not from a want of religion, and is not a proof that a man has no religion, when this inquiry crosses his

mind : for it need not be accompanied with any longings for that which has been abandoned, but, on the contrary, the result may be to augment his sense of the wisdom of the change, and of the value of that which has been obtained as compared with that which has been relinquished. In his lonely journeys in India or Persia, with *no* brilliant earthly prospects, far away from home and friends, sick and feeble, travelling often through the entire night, we cannot but think that to Henry Martyn there would recur the memory of past years ; the honours which gathered around him as "senior wrangler" at the University ; his reputation for scholarship, and his early aspirings. We cannot but suppose that he would compare what he *might* have been in that honourable career, with what he *was* as a missionary of the cross in a heathen land. Yet this may not have been, and we have every assurance that it was not, attended with any regret that he had forsaken all this, or with any desire that this might now be his, or with any feeling that he had made a wrong choice. The effect of all such reflections might have been only to increase his sense of the goodness of God to him, and to make him value more the life which he had chosen.

There can be no doubt on the question how Paul, in this review of life, regarded his work. He speaks as a man who was conscious that the work in which he had been engaged was a noble work, and one which might properly task the best powers of man ; that it furnished no occasion for regret either in regard to its nature and object, or in view of what had been abandoned in order

that it might be pursued, or in view of what had been suffered in endeavouring to carry out its great design. Neither in this discourse, nor in any of his epistles, is there the remotest suggestion that he repented the choice which he had made, or that he sighed for the honours or the wealth which he might have secured in a secular calling. The language which he subsequently used in reference to himself was as applicable to the voluntary surrender of these things, as it was to his early views of religion, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (Phil. iii. 8). Not when men take a true estimate of the value of things to be gained or lost,—not when, casting their eyes over the past and looking out on the future, they ask what life is, and what is its design, and what is the value of the human soul,—not then do they pour forth tears of regret that they have resigned even the most brilliant of earthly prospects that they might become ministers of the Gospel, or feel that they have given up the *greater* to embrace the *less* when they have turned from the bar, or the senate, or the gains of commerce, or the attractions of science, and have left the ranks of the rich, the worldly, and the gay, in order to spend their lives in telling the tale of redemption even to the humblest dwellers on the earth.

II. The second point to which I referred is *the character of a pastor, or the nature of the pastoral office, as indicated by this address of Paul.*

In the last chapter I had occasion to refer to the proper aims and efforts and manner of ministerial work as illustrated in Paul's address to the elders of the church in Ephesus. But there are other aspects in which his example, as bearing on the particular subject now before us, calls for attention.

(1.) The first is, that he could say, appealing to them as witnesses of the truth of what he affirmed, "I am pure from the blood of all men" (ver. 26).

The meaning of this language is plain. It is derived from such expressions as occur in Ezekiel, where the "watchman," by whose neglect or unfaithfulness men are left to perish unwarned, is declared to be guilty of their "blood" (their ruin), and where the faithful watchman, though men reject his message, and perish in their sins, is declared to be innocent (Ezek. iii. 18, 19). A declaration of similar import we have from the Apostle Paul himself: "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (2 Cor. ii. 15).

The statement of the apostle, as made to the Ephesian elders, implies two things;—his consciousness (*a*) that he had stated nothing in his ministry which was *fitted* to lead them away from God, or to ruin their souls; and (*b*) that he had done all he could do to save them. He had brought before them such truth, and had urged it so constantly, and plainly, and faithfully, and perseveringly, in private and in public, that he was now certain that if they perished the fault would not be his, but would be their own. With

the same consciousness he said to the Jews at Corinth, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean" (Acts xviii. 6).

It is much, very much, for a man in the ministry, on a review of his life at any period, to be able to say this. There are, in fact, few men, even with the low views of the design of the ministry which prevail among such as are engaged in that work, who are able to say this in sincerity. Few men could make such a statement without a fear that it might be denied by those to whom it was addressed. Few have been the men, few are now the Christian men, in any walk in life, who can feel that they have done all they could have done to present the truths of salvation to their fellow-sinners, or who have any degree of assurance that they might not have been the means of saving more souls if they had laboured more faithfully, more sincerely, more constantly, in the cause of their Master.

(2.) The second thing to be noticed in regard to Paul's work as a pastor is, that he had "not shunned to declare all the counsel of God"—*πᾶσαν τὴν βουλὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ* (ver. 27). This word *counsel*—*βουλὴ*—means properly counsel *as given*, that is, *advice* (Acts xxvii. 12); then, counsel *as taken* by any one,—*determination, purpose, decree* (Luke vii. 30; Acts ii. 23; iv. 28; xiii. 36; Eph. i. 11; Heb. vi. 17). Here it means all the purposes, determinations, plans, decrees of God, so far as made known, and so far as bearing on men. It would include His *general* plan in regard to the method of salvation, and His *particular* purposes in regard to the

application of that plan to individuals—either as affecting their salvation, or as determining their duty. The word used by Paul in the original, ὑπεσιλάμην,—and rendered “*I have not shunned,*” has reference to a *sail*, as meaning to send or draw under; to contract; to furl. Hence it means to draw back, under cover or out of sight, as one does when he hides himself; and then, to draw back anything in the sense of keeping it back, or suppressing it. The language used by the apostle might imply that there is some danger of doing this, or some temptation to do it; but if there was any such danger or temptation in the case of Paul, he had been able to overcome it, and had *not* withheld, concealed, or suppressed any part of the truth of God as made known for the salvation of men.

Of the danger of doing this, all men in the ministry must be conscious; few, in the review of life, could say that they had never done it. Many of the doctrines of religion are very repugnant to the feelings of the natural heart; many of those doctrines come in conflict with the maxims of the world, many are such as make it necessary for the minister of religion to advert with apparent severity to the methods of gain, the follies, the vices, the amusements of mankind; many come in conflict with the views of philosophy which prevail among men; many are imagined to represent God as harsh, stern, severe; many are easily perverted by wicked men as arguments against the Bible, or as excuses for remaining in sin. It requires much moral courage to present these doctrines steadily to a world lying in sin; to

urge them upon the wicked and the abandoned; to introduce them to circles of gaiety and vanity; to vindicate them before sceptics or philosophers, eminent in politics, in learning, or in science. It is to be remembered, also, that in the early periods of Christianity those who declared these doctrines were often exposed thereby to fiery persecution, and declared them at the peril of life.

Especially are these remarks applicable to those higher doctrines of religion which are now called "doctrines of grace," and which bring into view that which would be most naturally suggested by the word "counsel" here—*βουλή*—the sovereignty of God. These great doctrines of the Divine *counsel*—or *will*,—comprising under the general idea the doctrine of decrees, of predestination, of election, etc., as in accordance with a purpose,—are, as we well know, among the most unpalatable that can be presented to mankind. They are those which men are most reluctant to hear, and which are most easily perverted. They seem, too, to many, to have so little practical bearing on the salvation of sinners or on the Christian life, (while the plainer and more practical duties of repentance, faith, and holy living, seem to have so much more decided claims to attention,) that preachers of the Gospel often "shun to declare" them.

It is implied, however, that Paul in his preaching at Ephesus had not hesitated to avow his belief in those doctrines, and that he had, in fact, made them prominent in his ministry. What he understood by "the counsel

of God," and what were the doctrines which he actually preached, we may learn from the Epistle to the Ephesians, where these doctrines enter into the very essence of the epistle, and constitute its very substance. No man can read that epistle, and have any doubt that "the whole counsel of God" comprised in the view of Paul the doctrines of sovereignty, of decrees, of eternal purposes. That these doctrines might be unpopular, that they might be abused, that men might turn away from them, was, in his apprehension, no reason why they should not be "declared," and he *had* declared them. In reviewing the life which he had led at Ephesus, it was to him now no cause of regret that he had proclaimed them; and when, now, in a review of the past, a minister of the Gospel looks out on the eternal world, and contemplates appearing before his final Judge, it will be to him no cause of regret that he has made *God* prominent in his teachings, and that his great aim has been to exalt Him as the Sovereign Ruler over all worlds.

(3.) A third thing not improper to be noticed is, that he had set before them an example of *industry*; that he had been willing to forego his claim on them for support, and had showed them that he was not influenced by a love of gain:—"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (vers. 33, 34).

Paul, on proper occasions, was strenuous in urging the *right* of the ministry to support. That great prin-

ciple had been incorporated into the Jewish religion, and had been adopted in the Christian system. "Who goeth a warfare," says he, "at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? It is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?—Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 7—14). As a principle of religion, this is everywhere recognized in the Bible; as a matter of equity, it commends itself to all men. The teacher of the young, the physician, the man who advocates the cause of violated rights, and defends the widow, the fatherless, the wronged, the falsely accused, confers benefits that are more than equivalent for what he receives, and has, like other men, a full claim to compensation for the time, and talent, and study, and skill employed in behalf of others; and, in like manner, even laying out of view the bearing of the ministry on another world, the faithful Christian pastor confers benefits which are more than equivalent to the amount he receives. In the promotion of intelligence, industry, honesty, temperance, domestic order, peace, and happiness, he renders back to society more in regard to its real prosperity than is required for his support.

Yet, while this is a right to which the minister of the Gospel is entitled, there are not unfrequently circumstances in which it is proper to *forego* the right. It was often so with Paul. "I," says he, "have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me" (1 Cor. ix. 15). When the urging of the claim might lead to the charge of covetousness; when it might be oppressive and burdensome; when a people were very poor; when the fair interpretation of the act might be that he was acting *merely* from the principles and motives of a *profession*, it might be better for a minister to labour for his own support. Paul, in connection with Aquila, "of the same craft," so laboured in Corinth (Acts xviii. 3); and for the same reason, and doubtless in the same occupation, he had laboured at Ephesus. Whatever special reason there might have been for this in Ephesus, the *example* could not but have had an important influence on those to whom he ministered.

An example of industry is always of great advantage in a community. Whether it be in manual labour, or in study; whether it be in the regular line of a man's calling, or in something not immediately demanded by his profession, whether it be in an employment different from that in which other men are engaged, or whether it be in the same, the example itself is always of great value. The example of an industrious farmer is of advantage not only to other farmers, but to professional men; the example of an industrious minister

of the Gospel in his studies, his preaching, his visiting, though he never touches a plough or a hoe, is of itself of immense value even to those whose bread is gained by "the sweat of the brow." He who can, at the close of his ministry, honestly say that he has himself been *industrious*; that he has toiled early and late; that he has not eaten "the bread of idleness;" that he has employed in his profession *at least* as many hours of his life as the merchant in his counting-room, or the clerk in a bank, or the weaver at his loom, or the blacksmith at his forge, is a man who, in respect to the interests of this life, has not lived in vain.

III. In the third place, I propose to consider *the calmness with which Paul, in view of the past, contemplated the future; and the illustration thus furnished of the confidence with which one who has faithfully performed his duty can look forward to whatever may happen.* Paul's feelings are expressed in the following language:—"And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God" (vers. 22—24). His trials and persecutions in the past had made it probable that he would experience similar trials and persecutions in the future;

and he had the assurance from Him who saw all that was to come—the Holy Ghost—that he had nothing but this to expect wherever he went. He was going now into new dangers. He was taking leave of a people greatly endeared to him, among whom he had laboured happily and successfully for three years, and was going where he had reason to anticipate new and severe forms of trial.

In looking into the future, there are two things for us to contemplate:—(a) Those events which *may* happen to any of us; and (b) That which we know certainly *will* happen.

(a) Those which *may* happen. Paul knew that there was no form of persecution which he *might* not be called to experience. As a man, too, he knew that there *might* be sickness, disappointment, poverty, or reproach, in his path. So it is with us. We are in a world where these things *do* occur, and they may occur to us as well as to others. Any man may contemplate it as a possible case that any one of these things may befall him. There is no way in which he can secure himself against any one of these; there are some of them which will, in all probability, come upon him. Present exemption is no evidence that he will always or will long be exempt; and, at any moment, he may be plunged into any one of these forms of sorrow.

(b) That which we know *must* happen. Whatever may be uncertain in the future, one thing *is* certain—death. To Paul this was certain; it is certain to us all. The time, the manner, the circumstances, are wisely and

benevolently concealed from us; but the fact is certain, and is the only thing in all the future that to us *is* certain. And death is essentially the same thing to all. What it has been to the countless millions who have gone before us, it will be to us. We look upon a dying man; such we shall be. We view the mortal paleness on his cheek, and the cold drops which stand on the brow; so it will be with us. We look upon the body when the vital spark is extinct, and when it becomes cold and rigid; such ours shall be. We look on the eye, now deprived of all lustre and brilliancy; such ours will be. We look on the body, clad in the habiliments of the grave, placed in the narrow coffin, borne from the late dwelling to the new habitation—the grave; let down into the lowly resting-place, covered with earth, left alone in that narrow, cold, still, damp, chilly abode, to remain there, day and night, summer and winter, until all shall be lost in undistinguished dust. Such we shall be. We look on the company of mourners, as they turn away from that grave, to look on that pale face no more for ever. So will the mourners turn away from our graves. We look on the gay and busy world now forgetful of the sleeper there, and sporting in folly, or immersed in cares; and so will the world be gay and busy while we lie low in the grave, and moulder slowly back to dust.

Yet in the prospect of all that, Paul was calm. "None of these things move me." The thought that he had been faithful to his God and Saviour, and the hope that he would be blessed for ever, made *him* calm; and so it

will make *us* calm. There is nothing in all the future, known to us or unknown, which, if we have been thus faithful, and if we have such a hope, should move or disturb us. When life has been well spent; when there is a conscience without reproach; when there is faith in the Saviour, when there is a well-founded hope of heaven, there can be nothing that should disquiet us. From any point in our journey where we pause to contemplate the past, if we have this consciousness, we may look calmly on to the future; and on the outer limit of life, when death has come, if we have this consciousness, we may look calmly into the dark valley which we are entering, and say, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

XIII.

PAUL IN THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM.

The question how far it is proper for the sake of doing good, to yield to the prejudices of others, or to conform to the customs of the world.

Danger incurred at Jerusalem.—Warnings of friends.—Advice given.—Justification of the course pursued.—Prevalent extremes; unyielding rigidity, and culpable laxness.—*Principles applicable to this question.*—Vows not in themselves wrong.—Many things in life optional.—Some things not inherently wrong, forbidden because injurious.—Some things intrinsically wrong.—Some things not sinful, but inconsistent.—How the world views the inconsistent compliances of professors.—How such compliances differ from that of Paul.—*Application of these principles as a rule of life.*—The good-will of the world not to be despised.—Yet not to be secured by compromise.—Compromise to be refused only as duty.—Up to that point, concession to be made.—Motive of such concession.

“ And unto the Jews, I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

I COR. ix. 20—22.



A STREET IN JERUSALEM.

PAUL, after having travelled through Greece and Asia Minor, had gone up to Jerusalem. It was the first visit which he had made in a *public* manner to Jerusalem since his conversion, and it could not be otherwise than that his public appearance in that city, or his presence there at all, if known, would be likely to produce a riot among the Jews. He seems himself to have anticipated that something of this nature might occur. In his parting address to the elders who met him at Miletus, he had said, "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall *befall me there.*"

After leaving Miletus, Paul sailed to Tyre; and there the first definite apprehension of his danger was expressed: "Finding certain disciples, we tarried there seven days; who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." Their fear may have been caused by a knowledge of the feelings which prevailed at Jerusalem in regard to him, and the moral certainty that his presence there would call forth the manifestation of those feelings in some form of persecution.

This apprehension became more definite when Paul reached Cæsarea. A certain "prophet" named Agabus, who had come down from Judæa, "took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, so shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles" (Acts xxi. 10, 11). It is not necessary to inquire whether this man was actually inspired, or whether the word "prophet," as applied to him, is used in the large sense in which it is often employed in the New Testament as denoting a religious teacher or a minister of religion. His own knowledge of the actual state of feeling in Jerusalem might have been sufficient to assure him that those consequences would follow if Paul should venture to approach the city. Agabus had just come from Jerusalem. He knew the temper of the nation. He was aware of the intense and bitter hatred with which they regarded Paul, as an apostate from their religion, and as one of the most prominent and dangerous apostates; as a man of eminent talents, and most active in propagating his

own sentiments, in overthrowing the national religion, and in counteracting the institutions of Moses. More than any other man they regarded him as an enemy of their faith.

When he came to Jerusalem, the same apprehension existed among the leading disciples of the Saviour there. They themselves received Paul gladly. They recognized him as a true apostle, and as a man who had been eminently blessed of God in spreading the knowledge of the way of salvation among the Gentiles (Acts xxi. 17—20). But they knew well that there were large numbers—"many thousands," said they—of those who believed, who were still "zealous of the law," whose prejudices could be aroused, and whose passions could be inflamed, by the charge that he had taught "all the Jews which were among the Gentiles to forsake Moses" (Acts xxi. 21). It was unavoidable that they should be informed of his arrival; that they should come together; that there would be commotion and excitement; and that, unless something were done to calm down the feeling, his life would be in peril.

In these circumstances, it was proposed that he should at once do *something* of such a nature, and in such a public manner, as to show that he had no hostility to the laws of Moses, and that it was not his design to make war on the religion of his fathers. A method was suggested which it was supposed would show this in a satisfactory manner. There were with them, or of their own number, four men who had made a "vow," in accordance with what was usual among the Jews; the

conditions of the vow were already partly accomplished ; Paul could unite himself with them without loss of time in what remained to be performed ; and, as the consummation of this *must be* in the temple, it would show in the most public manner that he did not regard these ceremonial arrangements as unlawful in themselves, or as improper to be observed, in certain circumstances, by those who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity.

In justification of the course proposed, and of the conduct of Paul, it is to be observed that this was not a mere trick ; that it was not done in Jerusalem, under the influence of fear, what he would not do elsewhere ; that it was not designed to “throw dust in their eyes ;” that it was not an act of “trimming,” or of compliance with a custom which he elsewhere opposed. Similar instances had in fact occurred when travelling abroad, where no such cause could be alleged for his conduct. Thus, in one instance, he had performed an act of the Jewish religion in relation to Timothy, because there were many Jews in the region where it was proposed that he should labour (Acts xvi. 3) ; in another, and that when entering on this very journey to Jerusalem (Acts xviii. 18), he had fulfilled the conditions of a “vow” which he had made,—though when made, or for what purpose, is now unknown. It may be added, also, that he made no secret of all this. It was done publicly ; and, in an epistle which he addressed to one of the churches which he had founded among the Gentiles, he avowed it as a fixed principle of conduct :—“Unto the

Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews" (1 Cor. ix. 20).

The question which is suggested for consideration by this case, is, *How far is it proper to comply with the customs, or to yield to the prejudices of the world around us, in order to do good, promote religion, and win others to love the Saviour?*

That this is an important practical question, no one can doubt; that it is a question attended with some serious difficulties is equally clear. Very much of the honour of religion, and of the usefulness of Christians, depends on this; very much of the injury done to the cause of religion by its professed friends is to be traced to a want of correct views on subjects that come properly within the range of this inquiry.

In order to a just determination of the question, it will be proper to notice at the outset the *extremes* which prevail on the subject. These are two:—

(a.) A rigid, unbending, and stern application of religious principles to all cases that occur, and to all questions that pertain to conduct. No one can doubt that the Christian religion is a religion of principle, and not of sentiment, form, or feeling; that there are to be fixed and regular laws in religion, and that our conduct is to be regulated by those laws; that those laws, for Christians, are to be found in the Bible, and are not to be modified by the philosophy, the maxims, or the customs of the world; and that the highest exercise of conscience is to be applied to our conduct in relation to those laws. But it is assuming more than any one has a right to

assume, when a man affirms that those laws are designed to regulate *all* that pertains to society and conduct, or that there is no room for a diversity in social manners and customs; in dress and modes of living; in intercourse between man and man; in the ways and habits of doing things; or in customs that spring from different modes of education, climate, or pursuits. He who endeavours to bring under the domain of conscience and religion what does not properly belong to it, commits an offence, not less than he who endeavours to remove from the province of religion to a regulation of mere social custom what the Bible has made a matter of religious obligation. He who originates a rite, a custom, or an ordinance as pertaining to religion, and insists on it as a matter of conscience, is guilty of legislating where God alone can legislate; and he who attempts to apply the maxims of religion to customs, to habits of life, to modes of dress or of intercourse, which God has designed should be free, invades no less the province of God in matters of religion, than he who attempts to remove from their proper place those things which God *has* ordained, and to make them matters of expediency, of fashion, of custom, or of discretion. There are other things to guide us in life, than the direct and particular specifications of religion (Phil. iv. 8); and, within proper limits, religion is as much honoured by complying with those things as it is by obeying its direct and explicit ordinances. It may be said, indeed, with truth, that the error of the Church at large has not been that of a too rigid adherence to principle, or a too

stern application of the laws of Christianity to the common transactions of life ; but it is also to be said that there have been those in every age, the characteristic of whose piety has been the stern application of religious principles to every transaction of life, even so far as to bring under the domain of religion things which God has left to be matters of custom, of expediency, of taste, or of convenience. Extremes meet here. The Puritan on the one hand, and the Ritualist on the other (much as they differ in other respects),—he who insists that all things (dress, social customs, amusements) shall be regulated by the principles of religion, and he who exalts a humanly-appointed rite of religion (the mode of baptism, or a clerical dress, or the manner of administering a religious ordinance, or the observance of certain days) as a matter of stern obligation, however much they may differ in other respects,—agree in endeavouring to carry the domain of religious *principle* into regions which God never intended. Hence originates the denial of just liberty in the Church ; hence, the spirit of persecution, of exclusiveness, of bigotry.

(*b.*) The other extreme is laxness, or an abandonment of the proper principles of religion, by conformity to the customs of the world. It need not be said that this has been, rather than the former, the prevailing danger in the Church, and that the principal dishonour which has been done to religion has sprung from this source. The rule which has been practically acted on in the Church, to an extent which no one can vindicate, has been to conform to the world *in all things which are not morally*

wrong,—while what *is* morally wrong has been determined by other things than the laws and principles of the New Testament. Hence the most worldly forms of fashion, the theatre, the opera, the ball-room, the splendid party, have not been regarded as so different from the communion-table that both may not be alike participated in and enjoyed ; and it has been believed that a transition from the one to the other involves no evidence of a want of true love to the Saviour, or of zeal for the honour of His religion.

The question now is, What, in reference to these extremes, are the true principles of religion ? and particularly, What, on this subject, is authorized by the example of the Apostle Paul in the case before us ? In the solution of these questions, it will be proper, first, to lay down some principles which, it may be presumed, will secure the assent of all ; and, secondly, to consider the application of those principles to the point in hand.

I. There are certain principles, as bearing on the subject, which are likely to command universal assent.

(1.) Vows, or voluntary promises and pledges, are not, in themselves, immoral or improper. They were allowed freely under the Jewish system of religion ; they are not forbidden in the New Testament ; and they have been made by men most eminent for holiness and purity in all ages of the Church. They cannot, indeed, impose an obligation to the performance of that which is in itself wrong ; but where an act is in itself right, they may be an important aid in securing its performance. In

the general course of life, a *purpose* to do right is closely connected with the act of doing right, and goes far towards securing such an act; and a pledge, a promise, or a vow, whether in relation to God or man, may be an important means of securing upright conduct. The promises which we make in the ordinary transactions of business, and the professions which we make in religion, are valuable means of securing fidelity to any trust. That Paul should have made a vow at Cenchrea, or should unite with others in carrying out a vow already made by them in Jerusalem, was in no way a departure from the principles in which he had been trained; or from the spirit of the Old or the New Testament; or from the general sense of mankind in regard to the propriety of the principle, in religion; or from the practice of men in regard to it, in the ordinary transactions of life. Whatever, therefore, may be charged on the apostle in reference to this transaction, it cannot be alleged that, in taking upon himself a share in this vow, he was doing that which was morally wrong.

(2.) There are numerous things that pertain to human conduct which, in themselves, are neither moral nor immoral, but which are indifferent in their nature. These things are not regulated by the Bible, nor do they conflict with the precepts of the Bible. Dress, manners, modes of living,—methods of salutation, of address, and of intercourse,—social habits and customs,—domestic arrangements,—such things as these, pertain to the organization of families and societies as such, and must in the main be regulated by things quite

independent of religion. Education, long-established usages, the tastes of individuals, difference of climate, diversities of pursuit, varieties in the ranks and conditions of life,—all these enter into the formation of such habits and customs. We do not expect the same formalities of intercourse in the cottage and in the palace; we need not require, and we could not secure, the same modes of salutation in China, in Persia, in Arabia,—among Turks, among Frenchmen, or among savage tribes.

Further; some of these things *may* pertain to religion. It remains yet to be proved that, according to the tastes, the education, and the individual characteristics of men, different modes may not be adopted in the worship of God, or that prayer may not be acceptable to God when offered either kneeling or standing; from a pre-composed form, or from extemporary utterance; in audible expression, or in the silent breathing of the heart; when lying on the bed at night, or when in the hurry of business, in the counting-room, at the work-bench, or at the plough, as well as amid the solemnities of public worship in the most gorgeous temple. It remains yet to be shown that in respect to the worship of an Episcopalian, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Lutheran, a Moravian, though offered in different modes, there is not, as in respect to the social customs of life, a wide range of choice allowed according to the customs of nations, or according to the characteristics of individual men.

(3.) There may be things, not improper or wrong in

themselves, that may be made improper and wrong by the positive commands of religion ;—that is, from which religion would restrain us for our own good, and in order to secure the highest degree of spirituality. There may be a pursuit of wealth which would be attended with no positively immoral act, but which would be perilous to a man's soul ; there may be a desire of distinction in the world, in science, in political life, or a desire of remembrance after death, which would be connected with nothing immoral, but which might endanger the soul ; there may be a love of dress, of pleasure, of amusement, of commendation and flattery, in a world gay and godless, which, though it might not lead to any acts of dishonesty, fraud, falsehood, licentiousness, or intemperance, and though it might be connected with all that is refined in intercourse and attractive in manners, might nevertheless lead to the neglect of the highest interests of the soul, and to its ultimate ruin.

(4.) There are things which are intrinsically and always wrong,—forbidden alike by the rules of a just morality, and by the principles of revealed religion. No possible circumstances can make them right ; no sanctions or commands could change their essential nature, or invest them with innocence. No contingencies, no dangers, no hope of good, no fear of evil, could justify them or make them proper. Nothing could excuse or palliate them. In the nature of things, and apart from all positive commands, and all legislation, there are such things as right and wrong ; good and evil ; true and

false ; benevolent and malignant. These are not *made* right or wrong, good or evil, by a mere exercise of will ; and the excellence of the Divine nature itself is not that God declares that to be right which He *does*, but that His doings are eternally and invariably conformed to that which *is* right, and are unchangeably opposed to that which *is* evil and wrong. Nothing can justify a man in violating those eternal principles of right as existing in the nature of things, and as confirmed by the nature and the law of God ; and if Paul's becoming "all things to all men," had gone to the extent of violating those principles, it would be impossible to vindicate him. What those things *are* has been declared by God himself in the volume of revealed truth, and has been engraved largely on the very consciences of men (Rom. ii. 14, 15).

(5.) There are things which are not regarded by the world as sinful or improper, but which are condemned by religion, and which, if practised by the professed friends of religion, that very world would consider to be wrong. The people of the world, while *they* see nothing in such things absolutely wrong, or inconsistent with any principles which *they* hold, profess to be able to see that such things are inconsistent with the professions which Christians make. In *their* estimation such things are not in themselves evil, and would not be improper for *them*, but if professed Christians carry out the principle of "becoming all things to all men," to such an extent as to lead to a compliance with those customs, it would be set down against the latter as an abandonment

of their profession, and as a proof that the principles of religion have no true and firm hold on their hearts. In the time of Paul there were many things freely indulged in by both Jews and Pagans, which while they would not have been regarded by Jews or Pagans as inconsistent with any principles which *they* held, would have been regarded as scandalous in a Christian apostle. What Pagan, who knew anything of the nature of Christianity, could have looked otherwise than with scorn on an apostle enjoying the conflicts in the amphitheatre, and joining the shouts of exultation as one gladiator plunged his sword in the heart of a less powerful or skilful antagonist?

There are many, very many, such things in the world now. Without pretending to know exactly how the world regards the question of *morality* as applicable to the amusements of society,—the theatre, the opera, the ball-room, the social “glass,”—to late hours, to gay and splendid apparel, to a life frivolous and vain, to the love of flattery,—it must be apparent to themselves, as it is to others, that they make a broad distinction between these things and ingratitude towards a parent, or a wrong done to a neighbour, or a flagrant breach of promise, or an act of dishonesty in business, or crime as defined by the laws of the land. They never, in respect to themselves, place such things in the same category with falsehood, theft, dishonesty, murder. Yet, whatever be the exact degree in which the world attaches the idea of morality to such things, it is not difficult to ascertain how they regard the question whether the

professed friends of religion can consistently mingle in such scenes. On this point there is probably but one opinion among the people of the world. In *their* estimation, the communion-table and the theatre, the ball-room, and the opera, are separated by wide and impassable distances. There is no affinity between them. They cannot be rendered harmonious. The spirit of the one is not the spirit of the other. The transition from one to the other is *not* a natural and easy transition,—of the same nature as the transition among themselves from the employments to the amusements of life (all in the same line, and pursued with the same general aim),—but a transition to a new region—a transition for Christians from light to darkness, from right to wrong, from stern and fixed principles to a loose, and easy, and unjustifiable compliance with the customs of the world. Well do the people of the world, whatever may be true of many professed Christians, understand the force of the apostle's appeal, despise it though they may, when he says, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (2 Cor. vi. 14, 15). "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of devils" (1 Cor. x. 21).

If, in these respects, a professed Christian now becomes "all things to all men," it is impossible not to see that his conduct differs wholly from that of Paul. The fact that he had a "vow," and that, by complying

with the requirements of such a vow, he showed respect to the religion of his fathers, and even yielded to the prejudices of his countrymen, would not, and could not, interfere with his purpose to impress on their minds the reality and importance of religion, and the momentous nature of the interests of the soul. It would be seen that his conduct was *in that line*, and was designed to secure that end. But when a professed Christian is seen now in the theatre, or the opera, or the ball-room, is this in the line of doing good to the souls of others? Is it designed or adapted to impress on them the importance of personal religion? Can the people of the world regard it as having this tendency? Can they by any ingenuity of interpretation bring this mode of becoming "all things to all men" under the rule of Paul, "*that I might by all means save some?*"

II. Assuming now that these principles are correct, it will not be difficult to *apply them as a rule of life,—and, in doing this, to show that the conduct of Paul was in no way chargeable with a want of firmness or of principle, and that it was not the offspring of timidity or fear.*

(I.) In the effort to do good to others, and in all our intercourse with our fellow-men, the friendship of the world is better than its hatred. That man is more likely to do good to others who does not needlessly make war on their prejudices; who does not excite angry passions by a denunciation of customs that are innocent; who is not, of design, singular and eccentric in his speech and manners; who, in common matters,

lives as other men live, and dresses as other men dress, and talks as other men talk, than he who begins his work by an assumption of universal singularity. To the intrinsic difficulty, always great, of doing men good in religion, in such a case we add the difficulty arising from the fact of disgusting them; of alienating them from us. The good-will of any man is better than his ill-will; and it cannot be desirable to run against the prejudices of the world where no principle is involved. As has been already remarked, there are numberless things in life which it is not the province of religion, any more than of civil law, to control. Every man has his own way of doing things. He has his habits formed. His peculiarity is of no importance to the community, it may be, but it is of importance to himself—to his comfort, to his views of propriety. We insensibly learn to adjust ourselves to the habits of others, showing respect to their peculiarities, and allowing them to do things in their own way. It may require months for a husband and wife to learn to live together without pain caused undesignedly in respect to some innocent habit or mode of doing things; but individuals brought to live together, *do* so adjust themselves to each other that peace and harmony prevail in families and communities. Now up to the point where such peculiarities—such habits or customs—cease to be innocent, it cannot be wrong to conform ourselves, as Paul did, to the state of things around, or to become “all things to all men.”

(2.) In our intercourse with the world, in our transactions of business, in our efforts to do good, no principle

—no truth—should be sacrificed or compromised. In the case now under consideration, Paul sacrificed no principle, and compromised no truth; we shall see hereafter that when principle was involved, or when truth was imperilled, nothing, not even the prospect of death, could move him from the performance of duty. At all hazards, in the face of all opposition, when threatened with the loss of all things, or with death itself,—or when there *seems* to be a prospect of doing good by the temporary abandonment of principle,—we are to adhere to that which is just and right; to all that our religion requires. Not by the allurements of fashion, of gaiety, and of worldliness, are we to be drawn aside from our duty; and not by the hope of doing good to the fashionable, the gay, or the worldly, are we to compromise the principles of religion, and to conform to customs that are wrong. If the principles of the Gospel are opposed to the theatre or the opera, he does no good to those who indulge in those amusements by being found with them in such places; if the principles of the Gospel are opposed to the use of intoxicating drinks, he does no good to those who indulge in the use of those drinks by partaking with them; if religion requires the observance of the Sabbath, he does no good to others who complies with their views, and travels with them on that day; if religion asserts the doctrine of human depravity, of the necessity for regeneration, of the necessity and the fact of an atonement, of the duty of a holy life, and of the certainty of eternal retribution, he can do no good to others who attempts

to modify those doctrines so as to suit their views. Not thus are we to seek to do good; not thus are we to become "all things to all men." Not thus did Paul. Not with one thing in itself wrong, or forbidden by his religion, did he ever comply; not in one habit inconsistent with the purpose to serve God his Saviour, did he ever indulge, that he might better commend himself to those whom he would save.

(3.) It should be observed, however, that the things referred to *should be* matters of *principle*, things *required* by religion, and not things of whim, or fancy, or imagination. One of the great evils of the Church—of religious men everywhere—is that of which the Pharisee was an illustrious type, making "broad the phylacteries, enlarging the borders of the garments, loving the chief seats in the synagogues, desiring to be called of men 'Rabbi, Rabbi,'" and calling this—*religion*. In all those things which prescribe rites and ceremonies, genuflexions and crossings, and confound a conformity to these with obedience to a moral precept;—in all those things which exalt forms above religion itself, and which base exclusiveness upon those forms;—in all those things which insist on a *mode* rather than the *reality*, or on a mode as essential to reality, there the spirit of the Pharisee is perpetuated. It was otherwise with Paul. What he insisted on, was principle and truth, not shadow and form. In principle, he was firm as the everlasting hills; in reference to the mere forms of religion, to the innocent customs of the world, to the harmless prejudices of his fellow-men, even of religionists,

as gentle and yielding as the osier when moved by the breathing of the zephyr.

(4) The conclusion, then, to which we have arrived, alike in vindication of the conduct of Paul, and as a rule of Christian life, is, that *up to the point where principle is involved*, it is right to mingle with the world around us, and to conform to the ordinary customs of life;—to talk as others talk; to dress as others dress; to live as others live; to practise the rules which they practise in social intercourse, and to be interested in things pertaining to the good of a neighbourhood or of the country. Mere oddity, eccentricity, or want of civility in manners, converts no one; nor do these things recommend religion to others; certainly they do not make religion more attractive to the human heart. To set at defiance the laws of social life does nothing to commend the rules of the Gospel. To each individual in society every other individual will readily concede such peculiarity of manner as to mark and preserve his individuality; and, in like manner, the world around should concede such peculiarities of manner, deportment, and expression, as properly characterize the true Christian;—seriousness, earnestness, devoutness, deadness to the world, and the manifestation of a spirit which shows that he does not regard this world as his home. With all there was in Paul that was yielding, all his readiness to comply with the ways of doing things in the world, there was enough in his character that was peculiar to distinguish him from every other apostle; enough, in his spirit and aim, to distinguish

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him in the most marked manner from the Jew and the Gentile, from the world around him, from the gay, the ambitious, the covetous, and the proud.

In view of the train of thought thus submitted, we may dwell a moment on the grand and noble purpose held up for our imitation in the language of the apostle, "*that I might by all means save some.*" Such a purpose, pursued in such a manner, implies that the salvation of a soul is a great matter; that it towers above all other things; that it is worth every sacrifice that can be made; that all other objects—fame, wealth, ease, reputation, life itself should be made subordinate to it; that it should control all the faculties; that it should concentrate and combine all the powers of the soul. On this principle Paul acted, for he did not count his life dear unto himself so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he had received (Acts xx. 24); and on this principle the Saviour of the world acted, who endured the agonies of Gethsemane, and the bitter pains of death on the cross, that he might redeem the souls of men. And can any one doubt that the salvation of an immortal soul is worth even such sacrifices as these? Can any one doubt that it is worth more than all the sacrifices which he himself can make, "if by any means" he "may save *some*?"

XIV.

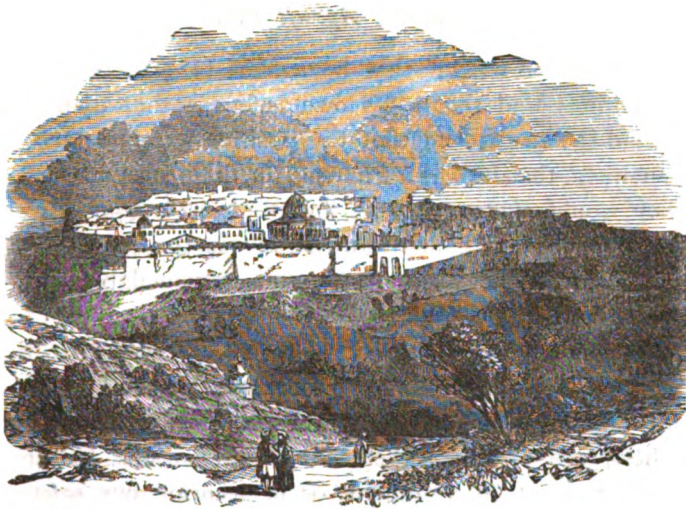
PAUL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIM.

How far it is proper to avail ourselves of differences and dissensions among others in defending ourselves.

Question to be solved.—*Circumstances of the case.*—The tumult.—The rescue.—Address to the people.—Renewed excitement.—Convening of the Sanhedrim.—No hope of justice.—Course pursued by Paul.—*Objections to his conduct.*—He was not literally a Pharisee.—Not actually on trial about the resurrection.—This was not a fair defence, therefore, but a trick.—*Vindication of his conduct.*—(1.) The Sanhedrim had no real authority; were not investigating impartially; and there was but one course by which a hearing could be obtained.—(2.) The difference of which Paul availed himself was already existing.—(3.) On this one doctrine, Paul did agree with the Pharisees.—(4.) Of this doctrine he had a proof more convincing than tradition; or analogy; or Old Testament Scripture (in which the Sadducees denied it; from which Christ did not quote; and in which we but dimly perceive it);—more convincing because a fact.—(5.) It was this doctrine, thus held, for which Paul suffered.

“ But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 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. And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the multitude was divided.”

ACTS xxiii. 6, 7.



JERUSALEM.



HE particular point suggested by the case which is now to come under consideration, relates to a question respecting the manliness, the candour, the nobleness, the fairness, the *straightforwardness* of the apostle, in availing himself of a difference of opinion among his accusers and judges; in seeking to produce dissension in the Sanhedrim; in claiming to be a Pharisee; in stating that that for which he was now on trial was the doctrine which distinguished the Pharisees from the Sadducees,—the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. The objection would be that this was a mere trick on his part, unworthy of a great orator, of a great apostle, and of an honest man; that it indicated a small species of adroitness or cunning fitted to a “pettifogger” or a special pleader; that it bordered very nearly on the

arts of a "trimmer;" that he sought to confound his adversaries and secure his own safety, rather than to defend the truth; and that the position which he took—namely, that he was a Pharisee (in the sense in which they would understand it), and that the actual thing for which he was called in question was the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead—was irreconcilable with the truth of the case.

In connexion with this it is to be observed that it *may* become a question of importance for us, how far we may avail ourselves of the peculiar opinions of others, and of their differences or dissensions, in carrying a point in argument, or in securing our safety when accused, or in vindicating our character when assailed or in defending the truth. In other words, the question would be, "What is manly, dignified, fair, honourable in such circumstances?" This may be determined by a full understanding of the apostle's case, to which, therefore, we may limit our attention.

To illustrate the subject, it will be necessary to consider the circumstances of the apostle at this time; to examine, more at length, the nature of the objections which could be urged against his conduct; and to ascertain whether that conduct can be vindicated, as being consistent with fairness, truth, and honour.

I. The circumstances preceding and attending the case.

In the previous chapter we considered the proposal made to Paul, and adopted by him, that he should take part in a vow which had been made by some members

of the church in Jerusalem, and should thus show in a public manner that he was *not* hostile to the institutions of Moses. The hope of thus preventing an excitement among the Jews, however, proved to be vain. Certain "Jews which were of Asia," that is, of Asia Minor, where he had laboured so long and so effectually, saw him in the courts of the temple, and "stirred up all the people," laying hands on him as an enemy of their religion, and accusing him of having polluted the temple. This was sufficient to produce the deepest excitement. The multitude rushed upon him with fury, hurried him out of the holy place, and "went about to kill him." From this danger Paul was rescued by the chief captain of the Roman guard, stationed in the Tower of Antonia. This was but a short distance from the spot where this scene of violence was occurring, and it is probable that the tumult had been witnessed by the sentries on duty. Intelligence was at once sent to the chief captain that "all Jerusalem was in an uproar," and forthwith he came with a band of soldiers, and rescued Paul from the hands of his murderers. Failing to learn the cause of this disturbance from the multitude, among whom "some cried one thing, some another," and supposing him to be the Egyptian concerned in a recent rebellion, he secured him with chains, and carried him into the tower (Acts xxi. 27—34).

To the surprise of the chief captain Paul respectfully addressed him in Greek, and requested permission to address the people. "I am a man," he said, "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" (ver. 39). The fact that he was *a Jew* identified him with the people who cried "away with him;" the fact that he was *of Tarsus* explained the reason why he was able to "speak Greek," for Tarsus (as we have seen) was, in the celebrity of its schools, second only to Athens; the fact that he was a "citizen of no mean city"—*οὐκ ἀσίμου πόλεως*, not a city undistinguished, unknown, uncultivated, and rude—was a reason why he was entitled to respectful treatment, and why it might be presumed that he would do nothing against the rules of propriety. Lysias, the chief captain, willing to adopt any mild measures by which he might ascertain the cause of the tumult, and by which he might hope that the passions of the people would be calmed down, readily granted his request (Acts xxi. 35—40).

Standing on the stairs, Paul then delivered one of the most beautiful of all his addresses. Speaking to the multitude in their own native language, not as a foreigner, but as an educated Hebrew, he at once secured their attention. He told them of his early life, and informed them that, though born in Tarsus, he had been brought up in Jerusalem and at the feet of Gamaliel, a Rabbi known to them all. He referred to his zeal for God; his persecution of the Christians; the confidence placed in him by the high priest and elders; and the commission which they gave him. He narrated the circumstances of his conversion; the announcement brought to him by Ananias, as to the purpose for which he had

been thus arrested; and the marvellous vision which he subsequently had, in the temple itself, commanding him to bear to the Gentiles the message of salvation (Acts xxii. 1—21).

Up to this point they heard him patiently. But when he spoke of his mission to *the Gentiles*, he was interrupted by a burst of indignation. The violent words and furious gestures of the multitude led Lysias, who evidently had not understood what the apostle was saying in the Hebrew tongue, to conclude that he must have committed some great crime. To ascertain what this was, he proposed now to subject him to the torture,—to examine him by scourging.¹ In danger of this enormous wrong, helpless and defenceless, Paul now, to the amazement of the Roman chiliarch, availed himself of his right as a Roman citizen, as he had done on a former occasion at Philippi. But one thing now remained for the Roman military commander to try. It occurred to him that by a form of trial before the Jewish Sanhedrim itself, he might ascertain the true source of all this disturbance; that perhaps the case might, without further trouble, be disposed of as a Jewish matter before that tribunal; or that, at any rate, he might obtain light to direct him in his duty. On the following day, therefore, the Sanhedrim was convened, and Paul was brought before them that the cause might be heard and determined (Acts xxii. 22—30).

¹ Greek; to inquire strictly; then, to "put to the question;" to force confession by scourging—*μάστιξιεν ἀνεράζεσθαι*.

It was then and there that the scene occurred, which we have now under consideration. Paul having begun, as usual, in the most respectful manner,—“Men and brethren,”—calmly asserted that he had endeavoured always to live a life of integrity;—“I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts xxiii. 1). This was a solemn affirmation that he had done only what every good man ought to do. He had acted in accordance with the demands of conscience.

The manner in which this was received showed that he had nothing to hope from the council in regard to justice;—“the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by to smite him on the mouth” (Acts xxiii. 2). This act on the part of him who occupied the place of high priest, was so contrary to all the rules of justice, and indicated so settled a determination to condemn him, as to change the whole course of things. After an indignant rebuke for an act so uncalled for, after a solemn declaration that God would smite a man who was merely a “whited wall,”—a man who was like a wall painted or whitewashed, and who was not what he pretended to be, or appeared to be;—a man who “had the semblance of the high priest’s office without the reality” (*Lightfoot*),¹—Paul, for his own safety, resorted to the course which now claims our notice. Seeing that

¹ “If we consider these words as an outburst of natural indignation, we cannot severely blame them, when we remember St. Paul’s temperament, and how they were provoked. If we regard them as a prophetic denunciation, they were terribly fulfilled, when this hypocritical president of the Sanhedrim was murdered by the assassins in the Jewish war.” (*Josephus, Bell. Jud. ii. 17, 9*).—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. p. 282.

there were two parties in the Sanhedrim, he resolved to divide and distract their counsels, and to trust for his own safety to the protection of the Roman power.

II. This brings us, in the second place, to the statement of *the objections which might be urged against his conduct*. These have already been adverted to in a general manner, but they are such as to demand a more particular specification. They involve the whole question of honesty and fairness in this transaction; and they suggest the inquiry, how far such a course is allowable and proper for a Christian.

The objections to the course pursued by Paul, might be such as the following :—

(1.) That when he said he was a “Pharisee,” it was not true in the sense which the term would naturally convey, and in which they would understand it. It would be alleged that in the sense in which *they* were Pharisees, he was *not* a Pharisee. He was not associated with them; he was not identified with them; he was not reckoned as one of them. He was not now of their party. Long since, on becoming a Christian, he had renounced all connexion with them, and had everywhere opposed their characteristic opinions, their doctrines, their practice, their respect for tradition, their regard for show, parade, and ostentation, for broad phylacteries, and for the chief places in the synagogues, and their public prayers and charities. Eminently and entirely, also, he was opposed to their views of justification before God,—their system of self-righteousness,—

and had preached a doctrine diametrically and totally contrary to theirs in respect to the way of salvation. Nothing could be more unlike than the view which he held, that a man can be saved only by faith, and the view which they held that good works, an outwardly blameless life, and conformity to the rites and ceremonies of the law, can constitute the ground of hope towards God. Wherever he went, he had done more than any other man to hold up their religion as false and ruinous, and to turn mankind from it. In what sense, then, could he claim to be one of their number?

(2.) It might be alleged that what he affirmed to be the main point involved in his present troubles, "the hope and resurrection of the dead," was *not* really the point for which he was "called in question," but for setting aside the laws and institutions of Moses; for undervaluing the Hebrew institutions; for apostasy from the faith in which he was trained; and specifically and directly, as charged upon him, for polluting the temple by bringing Greeks into it. Going back to the source of the present difficulty, and the immediate matter before the council, these were the *only* offences charged on him,—and no allusion whatever, not even the most remote, had been made to what he here affirms to have been the chief thing—the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. How then could he honestly say that it was "*for the hope and resurrection of the dead,*" that he was being judged (ἐγὼ κρίνομαι)? How could he say that this was the point for which he stood before that august tribunal?

(3.) It may be urged, therefore, that this was the trick of an orator rather than the act of a noble-minded man; that it was a cunning attempt to turn the mind from the main point at issue in order that he might save himself; that it was designed to embarrass, and divide, and confuse, but that it constituted no defence in regard to the charges which had been brought against him; and that it had no tendency to enlighten the mind of Lysias respecting the cause of the trouble, or to aid him in the performance of his duty.

It cannot be denied that there is much plausibility in these objections, and it cannot be doubted that there are candid minds that are troubled by them, and that would be glad to have the difficulties suggested by them removed.

III. This leads us then, thirdly, to consider the question *whether the conduct of Paul can be vindicated as consistent with fairness, honour, manliness, and truth.*

(1.) We are to bear in mind that the Sanhedrim had no real *authority* in the matter; that they had no right to pronounce a sentence of acquittal or condemnation; that they had properly no jurisdiction over the case whatever, and that the matter had not been submitted to them at all with that view. They *had*, indeed, a certain jurisdiction over questions pertaining to their law and their religion; but this was not one of those questions. It was solely a matter which had been referred to them by a Roman magistrate in order *to ascertain the cause of the riot, the tumult, the disorder,*

which had endangered the life of the apostle, and which constituted "a breach of the peace." That was a matter which pertained to the Roman authority exclusively, and of which the chief captain, as entrusted with the military command in Jerusalem, was bound to take cognizance. Lysias of his own accord, determined to bring the matter before this council, to ascertain one point alone,—"*wherefore he was accused of the Jews*" (Acts xxii. 30). That one thing discovered, if it could be, the case would then be entirely in the hands of the Roman authorities.

But even in regard to this point, it was manifest at the very opening of the trial, that there was no hope of justice; no likelihood of securing the expression of a candid opinion. There was evidence that they would not hear his explanations, and that their minds were already made up to condemn *him* as the cause of the disorder. The command given by the high priest at the the very commencement of the investigation, so contrary to every principle of justice, and so clearly indicating a determined purpose to condemn the accused,—took away all prospect of obtaining a fair hearing, and of securing a just opinion of the case. The members of the Sanhedrim were prejudiced and passionate men; they were resolved on Paul's condemnation; their minds had been already made up in the matter.

If now, in this state of things, Paul could prove that, in condemning *him*, as it was manifest they were determined to do, the *majority* in the council would condemn *themselves*, and must deny their own peculiar doctrines

—doctrines for which they had always been contending, could it be regarded as unfair or unmanly to *show* them that this must be so? If, without perverting the truth in any way, he could convince them that he had been suffering for what he and they held *in common*, and for what was a vital principle in *their* religion, would it be improper for him to endeavour to add their testimony to the truth of the doctrine, and at the same time to secure their influence in his favour? If this *could* be done, it seems difficult to see why it might not be done. It is certain that this was his aim. Whether this *could* be done, consistently with truth and candour, it must be admitted is a fair question. That question it is my object, in the following remarks, to examine.

(2.) There was, *in fact*, an important difference of opinion in the Sanhedrim on the most vital subjects of religion. That difference of opinion Paul did not *make*, nor did he *increase* it. He found it already existing. They all knew that there was such a difference. That difference pertained, among other things, to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead; to the separate existence of the soul after death; to the future state; to the hope of a future life; and, consequently, to the judgment, and to the world of retribution,—for, if the soul has no existence after death, and there is no resurrection of the dead, there can be neither a judgment, a heaven, nor a hell. It embraced the entire question respecting the existence of angels and spirits, **and** consequently affected all the views which were held as to the unseen and the future world.

The difference of opinion on these subjects led to a complete difference of views and practice on the subject of religion,—a difference in worship, in hope, in practical life; for what is, and must be, the religion of a man who has no belief in a resurrection and in the future state? What is his sense of responsibility? What hope can he cherish? What apprehension of the future will deter him from sin? What effort will he make to save men? "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," must and will be the controlling maxim of his life. The problem to be solved by him will be, how to multiply, increase, and prolong the pleasures of sense, so as to make the most of life; and the practical life will be that of the voluptuary.¹

It was impossible for Paul to magnify this difference beyond the reality, and he had a right to assume that this was a material and vital difference, and to act accordingly.

(3.) It was a matter of fact, also, that, *so far as these two parties were concerned*, Paul was wholly with the Pharisees. He had been educated in the strictest manner in the doctrine of the Pharisees, as distinguished from the Sadducees. His own father was a Pharisee; and, in the education of his son, had removed him from the place of his birth, and put him under the instruction of the most eminent Pharisee of his age.

¹ Of the practical effect of the view of life here adverted to, history has furnished numerous illustrations. I would refer the reader to a collection of facts given by *Dr. McCosh* in his work on "*The Divine Government, physical and moral*" (pp. 245—247).

Paul had no sympathy with the Sadducees in the peculiarity of their views ; and there was not a man living, not even the most rigid of the Pharisees, who had a deeper abhorrence of the doctrine of the Sadducees, or a deeper sense of the danger of that doctrine, than he had. He had done more to propagate the doctrine of the Pharisees on these subjects than any Pharisee then living, even than Gamaliel himself.

The doctrines here adverted to, and on which Paul claimed to be united in opinion with the Pharisees, *were* the peculiar doctrines of the sect. That he might hold many other opinions in which he differed from the Pharisees was true ; but he did hold *these*, and he held none that were inconsistent with these. Moreover, he attached all the importance to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which the Pharisees had ever done. It had lost none of its value in his estimation by his having become a Christian. On the contrary, its importance had become intensified in his view by what he believed had actually occurred,—the resurrection of the crucified Messiah from the grave,—and by all the hopes of eternal life which he now cherished through Him. Let any one look into Paul's recorded addresses and into his writings, and he will see how prominent he made this truth. It lies at the foundation of all his preaching, and of all his arguments and appeals. On Mars' Hill, it was the very point which he sought to establish, and the very thing which repelled from him the Epicurean and the Stoic philosophers. We may see how prominent he made this subject elsewhere, if

we read the noblest chapter that even Paul ever wrote,—the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians:—"If there be," says he, "no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable,"—ἐλεεινότεροι, most the objects of compassion, most to be *pitied*,—since we have cherished more exalted hopes than any other men, only to be disappointed (1 Cor. xv. 13—19).

With this full conviction of the truth of the great doctrine in which he had been trained, Paul now stood before the Sanhedrim. In the view of the Pharisees, it was the great doctrine of religion,—the line of division between them and the Sadducees; and as it had this importance in *their* view, so it had in *his*. It was not strange, therefore, that he sought to *give* it this importance, as he stood before the Sanhedrim.

(4.) Paul held that doctrine now in a form which was to him most convincing,—which furnished to his mind the most certain confirmation of its truth (if not the *only* proof of its truth) in the fact that *one had actually been raised from the dead*: He had formerly held the doctrine on the same ground on which it was held by all the Pharisees—the ground of tradition; the ground of their interpretation of the Scriptures. We must bear in mind the different degrees of force between such arguments as these, and an argument derived from *fact*. We may easily suppose that as he stood before the San-

hedrim, he had the consciousness that he was now able to confirm the views in which he and they who agreed with him had been educated, by an argument vastly superior in strength to that in which they had been trained,—an argument which, in his view, removed all difficulties, silenced all objections, and put the question for ever at rest.

To see the full force of this, it may be necessary to advert to a few considerations such as we may suppose influenced the mind of Paul.

(*a.*) We are to remember how feeble and weak to a man who has arrived at an age to think for himself, is the proof of any doctrine considered merely as derived from education or tradition. Such evidence may indeed secure a belief of the doctrine, or prevent its utter abandonment, but still the mind asks for stronger evidence; and such traditionary and educational evidence cannot save a thinking mind from deep solicitude, or from many of the agitations of scepticism.

(*b.*) We are to remember how feeble and weak is the evidence of the resurrection of the dead, as derived from nature; how restless the human heart has been on the subject; how vague, fanciful, contradictory, and absurd have been the views which men have entertained of the future state; how unsatisfactory the reasonings of the most able minds on the whole matter. Even now the profoundest argument from nature for the immortality of the human soul is that of Plato in the *Gorgias*,—an argument, which would convince no man of the truth of the doctrine. Can we doubt that Paul, early instructed

in the Greek philosophy, had become deeply impressed with the weakness of all arguments for the future state as derived from human reasoning?

(c.) We are to remember how comparatively slender is the proof of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as derived from the Old Testament,—the only proof except that derived from tradition on which the Pharisees could rely. It is not to be denied that the fact of the future state, and of the resurrection of the dead, *is* to be found there; but it must not be forgotten, that *we* contemplate this with the New Testament in our hands, and with the light which *that* throws on the meaning of the sacred writers under the old dispensation, and not as men would interpret it before the coming of the Saviour. To those who lived under that dispensation, and before the clearer light of the Gospel was revealed, the argument for the resurrection of the dead, *might* not have been, and *could* not have been, as plain as it is to us. A large party, and that the most learned party in the nation—the Sadducees—did *not* find the doctrine of the resurrection and the future state in the Old Testament. When the Saviour argued the question of the resurrection with the Sadducees, He did not claim that there was any *explicit* statement on the subject, but relied on an *inference*,—an argument which, though strong and conclusive in itself, was nevertheless not obvious, and was one which might not occur to others:—“Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of

Jacob, for He is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (Luke xx. 37, 38). Assuredly, if there had been in the Jewish Scriptures any direct and clear proofs of the doctrine, He would not have relied on a mere inference in this form. Again there is much obscurity in the doctrine, as found in the Old Testament, even *with* all the light thrown upon the subject by the disclosures in the New Testament; so much so, that Bishop Warburton founded the entire argument for his "Divine Legation of Moses," on the fact, as he alleged, that Moses had *entirely omitted* all reference to the doctrine of the resurrection and the future state in his legislation. This argument is, indeed, paradoxical; but the fact that so plausible an argument *could* be made shows, at least, that the doctrine was *not* very prominent in the institutions of Moses, and may serve in some degree to explain the fact that the Sadducees did not find it there.

(d.) We have now to contrast with this, that, in the view of the apostle, *a fact—an undoubted fact*—had occurred in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the grave. This fact made absolutely certain the faith in which he and the Pharisees had been trained. Instead of the uncertain argument from tradition; instead of the doubtful arguments derived from nature; instead of the argument derived from the disputed interpretation of obscure passages of the Old Testament,—there was now *a fact* which put all doubts to rest. The actual resurrection of the Saviour from the grave *must* settle the possibility and the certainty of the resurrection (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 20—23). It was in this form that the apostle

now held the doctrine, and this was the reason why he made it so prominent in the presence of the Sanhedrim.

(5.) It was this doctrine, *as thus held*, which was the real cause of all that Paul had suffered at home or abroad; and it *was*, in fact, this for which he had been "called in question." He had asserted, on all occasions, that Christ had risen from the dead, and had appeared to him after His resurrection. He had laid this doctrine at the very foundation of all his arguments for the truth of the Christian religion. This was vital to all his views of religion, and to all his personal hopes of salvation. For this he had endured persecution; and in order to diffuse a knowledge of this he had gone over the world, enduring all forms of privation and suffering.

Thus holding the great doctrine in which he and the Pharisees around him had been trained, and which they held in common,—thus believing that he held it in a form which made it absolutely certain,—and thus regarding it as lying at the very foundation of all true religion, and of all his own hopes, and of the hopes of a dying world in regard to a future state, it was *not* a mere piece of cunning and adroitness in argument; it was *not* an evasion of the main point at issue; it was *not* taking an unfair advantage of a mere prejudice; it was *not* acting an unmanly and disingenuous part, when "he cried out in the council, *Men, brethren,—I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.*"

XV.

PAUL IN THE CASTLE AT JERUSALEM.

Divine encouragement amidst the difficulties, struggles, and perils of life.

Instances of special encouragement.—Seasonableness of it.—*Difficulties and dangers.*—(1.) Secret conspiracy.—Character of its agents.—Probability of its success.—Facility of its execution.—Means of its defeat.—(2.) Impending trials.—Before Felix.—Before Festus.—(3.) Approaching peril at sea.—*Assurance of safety.*—Hope of success needed by all men.—Cherished by all men.—Founded on the history of the past.—On God's promises, general and absolute.—On innate hopefulness.—This hopefulness, a natural endowment.—This endowment, a proof of Divine benevolence.—Workings of this hopeful spirit, illustrated.—In the young.—In the mariner.—In the merchant.—In the farmer; the soldier; the philanthropist.—In the sufferer; and in the penitent.

“And the night following, the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.”

ACTS xxiii. 11.



NIGHT-JOURNEY IN JUDEA.

IN two other occasions in the life of Paul, a special Divine encouragement was given to him similar to the one which forms the subject of this chapter. One, as we have already seen, was when he was approaching Corinth, and when, for some cause not fully known to us, he seems to have been filled with deep apprehension of danger, or to have been discouraged by the difficulties before him, or by his want of success in Athens: "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" (Acts xviii. 9, 10). The other occasion, which we shall have to notice hereafter, was on the dangerous voyage to Rome: "For there stood by me," said he to the desponding

crew, "this night the angel of God, whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar" (Acts xxvii. 23, 24). At other times he seems to have gone to his work under the *general* promises which God had made to him, and which He makes to all His people; but in these instances, the difficulties which environed him were such as to make a special promise appropriate. In the case before us, the special promise was that he should see Rome, implying that he would be permitted to preach the Gospel there.

As one of the incidents in the life of Paul, and as giving occasion to illustrate what may occur in the lives of others, this special assurance of protection is worthy of consideration. The point suggested is THE DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN TO US IN THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE GREAT PURPOSES OF LIFE, *especially when surrounded with difficulties and embarrassments.*

In considering this, with the case before us in view, it will be proper to notice—I. The difficulties and dangers which then surrounded Paul; and, II. What we may learn from the assurance that he would be protected, and would be permitted to carry the Gospel to the capital of the world.

I. The difficulties and dangers which surrounded Paul.

Under this head we may embrace all those which were then apparent, and all those which he would encounter, and which would tend to thwart his purpose, before he should see Rome. The promise made to him would cover all these, for it made it certain that

he would pass safely through all, till the object was secured.

(1.) The conspiracy which had been secretly formed against his life. At no time probably had he been in greater peril; at no time had there been a greater probability that the malice of his enemies would secure a triumph in his death; at no time could an assurance of Divine protection be more appropriate or desirable.

Of this conspiracy (Acts xxiii. 12—15), it may be remarked,

(a.) That it was made sufficiently *strong* to render the accomplishment of the scheme morally certain. More than forty men were united in it. It may be presumed that it was composed of men who were ready to face any danger in order to accomplish the object, and of men the most resolute and determined among the enemies of Paul. The fulfilment of this design was secured also, as far as possible, by a solemn oath. They “bound themselves under a curse”—ἀνεθεμάτισαν ἑαυτοὺς, more literally, “*anathematized themselves*,” or “bound themselves with an oath of execration;” Ἀναθέματι ἀνεθεματίσαμεν ἑαυτοὺς, “with an anathema we have anathematized ourselves.” That is, we have cursed ourselves with a curse; we have bound ourselves over to death—to destruction—to the wrath of God; we have separated ourselves from God’s favour, and devoted ourselves to eternal destruction (comp. *Rob. Lex.*) if we do not succeed. The peril could not be small when such desperate men had bound themselves to the accomplishment of their purpose by such a solemn anathema.

(b.) It was *not* in itself *improbable* that they would be successful in persuading Lysias to grant this. The influence of the Sanhedrim would be supposed to be great with him. It was proposed to urge the plea that they desired to "inquire something more perfectly concerning" Paul (ver. 15)—ἀκριβέστερον—"more accurately or precisely" (*Rob. Lex.*); to obtain more minute information as to his principles, and as to what he had done. In support of this request, it might be urged that the former trial had been suddenly and unexpectedly interrupted; that in the excitement they had learned really nothing of his views and of his manner of life; and that now in a calmer manner they might pursue the investigation, and ascertain what was the real ground of the disturbance. It might be presumed, also, that Lysias would be quite willing to grant a request which promised to relieve him of his embarrassment.

(c.) We may suppose that, if the request had been granted, it would have been an easy matter to have carried their purpose into execution. It is not probable that a strong guard would have been sent to accompany him on an errand apparently so peaceful, and it would not have been difficult for forty men fully armed to strike the fatal blow before protection could be given, whatever the consequences to themselves.

In the vision Paul was assured of protection from *this* danger; and he was rescued in a most remarkable manner. In some way unknown to us a nephew of Paul received intimation of the conspiracy, and having communicated it to Paul, was dispatched by him with

the intelligence to Lysias, who at once made ample arrangements for his removal to Cæsarea, and with such a guard that he would be safe from the conspirators (vers. 16—24).

(2.) The trials before the Roman governors, through which Paul was to pass before he could arrive in Rome. When brought to Cæsarea, indeed, he was safe from those who had conspired against his life; but it was not yet altogether certain that he would not be delivered into the hands of the Jews, or that he might not be doomed to a long imprisonment which would prevent his reaching Rome. We may conclude that the address in the vision, "Be of good cheer, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome," was designed to sustain and comfort him with the assurance that from these dangers also he would be safe. The trials here referred to were those before Felix and Festus. There will be occasion to consider them more fully hereafter. At present it is necessary to allude to them only so far as they involved the danger that Paul might again be delivered into the hands of the Jews, or that he might be prevented, as the result of those trials, from going to Rome.

The character of Felix (Acts xxiv.) was not such as to afford any very confident expectation that justice would be done. A man corrupt at heart and in his life (ver. 25); a man ready to be bribed (ver. 26); a man unacquainted with Jewish customs and opinions (ver. 22); a man disposed to do anything to gratify the Jews which would not directly affect the Roman authority (ver. 27); from

such a man there was little reason to hope for a decision in accordance with justice.

The probability that Paul would be delivered up to the Jews, and that his life would be again endangered, was not less in the trial before Festus than in that before Felix. Festus (Acts xxv.) was equally disposed to conciliate the Jews (ver. 9); and he therefore proposed that Paul should go again to Jerusalem, and be tried there. Paul saw that this might endanger his life, by his being again placed in the power of his enemies; and therefore he made appeal to Cæsar—an appeal which admitted of no evasion, and which secured for him what had been promised him in the vision, that he should see Rome, and have an opportunity of testifying there in behalf of the Gospel.

It is easy to see how, when brought before Felix and before Festus, the promise that he should “bear witness” to the cause of the Saviour “at Rome” was necessary to sustain him; and it is easy to imagine how often he might refer to this promise in the apparent uncertainty as to the result of the trial.

(3.) He would again be placed in circumstances where the recollection of the promise would come to him. On the voyage to Rome, his life would be in danger. In the storm, and in the shipwreck which followed, all human probability of reaching Rome would fail entirely. Amidst these scenes, Paul could not but fall back on the assurance made to him, that as in Jerusalem so also in Rome he must testify of Christ.

II. We are now prepared to consider the *assurance* given in the vision, as an *illustration* of what may occur in our lives; of the arrangements which God has made to keep us from despondency and despair, and to set before us, amidst the dangers and uncertainties of life, such a hope of success as to call into proper exercise our active powers, and confirm our faith in Him. We shall not find, indeed, that this is an arrangement of miracle, or that it is by a heavenly "vision;" but we may find that for this purpose there *is* an arrangement which bears all the marks of a Divine origin as really as a miracle or a direct "vision," and that it is a striking proof of Divine forethought, wisdom, and benevolence.

It will prepare us to consider this, if we bear in remembrance that there is *need* of such an arrangement; and that we are secretly conscious to ourselves that there *is* such an arrangement.

(a.) There is *need* of such an arrangement. Life is a struggle of uncertain issue. We are often surrounded with perils. We are embarrassed in our way. We are disappointed and foiled in our plans. We are beset with enemies, artful, powerful, malignant. We see no egress from our difficulties; no way of escape from our danger. We cannot throw off the burden under which we seem ready to sink; and if we emerge from one difficulty, new ones thicken in our path. We cannot but ask, in these circumstances, whether there is not something to buoy up the soul; to support us; to comfort us. Obviously we need some arrangement that will inspire hope; obviously our world would not be

complete if there were *not* such an arrangement; for, without this, men would settle down in despair.

(*b.*) We are secretly conscious to ourselves that there is such an arrangement. The world, though full of disappointment and trouble, is *not* inactive, or despairing. The powers of man do not droop and flag. The shuttle is not still; the plough is not suffered to stand idle in the furrow; the anvil does not cease to ring; the spindles are not motionless; the ship is not suffered to lie at anchor until it rots at the wharf. The world is a busy world. All men have their own plans; and all are cheered with hope, and the great and constant movements on sea and land are carried forward under the stimulus of the Divine arrangements, the promises of God, the hopes which He inspires. There is something—a conscious something—which inspirits the mariner, the warrior, the farmer, the merchant, the traveller, the Christian. What *is* this arrangement? How does it appear from the arrangement that it is of Divine origin, and marked by Divine benevolence?

In reply to these questions I shall advert to three things, which, in a world so full of conflict and toil, serve to give assurance or hope to men.

(1.) I refer, first, to the records of the past, or the experience of the world. We have unconsciously before us, in our struggles and difficulties, the memory of the struggles of the past, and of the general prosperity and success which crown the conflicts of life. We may not, indeed, have this distinctly and definitely before our minds, and perhaps we are scarcely conscious that it has

any influence on us; and yet, in our seasons of fear and perplexity, we secretly summon to our recollection all that we have observed, or all that we have been told, or all that we have read of a successful issue to efforts and perils like our own. Life is a battle. That is the record; that is the history of the world. The great lessons of the past come to aid us in our conflicts, and to encourage us with hopes of victory.

Thus we have in our minds the memory of those who have been made immortal in the endeavour to break the yoke of oppression, and to secure freedom for themselves and for their children. Thus we have before our minds the memory of those who in early life have striven against the evils of poverty and dependence, but have surmounted those difficulties, and have been successful, honoured, and respected in their lives. Thus we have before us the memory of the farmers who labour hard, who cut down forests, who fence their fields, who plough and sow, uncertain what may be the result, but who gather in the golden grain, and fill their granaries with the fruits of their toil. Thus we have before our minds the memory of the mariners who have braved the dangers of the deep, who have penetrated distant seas, who have encountered storms and tempests, and who have returned from far distant lands in ships laden with corn, or oil, or silks, or spices, or gold, or ivory. Thus, also, in the effort to obtain the friendship of God, and the pardon of sin, we have before our minds the memory of those who have prayed, and wept, and pleaded for mercy, and who have found peace. Every soldier who

has fought for liberty, every farmer who has cultivated his fields, every seaman who has made successful voyages, every merchant who has overcome the difficulties in his path, and every sinner who has struggled to find salvation, has been contributing his part in furnishing the lessons which are to guide us, and in imparting an inspiration which is to animate, to cheer, and to sustain us. These are the arrangements of God for the encouragement of struggling men; they show what is the *general tendency* of things in our world—a tendency favourable to effort and to virtue; they preserve the world from idleness and despair; and the result is seen in each new generation as it comes upon the stage.

(2.) I refer, in the second place, to the general promises of the Bible in regard to success in our efforts, and to safety amid our dangers; especially to the promises of *ultimate* success in the great interest of life—the salvation of the soul.

In reference to temporal matters, these promises are not indeed absolute and specific; in reference to the great end of life, they are. Success in our efforts in regard to this world may not be necessary to our highest welfare; success in our efforts to be saved, is. In the one case it was desirable that there should be such general promises of success as would stimulate us to effort; in the other case, it was indispensable that there should be an absolute promise of success in every instance where there was a desire to be saved, and where efforts should be put forth in accordance with that desire.

Thus we find, in fact, that the promises of the Bible

in regard to success in this life *are* of a *general* character (see Isa. xxxiii. 15, 16; Psa. xxxvii. 25; 1 Tim. iv. 8; Psa. lxxxiv. 11; Phil. iv. 19; Psa. xxiii. 1; Heb. xiii. 5). Of this nature are all those promises of temporal good addressed to the righteous, with which the Scriptures abound, and which constituted so large a part of the assurances of His favour which God made to His ancient people (comp. Lev. xix. 25; xxvi. 4; Deut. vii. 13; xvi. 15; xxviii. 4; Ps lxvii. 6). The old Jewish dispensation was founded, to a large extent, on these promises, but the spirit of those promises is found in every dispensation; and, as a great rule in the Divine administration, they are not disregarded. There actually is such a general measure of success in life as to correspond with these general promises.

In reference to the future life, however, we find that the promises of success are *absolute*. These, in all cases when there is a sincere desire to be saved,—when there is corresponding effort or striving to “enter in at the strait gate,”—when there is true repentance,—and when there is genuine faith,—are without any contingency of doubt. There are no such failures and disappointments in regard to salvation as there are in the things pertaining to this life; nor for the purpose of discipline is it required that there *should be* any possibility of failure. Accordingly all the promises in the Bible in regard to salvation are of the most absolute nature; and we have the positive assurance that, if we seek it aright, salvation will certainly be ours (Matt. vii. 7, 8; Mark xvi. 16; John vi. 37; Rev. xxii. 17). That there are dangers and

enemies in the way of our salvation, and that it requires a struggle, is certain. There are foes without, and foes within. There are the corruptions of our own hearts to be contended with. There are the temptations of the world to be met. There are the arts of the great enemy of souls to be overcome. But the promise of victory in regard to all these is positive; and any man may engage in the work of seeking after salvation under a promise as absolute and certain as was the special revelation of safety which was made to Paul.

(3.) I refer, thirdly, to what may be designated an *internal confidence* of success, of safety, of protection, even when we have no direct promise, and when we could not secure the same confidence of mind by the exercise of reason or by any ground of probability which would be apparent to us. This is a more difficult point than those which we have been considering; and yet it constitutes a Divine arrangement *as* definite as those, and is one of the numerous things not often adverted to, which show that there is a God, and which express His benevolence.

This is not revelation. It is not of the nature of a vision. It is not a direct Divine promise made to the soul. It is not the result of reasoning;—perhaps, as we shall see, it would neither be suggested by reasoning, nor sustained by reason. It is something with which God has endowed us in our nature, over and beyond our reason, and which was designed for the very purpose of encouraging us. Perhaps, in ordinary language, it would be called *buoyancy* or *elasticity of spirit*. It is

hope ever springing up in the breast. It is a belief that we *may* be successful. It lives even when we have been disappointed, and spreads over the future a mild and pure light, that attracts us and leads us on. It is the prospect of a safe harbour, after being tossed in a tempest ; of an oasis, or a fountain of waters, when we have been wandering long in a desert ; of health, when we are sick ; of safety, when we are in danger ; of success, when all seems dark.

Perhaps what is here intended can be best understood by supposing that God had made man, as He might have done (and as a *very few of the race* seem to have been made, apparently to show how all *might* have been made), with the opposite temperament or constitution. Obviously, He might have fashioned all men so that everything in the future would have looked discouraging, dark, and gloomy ; and in this manner a *malignant* God would have formed the race. Instead of the buoyancy of spirit, and the inspiration of hope, and the elasticity and recuperative energy under which we rally from disappointment, and instead of the bright imagination which gilds and brightens the future, man might have been so created as to act *on the mere reality of things* as they actually occur,—or so that a morbid fancy would darken all surrounding objects, and cover all the future with a pall. Under such a form of creation, only the most absolute necessity would have prompted to exertion ; and in the gloom of disappointment, the race would have sunk in despair. But God has not so made man. He has made him capable of being stimu-

lated by hope ; of looking forward to brighter things. The past is fixed, whether gloomy or bright ;—the future, imagination *makes* bright ;—and thus man is perpetually incited to new exertions. In all this we may see a great law of our nature *designed* to encourage the world, and to keep it from despondency, inaction, and despair. Could there be a more decided proof of Divine benevolence ?

(a.) How much of hope there is in *the young man!* What would there have been to stimulate him to effort, if he had been created with a gloomy instead of a hopeful temperament, and if his imagination had been so made as to darken instead of throwing a cheerful light on the future ? Under what a discouraging cloud would he begin his way, if he had been so formed as to look only on the things of sorrow and sadness which *may be* in his future course,—or, when looking at actual life, to bring into prominence, and keep before his mind, the *real* sadnesses of life ; if he had been made to reflect constantly on such subjects as the following,—How many fail in their plans ! how many are cut down in the beginning of their way ! how soon may I be cut down ! But the imagination of the young does *not* dwell on these things. It fixes on the hope of success ; on health, happiness, prosperity ; on things that cheer and animate.

(b.) How much of this there is in *the mariner!* If, when he thinks of embarking on a voyage, his imagination should dwell only on storms and quicksands and shipwrecks,—if he should think only of the lives that

have been lost on the coast to which he goes,—or if he should think only of the bottom of the ocean, over which he is to sail, as covered with the remains of vessels and the bodies of those who have perished in the tempest, —if he should conjure up all that has been *real* in navigating distant seas, who would venture to sail on the great deep? But the fancy of the seaman is on other things. He thinks of favourable winds, and prosperous voyages, and rich returns; and hence it is that the sails of commerce whiten every sea.

(c.) How much of this there is in the case of the *merchant!* On entering into business, he does not think only of the number that fail, and of the hazards of trade, and of the uncertainty of the result, and of the condition of bankruptcy; but he places before his mind the image and the hope of success. His mind rests on that; and by that he is stimulated.

(d.) How much of this there is also in the case of the farmer, of the soldier, of the man endeavouring to do good! If the first of these should dwell only on the hardships of his mode of life,—on the toil of clearing and cultivating the ground,—on late frosts in spring and early frosts in autumn,—on rust and mildew,—on the ravages of the Hessian fly, the weavel, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar; or if the second should think only of hard fare and hard marches,—of cold and hunger and thirst and danger,—of sickness in the camp,—of wounds on the battle-field, and of the groans and cries of anguish of dying men; or if the third should think only of the discouragements in the way of doing good

in a world like this,—of the indifference of men to their best interests,—of their opposition to well-intentioned plans of benevolence,—and of their ingratitude,—how few would engage in the work of agriculture, how few would go forth in defence of their country, how few would preach the Gospel in Christian lands, or carry it to the heathen world.

(*c.*) How much of this is there also in the sufferer on his bed, or the sinner seeking the salvation of his soul! If the one should look forward only to pain,—his imagination picturing to him all the future as only a prolongation of present endurance, aggravating every symptom of disease, and dwelling only on the numbers who under similar forms of disease have died, what gloom would settle down on every sick bed! and if the other should think only of his sins, and of the sorrows of the everlasting burnings, and never advert to the promises of God, to the cross of Christ, to the gracious terms of salvation, and to the number who have been saved, what sinner would hope for salvation? But God has created the mind buoyant, elastic, hopeful. He leads men to think of recovery and success, rather than to anticipate disaster and defeat. He has thus said to every man, not in distinct vision, as he did to Paul, yet *really* in language like that addressed to the apostle, “**BE OF GOOD CHEER!**”

XVI.

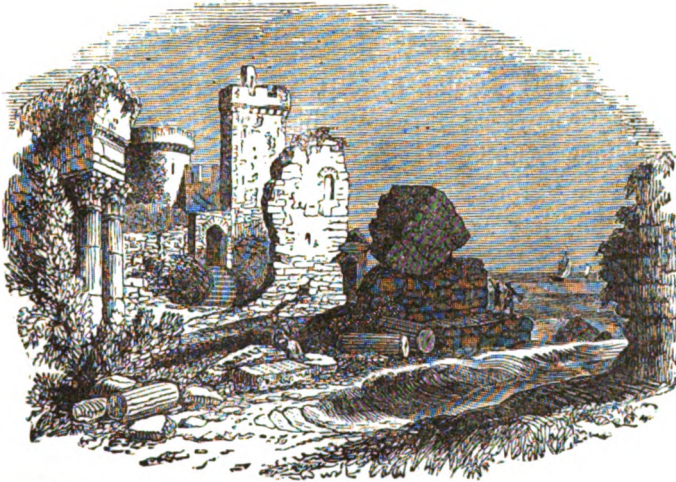
PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

Christianity in contact with a corrupt heart.

Value of historic characters.—Representative men.—Special value of Scripture characters.—History of Felix.—His characteristics.—Paul brought before him more than once.—First, on trial.—Paul's defence.—Second interview.—Paul's discourse.—*The truths enforced.*—Righteousness.—Temperance.—Future judgment.—Suitability of such subjects in all preaching.—Teachings of Christianity as to the judgment-day.—*Natural effect of such truths.*—Signs of conscious guilt.—They prove God's moral government.—They disclose sin when committed.—They may restrain from its commission.—They tend to the reformation of the wicked.—*Manner in which the impression of truth is often warded off.*—The jailor and Felix contrasted.—Men are prone to delay.—Such delay always dangerous, and possibly fatal.

“And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”

ACTS xxiv. 24, 25.



CÆSAREA.



HISTORICAL persons have an importance not only *as* persons in history, and by reason of the interest attached to their lives, their opinions, their adventures, their exploits, their valour, or their ambition, but as *representing* certain classes of minds. In dramatic writings, this *historical* value and this *representative* value are sometimes combined; but the latter is that which is principally aimed at, when the character is the mere creation of genius, or when, if historical, the facts of the narrative are made quite subservient to the representative purpose—the purpose of furnishing some illustration of human character and conduct. Thus, as almost entire fiction, we have the character of Macbeth, Lear, Othello, Hamlet; as historical, with no studied exactness as to the facts of history, the character of

Julius Cæsar, Henry V., Richard III., Cardinal Richelieu; in real secular history, the character of Nero, Cyrus, Augustus; in sacred history, Abraham, David, Absalom, Ahithophel, Joab, Judas. In like manner there are historical characters introduced into the sacred narrative, not as characters developed under the influence of religion, nor as a part of the history of the Church, but which have a value as representations of the way in which the Gospel, in various forms, comes in contact with the human heart. It is thus that we have notices of Pontius Pilate; Gamaliel; Gallio; Festus; Agrippa; Felix; Drusilla.

The Scripture narratives, as inspired, have this advantage over all other narratives, whether historical or fictitious, that we know the real motives which influenced the conduct. We are not left to a conjectural statement, as is often the case in Hume and Gibbon, and even in Tacitus, in explaining the motives of men long after events had occurred, and when there was no personal acquaintance with the actors; nor are we left to study imaginary motives of conduct, as in dramatic characters. We deal not only with a *real* character, but (if we believe in the inspiration of the sacred writers) we understand the *exact* character. We feel assured that it is accurately drawn. We know that no false motives are ascribed. We understand *what* influenced David, Joab, Abraham, Ahithophel, Judas, Peter, Paul, Pilate; we know *what* it was that made them what they appeared to be.

Felix, whose case now comes before us, was a remarkable, but not a very uncommon instance, of one raised

to a distinguished station, who had been born and reared in the lowest condition of life. He was by birth a slave, but he rose to little less than regal power. For some unknown cause, he was manumitted,—probably by Claudius Cæsar (Suet. *Claudius*, 28, Tacit. *Hist.* v. 9); and on this account he is said to have assumed the name of Claudius. His brother Pallas, also a slave, was set free by Antonia, the emperor's mother.

Felix was loaded by the emperor with military honours; and, among other marks of favour and distinction, was made governor of Judæa. In that capacity, as well as of his character in general, Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 9), says that “in the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a king, with the temper of a slave.” In another place (*Annals*, xii. 56) Tacitus represents Felix as considering himself licensed to commit any crime with impunity, owing to the influence which he possessed at court. Josephus says that under his administration the affairs of the Jewish people became worse and worse.¹

Felix was three times married. His first wife was a niece of Cleopatra. Of one of these wives nothing is known. Drusilla, mentioned in the narrative in the

¹ An instance which occurred in relation to the Jewish high priest, will illustrate his general character. Wishing to compass the death of Jonathan the high priest, who had remonstrated with him on account of his misrule, he persuaded Doras, an intimate friend of Jonathan, to get him assassinated by a gang of robbers, who, with weapons concealed under their garments, joined the crowds that were going up to the temple,—a crime which (Josephus says) led subsequently to countless evils, by the encouragement which it gave to the *Sicarii* or leagued assassins of the day.—*Ant.* xx. 8, 5.

Acts, was a daughter of King Herod Agrippa, and was married to Azizus, king of Emesa. Felix employed a magician named Simon, to induce her to forsake her husband; and Drusilla, partly to avoid the envy of her sister Berenice, consented to the union with Felix. The fact of this adulterous connexion will illustrate the manner in which Paul spoke when brought before Felix in the presence of Drusilla.

The character of this governor, as drawn by Tacitus, Suetonius, and Josephus, as well as by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles (for they all coincide in the description) was this:—He was a man of great energy, ambition, and power. He was admirable in some respects as a civil ruler, for he did much to put down disorder and anarchy in Judæa, and to maintain authority and law. But he was a man unprincipled in the manner in which he accomplished his objects; ready alike for his personal ambition, and in his civil rule, to employ any agents, and to make use of any means to secure his end,—bribery, corruption, falsehood, assassination, or any form of cruelty. He was a sensualist, a profligate, a libertine. He was venal and mean;—a man willing to be bribed, and coveting a bribe. He was timid and fearful, knowing that he was living in guilt, and that he had reason to apprehend the Divine vengeance. He was not insensible to the rebukes of conscience. He trembled at the preaching of Paul; yet was unwilling to repent. He was regardless of justice, for though evidently satisfied of the innocence of Paul, he unjustly retained him in prison. He had no love for religion, no respect for

Christianity, no purpose to abandon his sins; yet, though he despised Christianity, and though he was alarmed at the prospect of the judgment to come, so superior to all these considerations was his love of gold, that he was willing to hear Paul, and to send for him often, with the hope that ultimately a bribe would be offered by him to secure his release. He succeeded in driving away his convictions. He so disciplined himself, probably, as to hear what the apostle said *without* trembling; and he continued to live in sin, even when subject to the rebukes of conscience, and with the apprehension of judgment before him. He loved gold more than he feared the compunctions of guilt and the wrath of God. He was a man who sought to postpone present attention to religion, not with an intention of attending to it afterwards, but to make a professed interest in it an occasion for serving his own covetousness.

Paul was brought before Felix on two different public occasions, besides the frequent interviews which he had with him in a more private and less formal manner.

(a.) We have seen that, in order to secure his safety, and to ensure a fair hearing, he had been sent to Cæsarea. The trial came on. The case was managed on the part of the Jews by Tertullus; and Paul defended his own cause in a speech every way worthy of the occasion and himself, against the charges brought by his accusers (Acts xxiv. 1—21). Felix, having heard the matter argued, professed not to be fully informed on the subject, and deferred his decision until Lysias,

who had had better opportunities of understanding the affair, should come to Cæsarea (ver. 22). Meanwhile, he placed Paul under the custody of the centurion who had brought him thither, and gave him every reasonable indulgence in regard to free intercourse with his friends.

(*b.*) It was in this interval, while Felix was professedly waiting for the arrival of Lysias, that Paul was brought the second time before him. Drusilla, it would seem, had been informed by Felix of the case, and being a Jewess, she, as Agrippa did afterwards (Acts xxv. 22), expressed a desire to hear more of what Paul alleged in relation to a subject of common interest to all the Jewish people. Felix "sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith of Christ;"—the faith *in* Christ; or, the faith *in the Messiah*. A Jewish princess, though corrupt, could hardly be supposed to be indifferent to anything which claimed to be a fulfilment of the prophecies respecting the Messiah. On this occasion all the circumstances were changed. Paul was not on his public trial now; he was not pleading with the hope of acquittal; he was not there to advance *legal* argument in defence of himself. He had an opportunity, therefore, of preaching the Gospel in circumstances which might never occur again. "His audience consisted of a Roman libertine and a profligate Jewish princess." It was mere curiosity on the part of one of his hearers, at least; but it was not to Paul a case to be approached with the mere desire of gratifying curiosity. He had before him two guilty wretches, living in violation of the laws of God, and travelling unpardoned to the judgment-seat. He

was, indeed, a prisoner; but he felt now that he was a man; a preacher; an apostle. He had a solemn responsibility; a most difficult duty to discharge,—to reach the consciences of his guilty auditors, and to make their professed desire to hear him “concerning the faith in Christ” an occasion of showing them their guilt, their danger, and their need of a Saviour.

Who can fail to admire the tact—the wisdom—the skill with which this was done? Paul did not offend Felix by rude and severe invective. He made use of no disrespectful or uncourteous language. He did not even address Felix personally; sinner, corrupt, profligate as he was. He selected subjects which *seemed* to be abstract—“righteousness, temperance, retribution,”—subjects momentous at all times, and which ought to be interesting to all men, and yet of such obvious fitness and applicability to the occasion and to the character of Felix, as might afford the hope that Felix would apply them to his own conduct and life.

The result was what Paul hoped; what he anticipated. Not by denunciation; not by invective; not by the threatening of wrath, but as “he reasoned”—*διαλεγόμενον αὐτοῦ*, as he calmly *discoursed*, on these subjects—the attention of Felix was arrested; the truth found its way to his conscience, and he “trembled” in view of his guilt, and of coming wrath.

The subject before us, therefore, is THE CONTACT OF CHRISTIANITY WITH A HEART OF CORRUPTION, AND A LIFE OF GUILT. Three inquiries have to be made—
I. What are the truths which Christianity has to

address to such a man as Felix? II. What would be the natural and proper effect of such truths on the mind? III. What is the manner in which those truths are commonly met?

I. *The truths which Christianity has to address to such a man.* As presented by Paul, they are the following:—

(1.) *Righteousness*;—a topic eminently proper to be dwelt upon by Paul, as bearing on the object which he had in view, and on the character of the man before whom he stood. Nothing could be more appropriate in respectfully addressing one appointed to administer justice; nothing would be more likely to arrest the attention of one so venal as Felix. The subject was in itself so abstract as to be proper to be dwelt on at any time without any necessary suspicion of a personal reference; it was so related to God and His government, and would so naturally suggest the subject of retribution, and the method of justification before God, that it was among the most suitable of all subjects in speaking on the truths of religion. It would embrace the nature and the requirements of justice in the relations which man sustains to his fellow-men; and it would, at the same time, lead the mind up to justice or righteousness in the higher sense,—in that which pertains to God and to His administration. It would be (even without making a direct personal application), eminently appropriate to one whose life was steeped in crime; and yet it could not be regarded as discourteous to call on any one, no matter what his character, or what his rank,

to inquire how man can be "just with God," for that subject occupied the attention of philosophers everywhere, and was the foundation of the whole religion of the heathen world.

(2.) *Temperance*;—ἐγκράτεια;—"continnence, temperance, self-control" (*Rob. Lex.*) The power of self-restraint, self-government. The word properly refers to the control of the powers and propensities of the soul; keeping them in their due place; securing their healthful and harmonious action; restraining every unholy propensity, and giving to those powers of our nature which *ought* to rule the *actual* dominion. We now use the word in a very restricted and narrow sense as referring to moderation in eating and drinking—particularly the latter. The true idea of "temperance" as the word would be employed in the Greek language would be larger, for it would refer to dominion over every sensual passion or propensity,—pride, selfishness, lust, avarice, ambition, envy, covetousness, irritability, anger, wrath, revenge,—as well as to proper restraint in eating and drinking.

This topic, too, was eminently appropriate in addressing Felix. Not characterized indeed as an *intemperate* man in the sense in which that word is now commonly used, it *was* appropriate to him in the sense that he disregarded, in his own case, the restraints imposed by the rules of a rigid morality; that he had *not* the corrupt propensities of his nature under control; that he gave free indulgence to carnal appetites; that he was a licentious and an unprincipled man. This topic,

moreover, could not give any reasonable offence; for "temperance," or the proper control of the passions, was a subject which was freely discussed in all the schools of philosophy, and the duty was urged everywhere as essential to length of days and happiness. However the subject might *in fact* bear on Felix himself, or might have been *designed* to bear on him by Paul, yet no just objection could be taken to his introducing it in connexion with the "faith in Christ" (on which he had been requested to speak), as illustrating the claims and the nature of the Christian religion; and Felix does not seem to have taken offence at the introduction of the topic.

(3.) *Judgment to come.* The account which all men must render to God; the subject of human responsibility; the connexion of the conduct of men with the future world; the fact that human actions strike into the future, and must affect the future; the fact that all men are answerable to God for their deeds, and that there will be a day of final reckoning.

This subject, also, was one that was peculiarly appropriate in discoursing before a man whose life had been like that of Felix. Addressing a corrupt, a licentious, a wicked man,—a man then living in open sin,—a guilty man who must, like other men, soon appear before the bar of his Maker, it was eminently proper that this should be a prominent topic. Fidelity to his trust, fidelity to God, fidelity to his own soul, fidelity to the soul of the distinguished man to whom he spoke, demanded of Paul that he should *not* shrink from this

subject, and that he should not fail to warn a corrupt and profligate man of what must be the consequences of his course of life. At the same time, the introduction of such a topic could not properly be regarded as an adequate ground of offence. This pertained to the whole question relating to the Messiah, and the claims of Jesus of Nazareth to that office. A prominent subject, in fact, in the teachings of Jesus was the doctrine of the future judgment. To no other topic did the Saviour more frequently advert; on none were his addresses and appeals more plain, direct, peculiar, and solemn. So important did Paul regard it, that to the philosophers of Athens, as we have already seen, he declared the Christian doctrine on this point; and told them that God "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" (Acts xvii. 31).

These are proper topics for preaching anywhere, and everywhere. These must enter essentially into all preaching and explanation of religion, and of man's condition. These are the topics which God employs in arousing the human mind, awakening it from a state of lethargy, securing a sense of guilt, and leading men to feel their need of a Saviour; these are topics which lie at the foundation of all the success which attends the preaching of the Gospel.

Righteousness. The great inquiry as to what constitutes right; the obligations of justice; the character

of God as righteous; the character of man with reference to the question whether he is or is not righteous; the problem how a sinner may become righteous; the modes of maintaining right conduct in the relations and duties of life; the ways in which the obligations of right are violated; the injustice, the fraud, the dishonesty, which prevail in the world,—these and similar topics are always proper in addressing men. All right views of religion begin here; for no man can hope to be saved unless he has just views of the righteousness of God, and of the way in which the guilty may become righteous in His sight.

Temperance. The proper restraint and government of the passions; the modes in which they break over all control; the consequences of indulgence in sensual and profligate habits; the destruction which such indulgence brings upon body and soul; the customs which encourage such violation; the methods in which multitudes pander to the guilty appetites of others;—the distress of families, the poverty, the disease, the “babbling,” the “woe,” the hearts broken, the fortunes ruined, the hopes blasted, the bodies consigned to an early grave, and the souls lost for ever by intemperance,—all these are proper topics in preaching; all are fitted to stir the conscience to a sense of guilt, all are essential for the good of man here or hereafter.

Judgment to come. The fact that there will be a judgment; the nature of that judgment; the results of it; the solemnity of the transaction; the interests at stake; the things to be judged; the Judge Himself,—

His rank, His dignity, and His qualifications to judge mankind; the fact that the judgment will be final and irreversible,—all these are proper subjects on which to address man as he travels on to the retribution of that great day.

What has Christianity made known in respect to the judgment? What would one appointed to speak of the "faith in Christ" have to say on this subject?

(a.) Christianity has confirmed the natural apprehension of mankind in regard to the judgment. It admits the reality; it deepens the impression of that reality. It has affirmed that all which man ever apprehended in the judgment was well-founded; it has added many things to make it *more* fearful and solemn.

(b.) It has stated that there will be a judgment of *all* men; of all that have lived; of all that now live; of all who will ever live (Rev. xx. 12—14).

(c.) It has revealed the Judge who is to pronounce the final sentence on mankind—Jesus Christ, the Son of God; the Incarnate Deity; the brightness of the Father's glory; the Crucified One, who rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father Almighty (John v. 22, 23).

(d.) It has stated the consequences or results of the final judgment; the fearful sentence which shall be passed on mankind (Matt. xxv. 31—46).

Assuredly, if there are any truths, if there is any ground of appeal, that would be likely to arouse a thoughtless race to reflection; if there is anything that is adapted to fill the mind with alarm, it would be found

in considerations such as these, and we are not surprised, therefore, that in view of these topics, as presented by Paul, "Felix trembled."

II. *What, then, is the natural and proper effect of such truths on the mind?* This is, in other words, an inquiry whether the effect produced on the mind of Felix was natural and proper.

The consideration of this will bring before us an important law of our nature, or an important Divine arrangement, in regard to *guilt*. I shall refer to it, not merely as a proof of conscious criminality, but as a proof that there is a moral government over men; that God is a friend of virtue, and an enemy of vice.

(1.) All men are aware that, when nature acts freely, and when there is no restraint imposed by purpose or acquired by discipline, there are certain marks of conscious guilt which convey to those around us, without the use of words, and by signs which even contradict the words which *may be* used, the knowledge of that which is passing within, or that of which we are conscious. The blush, the paleness of the cheek, the averted eye; a trembling and agitated frame; a restless, suspicious, fearful look, are marks of what is within. These belong, too, to a certain class of emotions or feelings, or to a certain kind of conduct, and are confined to these. They cannot be transferred to another kind of conduct, —to the consciousness of a noble deed; to purity of purpose; to a feeling of gratitude; to self-approbation. They are not the result of education, or indicative of a

certain stage of civilization, or confined to any position or rank in life. They are not local, for they are found in every land; they are not the effect of climate, for they exist among all nations. They are so universal as to demonstrate that they belong to man *as* man.

(2.) The design of this arrangement, as a part of our constitution, it is not difficult to understand. It is at once a proof that there is a moral government over mankind, and a benevolent arrangement adapted to secure the good of mankind in great and important respects.

(a.) No one can explain it except on the supposition that there is a God, and that He rules over mankind. It is one of the original principles of our nature; and as it is always connected with a certain course of conduct, and cannot be transferred to the opposite course, its existence proves that God designed it to be an indication of *His* sense of human actions. The arrangement must have had its origin in the purposes of our Maker, and it is of such a nature as to show that He intends to control mankind.

(b.) It is an arrangement designed, when it operates freely, to reveal or disclose the knowledge of our sin to others. It is not susceptible of misinterpretation. The trembling of Felix under the preaching of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," could not be misunderstood. He would not have trembled, he could not have been alarmed under such preaching, if he had not been conscious that he had lived, and was living, in violation of "righteousness" and "tem-

perance," and had reason to look with apprehension to a "judgment to come." The natural, and the only interpretation which could be put on his trembling, either by Paul, by Drusilla, or by himself, must have been that he was a *guilty* man.

(c.) The arrangement is designed, not only to put *others* on their guard, but also to restrain *us* from the commission of sin. This is done by the very fact of the admonition of guilt in the feeling itself; by the fact that the guilty purpose must thus be known to others; and by the conscious shame and confusion which is thus produced in the soul. By all that is painful in such a consciousness of guilt and in the fear of wrath; by all that there is to expose us to shame and disgrace before the world, it is designed to act as a check on criminal purposes and conduct, and to hold men back from cherishing the purposes of crime.

(d.) This arrangement is designed to be among the means of securing the reformation of the guilty; an arrangement of Divine wisdom to lead men to see in this dreadful anticipation—this trembling—what *must* be the consequences of the course which they are pursuing, and to lead them to "flee from the wrath to come." Thus the jailor at Philippi trembled; thus Felix trembled; and thus the sinner now—under the consciousness of guilt—trembles, turns pale, and is alarmed at the prospect of impending judgment. Among the most effective means of recovering and reforming the wicked, is this power which God has of alarming the consciences of men, and overwhelming them with the remembrance of

past guilt, and the apprehension of future wrath. He is the most successful preacher who is most able, under the Divine blessing, to produce this consciousness of guilt in the soul, and the work of such a preacher is nearest to its accomplishment, when his hearers turn pale,—when the wicked, and the gay, and the thoughtless, and the corrupt, and the sensual, and the profane, are made to tremble in view of a coming judgment.

III. The remaining inquiry is, *In what manner are these impressions often met and warded off?*

The conduct of Felix will be our guide in illustrating this point. He “trembled;” but he did not yield. The jailor at Philippi “trembled,” and yielded; fell down before Paul and Silas, his prisoners, and brought them out, and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts xvi. 29, 30). *He* acted as God meant that men should act; and he was true, in this respect, to the nature with which God had endowed him. But Felix “trembled,” and then said, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.” *He* resisted his nature; he violated a great law of his being, and perilled his everlasting welfare. The jailor, in humbler life,—perhaps not living in any known form of sin,—and having nothing as derived from rank, position, and associations, to prevent his acting out the inward promptings of his nature, yielded to his convictions, and was saved; Felix, living in known sin, bound and fettered by a guilty tie,—in a position in which a confession of guilt might have exposed him to

the ridicule of those in elevated life, or to a loss of place and position,—refused to yield to the suggestions of conscience, and sought relief from present alarm by deferring all to a future time. He banished his serious impressions; he calmed down the apprehensions of guilt; he put himself on his guard against any danger of being overcome in the future by such sudden and unexpected emotions; and, as far as we know, gained the victory over the finer feelings of his nature,—and lost his soul.

The great difficulty always is to induce men to attend personally and practically to religion *now*. In many cases we have their understandings already with us on the side of religion; they are convinced of the truth of Christianity; we either meet them when they are already conscious of guilt, or by a course of reasoning on “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” we can, by the help of God, produce such a consciousness of guilt; we find them already cherishing a general purpose to attend to religion at some future time, or we can easily persuade them to adopt such a resolution. The difficulty is to prevail on them to attend to the subject *now*; to do it *at once*; to make it the *first* thing. Could we do this, our work would be accomplished; for then religion would become easy, and the difficulties in regard to it would vanish.

There are, it need scarcely be said, many reasons why men, even trembling under the conviction of guilt, plead for delay. The original Greek, in which the words of Felix are given us, is “Taking time, I will call for

thee;" that is, I have it not now; I will secure it; at some future period I will "*take*" the time needful to pursue the subject further. So men, engaged in the world,—in a bank, in a custom-house, in a counting-room, on a farm, in the workshop,—plead that they have not time to attend to the matter now. So the young delay the subject to a future period, when it will be more suitable than at present. So the gay and thoughtless ask that they may be allowed to engage for the present in the festive scenes of life, with a promise or a hope that the time will come when religion will be more appropriate, and when—the pleasures of life past—they may find leisure to prepare to die. So the wicked of all classes ask for present indulgence, with a purpose to repent at a future time.

Thus, as we pass along the journey of life, a thousand things—business, pleasure, ambition, sin, the love of ease, the desire of indulgence—plead for delay, on that which *must* be to all men the most momentous of all subjects; and the soul is lost. The mind is calmed down, the subject of religion is banished from the thoughts, and the troubled heart is set free from alarm.

I do not say that time is never found to attend to religion, or that the purpose to attend to it is never carried out. Felix *found* time to consider the subject, for he "sent for Paul often,"—the oftener because he hoped that a bribe would be offered,—“and communed with him.” It is not for us to say that a man who has neglected a present opportunity of salvation, and postponed it when his mind had been awakened to the

subject, will *never* have another serious thought, and that he certainly seals his own condemnation for ever. I do not say that a man, thus disregarding the present, never is, or can be saved. Not thus do I understand the arrangements of God in regard to the salvation of men. But that it *may be* the last opportunity, no one can doubt; for death may be near. That a man will be less likely to be aroused and awakened at another time, as the result of having refused to yield, no one can doubt; for this is in accordance with a great law of our nature. That it does not, in all respects, depend on our own will *when* the mind shall be serious,—*when* it shall be disposed to attend to the subject,—*when* it shall find leisure,—is equally clear. That it may not be as *easy* to attend to the subject on a bed of sickness, or on the approach of death, as in health, and when the mind is calm, is no less plain. That when a man who has been convinced of his sin, has secured such a triumph as to say to the heavenly Messenger, “Go thy way for this time,” the heavenly Messenger *may* not take a final departure, and that such a man *may* not by that act determine the destiny of his soul for ever, no man can deny. This hour—this very moment—you *may* so resolve to reject the invitation of mercy, as to settle the question of your salvation *for ever and ever*. To-morrow—nay, the next moment of your life—you *may be* BEYOND HOPE!

XVII.

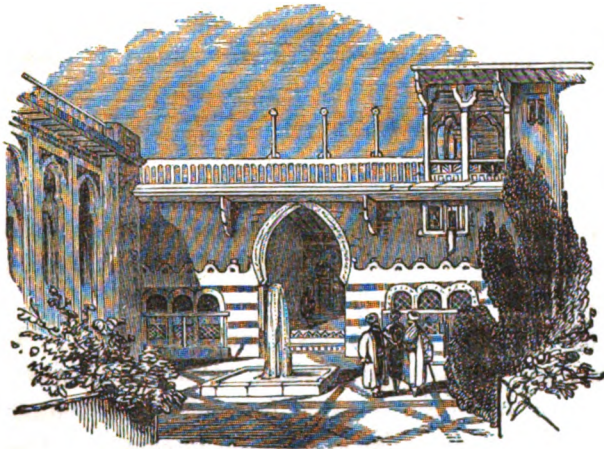
PAUL BEFORE FESTUS.

Christianity in contact with a mind that regards religion as pertaining to others, and to questions of a trivial nature.

Festus, a representative character.—*Manner in which he regarded religious questions.*—As a governor, he was just and honourable; would not yield up a prisoner untried; gave the case a prompt hearing; conceded the right of appeal; maintained important principles of law.—In reference to religion, he deemed its questions foreign to his own interests; trivial in their nature; and not requiring his investigation.—*Reasons why religion should not be so regarded.*—Man has a real interest in it.—Is bound to meet its requirements.—Needs its provisions.—Must perish, if destitute of it.—Inferences.—(1.) Men are not mere lookers-on.—(2.) Men cannot escape religious obligation.—(3.) No man should wish to evade it.

“ Without any delay on the morrow, I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth; against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.”

ACTS xxv. 17—19.



AN ORIENTAL HOUSE.



THE history of Festus, like that of Felix, is important, not merely *as* a record in history, and as bearing on the early propagation of the Gospel, but as illustrating the contact of Christianity with minds of a certain class or order, to be found in every age and land; a class of minds with which Christianity was to come in contact often in the attempt to bring men under its influence, and to spread itself through the world. As such, it becomes a proper subject of consideration in illustrating the scenes and incidents in the life of the Apostle Paul.

The point before us will be, CHRISTIANITY IN CONTACT WITH MINDS THAT REGARD IT AS PERTAINING TO QUESTIONS OF A TRIVIAL NATURE, AND IN WHICH THEY THEMSELVES HAVE NO CONCERN. This may be

viewed under two aspects:—I. As showing how a certain class of minds regard the subject of religion; and II. as leading to the inquiry whether this be a proper manner in which religion should be regarded and treated.

I. The case of Festus may be considered as representing a certain class of minds. This will lead me to make a few remarks,

(1.) In reference to his general character. That character was strongly marked. When Felix, his predecessor, had been removed from office on charges of maladministration, Festus had been appointed to succeed him for two reasons;—because he was a more just, honourable, pure, and incorruptible man; and because he would be more likely to be popular among the Jews. His general character, as honourable and upright, was evinced, in accordance with his general reputation, in the transactions which came so early under his notice in the case of the Apostle Paul.

(a) He was firm in his purpose not to grant the request of the Jews in regard to the removal of Paul to Jerusalem. One of the first duties of a newly-appointed governor would of course be to make himself acquainted with the condition of the country over which he was to preside, and especially with the state of affairs in regard to the administration of justice. Festus, therefore, though the seat of the Roman power was at that time at Cæsarea, would take the earliest opportunity, to visit the Jewish capital, the ancient seat of power and

influence. Accordingly, within three days after his arrival at Cæsarea, he went up to Jerusalem (Acts xxv. 1). There he was immediately met by the chief priests, and the leading men among the Jews (ver. 2); and they, in harmony, as it would seem, with a desire of the people (ver. 24), presented a request that he would allow Paul, whom Felix had left "bound" at Cæsarea, to be summoned to Jerusalem, that he might be tried there (ver. 3). They hoped that the new governor would grant them the seemingly not unreasonable claim, that Paul might be tried where the Jews had been accustomed in former years to have such cases determined, and where, moreover, the alleged offence had been committed. He had been, they might allege, taken forcibly from their custody by the Roman captain Lysias; and they asked as a favour that the case might be remanded to them, and might take the usual course. Their *real* purpose was that they might waylay him on the road, and assassinate him (ver. 3).

There was some plausibility in the request, and it might have occurred to Festus that in this way he could more easily and readily dispose of the case than in any other, and that his compliance might contribute not a little to his own popularity. It was a simple request, and it *seemed* to involve nothing improper or wrong. But his answer was every way becoming one who represented the majesty of the Roman law. Paul, he said, was in safe custody, and would not be suffered to escape. He himself would shortly return to Cæsarea, where the utmost fairness should be allowed in the trial (ver. 4).

He stated to them at that time, as he afterwards informed Agrippa (ver. 16), that it was a great principle of Roman law, that no man should be condemned to death before he had his "accusers face to face;" but any persons among the Jews who were "able" to manage the cause, should, he said, have ample opportunity to substantiate the charges against the prisoner (ver. 5).

(*b.*) His promptness in bringing the case of Paul to a trial, with no unnecessary delay, was also an indication of his justness of character, and was remarkably in contrast with the conduct of his predecessor. Felix had, with most manifest injustice, kept Paul as a prisoner for two whole years, with the hope that he might secure from him a bribe; Festus promised to try the cause himself, and to make it his first business after his return to Cæsarea. In the course of eight or ten days (Acts xxv. 6, *margin*), he went thither; and the very day after his return, he took his seat on the bench of justice, and commanded that Paul should be brought before him. Nothing could be more fair and honourable than this disposition to render speedy justice to one who had been so long kept in custody.

(*c.*) His ready concession of the right of Paul to carry the case before the Roman emperor was another indication of his character as a man of justice and uprightness. He was surprised to find that the accusation against Paul was not, as he had supposed, for crime against the government and laws, but was connected with the religious opinions of the Jews, and did not, therefore, properly pertain to a Roman tribunal. In his perplexity,

therefore, and disposed as he was to ingratiate himself as far as possible with the Jews, he proposed to Paul that he should go up to Jerusalem, and be judged *there*, before himself, in regard to the charges of heresy and sacrilege which had been laid against him. Paul understood at once the dangers which this would involve; he well knew what were his own privileges as a Roman citizen; and he knew what a Roman governor would feel himself compelled to grant, if an appeal were made to the Roman emperor. Standing before the tribunal of the governor, and in the presence of his accusers,—and manifestly to the surprise and dismay of both,—he uttered the noble declaration and appeal: “I stand before Cæsar’s tribunal, and there ought my trial to be. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as thou knowest full well. If I am guilty of breaking the law, and have done anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if the things whereof these men accuse me are nought, no man can give me up to them. I APPEAL UNTO CÆSAR” (Acts xxv. 10, 11).¹

Festus could not, indeed, as a Roman magistrate, deny that right of appeal to one who was a Roman citizen; but it would have been easy to raise the question whether Paul had any claim to the right; and with a purpose such as Felix had, the cause could easily have been continued for two weary years more, or perhaps, protracted to an indefinite period. Paul had no occasion, however, to complain of Festus as to the manner in which his appeal to Rome was received.

¹ Conybeare and Howson’s translation.

It was at once allowed, and arrangements were made to have the matter brought as speedily as possible before the emperor.

(*d.*) The noble sentiment which Festus uttered in stating a great principle of Roman law, showed also what was the character of the man. That principle was, as we have already seen, that no man should be condemned to death "before that he which is accused should have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him." No principle is more essential in the administration of justice than this; none has gone more deeply into the defence of the rights of man. The trials in the Inquisition and in the Star-chamber derived their enormity mainly from a violation of this principle; and the chief progress which society has made in the administration of justice has consisted in little more than in securing, by proper sanctions and provisions, the law here enunciated by Festus.

In him, then, we have the example of a man upright and honourable; just, true, firm, faithful to the obligations of his office; prompt to do what was his duty, and not to be turned, by any personal considerations, from a purpose to do right. Yet, so far as appears, his mind was now, for the first time, brought into contact with the subject of revealed religion, and with questions which grow out of that. It is natural to inquire how those questions would strike such a man, and in what light, or with what interest, he would regard them.

I need not say that, in this respect, Festus repre-

sented a large class,—men of integrity, honesty, uprightness; prompt in the execution of duties entrusted to them; men who are above a bribe; who act from a sense of obligation; who adhere to great principles of justice and law in all their official and personal relations. There are such men in large numbers in every profession, and in all positions of life. You confide in them, and are not disappointed; you commit to them great interests of property, reputation, justice, liberty, charity, and those interests are safe.

(2.) We have to consider Festus more particularly in reference to the sentiments which he entertained on the subject of religion. It is here that we meet him in his contact with Christianity, and it is in this respect that his views and feelings become so important to us. We find these expressed, in the account which he gave of the matter to Agrippa: “They brought none accusation of such things as I supposed; *but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*”

This will bring before us the views which men *like Festus* take of the subject of religion. We shall not have before us the views which the profligate, the profane, and the vulgar,—which atheists, blasphemers, and sceptics,—which the uneducated, the low, the vile,—which scoffers and sensualists take of the subject; but the views of men who are, like Festus, upright, just, and faithful in their private character, and who sustain elevated and honourable social positions.

In order to understand this subject fully, there are two or three subordinate remarks to be made:—

(a.) Festus regarded the “questions” or disputes in the case as pertaining to the Jews *themselves*, and in no manner as pertaining to *him*;—“certain questions of *their own* superstition.” The word “superstition” is not here to be regarded as necessarily reproachful or contemptuous. It is the same word which Paul used in addressing the Athenian philosophers on Mars’ Hill (Acts xvii. 22). The Greek word, however,—*δεισιδαιμονία*—properly means the “fear of the gods;” and then, *religiousness*, or *religion*; and though sometimes used by Greek writers, to denote superstition, or bigotry, yet it is such a word as would commonly be employed by a Greek to describe religion in general, even when speaking of it in the most respectful manner. We are not, therefore, to suppose that Festus meant by this language to express contempt for the Jewish faith; and we cannot believe that in entering on his office among the Jews, he would designedly make use of a word which would irritate and provoke them.

The feelings of Festus are indicated rather by the expression that it was “*their own*”—*περὶ τῆς ἰδίας*:—that is, that it pertained to *them*, to *their* nation;—not to *him*, not to *his* nation. The dispute was about *their own religion*. It was to be settled by themselves. It was a matter in which he had no concern. It did not pertain to him either as a man or as a magistrate. He regarded all the controversies which they had started among themselves about the death and the resurrection

of Jesus, as he would have regarded the controversies of the Greeks, the Persians, the Babylonians, or the Egyptians, about the religion of their own country. Those subjects of controversy might seem important to *them*; they were none of *his*.

I need not say that, in *this* respect, Festus is a representative of a very large and a very respectable portion of mankind. They are men who would not revile religion, or speak of it with contempt. If they have no personal interest in it, they are willing that others should discuss its questions freely among themselves. They would not disturb others in the quiet enjoyment of their own opinions, or of their rights in religion; and, in numerous cases, their disposition to show respect for religion is increased by the fact that it is the religion of a friend; a father; a wife; a sister.

Yet they regard the subject as *not* pertaining to themselves. They do not intermeddle with it, nor would they interfere with it. The questions which are raised among Christians, and which are discussed with so much warmth, or it may be with so much acerbity, they do not regard themselves as required to solve. Their own purpose is to lead an upright, an honest, a moral life; to do justice to all; to settle questions which *do* pertain to themselves as magistrates, as business men, as patriots, and as philanthropists. Our difficulty in dealing with such is in persuading them at all to regard the subjects connected with religion as having any *personal* claim on them; and in inducing them to change

their position so far as, instead of "questions of *their* own," to say "questions of *our* own."

(*b.*) Festus considered the "question" which had come up for discussion between Paul and the Jews as one of little importance;—"certain questions of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be *alive*."

His sense of the real nature of the dispute is indicated by the language which he used respecting him who was affirmed by the one party to be alive, and by the other to be dead;—"and of one Jesus" (*περὶ τινος Ἰησοῦ*), implying that he was an unknown or obscure person, and perhaps also that, in his judgment, it was of little consequence whether he *was* alive or dead. Festus could see no great results to be attached to the inquiry. Why Paul affirmed of this obscure and unknown man, probably some impostor, some vagrant, some criminal, that he was *alive*, and why the Jews denied it, would seem to him a matter of no practical value.

Does not this state of mind represent, with a melancholy accuracy, the views and feelings of a very large portion of every community in regard to the question whether Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead? Does it not give a just representation of the views of such men in regard to *all* the questions which are agitated among Christians on the subjects of religion? Modes of belief, they think, are matters of little importance. If a man is just, true, honest, faithful,—if he meets his obligations, pays his debts, is kind to the poor, and

just to all,—if he is true to his family and to his country,—it is, in their opinion, of little consequence what he believes; nor can his conviction respecting the resurrection of Christ (either for or against it), or his belief in regard to any of those doctrines of religion which divide the Christian world, materially affect his character or his destiny. Our work with such men, is to convince them not only that they are as much interested in these subjects as other men, but that *the most important* questions which can come before the minds of men are those which pertain to religion.

(c.) Festus took no pains to inquire into or to settle these points. He was intent on other objects; he felt no interest in these inquiries. It does not appear that, as a practical matter, they came at all before his own mind. They *did* come before the mind of Felix, for he “trembled” under the reasoning of Paul. They *did* come before the mind of Agrippa, for he was “almost persuaded to be a Christian.” But the subject took *no* such hold on the mind of Festus. Cool, sober, upright, just, he never seems to have regarded the questions of religion as demanding even the tribute involved in a purpose to inquire whether they might not *possibly* be true.

Need it be said that in this respect, also, he was a representative of a large class of men? They are engaged in other inquiries than these; they investigate, discuss, and settle points of jurisprudence, history, science, art. They are interested in determining the date of a battle, of the birth of a prince, of the accession of a dynasty to empire; they examine into the

genuineness of an ancient manuscript, or the value of an ancient coin; but they have no interest in ascertaining whether Christ rose from the dead, nor can we persuade them to give to such things even a momentary attention. Our difficulty in regard to these men is to get the question before their minds *at all*. We place the Bible in their hands; they will not read it. We set before them the works of Grotius, Chalmers, Paley, Lardner, on the evidences of religion, but for them such works have no attractions. If they have had to study Butler's "Analogy" as part of their college course, it now pertains to the memory of their early studies, and all interest in it is lost amid the active scenes of life, and the questions which refer to this world alone.

II. My second object was to inquire *Whether this is the proper manner in which to regard and treat the subject of religion.* To those who may be in substantially the same state of mind as Festus, I shall submit a few remarks on this point.

(I.) The first is, that every man has *in fact* an interest in the great questions which belong to religion. Man is made to be a religious being; and he never approaches the perfection of his nature, or meets the design of his existence, until the religious principle is developed. It is the prerogative of his nature that he *can* be influenced by motives drawn from religion; can be guided by the counsels it suggests; can be cheered by the prospects and hopes it presents; and can be supported in trials by the consolations it imparts. Man is distinguished by

this from every other inhabitant of our world. The elephant, the lion, the horse is perfect in its nature without religion ; man never is perfect as a man until he recognizes the religious principle, and until it enters into all his motives of action. To deprive him of this capability, would as essentially alter his nature as to deprive him of reason or the power of imagination. Abraham, and David, and Paul,—Edwards and Baxter,—as religious men, are not merely *individuals* ; they are high specimens of the race ; exponents of what man is made to be ; men complete as God designed all men to be when developing the noblest principles of their nature.

Look, even for a single moment, at some of the subjects pertaining to religion, and it will be seen that this is a correct account of the matter. In the question whether there is a God, and what He is, one man is as much concerned as any other man can be. It is impossible for any one ever to place himself in such a position that he *has* no interest in it. If he could transform himself into a lion or a gazelle—a swan or a flamingo—a gilded basilisk or an ephemeron, he could throw himself beyond the reach of this inquiry ; but not as long as he is *a man*.

Whether man is a fallen being, suffering under the displeasure of his Maker now, and exposed to His deeper displeasure in a future world,—whether an atonement has been made for sin,—whether the Bible was given by inspiration of God,—whether there is a future state, a judgment-day, a heaven, a hell,—are things pertaining

to all men in common. There *are* things in the world which pertain to ourselves exclusively, with which another has no right to intermeddle, and in which another has no interest ; but the things of religion are not of that nature. They pertain alike to each and every one. In the days of Festus, they were not questions pertaining only to the Jews, and “ to *their own* superstition;” they were questions which pertained equally to Festus and all the Romans ; and in these days they belong not merely to those who voluntarily turn their attention to them, but they concern equally every human being, as a man, as a creature of God, as a traveller to the grave, as about to appear at the bar of God.

(2.) In the second place, every man *is bound* to perform the duties which religion requires, and one man as much as another. Among those who were supposed to be wrangling about some question of “superstition,” there was no one more bound to perform the duties of religion than Festus himself ; and of those who now live on the earth, one man is under as solemn an obligation to perform those duties as any other can be.

There is a very common, and not wholly an unnatural mistake on this point. Many men seem to feel that the obligations of religion are the result of a voluntary covenant, compact, or promise, like a contract for carrying the mail, or for excavating so many miles of a canal. They seem to suppose that there is nothing lying back of a profession of religion to oblige any one to attend to its duties, any more than there is to bind a man to enlist as a soldier, or to enter into a contract for building a

bridge. When a profession of religion has been made, they admit it to be binding. They are disposed to hold professors to the most rigid fulfilment of the conditions of that profession ; and they resolve that if they themselves ever enter into such a covenant with God, they will be as faithful to *that* compact as they are to others.

Now, Christians do not object to being held to the most faithful performance of the duties of religion, growing out of the voluntary covenant which they have made with God. They believe that God Himself will hold them to it, and that a profession of religion, viewed in this aspect, and in all others, is a most serious matter. But it is not the profession of religion which *creates* the obligation, for that existed before any such profession was made. The profession of religion only *recognizes* the obligation. To make such a profession is not like making a contract to build a house, or to perform the duty of a day-labourer ; it pertains to acts similar to the duty which a child owes to a parent, or a man to his country, or which we all owe to the poor and the oppressed. With, or without a covenant, we are bound to the performance of those duties ; and though there are advantages in such a voluntary covenant and pledge, as there were in the "times that tried men's souls" in the American revolution, when our fathers pledged to their country "their lives and their fortune," yet the *obligation* to those duties is not *originated* by the covenant, but exists whether any such compact has been entered into or not. The worship of God, repentance, faith in the Redeemer, a life of

piety, the grateful acknowledgment of mercies,—can any plead exemption from *these* duties? Or look at the *specific* duties which may pertain to a man. If he is a father, is he not as much bound as any other father to train up his children for God, to instruct them in the ways and duties of religion, to pray with them and for them, to walk before them so that they may be prepared for heaven? If he is a husband, is he not as much bound to be a Christian, and to serve his Maker in his family, as his wife is? is he more at liberty to neglect the religious duties of a husband and father, than she is to neglect the duties of a Christian wife and mother? If he is a man of influence and property, is he not as much bound as any other man to devote his influence and property to the cause of God? has he any more right than another man to employ them for selfish purposes? If he is capable of doing good, of relieving suffering, of dispelling ignorance, of helping the oppressed, of protecting the fatherless, of maintaining by eloquence or argument—by the tongue or the pen—the cause of justice, truth, and mercy, is he not as much bound to do this as any other man?

(3.) In the third place, every man *needs* the provisions which the Gospel has made for salvation. If Festus had inquired into that which he regarded as pertaining only to the “superstition” of a foreign people, a few questions put to one of the parties in that dispute would have opened such visions of glory, honour, and immortality, before his soul, as had never dawned on the mind of a Roman.

There is a very natural mistake which men are prone to make on *this* point, similar to the one already adverted to. It is, that while one class of the human family may need the provisions made in the Gospel for salvation, there are other classes for which these are unnecessary. It is like the feeling which we have about medicines. They are useful and desirable for the sick, but not needful for those who are in health ; they may become necessary for us should *we* become ill, but they are not now. So if men *feel* that they are sinners, if they are conscious of having transgressed the law of God, it is proper for them to make application to the system which proclaims and promises peace. But where this necessity is not felt, men do not think that the Gospel pertains to them.

Yet it is a great truth that the Gospel of Christ pertains to man as such in his fallen condition, and not merely to the most debased forms of humanity. It assumes that every one of the race is in circumstances which make the plan of redemption adapted to him, and necessary for him. It does all honour to the human powers; it regards with contempt nothing that is truly excellent; it undervalues no real virtue ; but at the same time it assumes that there is no such virtue in man as to meet the demands of the law ; that there is no holiness in the unrenewed human heart such as God approves and loves ; and that no one enters heaven who is not interested in the Saviour's death. It is on this assumption that the atonement was made for men ; and it is on the same assumption that the

Redeemer still lives to intercede for the race. It is this point which the Gospel presents more prominently than any other, and this conviction it seeks to secure in the heart. The work of redemption *has been* accomplished; the difficult work of convincing man that he needs a Redeemer, is the work which remains to be done. Nothing is more common among men than blindness to their own character and danger. The sense of dependence on Christ for salvation,—the recollection of any guilt which could demand such expiation as that made on the cross—to these feelings they are strangers. So it once was with those who now are Christians. They were strong in their own righteousness, and confident that they could be saved without the intervention of the Son of God. But the hour came when they saw themselves to be poor, and needy, and blind, and naked, and felt that if it were *not* for the Saviour they must perish. Crushed, and broken-hearted, and penitent, they went and sought pardon through the blood of Jesus, and through that blood they found righteousness and peace.

(4) It is as certain of one man as it is of another, that unless he is interested in religion, he will be lost. If one can be saved without religion, another can in the same way; and consequently religion is unnecessary for any. This seems almost too clear for argument, and yet here also we encounter the same feeling more than once adverted to already, that true as religion may be, and needful for some, there are others for whom it is unnecessary, and in respect to

whom a substitute may be found that shall take its place. This belief indeed is not often formally drawn out and avowed; there may be few who would be willing to place it as a distinct proposition before their own minds; but it exerts a more constant influence than many opinions that are embodied in words.

There is really, however, *nothing* on which any one can fall back in order to be saved, if he does not avail himself of the provisions of the Gospel; there is nothing which can be made a substitute for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in the matter of salvation, for "there is none other name under heaven, given among men," whereby they can be saved. And if this be so, then it is clear that men who neglect the religion of Christ must perish—all perish. It matters not what else they may have; this is the only thing that can save them.

From the subject of this chapter, the following things follow as inferences:

First. Men are not merely lookers-on in the world. The place which they occupy is not that of mere observers of what occurs in the Church. Each man that passed by the cross, though he looked in the most indifferent or contemptuous manner on what was occurring there, had the deepest personal interest, if he had known it, in the great transaction. So Festus, if he had known it, had the deepest personal interest in the question whether the unknown man who was affirmed to be dead was really alive. And so every one that hears the Gospel, has the deepest interest in the appeals which are made to men in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Second. The interest which a man has in these things is not one from which he can escape. It attends him everywhere, and at all times. Yesterday he had the deepest possible interest in all that pertains to religion; to-day he has the same; to-morrow he will have it still. When at home in the bosom of his family, when alone in the solitude of his retirement, when amid the crowds of men intent on gain, when in the circles of festivity and gaiety, his great interest still is religion. From a personal interest in religion he can never be released.

Third. No man should desire to drive the subject from his mind. Why should he? Why should he *not* be a religious man? Why should he not feel that he has a God and a Saviour? Why should he not feel that he has a better inheritance than perishable gold? Why should he not feel that he has a more enduring home than he now occupies,—a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Why should he not have a hope of future happiness, when all the pleasures of earth shall have passed away? Why desire to escape from the cross of Christ, from prayer, from the love of God, and from the privilege and honour of doing good? Why be willing to depart from this world with no bright prospect to cheer and sustain him on the bed of death, leaving to his friends nothing in the memory of his life that shall wipe away their tears, and comfort their hearts, when they stand beside his grave?

XVIII.

PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA.

Christianity in contact with the mind of a speculative believer.

Perplexity of Festus.—Case laid before Agrippa.—Eloquence of Paul's speech.—History of Agrippa.—His character.—His religious state.—*Different classes of speculative believers.*—Some led by religious training.—Some convinced by argument.—Some distressed by a sense of sin.—Some aroused by affliction.—*Reasons why such men are but almost Christians.*—Love of sin.—Love of the world.—Fear of shame.—Dread of restraint.—*Grounds of appeal to speculative believers.*—Their own admission.—The claims of consistency.—The risk of enhanced guilt.—And of increased danger.

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

ACTS xxvi. 28, 29.



ROMAN OFFICERS.



FESTUS having granted to Paul the right of appeal, it became his duty to prepare to lay the case before the emperor. But he was to a great extent ignorant of Jewish customs and opinions. The accusations against Paul had been so vague, and the facts elicited on the trial had been so indefinite and uncertain, that he knew not what statement to make of the case. It happened at this time, and in this perplexity, that Agrippa, with his sister Berenice, came to Cæsarea on a visit. It occurred to Festus that from one well acquainted with Jewish customs, as Agrippa was, he might obtain such information as would enable him to state the charge fairly (Acts xxv. 27). Under these circumstances, he resolved to lay the matter before Agrippa, and to seek his advice. Agrippa, that he might more fully under-

stand the case, or because he had heard much of Paul, or because he had a real desire to know what could be said in favour of the new religion by its ablest advocate, felt a wish to hear Paul speak: "I," said he, "would also hear the man myself" (ver. 22).

A time having been appointed, Agrippa and his sister Berenice, with great pomp, attended with the chief captains, and the principal men of Cæsarea, came into "the place of hearing;" and, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought before them. It was on this occasion that the remarkable speech, contained in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Acts, was delivered. It will compare favourably with the most famous specimens of eloquence which have come down to us from ancient times, and on reading it we are not surprised to find that Longinus classed Paul among the most celebrated Grecian orators.

Agrippa, second of that name, of the family of Herod, was by birth a Jew. He was a son of Herod Agrippa, who was himself a grandson of Herod the Great. His father, son of Aristobulus, who was cruelly put to death by Herod the Great, had been brought up at Rome, with Drusus, son of Tiberius, and was placed over the entire territories governed by Herod Antipas, with the title of *king*. On his death, which occurred in a most miserable manner at Cæsarea (as recorded in Acts xii. 20—23), Herod Agrippa, his son, was but seventeen years of age, and was regarded as too young to be made a king; and Judæa was again reduced to the condition of a Roman province. Subsequently, Agrippa obtained dominion over a part of the territories of his

father, under the title "King of Chalcis;" was made superintendent of the temple; and had conferred on him the right of naming or appointing the high priest.

Agrippa had grown up, in common with his countrymen, with a full belief in the inspiration of the sacred writings, and under a firm conviction that a Messiah, a messenger from God, would come to the nation. To the reasoning of Paul, therefore, he listened with more respect and deference than a Roman would have done; and the arguments which Paul urged had more effect on his mind than they could be expected to have on the mind of Festus. Agrippa, moreover, does not appear to have partaken of the violent passions and prejudices of those of his countrymen who had accused Paul. His character, as given by Josephus, is that of a mild, candid, ingenuous man. He had no special hostility against Christians; he knew that they were not justly chargeable with sedition. He saw that the conduct of Paul could not be explained on the principle on which Festus proposed to account for this remarkable burst of eloquence (Acts xxvi. 24),—for these were not the ravings of insanity. He felt the weight of the arguments alleged by Paul from the prophets in favour of the claim of Jesus to the Messiahship. In Agrippa the feelings of *the man* assumed a superiority over the prejudices of *the Jew*; and he said, not with a sneer, but in sincerity, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The argument of the apostle had such power, his appeal to Agrippa's own faith in the prophets was so irresistible, that, for the moment, he was on the

point of surrendering himself to the force of eloquence and truth.

Yet here he paused. We have no reason to think that he ever made any further advances towards becoming a Christian. Certain it is that the New Testament history gives no account of his conversion to Christianity; and it can hardly be supposed that an event so important as that would have been wholly unnoticed by the sacred historian. We are left to infer that Agrippa was never *quite* persuaded to be a Christian. What was included in the "almost," or what prevented his being altogether persuaded, we are not informed; but there is every reason to suppose that in fact this was the *crisis* or turning-point of his life and destiny; and, like thousands of others—a representative man in this respect—he refused to yield to the claims of Christian truth.

The case before us, therefore, is CHRISTIANITY IN CONTACT WITH THE UNCONVERTED HEART OF ONE PROFESSING TO BELIEVE IN A REVELATION.

It will be proper, in the first place, to inquire in what circumstances such cases occur; secondly, to show why such persons are not wholly persuaded to be Christians; and, thirdly, to state the considerations which may bear upon their consciences as derived from their admission of the truth of Christianity.

I. In what circumstances do such cases occur?

(1.) One class of such persons is composed of those who, as Agrippa perhaps was, have been favoured with

a religious education, and who have had, and now have, no serious doubt of the truth or the value of revealed religion. They have been trained to believe that the Bible is true; and they have, in the main, always cherished that belief. If they have had at any time any doubts on the subject, those doubts have been temporary; and at any time in their lives, though the appeal might have been made in circumstances as little likely to lead them to expect it, and might have been as sudden as it was when it was "*sprung*" upon Agrippa, they would as readily have admitted the force of that appeal as he did. They have always expected to become true Christians. They have been often almost ready to take the decisive step; almost persuaded to come out from the world, and to give themselves to God.

(2.) A second class is composed of those who, by argument, have been convinced of the truths of religion. I do not affirm that this *often* occurs. It is not a very common thing for a sceptic to *read* a book written avowedly in defence of the Bible; and it by no means always happens that one who does read such a book is convinced by it, and brought to see the force of the reasoning. Yet this does sometimes occur. Some disposition of mind which he is unable to account for; or some book or tract which has been placed in his way, or on which his eye may have accidentally rested in his own library, and which may have been long there, yet heretofore unperused; or some conversation with a friend or a stranger; or some sermon which has led him to doubt the truth of the system he has hereto-

fore followed,—may call a man's attention, with an earnestness never before experienced, to the great question whether the views which he has held are sufficient to constitute a ground of safety or of hope for one who is to live in another world.

These examinations sometimes result in decided conversion to the faith of Christ. In more instances, perhaps, they merely lead to an intellectual conviction of the truth of the Bible. Yet the mind is no longer openly hostile to religion. The infidel is disarmed. Opposition to the Gospel is neutralized; and there is a conversion of the intellect, if not of the heart. He that was a sceptic is now "almost" persuaded to be a Christian. He may now be appealed to, as Paul appealed to Agrippa, on the ground of his belief that the Bible is a revelation from God.

(3.) A third class is composed of those who have been brought to see their personal sinfulness and their need of a Saviour. There are few persons in any community where Christianity is the prevailing belief, who are not, at some period of their lives, made so deeply sensible of their sin as to be almost resolved that they will be Christians. The consciousness of guilt; the apprehension of wrath; the fear of death; the sense of obligation; the hope of heaven,—all press upon the trembling soul the duty of embracing the offer of pardon, and of seeking peace through the Redeemer.

(4.) A fourth class is made up of those who are visited with calamity, and who are *then* almost per-

sueded to be Christians. Who is there that in the sorrows and trials of life, when earthly comforts are taken away, has not been led to inquire whether support and consolation might not be found in religion? Sorrow, trouble, tears, anguish, sickness, the apparent approach of death, have done for many what neither their early training, nor their examination of the truth of religion, nor the consciousness of sin has done. They have been brought to feel that the world is dark—gloomy—hopeless, and have been led to ask with deep solicitude whether religion will not give them an enduring happiness.¹

II. I proposed in the second place, to inquire *why persons in this state of mind, do not carry out their convictions, and become altogether Christians.* Among those reasons, the following may be noticed as the most prominent :

(1.) *The love of sin.* I mean by this, not so much the love of sin in general, as of some particular sin which pertains to the individual, and “easily besets him;” which he is not willing to abandon; and which in his case operates with a power that it would not have over another man. In Agrippa it may have been pride of rank and office, or some guilty attachment. In one it may be pride; in another, ambition; in

¹ To the “small sneer” of the worldly, that when men are disappointed, they turn saints as “a last resource,” see the reply made by the Rev. F. W. Robertson, in his Sermon on the Prodigal and his Brother.—(*Tauchnitz Edition, Leipsic*, vol. iii. pp. 268, 269).

another, sensuality; in another, covetousness. This particular sin may be concealed from the world. It may be buried deep in a man's own bosom. It may be something, also, which he feels he ought to abandon, and which he is sometimes almost ready to give up for ever. The love of that sin is, in his mind, stronger than his conviction of the truth and necessity of religion. The latter is, with him, the work of the intellect; the former, the work of the affections;—and it is the heart, not the head, which controls the life of man. Many a resolution may have been made in regard to this sin; many a purpose may have been formed to forsake it; many other sins may have been relinquished; but *this one* he has never been quite willing to forsake; *this one* has prevented, still prevents, and may prevent for ever, his surrendering himself to God.

(2.) Connected with this, and perhaps as generally constituting *the* sin which prevents a complete yielding to the claims of religion, may be *the love of the world*. I refer to the love of office, of honour, of distinction, of fashion, of gaiety; to the employments and amusements which grow out of the pursuit of worldly pleasure. In our ordinary language, we make a distinction between the love of the world, or *worldliness*, and what is commonly known as *sin* or *crime*. The one may be, in our apprehension, and in general opinion, disgraceful; the other may be connected with every idea of respectability. The one we would turn from with utter loathing; for the other, we have no sense of shame or dishonour. A charge of fraud, or of falsehood, we

should deplore most keenly; we have no such feeling when made aware that the general estimate of our character is, that we are lovers of the world.

I would not be understood as affirming that these things are to be placed on a level. But I may say that the Bible never speaks of one of these as innocent and of the other as criminal; but it teaches that the one *may*, as effectually as the other, keep the mind from religion, and that we should regard as *sin* all that *alienates* the mind from God, and all that *holds* it in alienation from Him. The love of the world is often avowed as the reason why the heart is not wholly devoted to religion; and this is oftener felt than avowed. The two, it is manifest, cannot be united. That which is supreme in the heart, of course, has the dominion; and the world effectually rules the soul.

(3.) I refer, as a third thing, to *the fear of shame*. That this was one of the reasons which prevented Agrippa from becoming altogether a Christian, is more than possible. He was a king; and though a petty king, with little more than an empty title, yet it *was* a title, and on his mind that fact may have operated as powerfully in preventing him from embracing a despised religion like Christianity as though he had swayed a sceptre over the most extended empire. With all the honour attached to the word "Christian" now; with all that there is in the Christian religion to refine the manners of men, and to purify their hearts; with all that it has done for society, for its habits, its customs, and its laws; with all that it has done for our

friends in making a father, a mother, a wife, a child, more worthy of our affections,—can we be wrong in supposing still that the feeling of shame *may* operate *now* in preventing multitudes from becoming altogether Christians? That young man,—has he no fear of being made the object of derision by scoffing comrades, if he becomes religious? That young woman,—has she no fear of shame, should it be whispered in the circles of the gay, that she is becoming serious and prayerful? That man, honoured in office, honoured as a financier, honoured as a merchant, honoured as a professional man,—has he no fear of shame? Would he be willing that the men with whom he has been accustomed to associate, should see him in a little company of believers assembled for prayer? Would he be willing to gather his own family around the altar, and lead them in daily devotion to the throne of grace?

In their present condition such persons have no sense of shame. To be "*almost*" persuaded to be Christians involves no sacrifice; commits them to no change in their plans of life; comes in conflict with none of the prejudices of the world; and separates them in no manner from the society of the worldly and the gay. It is a position so common, so respectable, so often found among those in their own rank of life, that they regard it as in no degree inconsistent with all that they esteem to be honourable in pursuit, and as affecting in no way their social position, or the esteem in which they are held. But their feelings would be altogether different at the suggestion of an *advance* from this

position, and of taking a decided stand in favour of religion. There they would pause, for such is still "the offence of the cross," that it might require a degree of courage, and a power of principle which they do not possess, to give themselves wholly to God. Nay, there may be many a man who, in defence of his country, would face the cannon's mouth, but would not dare to encounter what he might have to meet in carrying out the purpose to be entirely a Christian.

(4.) I mention a fourth thing as operating to prevent one who is almost persuaded to be a Christian from becoming altogether such,—*a desire to be free from the restraints and obligations of religion.* Such a man does not purpose to live in open sin; he does not intend to be regarded as an infidel. But he desires to be more free in his pursuits than if he were bound by the obligations of church membership; he desires to be more free in regard to attendance on public worship, and the observance of the sabbath,—more free from any obligation to attend on meetings for prayer, to labour in sabbath schools, to aid in efforts of Christian philanthropy,—than he would think it right to be, if he had joined himself to a Christian church. He knows, indeed, that if he were to become a member of a Christian church, he could vindicate himself in all which, in these respects, he now desires, if he were to make some professors his standard; but well does he know that their mode of life by no means comes up to what may be properly demanded of such as bear the Christian name. And he is not prepared for the

restraints which he knows a Christian profession truly imposes. He has always felt that he was free; he wishes to take on himself no obligation; he wishes still to ward off all appeals with the summary statement that he is not a professor of religion,—not a member of the church.

III. It remains to notice *the proper grounds of appeal to be made to persons who are in this state of mind.*

(I.) The state of mind *itself*. In the case of Agrippa, it was not needful for Paul to speak as if he had been addressing a heathen. Agrippa was a believer in revelation. That point was admitted; that was the very basis of the appeal:—"King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest." And though Agrippa's faith did not extend to the point that Jesus of Nazareth was the predicted Messiah, yet the main difficulty was overcome; and it seemed to Paul, if the fact was admitted that the prophets were inspired, there was but a step to the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Christ.

It is hardly necessary to remark that there *must* be a great difference between approaching a sceptical mind, and a mind speculatively convinced of the truth of the Bible. In the former case, all the work is to be done from the foundation. The entire question of the possibility of a revelation; of its necessity; and of the evidence in favour of any particular revelation, is to be argued. When all this is done, we have but just come to the point which was assumed by Paul in the appeal

to Agrippa. In the latter case, as in that of Agrippa, all this may be assumed at once, and we have only to ask men to carry out in all honesty the convictions of their own minds. It is a great advantage in preaching, where Christianity is known, that even when the full effect of the Gospel is not secured, it has prepared many minds for serious appeals; and we are justified in at once calling upon men to carry out to the proper result that which they already admit as truth.

(2.) We may appeal on the ground of *consistency*. They avow all, in the *understanding*, which we ask them to receive in the *heart*. Admitting the truth of the Bible, they admit the fact of their own depravity; the need of regeneration; the necessity of repentance; the propriety of faith in order to salvation; the doctrine of the atonement; the claims of a Saviour; the obligations of prayer and of holy living. If they would simply act out their own admitted principles, all that we seek to secure would be gained.

To all such we say,—Your reason, your conscience, your judgment are on the side of religion; and we merely ask you to carry out these admissions and convictions. A desire to maintain consistency of character, if there were no other motive, demands that you should be *altogether* Christians. We say that this is a proper motive to urge. Every man who is careful of his reputation (as every wise man is),—every man who seeks to carry out his own principles (as every man should),—must admit the force of this appeal. He owes it to himself, to these principles themselves, to the cause of virtue, to

society, to his own proper influence while living, to his memory when dead, to the welfare of his children, to his friends, to his country, to the world, and to God, to carry out what he owns to be truth, and to allow it to produce its fair influence on his life. Thus men feel and act in other matters. There is no other subject on which they hold important principles as mere abstract opinions, and make no effort to apply them in their conduct. Neither in finance, in commerce, in professional life, in the mechanic arts, nor in domestic arrangements, do they hold a set of important truths in theory which they habitually disregard in practice. They maintain that it is right to be honest, but they do not feel justified in holding this as an abstraction, and disregarding it in their transactions. They give assent to the principles of chastity, truth, patriotism; but they also aim to carry out those principles in their lives. Christianity demands the same thing of those who admit its Divine origin. It asks no more; no less. Is this an unreasonable demand?

You admit that there is a God; yet you offer Him no homage; you never worship Him. You admit that you are a sinner; yet you exercise no repentance; you make no effort to become holy; you make use of no means to secure pardon, and to avoid the wrath to come. You admit that you can be saved only by the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet you are not seeking to obtain an interest in His blood. You profess to believe that there is a heaven; yet you are making no efforts to secure it; a hell, yet you make no efforts to avoid it.

In the conduct of the atheist, the sceptic, the infidel, there *is* a melancholy consistency. The sceptical sensualist and voluptuary is only carrying out his principles when he gives himself to revelry, and says to his companions, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." It is fair for him to say, "Let us make the most of this present life, for there is no life beyond; let us multiply, refine, and prolong the pleasures of sense, for these are all that can be ours." But is this consistent for a man who believes that there is a God; that he himself has an immortal soul; that he is made to be a religious being; that he must live for ever; that a Saviour died to redeem him; and that man's great interests are beyond the grave?

(3.) A third consideration as a ground of appeal to such men is, that their own *guilt* and *danger* must be increased by the fact of their admitting these obligations while yet practically disregarding them.

(a.) *Guilt.* That this is increased, is manifest. Guilt is always augmented by light and knowledge, and by the fact that a man is neglecting what he knows and admits to be duty and truth. There is, indeed, guilt in the heathen world, for there is some degree of light and knowledge even there; but amidst all the pollutions which prevail, there is also pervading ignorance of God and of His law,—ignorance which must mitigate the measure of guilt, and modify the sentence of the last day. No thunders, like those of Sinai, have there proclaimed the law of God; no herald of salvation has told of a bleeding Redeemer; no teacher has explained

the pure precepts of the Gospel. But, in a Christian land, the first lessons learned were usually those which pertained to a God and Saviour; the earliest recollections which you have, may be those of a mother bending over your cradle in prayer, or a father kneeling at the family altar. All your life, you may have gone regularly to the sanctuary; may have occupied a place in the courts of God; may have heard more frequently than any other lessons, the great truths of religion. Who shall say that there is not in such a case deeper guilt and a more solemn account to be rendered, than in the case of the poor benighted heathen?

(*b.*) *Danger.* Can there be any doubt that this, too, is augmented by a man's knowing his duty, and his being unwilling to perform it? Danger always follows guilt, and the one is commensurate with the other (Matt. xi. 23, 24; Luke xiii. 34, 35). Why the heavy doom of Capernaum? Why that judgment impending over Jerusalem, which drew tears from the eyes of the Redeemer? The answer is plain. The Son of God Himself had made known to them the will of God and the way of salvation. "Because," says God, "I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh" (Prov. i. 24--26). "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1).

XIX.

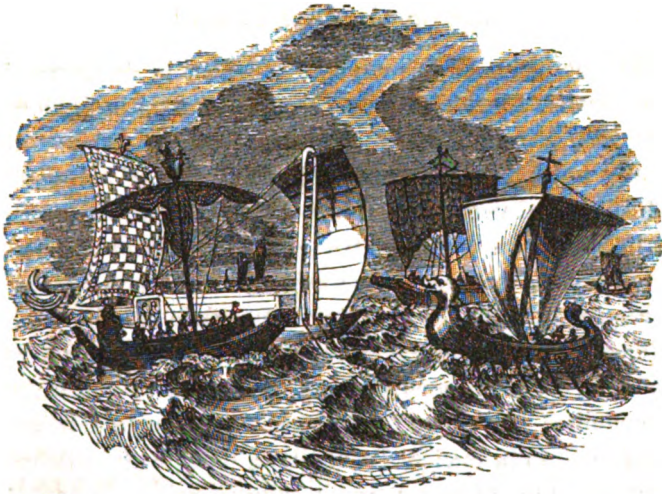
THE VOYAGE TO ROME.

The fulfilment of the Divine purposes and promises connected with human agency.

Ancient navigation.—Dangers of the voyage.—Calmness of the apostle.—
The assurance or promise of salvation.—God has a plan for saving men.
—It was necessary for Him to have such a plan.—Such plan must have
been eternal.—Such plan could not be wrong, if the thing planned was
right.—This plan is specific and definite.—All Divine plans are so.—
The nature of the case demands it.—Scripture affirms it.—Definite as to
the number saved.—As to the certainty of their salvation.—*God's plan
connected with human agency.*—God might work alone.—He did so in
creation.—He can still do so, if He pleases.—But He does not ordinarily
do this.—In secular things He uses human instrumentality.—So in
religion.—Hence we learn a lesson of activity.—Our hope of salvation
is connected with the use of means.—Life a voyage.—The shore of
safety.

“Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, 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. . . . And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.”

ACTS xxvii. 21, 22, and 30, 31.



ANCIENT SHIPS.



HE voyage described in Acts xxvii, so far as the apostle Paul was concerned, was in consequence of the appeal which he had made to the Roman emperor, when he was arraigned before Festus (Acts xxv. 10, 11). Navigation at that time, over those seas, was very different from what it is there now. Then it was long, tedious, dangerous, in vessels ill-fitted for the voyage, dependent on the changing winds, and often occupying wearisome months, making it necessary to secure a safe harbour on the way, till the dangerous season was past;—whereas now the same voyage is made in vessels navigated in a manner wholly unknown to the ancients; not dependent on the winds; and requiring only a few days to make the voyage which it took Paul so many weeks to accomplish.

The narrative of this voyage, as given in the Acts of the Apostles, has been very carefully studied in modern times by men eminent in the science of navigation, and it has been shown that it is a description of a voyage which actually occurred; and that the narrative was written by one who was an eye-witness, and a participator in the scenes, as well as by one who was familiar with navigation. It is, from the nature of the case, almost the only event recorded in the Bible where modern *nautical* knowledge can be applied to verify the account of the sacred historian. To those not acquainted with ancient navigation, and with nautical matters, the narrative, as it stands, is encompassed with many difficulties; and until recently it did not occur to any expositor of the Bible to apply to it the knowledge which a *seaman* has.¹

It does not comport with my design to attempt a minute illustration of the history. The principal interest in the voyage is that which is derived from the fact that a Christian apostle was on board; from the fact that this was one of the incidents in his

¹ "A practical knowledge of seamanship was required for the elucidation of the whole subject; and none of the ordinary commentators seem to have looked on it with the eye of a sailor. The first who examined St. Paul's voyage in a practical spirit was the late Admiral Sir Charles Penrose. . . A similar investigation was made subsequently, but independently, and more minutely and elaborately, by James Smith, Esq., of Jordanhill, whose published work on the subject (1848) has already obtained an European reputation."—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. p. 321, *note*. The substance of this examination, illustrating the narrative of the author of the Acts of the Apostles, may be seen in the twenty-third chapter of their work (vol. ii. pp. 321—374).

life; from the nature of the object which he aimed to accomplish, the great work in which he was engaged,—that of spreading the Gospel among the nations of the earth. If we take away the apostle Paul from the scene and the events, the voyage would not be distinguished from thousands of voyages made over those waters in Grecian, Roman, or Alexandrian ships; the storm and tempest which then occurred would be in no manner distinguishable from similar storms and tempests constantly occurring there; the efforts to secure a safe harbour, or to ensure the safety of the vessel by “undergirding,” or to fasten it by anchors cast out of the stern, could be in no way distinguished from efforts made, of a similar kind, a hundred times before or since; and the shipwreck would have ceased long since to be remembered as having anything to distinguish it from a thousand shipwrecks which had before occurred in those dangerous seas. The name of the vessel; the name of the captain; the names of the sailors; and the names of the other prisoners, have alike long ago perished.

Perhaps the main point in the history now under our attention, so far as the Apostle Paul was concerned, was his entire calmness in the midst of the dangers of the deep; his confidence in God; his assurance that he would be brought safely on his way to Rome. Of this he had had a promise in the night-vision at Jerusalem (Acts xxiii. 11). Under this assurance, his mind had been calm amidst the dangers of the voyage, until having passed by Crete, they

encountered a more fearful peril than any which they had experienced—the imminent danger of shipwreck. Then, in order to reassure the mind of Paul, and in order that he might inspire confidence in the crew and prisoners, and might thus be the means of saving all on board, a new vision was vouchsafed to him: “There stood by me this night,” said he to the alarmed mariners, “the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Cæsar; 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” (vers. 23—25).

Yet, there was something more than the mere assurance—the promise—the declared purpose on the part of God manifested in the vision, that was *necessary* to save the crew, and the passengers, and the soldiers. There was something *outside of the mere assurance or promise*, which was needful *in order* that this might be done,—something without which it could not be done. There was that, connected with human agency, without which the purpose of God, though so plainly declared, would not, and could not be accomplished. What that was, is stated in the words of Paul to the centurion and soldiers, “*Except these abide in the ship, YE CANNOT BE SAVED.*” In the impending danger, the “shipmen”—the crew—made arrangements “to flee out of the ship;” they let down a boat into the sea for that purpose. The men, who alone, it is to be presumed, were in any manner acquainted with the management of a vessel,

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ST PAUL SHIPWRECKED
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and who, therefore, alone were qualified to do what was necessary to be done, were about to withdraw from the ship; Paul said that if *that* were allowed, the destruction of all on board would be certain. He had seen much of sea-dangers; and either by what he had witnessed, or by natural sagacity, or by Divine inspiration, he knew what the danger was now. Confiding in his advice, the escape of the crew was prevented; and the ultimate result was, that *all* on board—the crew, the centurion, the soldiers, the prisoners, and Paul among them—escaped safe to land (ver. 44).

From the circumstances thus detailed, I shall deduce this proposition:—that the plans and purposes of God are to be carried out in connexion with human agency; or, to put it in stronger language, are *dependent* on human agency. The case before us related to salvation from the dangers of the sea. The same *principle* is applicable to a higher salvation,—the final salvation of men from the danger of eternal ruin,—the salvation of the soul; and it is with reference to this that I shall use it. My remarks, however, will mainly be in illustration of the general principle, that THE PURPOSES OF GOD ARE DEPENDENT ON HUMAN AGENCY FOR THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT.

I shall illustrate this under two general heads:—

I. There is, on the part of God, a definite plan or purpose in regard to the salvation of men; and II. The accomplishment of that purpose is connected with human agency.

I. The first proposition is that *there is, on the part of God, a definite plan or purpose in regard to the salvation of men.* There was an assurance given to Paul that he would be brought to Rome; there is an assurance equally strong and clear to the people of God that they will be brought to heaven.

There are two subordinate points to be considered here:—(1) That there *is* such a plan; (2) That this plan is specific and positive in regard to those who shall be saved.

(1.) There is such a plan on the part of God. That is, He *has* a purpose in regard to the salvation of men. That plan or purpose is what is commonly designated by a word that grates harshly on the ears of most men,—His “*decree.*” The evidence that there is such a plan is found in such passages of Scripture as the following:—“He”—the Messiah—“shall see of the travail of His soul, *and shall be satisfied*” (Isa. liii. 11). That is, His work—His sacrifice—shall not be in vain, or void. The purpose contemplated shall be accomplished; and there shall be a full equivalent for *all* the sufferings of the Messiah in behalf of men. “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (John vi. 37); that is, all whom He has given me by purpose or by covenant,—all whom He has intended or promised to give me—shall surely come to me; the purpose to give them to me makes the result certain. “I lay down My life for the sheep; and other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall

be one fold and one shepherd" (John x. 15, 16); that is, there are some given me by the Divine purpose and promise whom I may call "*mine*;" for whom I am about to lay down my life, with a special purpose that they should be saved. "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will; . . . we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. i. 4—11). It is not possible for language to express more clearly than this passage does, the fact that God has a definite design in regard to the salvation of His people; that their redemption is the result of that purpose; and that their being brought into His church is to be traced solely to that plan. There is no article of any creed held by any church, however "Calvinistic," that expresses the doctrine in stronger or more "*objectionable*" language—if it be right to apply to it a term which is often used in regard to the doctrine; and there is no such church, however firm its belief in the doctrine of decrees, that is not satisfied with the use of the language of the Apostle Paul as expressing its own faith.

The following remarks may be added here :—

(*a.*) That the success of the plan of salvation was not left, and *could* not have been left, to chance, or to the determination of men themselves whether they

would embrace it or not. It was a matter of too much importance to be thus left; it involved too much sacrifice, suffering, and self-denial. It cannot be believed that the Son of God would have come into the world to suffer and die, with any uncertainty as to the result of His work, or under any such arrangement as that of a doubtful *experiment* to see whether man *might* not be redeemed. Had it been left to any such contingency as would be involved in the question whether man himself would be *disposed* to accept the salvation so offered, it is morally certain that the scheme would have been a failure, and that not one of the race would have been saved.

(b.) Another remark is, that if this plan existed at all, it was *eternal*. God has no new counsels. He has no *succession* of purposes. He forms no plans to meet unexpected and uncertain contingencies. Every plan which He has, must be, like His own nature, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." If there is any real difficulty in regard to the plan, as bearing on human freedom or responsibility, it exists equally whether the plan is eternal, or whether it is of recent formation. The essential difficulty (so far as there is any difficulty), is that the plan was formed *before* the event occurred; and it matters not, in respect to that, whether it was a day, or a year, or a million of years, or from eternity.

(c.) A third remark is, that such a purpose on the part of God *cannot be wrong*, nor can the fact that He has formed such an eternal purpose constitute an objection to His character or government, unless it can be

shown that the thing purposed to be done was wrong. If *that* is right in itself, it cannot have been wrong to resolve to do it. If it be right for a man to pay his debts, to tell the truth, to do an act of kindness to the poor, to befriend the prisoner and the fatherless, it cannot be wrong for him to resolve that he will do it; and the more firmly he determines to do this, the more do we regard him as a man of virtue. And if this constitutes excellence of character in man, it cannot be a proof of want of excellence in God.

(2.) The plan of God is specific and particular. It embraces just what *will* occur; exactly *as* it will occur; just the *number* that shall be saved; just the *individuals* on whom life will be conferred; and the definite fact that they *will* be saved, or that they cannot be lost.

The declaration of the Divine purpose, in the case of Paul, was definite and specific. It was that he should stand before Cæsar; that all on board the vessel should be rescued, and that not a hair of their heads should perish. Thus it *must* be in regard to the plan of salvation; to the manner in which individual men will be saved; to the fact that no one of those who are embraced in the plan will be allowed to perish.

(a.) This must be so in regard to all the Divine plans. In the nature of the case, they must be specific and definite. They are based on *will*, where there is *power* corresponding with that will, and where there is *knowledge* of all that can affect the execution of that will. They are not formed on conjectural or uncertain reasoning, as the plans of men often are; nor in view

of any contingency which is unforeseen and doubtful ; nor as the result of mere sagacity ; nor under the deceptive influence of mere hope or desire ; nor when there *may* be a power, as is often the case in regard to human schemes, which is unknown to the author of the plan, and against which he cannot guard. It is impossible to conceive that God should form a plan in relation to which, from these or any other causes, there would be anything indefinite or uncertain as to the issue.

(*b.*) The carrying out of the Divine plans *demand*s that there shall be certainty and definiteness in each and all of them. One depends on another. The failure of one would jeopard every other, or render its accomplishment uncertain. In a machine the failure of one wheel, pulley, or band, might derange the whole. Thus it must be in the Divine plans. The revolution of the earth on its axis, and in its orbit, depends on the exactness of the movements of the sun, moon, and stars ; and a want of *certainty* in the movements of any one of them would have rendered the formation of a purpose in regard to the earth, except by miracle, impossible. If it be admitted that God has any plan, the admission carries with it of necessity also the idea that it is definite and certain.

(*c.*) This idea occurs in the Scriptures everywhere in regard to the plan of redemption, and the salvation of men. That plan is never represented as left to uncertainty, or as depending on any contingency, or as liable to be affected and frustrated by that which was not foreseen, and which could not be provided against. There are

statements in the Bible (*e.g.*, 1 Pet. i. 2; Matt. xxiv. 22, 31; Rom. ix. 11, 12; and 15, 16), which prove that there is definiteness in the Divine mind as to the *number* of those who shall be saved; that this matter is not left indefinite; that the plan is not, in this respect, subject to contingencies. Whatever may be the *foundation* of the "election" in the case,—whether it is the mere will of God, or whether it is the foresight of what would be, or whether it is the fact that no others could have been saved,—the fact is affirmed everywhere in the word of God, that there *is* a portion of the human family designated to salvation, and that this portion constitutes the part of the human race which is to be saved,—“THE ELECT OF GOD” (Col. iii. 12).

The same thing is true in regard to the *certainty* of salvation. It was, in the case before us, no uncertain or contingent matter whether those on board the vessel should in the end escape safe to land. The Bible is as clear and definite in its statements with regard to the salvation of those whom God designs to save, as was this promise in regard to the safety of the prisoners, the soldiers, and the crew. “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. i. 6). “It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matt. xviii. 14). “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (John xvii. 24). “No man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand,”—οὐδεὶς, *no one*—man, angel, or devil—

(John x. 27—29). “Whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren; moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. viii. 29, 30).

There is no mistaking the meaning of such language. Those whom He did “*foreknow*,” and whom He “glorified” are the same. Of those—all those—thus foreknown, it is affirmed that they are “predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son;” that they are “called;” that they are “justified;” that they are “*glorified*,”—that is, *saved*. There has been no change in the number, or in the persons, in the process. None thus foreknown, and predestinated, and called, and justified, have fallen off. No new ones have been added; no places have been vacated; no names have been stricken off; no new enlistment has been gone into, to fill up the ranks made thin by apostasy. The march has been an unbroken one; all that started reached heaven. If any who *seemed* to start on the way have wandered off and have been *dropped*, the fact is elsewhere accounted for. So it is said of Judas, that from the apostleship, he “by transgression fell, *that he might go to his own place*” (Acts i. 25). So of those who left the Church in the time of the apostle John: “they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; *but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were*

not all of us" (1 John ii. 19). So of the hearer who was represented by the seed that fell in stony places; "*yet hath he not root in himself*" (Matt. xiii. 21);—he falls away *because* he has *no* true piety.

Thus we have seen that God has a plan for human salvation; and that this plan is definite, both as to the number of the saved, and as to the certainty of their being saved.

II. My second proposition was, that *the accomplishment of the Divine purpose in the salvation of men is connected with human agency*. This is founded on the statement: "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved;" that is to say, on the fact that it was *in the power* of these men to leave the ship, and thus to frustrate the Divine purpose; and on the declaration that their remaining there was *indispensable* to the safety of all. If they had *not* stayed in the vessel, the purpose of God could not have been carried out, except by miracle.

There are two methods by which God can accomplish His purposes; two to make choice of; two to use. The one is His own absolute and independent power; the other is the instrumentality of means. It cannot be denied that both of these methods are adopted, each in an appropriate sphere, though we may not be able to separate and define them, so as to determine always where the one ends and the other begins, or may not be able always to understand why the one or the other was adopted in a particular case.

(1.) There *is* a sphere where God works alone; where He accomplishes His purposes by His own independent power. Such, undoubtedly, was the case in the creation of the worlds; such may be the case in keeping the universe in the form and order in which He has created it; such *may* be His control over what are called the "laws of nature"—gravitation; attraction; repulsion; electricity; galvanism; and the vital forces. In the act of creation no means could have been used, no instrumentalities could have been employed, no secondary causes could have been relied on, nothing could have entered into the result *but* the Divine power and will; for the very *idea* of creation is that nothing but God preceded that which was brought into being. There was a time—if the word "time" may be so employed—when God was literally *alone*. There was a period when He ceased to be alone, for He *willed* that there should be worlds where there had been none before; that there should be countless beings where all before was void.

That He reserves this power still, no one can doubt or deny; that He does not make use of it, no one can prove. He has not *exhausted* it in the acts of creation. He has not so bound or committed Himself that He may not employ it. Whether He does thus employ it in any case, is a question to be settled, not by *assuming* that it is never put forth, but, as in any other case, by appropriate evidence *in regard to a fact*.

It *may be* that this power is reserved in relation to the establishment of the truth of religion by miracle; by some act of His above the powers of nature, and

where the only antecedents to what is done are His will and His power—as in raising one from the dead, or in opening the eyes of the blind. It *may be* that this power is reserved in relation to the conversion of the soul by the special influences of the Spirit of God. It *may be* that this power is reserved for vindicating and defending His people in times of danger. It *may be* that this power is reserved in relation to great changes which are to occur on the earth in the elevation of the race. It *may be* that this power is reserved in relation to the final resurrection of the dead, and the winding up of the affairs of the world.

(2.) But while all this is in the power of God, and while no one can prove that this power is *not* reserved in relation to important matters in the world's history, it is also true that this is *not the ordinary method* by which God works. It is true that God *could* have saved the prisoners and the soldiers, by miracle; but He chose *not* to save them in this way. It is certain that He *would* not have saved them at all, if the crew had not, at the suggestion of Paul, remained in the ship.

To work by human agency is God's ordinary method in the secular affairs of men; this is His ordinary method in their salvation. It is only on this supposition that we can form our plans, and found our hopes, in respect either to our secular or our spiritual interests.

The earth is cultivated in this way. God *could* create plants, fruits, and flowers now, as He did in Eden. He *could* level the forests, upturn the soil, raise fences around the fields, gather out the stones, scatter or create the

seed, and gather in the harvest, by His own direct power. But He does *not* do this. If man employs not his own agency, it is not done, and will not be done.

The sea is navigated in the same manner. God could bring the productions of foreign climes across the waters—the gold, the diamonds, the pearls—the spices, the oranges, the bananas—the wheat, the rice, the cotton, the silks, the woollens, the linens—by His own power, without the instrumentality of man. But He does *not* do it. If man does it not himself, it will not be done; and in this sense, the plans of God are dependent on human agency. If that agency were *not* put forth, the nations would have no commercial intercourse, nor the productions of one climate be transferred to another.

Religion is propagated in like manner. God could, undoubtedly, reveal His truth individually to any and every human being on the earth, and make His will known by miracle and inspiration to each successive generation. He could give a Bible to every man; He could at once flood the moral world with truth, as He did the natural world with light. But He does *not* do this. Religion is *not* spread in any such way. It is by human effort; and if that effort is not put forth, the work is not done; so that, in this sense also, the plans of God are made to depend on the agency of man.

The souls of men are converted and saved in this same manner. God has the power of converting the soul by His own direct agency. But He does not do it. The sinner is promised salvation if he will pray; if he will repent; if he will believe; if he will forsake his sins;

if he will turn to God; if he will live a holy life. He prays; he repents; he believes; he forsakes his sins; he turns to God; he leads a holy life,—and he *is* saved. If he did not do this, he would not be saved; and in this sense, also, it is true that the plans of God are inseparably connected with the agency of man. Of any sinner it is just as true that he will not be saved without his own efforts, as it was in the case of the tossed and endangered soldiers and prisoners and mariners in the ship, that unless all should abide in it, no one on board could be saved.

In view of the doctrine thus illustrated, I would remark,

(1.) That it has an important bearing on the whole subject of religion. It is opposed to Antinomianism—a refuge which men are prone to embrace when the doctrine of the Divine decrees and purposes is brought before them. It prompts to activity and energy in a case where men might otherwise plead that, since the whole matter of salvation is determined and fixed by the Divine purpose, their own efforts are needless, and would be of no avail.

(2.) Our only hope of salvation is connected with the use of the means which God has appointed. It is only so far as we employ those means, only so far as in fact we comply with His commands, only so far as we *do* what He requires us to do, that we can have any well-founded hope of eternal life. God has not authorized us to hope in anything else; and all other hope is mere

presumption. In the work of salvation, as in everything else, the means must be proportionate to the end; they must be such as God has appointed; they must be employed as He has directed.

(3.) Life is a voyage, a perilous voyage, which that of Paul affectingly illustrates. The delays; the slow progress; the necessity of seeking safe harbours; the storms; the quicksands; the darkness; the uncertain way; the leaky ship; the striking on the shore; the beating of the waves; the failure of the anchors; the breaking up of the vessel; the plunge into the deep; the clinging to boards and broken pieces,—what apt emblems of human life! From all these dangers there is a safe refuge—a shore which may be reached—a firm anchorage—a land where, secure from danger, we shall be welcomed, and may dwell for ever. How happy would it be if we could assure *all*, as Paul did the alarmed and imperilled mariners, that “there shall be no loss of any man’s life;” that God hath given us all those that sail with us; that “there shall not a hair fall from the head of any;” that only “the ship” will be lost. Our earthly possessions will, indeed, perish in the final wreck of all things; but let the ship perish, let all that we have sink in the deep, if *we* may come “safe to land.” From these storms and billows—these dangerous seas—these tempestuous voyages—may we all be brought, at last, **SAFE TO HEAVEN!**

XX.

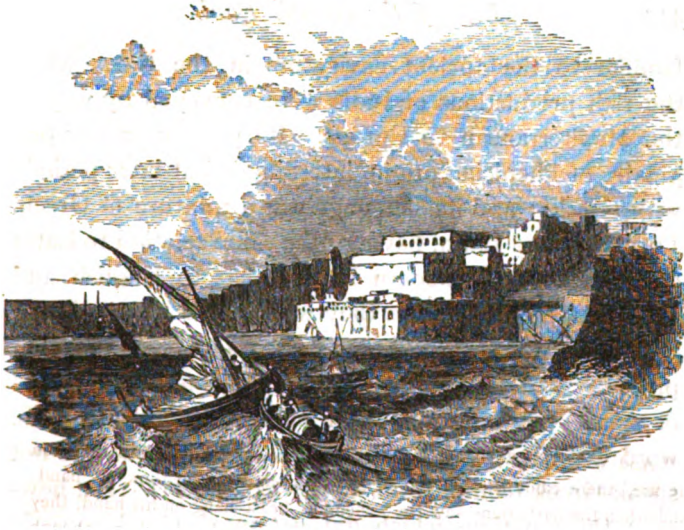
PAUL AT MALTA.

The general belief of mankind that the world is under a just providential government.

Malta.—Its inhabitants.—Their reception of the shipwrecked.—The viper.—Supposition respecting Paul.—*General sense among men of Divine justice in the punishment of crime.*—The feeling is natural to man.—Is found in all moral codes.—Is traced in early usages.—Is embodied in all laws.—*General belief in a Divine arrangement for the discovery of crime.*—“Murder will out.”—Awakened vigilance.—Difficulty of concealment.—Dr. Webster.—Minute evidences.—Self-betrayal.—*General conviction that punishment ought to follow crime.*—Theories of punishment.—Often morbid.—It is not for reformation.—Nor for mere restraint.—But a requirement of justice.—And one to which society assents.—The handwriting of God himself on the heart.—The sinner lives in a world of justice.—Justice will follow him wherever he goes.—The universe will acquiesce in his doom.—But there is a way of escape.

“ And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.”

ACTS xxviii. 4.



MALTA.



THE small island of Melita, or Malta, has a history of its own, not uninteresting or unimportant in the annals of the world. The Knights of Malta, by their exploits, have made its name celebrated; the siege of Malta was one of the most memorable that has occurred in all history. But its principal interest now to us, and to the world at large, is the fact that it is the island on which the great Christian apostle was cast, in his voyage to Rome.

It is situated to the south of Sicily, from the nearest point of which it is about fifty-eight miles distant. Its greatest length is seventeen and a half miles; its greatest breadth nine and a quarter. It was well known to the Romans as "a dependency on the province of Sicily;" and the principal harbour, Valetta, must have been

familiar to the ancient navigators in the times when the rich productions of India were conveyed by way of the Mediterranean to Europe. Its population was originally of Phenician origin, intermingled at later periods with Greeks; and its language was a mixture of Greek, Phenician, and Latin, having "the same relation to Latin and Greek which modern Maltese has to English and Italian." By the Greeks they were called "barbarians," *βάρβαροι*—the word *barbarian* (*βάρβαρος*) meaning properly *a foreigner*, or one who does not understand or speak the language of a particular people. The word was used by the Greeks to denote all who did not speak Greek (comp. Rom. i. 14; Col. iii. 11). As, however, those nations which did *not* speak Greek were, in general, less civilized than the Greeks themselves, the word came to denote, as it does with us, those who were rude, uncultivated, and savage in their manners.

It is to be observed, however, that although the name *barbarian* is given to the inhabitants of Malta, they were a people who, in some respects, were an example to more civilized nations, and their conduct is most favourably contrasted with that of many, even in Christian lands, in regard to such as are driven on their shores. To these shipwrecked strangers they "showed no little kindness." They "kindled a fire," and welcomed them "every one" to its warmth, drenched as they were by the sea, and shivering with cold. Indeed an illustration of human nature might be derived from the manifestation of such kindness by these "barbarians," showing what gentleness, kindness, and compassion may exist in

the human bosom though man is fallen, and suggesting the bearing of these virtues on social order, domestic peace, and the general happiness of the world.

But I do not propose to consider that point now. There is another subject presented by the narrative, equally illustrating what there is in man in his fallen condition, and important as relating to the government of God, bearing alike on the course of this world and the world to come. It is founded on the statement that "when the barbarians saw the venomous beast" hang on the hand of Paul, "they said among themselves, 'No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.'" The word rendered "vengeance"—δικη—means properly custom, manner; prescription, right; a judicial process, lawsuit, trial; then, judgment or sentence of condemnation; then penalty, punishment, vengeance. Here it is the *personification* of justice or vengeance, and probably has reference to the heathen goddess *Vengeance*, or *Nemesis*. The idea is, that there was a sense of *justice* in the case; that, in their apprehension, such a punishment must have been the consequence of some remarkable crime; that there was a belief among them in an order or course of events on earth which makes it certain that due punishment will overtake the guilty; and that such a punishment is, in itself, proper. Why they supposed that the crime which had been committed was *murder*, is not known. It is probable, however, that it was because mankind universally believe murder to be the most atrocious crime that can

be committed, and the most certain to be followed by deserved punishment.

From the incident as thus explained, I shall deduce the following propositions:—I. That there is, in the bosoms of men, a general sense of Divine justice; a belief that the world is under a moral government, and that crime is to be punished. II. That, under that government, there is an arrangement by which it is believed that crime *will* be detected. III. That there is a prevalent conviction among men that it is right and proper that this *should* be so.

I. *There is a general sense of Divine justice among men, even among those who are the most barbarous and uncivilized.* Such a belief existed among the people of Malta, as one of the promptings of their nature; on this belief they acted without hesitation or doubt; and they may, without impropriety, be regarded as representing mankind at large.

(1.) This conviction, with more or less distinctness, exists in all nations, often imperfect indeed, and often perverted, but still so manifesting itself, as it did on this occasion, as to show that it lies *deep in the human mind*. Man is, indeed, fallen; and his faculties of mind, and his views of moral subjects, are sadly deranged. But still there are things remaining in fallen man—*fragments*, so to speak, of what he was—sympathies, tendencies, aspirations, affections, sensibilities, perceptions of what is right, and promptings to what is right, which show what he originally was, and which show, at

the same time, what is the character of the government under which he is placed. There was not probably an original virtue in the heart of man when he was created, of which there is not in him *something* even now that reminds us of it, and that tells us what he was designed to be. These things which fallen human nature still retains, resemble, in some respects, the half-effaced inscriptions found on ancient tombs and monuments. The letters of the name have, in part, been worn away by time; the dates are half-obliterated; the dignity of the sleeper within can be only imperfectly proven by the defaced emblems of rank. But skill, and care, and sagacity, may enable us to fill up the partially-lost inscription; to put in a letter here, and a letter there, that shall so completely supply the chasm as to leave no doubt that the true words are restored. In like manner, there are in the soul, half-effaced records of man's original nature and dignity. We cannot read them perfectly. From them alone we never could know entirely what man originally was. Yet they are there; and when they are *filled up* with the knowledge imparted by revelation, the record becomes complete. The knowledge thus imparted *fits in* to the rest, as the letters added do to the inscription on the tomb; and we have a correct understanding of what man was.

Among these traces left upon the hearts of men, though fallen, and even though barbarians, I have at present to mention the following:—(a.) The belief in some form of a Divinity, or Divine government, as was indicated in the case of these islanders. (b.) A sense of

justice, and a feeling that the guilty deserve to be punished. These are things which tend to illustrate the nature of the administration under which man lives, and the character of that great Being who presides over all. If it should be said, in objection to this remark, that man is conscious of other tendencies, in an opposite direction, and that there are things in his nature quite as universal which seem to indicate the contrary, the reply is obvious. These things, though they *exist*, are not regarded as matters of *obligation*, or of *right*. They are not looked upon with approbation. The nature of man does not teach him to cherish and cultivate them, but to overcome, to resist, to destroy them.

(2.) Wherever men have embodied their sentiments in *codes of morals*, it has been done in accordance with this view. These codes of morals among men are remarkably harmonious in the main points. They differ in regard to the degree of intelligence, and to the range of subjects; not in the principles on which they are founded. Men are to do certain things because they are right; they are to abstain from certain things, because they are wrong. To a great extent, also, those things, in both respects, are substantially the same. If they do not come up to the full measure of the ten commandments of Moses, or of the Sermon of Christ on the Mount (as they, in fact, do not), yet they do not, in the main, violate the principles of either, or enjoin things which are there forbidden. There are no books on the subject of morals, in any language, or in any age, which do not make a distinction between right and wrong;

and for the most part, in regard to the same actions. With most striking coincidences, and with no very palpable divergencies, the same things are found on these subjects in Seneca, in Pliny, in Plato, in Confucius, and in Lord Herbert; in the laws of the Republics of Greece, in the Assyrian and Babylonian laws, in the laws of China, in the laws of the twelve tables of Rome, and in the New Testament. This fact may, therefore, also be regarded as an illustration of what mankind considers the government of the world to be.

(3.) The same views are found in a community *before* there are regular laws in regard to the administration of justice. There never has been a nation or a tribe of men which had not some notions that the guilty should be punished, and especially, as on the island of Malta, that a *murderer* ought not to escape.

In the earliest ages it was a universal conviction that the duty of avenging the blood of the slain devolved on the "nearest of kin" to the murdered man, and that he was not only at liberty, but was bound to avenge the blood thus shed. Among the Hebrews such a person was known as "the avenger of blood" (Num. xxxv. 19, *seq.*; Deut. xix. 6, 12; Josh. xx. 3; 2 Sam. xiv. 11). His business was to see that the offender should not escape, but that he who *slew* should himself *be slain*. Such a person was recognized in all Oriental nations; such a person is found everywhere in the rude stages of society. Among American savages this duty devolved, as elsewhere, on the nearest kinsman; and, among these tribes, it became the business of life to pursue the guilty,

to seek him out, and to accomplish his death,—or if vengeance could not be wrought by the kinsman himself, and on the offender, the duty devolved on his descendant in the next generation to take such revenge on some one of the tribe to which the offender belonged.

It was not easy to regulate this matter, so as to save from the outburst of passion an innocent man who might be suspected. Nor was it easy to abolish the custom, because the *principle* was deeply laid in the structure of ancient society. Moses, therefore, who could not at once abrogate it among the Hebrews, sought to control and restrain it, so that the guilty only should suffer. He appointed "Cities of Refuge" to which the manslayer might flee (Num. xxxv. 10—15), and where he would be safe until the case could be properly determined by the forms of law. Subsequently, also, the horns of the altar became a place of refuge, from which even the guilty could not be torn by violence for the satisfaction of private vengeance (1 Kings ii. 28). Thus, too, in the middle ages, the altar in the sanctuary was regarded as a place of safety from popular violence.

It is manifest, from all this, that there is in the bosom of man a deep conviction of the necessity of punishment, even when that punishment cannot be regulated by law. The "avenger of blood" was the minister of justice,—one who represented what every man felt to be a carrying out of the Divine purpose in the infliction of vengeance.

(4.) The same thing is true in regard to the *laws* of men. As the world advances in civilization, arrangements for the punishment of crime enter into all laws,

and are essential to the organization of civil society. No civil government would be complete without courts, and prisons, and instruments of punishment; or without an array of officers whose business it is to ferret out the guilty, and to bring them to trial. Arrangements for detecting the guilty, and for punishing them, are as universal, and as essential, as houses, and barns, and roads, and bridges, and legislative halls, and graveyards; and we should as soon expect to find a civilized community without the one as the other.

As civilization has made progress in the world, numerous arrangements have also been adopted on the same principle as the appointment of cities of refuge to be places of safety from the avenger of blood. The whole matter of punishment has been taken from the hands of those related to the injured or murdered man, and placed in the hands of independent and impartial men,—the appointed officers of the law; and it is required that those who occupy that position shall be impartial, upright, incorruptible men, who can be confided in alike by the accuser and the accused.

It is material to observe that, while society has made constant advances, still the same *principle* is recognized, that all this is demanded as connected with the *Divine* government over the world. The judge, the subordinate officers of justice, the jurymen, are alike the “ministers of God.” Each one is appointed under the idea of a general sense of justice implanted in the soul of man; thus carrying out the sentiment in the minds of these barbarians, that *justice* should be done; and that there is,

and should be, an arrangement in the world to secure the punishment of the guilty. This was my first proposition.

II. The second point proposed to be considered was, that *there is a process or arrangement under the Divine government by which crime will be detected and punished.* This was evidently the belief of these islanders; and it is my purpose now to show that this belief was founded on a state of things which was then open to observation, and which exists everywhere; and that it is not of human invention, but that it lies in the very structure of society—in the very nature of man.

This might be proved in reference to all crime; all forms of guilt. The boy at school who does a wrong to another boy on the supposition that it will be undiscovered, or the boy who in the same way robs an orchard at night, is often surprised to find that the act was known,—that there was some silent observer of what he was doing,—or that some circumstance of which he was not aware has brought his deed out to the light of noonday.

But it will be more appropriate to illustrate this in reference to the particular subject referred to in the narrative,—the commission of an act of murder. These islanders believed that the “goddess of vengeance” would not suffer the murderer to go undetected and unpunished; and that, though the offender had survived one peril—the danger of the sea—yet that *another* method of punishment had been in reserve, making it impos-

sible that he should escape. They were in error in supposing that this particular thing was proof on the point; but they were in the right in believing that there *is* an arrangement designed to find out the murderer, and to ensure his punishment. It has passed into a proverb that "murder will out." The following things may in few words be referred to,—all of which are to be regarded as a part of the Divine arrangement for that purpose; that is, as things which cannot be explained on any other supposition than that.

(1.) There is the awakened vigilance in every community on the commission of an act of murder, making every man feel that he has a personal interest and a personal responsibility in securing, if he can, the detection and punishment of the murderer; in the fact that every man is at once—so to speak—turned into a "detective," to find out the criminal, and to bring him to justice.

(2.) The difficulty of covering up or concealing the crime, so that it shall not be discovered,—a difficulty which is often so palpable, and so wonderful, as to lead to the belief that there *is* some special Divine agency in preventing the obliteration of all the marks and evidences of guilt. In itself considered, it would not seem to be difficult to obliterate all traces of a murder; to place the knife where it could not be found; to cleanse the axe so that it should not betray the blood upon it; to burn a garment so that it should not reveal the stain; or to consume a body by fire or by some chemical agency, or to hide it by burial, so that no traces of it

could be found. Yet nothing is more difficult. Dr. Webster, an accomplished chemist, undertook to hide the evidence of murder by destroying, by chemical process, the body of his victim;—yet it was done in a manner so unskilful and so unscientific as to lead to detection, and to elicit the profane remark of another chemist that “he could forgive him for the murder, but not for the want of chemical skill in disposing of the body.”

(3.) The very slight circumstances through which detection occurs may be referred to as another illustration of this point. A lock of hair; a footprint in the snow or on the sand; an unguarded remark; the possession of some article of little or no value;—any one of a thousand things in themselves apparently trifling may lead to the discovery.

(4.) We might advert to the madness and folly of him who has committed the crime,—as if abandoned by God. Remorse, compelling him to confess the crime; indications of guilt in sleep, too,—troubled dreams, the language of a guilty conscience;—the fear of every man (“I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth,” said the first murderer; “and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me”),—such things as these betray the murderer, and justify the deep feeling of men everywhere, that, under the Divine government, such crime is sure to be detected and punished.

III. We are prepared now to consider the third point which was to be illustrated,—that *there is a general con-*

viction among men that it is proper and right that this should be so. Beyond all doubt these barbarian islanders acquiesced in the arrangement. They not only saw in the fastening of the viper on the hand of the stranger what they regarded as proof that he was a guilty man, but what they regarded as a proof of that which was just and right in the case. On no subject have the sentiments of men been more decided and unanimous than on the conviction that the guilty SHOULD be punished. It would be necessary that the whole structure of society should be altered, and a universal change made in the affairs of men, if this should cease to be the belief of mankind. The belief is equally universal, (when men express themselves freely), that punishment should be for *crime*; that it is designed to be an expression of the *evil* of the crime as such; and that, as far as it can be, it is a just *measure* of the evil of the crime committed. This point is material to the subject; and the views entertained on this affect the whole question of justice and punishment.

There are, indeed, prevailing theories in regard to punishment, which are directly in conflict with this view; but these theories are at variance with human nature as God has made it. They are the results of a morbid sensibility; of false compassion for the guilty; of the aversion of the heart to the idea of punishment,—especially of punishment in the future world. They proceed on the supposition that all the objects of punishment can be accomplished in this life, and that punitive suffering will not extend beyond the grave.

(a) We may observe here, that punishment is *not* primarily for the *reformation* of the guilty. Whether it contemplates that at all, or is fitted to secure that, is a secondary question. It is never the direct and immediate object. Certainly this is not, and cannot be, the purpose in inflicting capital punishment; and as capital punishment has been practised in all nations, this fact proves that in the estimation of mankind such is *not* the design of punishment. Such punishment has not in itself a *tendency* to reform the guilty. There is no evidence that such result is ever secured by stripes, and chains, and manacles, and hard fare, and excessive toil. It is by the introduction of *moral* influences; by the self-sacrifices of Howard, not by the stern sentence of law, as pronounced by Jeffries.

(b.) In like manner the design of punishment is *not* mere *restraint*; not the mere securing of a community against the commission of crime. That this may be one object of punishment is to be admitted; but it is not the main purpose. The moral sense of mankind would not be met and satisfied by this.

(c.) There is, then, a *higher* idea of punishment than either of these. It is founded on the fact that it is *deserved*; that *justice* demands it; that it would be wrong not to inflict it, even though there might be the most abundant security that the crime would not be repeated if the offender were allowed to go at large.

(d.) When punishment is inflicted,—when the murderer dies, the world at large *acquiesces* in it as right. Men may have no ill-will toward the murderer; no

desire that he should suffer ; no personal wrong to be revenged ; no private feelings to be gratified ; no pleasure in his sufferings as such ; but they would not dare to interpose to rescue him from the hands of the officers of the law. They do not feel that these officers have done wrong, or stained their hands with guilt in condemning him and in putting him to death. Those officers of the law have done what *law* appointed ; what *justice* demanded. Vengeance, justice, God, and the sense of right in man, *required* that it should be done.

In conclusion I remark,

(1.) That these things have been written in the human heart by the hand of God Himself. They would not have been implanted in man, they would not have been found everywhere, if they had not been founded on truth,—if there were not such a thing as justice ; if justice did not demand punishment ; if punishment were not right. The feelings are a counterpart—a *transcript* of the mind of God. We cannot believe that the Creator has implanted false and delusive notions in the heart of man ; that He intends to make use of a falsehood in order to govern the world ; or that He designs great arrangements in society to be made and perpetuated on illusion and deception.

(2.) The sinner lives in a world over which a just Being presides, and where *punishment of guilt* is a part of His arrangement as essential as any other thing that pertains to moral government. This is not a world of mere mercy. It is not a world of mere benevolence.

It is a world where there *is* justice, and where justice demands punishment.

(3.) Wherever the sinner goes, this demand will follow him. If he escapes one danger, it will follow him still. If he is rescued from the perils of the sea, the demand follows him when he places his foot on the land, whether the land be barbarous or civilized. If he escapes from this world and flees to another, it will follow him there.

(4.) The universe will assent to the final punishment of the sinner. "Even so, Lord God Almighty," will be their language, "true and righteous are Thy judgments" (Rev. xvi. 7). In the fearful doom of the wicked all worlds will acquiesce, for all the inhabitants of those worlds will yet see it to be right.

(5.) Finally. There is a way in which the guilty may escape from impending judgment. The Son of God—the Lord Jesus—has died for men, "the just for the unjust." He "has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. liii. 4—6). In Him the guilty may find pardon and peace; through Him the pardoned sinner will be safe on sea or land; whoso believeth on Him will be no more exposed to wrath in this world or in the world to come.

XXI.

PAUL IN ROME.

Paul a prisoner in Rome.—*Fulfilment of his own desire.*—That desire long cherished.—Reason of it.—Centres of influence.—“Beginning at Jerusalem.”—Tendency towards Rome.—Church founded there.—Epistle to the Romans.—Manner in which Paul’s desire was met.—*His employments at Rome.*—Welcome by the Church.—Interview with the Jews.—Influence in Rome.—Care of distant churches.—*The spirit he manifested under the delay.*—Forbearance toward enemies.—Unselfish joy in the furtherance of the Gospel.—Acknowledgment of God’s over-ruling providence.

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

ACTS xxviii. 30, 31.



ANCIENT ROME (FROM THE CAPITOLINE HILL).



HE apostle Paul was a prisoner at Rome;— kept and treated as a prisoner, though in his own “hired house;”—a prisoner under military custody, chained by the right arm both day and night to the left arm of one of the imperial body-guard, and not at liberty to go at large except in company with the soldier (Acts xxviii. 16).¹ As an act of indulgence, however, he was permitted to occupy a dwelling by himself. He had all the liberty which the Roman laws ever conceded to any one who was held for trial. The practice of “bailing” one accused of crime is the offspring of a later humanity.

¹ Comp. Phil. i. 13, and Col. iv. 18. Also, Eph. vi. 20; *πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει*, “I am an ambassador in bonds.” Possibly *two* soldiers guarded him by night, according to the Roman law; “*nox custodiam geminat.*” On the “*Custodia Militaris,*” see *Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. p. 308.

The practical instructions to be derived from the apostle's residence at Rome during the two years in which he was awaiting trial, may be gathered, I. From the fact that a long-cherished desire was now fulfilled; II. From the nature of his employments at Rome; and III. From the spirit he manifested under the delay.

I. The first point to be illustrated is, that, *in the fact of his being at Rome, a desire and purpose long cherished had been accomplished.* That desire was to reach Rome, and to preach the Gospel there.

(1.) This had been with Paul a cherished desire for many years. Thus, in his Epistle to the Romans, written at least four years before, he says, "Without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you; for I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift," &c. (Rom. i. 9—12). It was in accordance with this wish that, as we have already seen, he was twice assured, by express vision, that he would be permitted to bear witness for the Lord "in Rome also."

(2.) It is not difficult to determine what was the reason of this desire. It was not mere curiosity that made him wish to see the capital of the world. It was not the love of fame, or the prospect of increasing his reputation by having the opportunity to preach there, and adding his name to the long list of men, whose renown for eloquence had gone forth from Rome to

the remotest parts of the empire. We know enough of Paul to be convinced that, whatever were his motives, *these* were not the considerations which influenced him.

His desire to reach Rome was in accordance with a general plan or purpose of the apostles. In His parting charge to them, the Saviour commanded "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at *Jerusalem*" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47), because that was the place in which was concentrated more of learning, wealth, and power than in any other city of Palestine, and from which, as a centre, most important influences extended to all parts of the world. The apostles acted on this idea. They sought to preach the Gospel in places from which it might radiate into surrounding regions. Then, as now, great cities *were* centres of influence. From them emanated habits, opinions, laws, which regulated, to a great degree, the views and the customs of the world; and, as those cities, if not purified, would be centres of evil influence, so it was important that they should be made centres of light, and not "plague-spots" in the earth.

There was a *tendency*, therefore, always towards *Rome*. Before Paul went there—how long before, we cannot now ascertain—the Gospel had been carried there, and a church had been founded. The closing chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, contains numerous salutations to members of the church there;—and it is remarkable that so large a number consisted of those who had been in some way connected with Paul; those whom he had elsewhere known in his travels; those who had served

with him in the gospel ; or those who had been converted under his ministry (Rom. xvi. 3—15). Paul had sent to *that* church one of the most laboured and most important of all his epistles. What other writings of the New Testament they had, we know not ; but it cannot be doubted that they would lay this epistle, specifically addressed to them, at the foundation of all their religious doctrines. That letter stands foremost in all the doctrinal instructions of the Bible, and has done more to form the theology of the world than any treatise in any language. It is to this day *the* great theological treatise in the Bible : the most complete and profound exposition of the doctrinal system of the Christian religion, the most elaborate defence of the great doctrine of justification by faith, and the most thorough guide in the application of Christian doctrine to Christian duties, that the world is in possession of. This position, too, it will sustain to the end of time.¹

(3.) The accomplishment of this desire, in the case

¹ In a far distant age, long, long after Paul himself ceased to be among the living ; after all the members of the church in Rome whom he so affectionately saluted in the Epistle had passed away ; after the corruptions and errors of the Papacy had been superinduced on that once pure church,—a few words in that epistle, called to remembrance in that very city, were made the means of reforming the church, and of restoring Christianity to its primitive purity and simplicity of faith. Luther, reared under the sternest rules of the Papacy, as an Augustinian monk, went on a pilgrimage to Rome. In common with others, he sought salvation in the rights and the faith of that corrupt church. Climbing slowly on his knees up “ Pilate’s staircase,” the declaration of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, came into his mind, reached his conscience, touched his heart,—“ *The just shall live BY FAITH*” (Rom. i. 17) ; and that single sentence, impressed on that single mind, has changed the religion of the world.

of the apostle Paul, was brought about in a manner which he did not anticipate, and which was contrary to what would have been his own arrangement. He had hoped and purposed to take Rome on his way in the carrying out of another purpose,—a journey into Spain (Rom. xv. 24); and he hoped, doubtless, to go there in the same way as to other places, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus. But he, in fact, went in a very different manner. He went as an accused man—as a prisoner—to be tried for his life; he had no prospect now of prosecuting his journey into Spain; but still he *was in Rome*, and he had the opportunity which he had desired,—that of preaching the Gospel in what was then the capital of the world. In like manner, often, *very often*, our wishes and desires are accomplished, and our prayers heard, in a manner altogether different from what we should have chosen, and in a way which leads us through many perils, disappointments, and trials; but still the prayer *is* heard, and the desire *is* granted.

II. The second point which I proposed to consider was *the nature of Paul's employments in Rome.*

Many men, even good men, in such circumstances would have felt that there was nothing for them to do but patiently to await their trial, and to prepare themselves for it. What could Paul now do in regard to the great purpose of his life? how could his work as an apostle be carried on? We are not left in ignorance as to these questions. The field of usefulness which he saw open to him pertained (*a.*) to the church there;

(*b.*) to his own countrymen ; (*c.*) to the people of Rome, especially to those who were connected with the government ; and (*d.*) to the churches abroad.

(1.) The *church in Rome*. What would be his reception by that church ? What would be his influence on it ? What could he do for it ?

With not a few members of that church, as above remarked, he had been elsewhere acquainted. Priscilla and Aquilla ; Epenetus ; Mary ; Andronicus and Junia ; Amplias ; Urbane ; Stachys ; Apelles ; Herodion ; Tryphena and Tryphosa ; Persis and Rufus—honoured names—are mentioned as those whom he had loved, who had been fellow-workers with him ; who had been brought to Christ by his labours, or who were his own kinsmen. Beyond all question, these were leading and influential members of the church ; and they would regard him, though a prisoner, with an interest which they would feel for no other man. It could not, then, have been an unnatural desire on their part to see Paul ; it was the natural prompting of affection which led them, when they heard of his coming, to go out to meet him on the Appian Way (Acts xxviii. 15), and to conduct him to the city. He was approaching Rome as a prisoner ; as a companion of felons, and was regarded by many as worthy of death ;—but *they* were ready to show him the highest honour ; and, however others might regard him, they were willing to be identified with him, and to accompany him as on a triumphal march, to the capital of the world. Paul found himself at home in their midst ; and could co-

operate with them in diffusing the Gospel. "Many of the brethren in the Lord," said he, "waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. i. 14).

(2.) His *own countrymen*. As soon as possible, he sought to lay before them the whole matter pertaining to the accusations against him. After the short space of three days from his arrival at Rome, he invited a meeting of the principal Jews to his own residence, as he was not suffered to go among them (Acts xxviii. 16, 17). There were many Jews dwelling in that city. They occupied then, as the Jews do now, a particular quarter; and, as is usual, it was the most wretched and squalid portion.¹ We have no means of ascertaining the number of Jews then in Rome, but we have reason to believe that it was not small.

To them, as being his own countrymen, Paul brought his case. He referred to his former course of life. He declared that he had been guilty of no wrong against the nation, and of no violation of the customs of their fathers; but that, having been examined by the Roman authorities before whom he was accused, he would have been discharged if it had not been for the opposition of his own countrymen in Jerusalem, which had constrained him to appeal to the Roman emperor. He reiterated

¹ The place which they occupied at that time lay on the low ground between the river and the base of the Mount Janiculum; that which the Jews now inhabit—the Ghetto—is not far from this, though on the other side of the Tiber, being between the river and the Capitoline Hill.—See, on the Condition of the Jews in Rome, *Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii., p. 388-390.

the statement he had made before the Sanhedrim, that it was solely on account of his preaching the doctrine held by the Pharisees, and which was in fact, "the hope" of the nation—the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead—that he had been called in question, and was bound with that chain (Acts xxviii. 17—20).

The Jews at Rome had heard no unfavourable reports of him; they entertained no personal prejudice against him; they wished to hear what he would say in respect to the new form of religion which was held, but which was everywhere spoken against; they were desirous to learn the opinion of one who was recently from Judæa, who had been trained up in their own faith, and who had been most active in propagating the new belief. It was certain that he could give them better information in regard to it than perhaps any other man. It was possible that he might state reasons for it, which would remove their difficulties and be satisfactory to their own minds. Their request seems to have been made in an eminent spirit of candour.

There is much to admire in all this. The conduct of Paul in seeking the earliest opportunity to lay the case before them, and his frank statement that he had nothing to accuse his own nation of (ver. 19);—their honest avowal that they had not been prejudiced against *him* by any communication from Judæa, and their willingness to learn his views, though regarded by his countrymen at home as an apostate,—evinced a high degree of sincerity on both sides, and might have promised the most happy results from the interview. But

the result was as elsewhere in preaching to the Jews;— a part believed; a part blasphemed. A few were converted; the mass turned away. To them, therefore, Paul uttered language such as he had elsewhere used;— having discharged his duty to them as the people of God, he said, “ Be it known unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it ” (ver. 28); just as at Antioch in Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas had before addressed their countrymen, “ It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles ” (Acts xiii. 46).

(3.) His influence on *the Roman people as such*;—the two or three millions of human beings congregated in the city at that time. His advantages for acting on such a population were indeed few; and we cannot suppose that his influence on that great multitude would be directly felt. He was not suffered to go at large; he could not address assembled philosophers in the Forum, as he had done on Mars’ Hill; he had no direct access to the palace of the Cæsars; he had not yet been brought before the emperor, as he had been before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. He could only preach to those who came to his own hired house (Acts xxviii. 30, 31). We are not, therefore, to look for any direct or wide-spread influence on the masses of the population; on philosophers and sages; or on those connected with the government.

Yet there are one or two very interesting incidental

statements, illustrating and confirming what we should suppose would have occurred, and showing that his influence was felt more or less in the very place where he would most desire that it should be felt. As a prisoner; as under the charge of the government; as guarded by those in the employ of the government, and located, in all probability, not far from the seat of authority—the “palace” of the emperor,—we should most naturally look for the result of his labours, if there was any, in *that* direction. Accordingly, in the Epistle to the Philippians, written during his residence in Rome, we find proof of an influence perhaps more largely connected with the ultimate prevalence of Christianity in Rome than we can now trace. The one is this: “My bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace (marg., *Cæsar’s court*), and in all other places” (Phil. i. 12, 13). The Greek word here, *prætorium*, means, properly, a general’s tent in a camp; then it is applied to the palace of Herod at Jerusalem,—the place which became the head-quarters of the Roman procurators or governors; then, to the palace of Herod at Cæsarea; then, to the prætorian camp at Rome,—the quarters of the prætorian cohorts or guards. These were privileged troops appointed by Augustus to guard his own person, and to have charge of the city, and they soon became the most powerful body in the state. (*Robinson’s Lexicon*). They were, therefore, very closely connected with the government.

Another passage, bearing on the subject, is found in the salutations at the close of the same epistle: “All

the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household" (iv. 22); that is, they who are of the house or family of Cæsar. How nearly they were related to the emperor, if they were at all, is, of course, to us unknown. One thing is clear, however, that the Gospel, apparently in connexion with Paul's labours, had penetrated the Royal palace, securing converts there, and that those converts had free communication with the apostle, and he with them. They are associated with the "brethren" who were with him (ver. 21); they joined with those brethren in kind greetings toward saints in a distant land whom they had not personally known.

(4.) Another point relates to his general labours *toward the Churches* which he had established, and which looked to him for counsel and advice. It was not unnatural that "the care of all the churches" (2 Cor. xi. 28) should come upon one who had founded so many of them, and who was so prominent among the apostles; and this toil, anxiety, and care would not wholly cease when he was a prisoner in Rome. It is probable that their questions of difficulty might be referred to him; it is certain that he would feel an undiminished interest in their welfare, and would be deeply affected by the intelligence of their prosperity or their adversity; their unity or their divisions; their progress or their decline. We have ample evidence of this. Four of his letters, that to Philemon, that to the Colossians, that to the Ephesians, and that to the Philippians,—were written at Rome, while he was there awaiting his trial. It may not seem, indeed, to be

a great matter to compose four such epistles in two years; and I do not now refer to it as if it *were* a great matter in respect of the labour involved, but only as showing the spirit of the man,—his desire to do good; his wish to look beyond himself, and beyond his own circumstances; his interest in the general condition of the Church and of the world.

III. This leads to a remark or two in reference to the illustration furnished of his own character *by his residence in Rome, and the spirit which he manifested*; the illustration of *religion* as found in these circumstances; or the practical lessons conveyed by the facts which have been adverted to.

(1.) The first point that would attract our attention would be his forbearance towards those who had wronged him. He had been falsely accused by his countrymen in Judæa; he had been subjected by them to an unjust trial; his life had been endangered by their conspiracies; he had been detained in prison at Cæsarea, and had been called to encounter all the perils and hardships of the voyage to Rome, and was awaiting all the uncertain issues which might attend a trial before the emperor, through their continued opposition to him. Yet when he met his countrymen in Rome, and stated to them the reasons why he was there, he spoke as if all this had been forgotten,—“Not that I had ought to accuse my nation of,”—that is, “I did not come here for that purpose; I have nothing to allege against them before the emperor; I shall refer to none of the wrongs which I

have received from them; and I have summoned *you*, not to complain of our Jewish brethren, but to speak to you of that which they, and you, and I, hold in common,—‘*the hope of Israel.*’”

We may advert here, also, to his kind feelings towards those who had perverted his doctrines, and had sought to propagate their own views, taking advantage of the fact that, being a prisoner, he could not openly counteract their statements. While his imprisonment had been the means of stimulating many to more earnest efforts in the cause of religion, being “much more bold to speak the word without fear,” some also took the opportunity to disseminate error; they did it, he says, for the purpose of adding to his trials: “supposing to add affliction to my bonds” (Phil. i. 16). Yet even in this, he found occasion to rejoice. His own feeling—his own happiness—was a small matter. The great object of his life was promoted. Christ *was* made known, though it was imperfectly, and with much error intermingled, and with much that was designed to pain his heart. “What then?” he says; “notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, *Christ is preached*; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice” (Phil. i. 18).

(2.) We may notice that Paul turned all that had occurred to good account; he saw the hand of God in it all; he felt assured that events, apparently most disastrous, had been overruled to the promotion of the Christian religion. “I would ye should understand, brethren,” wrote he to the Philippians, “that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto

the furtherance of the Gospel" (Phil. i. 12). All had been made use of to serve the good cause which he had at heart;—and this was enough; this was an ample compensation for all that he had suffered.

We may here refer to what the Church and the world owe to that imprisonment of Paul in Rome. We cannot say, indeed, that the four epistles then written would *not* have been written if he had been permitted to pursue his labours without hindrance or obstruction; but we know that they *were* penned during his detention as a prisoner in Rome. Those epistles are invaluable. The Church could not do without them. They are to the Church, and to the cause of religion, more than an equivalent for all the sufferings of the apostle. The world could not afford to lose what it has gained by the oppressions, the wrongs, the trials experienced by the friends of liberty and truth. Bunyan spent twelve years in Bedford gaol: the result, among other things, was the "Pilgrim's Progress." A large part of Baxter's works, and many of the writings of other nonconformists in the seventeenth century, originated from their not being allowed to preach. From gloomy dungeons,—from dark, chilly, repulsive cells where the friends of God have been confined,—light has streamed forth which now illuminates the Christian world, and has guided millions in the path to glory. God reigns. God directs the affairs of men; and to His name be the praise!

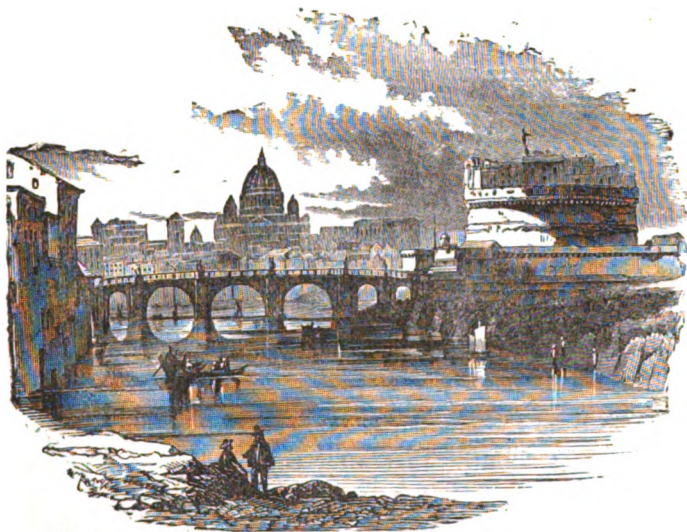
XXII.

PAUL'S FIRST TRIAL BEFORE NERO.

Close of Luke's history.—A “first answer” implying a first trial.—*The trial itself.*—Before the emperor.—That emperor, Nero.—The charges.—Treason; heresy; sacrilege.—The defence.—No crime proven.—No judicial opinion unfavourable.—No case for Roman jurisdiction.—*The acquittal.*—Implied in Scripture.—Affirmed by tradition.—*Paul forsaken by his friends.*—No uncommon experience.—Some friendships never put to the proof.—Some false.—Some true and self-sacrificing.—Some, though true, may seem for a time to fail.—The disciples.—Cranmer.—The few who have failed, and the many who have been faithful.—*Prayer of Paul for those who forsook him.*—A forgiving spirit distinctive of Christianity.—The one Friend who never forsakes.

“At my first answer **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. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.”

2 TIM. iv. 16—18.



MODERN ROME.



LUKE tells us, in the Acts of the Apostles (xxviii. 30), that Paul remained under military custody in Rome, though “in his own hired house,” and with liberty to receive “all that came unto him” for “two whole years.” Here he leaves him. He does not say whether he was then tried, or whether he was discharged, or whether he was put to death, and the remainder of the history of Paul is obscure. From this point, in relation to the life of this great apostle, and the history of the Church generally, we plunge into darkness.

It is evident that Paul had a trial in Rome, which, in writing to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 16), he makes mention of as his “first *answer*,” that is, his first “apology”—*ἀπολογία*; not an excuse for his conduct, as if it had been wrong, as the word “apology” means now, but a

plea; a defence; an answer to charges against him. It is manifest, also, that he either had a second trial, or had reason to look forward to one, for, only in that case, would he refer to the other as the "*first*" trial. Comp. vers. 6—8. Whether that which he anticipated was simply a second *hearing*, as if the case were "continued" (in the language of lawyers), "to another term," or whether he had been discharged, had left Rome, had been engaged in missionary labours, and was now to be *again* brought before the emperor, does not so far appear from the language. It seems probable, however, from what follows, that after the "first" trial he had been released, and that he had been permitted to go abroad again; for he says, as to his having been "delivered out of the mouth of the lion," that the design or reason was, that by him "the preaching might be fully known" (or, that he might have an opportunity of more fully manifesting the power of "preaching"), and that "all the Gentiles might hear the Gospel,"—intimating that he had borne it to them.

We have before us, then, for our meditation THE FIRST TRIAL OF PAUL BEFORE THE ROMAN EMPEROR, —a fact of which we cannot doubt, and which is of sufficient importance to engage our attention, in a review of the "scenes and incidents" in the life of this remarkable man. The points which will bring the case before us in the best order will be—I. The trial itself; II. The acquittal; III. The fact that he was forsaken, in the trial, by those on whom he supposed he might rely; and, IV. His prayer for those who forsook him.

I. *The trial itself.* The statement of Luke that Paul "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house" would seem to imply that some important change occurred at the end of that period; and nothing is more probable than the supposition that this change was connected with his trial. Why Luke did not give the history and the results of that trial, and why he did not refer to the causes of its delay, are matters on which conjecture would be useless.

We are not to be surprised, however, at that delay. Paul had been, for very slight causes, kept as a prisoner for just that length of time, by Felix, in Cæsarea; and we must bear in remembrance the dilatory steps of justice everywhere, and the mass of business of this kind which must have accumulated at the Roman capital, demanding the attention of the emperor. The case of a Jew,—a Jew unknown,—apparently not of any great importance,—would be likely to be postponed for matters more immediately claiming attention. Nor should we forget the character of the emperor Nero,—a man more devoted to amusement and vice than to the affairs of government.

Trials from the provinces were heard, in *criminal* cases, before the emperor himself. "Civil causes or appeals from the provinces were heard, not by the emperor himself, but by his delegates, who were persons of consular rank: Augustus had appointed one such delegate to hear appeals from each province respectively. But criminal appeals appear generally to have been heard by the emperor in person, assisted by his council of

assessors. . . . These councillors, twenty in number, were men of the highest rank and greatest influence. Among them were the two consuls, and selected representatives of each of the other great magistracies of Rome. The remainder consisted of senators chosen by lot. Over this distinguished bench of judges presided the representative of the most powerful monarchy which has ever existed,—the absolute ruler of the whole civilized world.”¹

The supreme judge in the case before us—the man who was to decide the question of life or death in respect to one of the apostles of Christ,—was as little qualified to determine such a cause as any man who ever sat on a bench of justice. Hitherto, indeed, “his cruelty had injured his own family rather than the state.” But we can imagine what must have been the feelings of Paul when he stood before such a man, and felt that he was to plead for his life before one who excited disgust even in Rome by his shameful licentiousness.

We have none of the details of the trial, but we cannot much err in regard to the charges, or to the defence and the reasonable grounds of acquittal.

(1.) The main alleged accusations before Felix and Festus respectively (Acts xxiv. 5, 6; xxv. 7, 8), were doubtless carried up before the Roman emperor; and these were three in number:—first, that of treason against the Roman government, by having caused factious disturbances among the Jews throughout the empire;—

¹ *Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. pp. 465, 466.

"we found this man a pestilent fellow," λοιμὸν, literally a *pest* or *plague*, "and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world." Secondly, that of heresy, against the law of Moses, in being a "ring-leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." And thirdly, that of having attempted to profane or defile the temple at Jerusalem (Acts xxiv. 5), which was an offence not only against the Jewish, but also against the Roman law, for the latter protected all persons in the exercise of their religion. Two years had elapsed, but we have no evidence, and no reason to believe, that any addition had been made to the number of these accusations, or that they had been in any way modified. Heresy, sacrilege, treason, "against the law, against the temple, against Cæsar,"¹—these were still the charges, and were *all* the charges to be made against him.

(2.) We have not the argument of Paul in his own defence on his first trial at Rome. We have no tradition in regard to it. All that was *necessary* in the case—all that the interests of justice demanded—was a simple denial of these charges, and a statement (as before Festus), that they *had not been proved* and *could not be proved*.

He would urge, we may suppose,

(a.) That no crime, no breach of law, had been proved against him. This he affirmed before Felix (Acts xxiv. 13); and it is affirmed in regard to him when on trial before Festus (Acts xxv. 7). It could not even be pretended on the trial at Rome, that he had been proved

¹ (1.) εἰς τὸν νόμον; (2.) εἰς τὸ ἱερόν; (3.) εἰς Καίσαρα.

guilty of any crime. This, before a Roman tribunal—before *any* tribunal—would have been a sufficient defence. In no system of jurisprudence was the principle that a man is to be regarded as innocent until he is proved to be guilty, more sternly acted on than at Rome.

(*b.*) Paul might have urged in his defence the favourable judgment of the Roman authorities in Judæa, so far as any judgment had been pronounced. Thus there was the express judgment of the Chiliarch Lysias, that there was “nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds” (Acts xxiii. 27—29). Felix had heard the accusation and the defence of Paul, but he had not condemned him. Paul had been before Festus when alone; he had been before Festus and Agrippa together; but individually, and by concurrence, they had regarded Paul as *not* proved guilty (Acts xxv. 18, 19, 24, 25; xxvi. 31). If these things were known at Rome,—if they were urged by Paul as they might have been,—it is not difficult to account for the fact that he was acquitted. Even Nero could, on this occasion, find no cause for putting him to death. On what grounds he subsequently condemned him to death, on his second trial, is a matter that does not pertain to the subject which is now before us.

(*c.*) Paul might have alleged that the whole matter in dispute pertained to the Jews themselves; and he might have cited cases which Roman magistrates had been reluctant, or had refused to notice. Thus Pontius Pilate had been unwilling to pronounce sentence in the case of Jesus, and had endeavoured to have the matter

adjudicated by the Jews themselves (John xviii. 31 ; xix. 6). The case of Gallio, "deputy of Achaia," representing the Roman authority, would be another instance in point (Acts xviii. 14, 15).

II. *The acquittal of Paul on this his "first trial."*

Of that fact we have, indeed, no *direct* proof; but we have seen that it is implied in the words of Paul, and we find that it is uniformly affirmed by tradition.

That he was discharged, is fairly implied in the language, "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion" (ver. 17). These words may either mean that he was delivered from Nero, compared with a lion, or that he was saved from being thrown to lions in the amphitheatre,—a mode of punishment which was not uncommon in Rome, and to which many Christians were subjected in times of persecution. Either of these interpretations would be in accordance with the language used. It is not uncommon in the Scriptures, to compare tyrants and persecutors with ravenous beasts; comp. Ps. xxii. 13, 21; Jer. ii. 30. Nero is called a lion by Seneca; and it was usual among heathen writers to apply the term, in various senses, to princes and warriors. Still it is quite as natural to suppose that the punishment to which he would have been subjected if found guilty, was to be thrown to the lions, and that in some way he had been delivered from it. But how or why, must be a matter of conjecture. Paul attributes his deliverance entirely to the Lord:—"The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;"—but what instrumental agency there

may have been in his deliverance, he does not specify. If he had known it to be through the help of a friend—even of a heathen advocate—it is hardly to be supposed that he would have failed to mention the name of one to whom he owed his deliverance. It seems probable that he had been enabled to plead his own cause with so much ability, and to show his own innocence of the charges against him so clearly, that he found favour with the Roman emperor, and was thus set at liberty. Corrupt as Nero became, we may believe that at that period of his life his sense of public right may not have been wholly extinct; and that, on the ground of justice, Paul was on this occasion acquitted.

Tradition is uniform in the statement that he was acquitted, and that he afterwards took his long-meditated journey to Spain.¹ Against this unanimous testimony of the primitive church, there is no external evidence whatever to oppose. At the same time, however, it should be said that there is no evidence to show *how soon* after his liberation he went into Spain; how far he travelled there; how long he remained; what success he met in his labours; whither he went on his return; or why he was again brought to Rome, and subjected to a second and final trial.

¹ Eusebius tells us, “*after defending himself successfully it is currently reported that the Apostle again went forth to proclaim the Gospel, and afterwards came to Rome a second time, and was martyred under Nero*” (Hist. Eccl. ii. 22). So Chrysostom says, that “*St. Paul, after his residence in Rome, departed to Spain*” (Chrysost. on 2 Tim. iv. 20). Jerome bears the same testimony, saying that “*Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach Christ’s Gospel in the West*” (Hieron. Catal. Script).—*Conybeare and Howson*, vol. ii. pp. 462, 463.

It has been supposed that on his liberation he first fulfilled an intention which he had expressed (Phil. ii. 24, and Philem. 22), of travelling through Macedonia, and visiting the churches of Asia Minor; that he then went into Spain; afterwards returned to Ephesus, and then went to Macedonia and Crete; that, soon after, he left Ephesus for Rome by way of Corinth; and that during these travels he wrote the First Epistle to Timothy, and the Epistle to Titus,—the one from Macedonia, and the other from Ephesus.

III. We must go back to notice *the fact that Paul was forsaken, when on trial, by those on whose friendship he had a right to rely*:—"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me."

That the apostle had friends in Rome we have already seen. That these were true and tried friends is apparent from what he says of one and another; "who have for my life laid down their own necks;" "who bestowed much labour on us;" "my kinsmen and my fellow-prisoners;" "of note among the apostles;" "my beloved in the Lord;" "our helper in Christ;" "approved in Christ;" "chosen in Christ" (Rom. xvi. 4—10). We have no reason to doubt, also, that during the two years in which he was at Rome, with the freedom which he then had of "receiving all who came unto him," and of "preaching the kingdom of God with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts xxviii. 30, 31), he had made many additional friends. Even if we suppose that, during the interval which elapsed from the

time of writing the Epistle to the Romans till the time of his trial, some of the friends there mentioned had died, or had removed to other places, still the number in Rome at the time of his trial could not have been few, and from them he might have reasonably expected such countenance and support as they could render. He might at least have expected that they would stand by him, and that if they had no power to help, they would, as silent lookers-on, give him the encouragement of their presence and sympathy.

We know not definitely the reasons *why* they did not thus stand by him; but the fact that they *did not* furnishes an occasion for some remarks on trials of this kind, and on the nature of true friendship.

(1.) What Paul here refers to has not been uncommon in the world. Thus Job, in a very pathetic description of his own trials, shows that he went through a like experience (xix. 13—19). So the Psalmist was forsaken by his friends in the time of calamity (Ps. xxxv. 11—16; xxxviii. 11; xli. 9; lv. 12—14). The same thing occurred in the case of the Saviour, and this was one of the severest of His many trials,—for, having taken our nature, He would feel this as acutely as any man. In the Garden of Gethsemane,—when He had just passed through the scene of unutterable agony,—when He was arrested, and was about to be taken away for trial,—when He was about to be put to death,—then “all the disciples forsook Him and fled” (Matt. xxvi. 56). To such a form of trial as among the most severe that man can endure,—perhaps to that very scene in the Garden of

Gethsemane,—there is an allusion in Zechariah (xiii. 6): “And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” If such things occurred to Job, to the Psalmist, to the Apostle Paul, and even to the Redeemer Himself, we are not to be surprised if they occur to us.

(2.) There is much friendship that will bear the *common* and *ordinary* tests or trials to which it may be subjected, but which would not bear a severer trial. Such apparent friendship in the ordinary course of life, requiring little sacrifice, is pleasant rather than otherwise; it is satisfied with small courtesies and kindnesses; it finds expression rather in words than in any acts requiring an expenditure of time or money; it involves no loss of reputation; it perils nothing in regard to character; and it does much to promote the general happiness of mankind. It is dependent often on the period of life; on circumstances of neighbourhood or business; on connexion for a time in a college-class, a clerkship, or a store; or on some temporary object to be accomplished. But under new circumstances, much of this sort of friendship fades from the memory. It never has been put to any strong test. There has been nothing to fix it deep in the soul. We are not to infer that it was insincere, or that it would not have borne the test of a severe trial. But the occasion never occurred, and the bond was easily broken. The world owes much of its happiness to intimacies like these, and they are not to be branded as false and hollow.

(3.) There is, however, much professed friendship that *is* false and hollow. So plain is this, that it can hardly be necessary to illustrate it. There is professed friendship that is founded on wealth (Prov. xix. 4, 20); and friendship cherished for those in elevated and fashionable circles,—but cherished only *while* they are in such circles, and no longer. There is that which rests on beauty of person, or gracefulness of manner, rather than on the solid virtues of the heart. There is that which exists in prosperity—in the sunshine of life—the affection of “swallow-friends, who retire in the winter, and return in the spring.” There is that which is based on some hope of advantage, and which ceases when that hope is gratified, or when it must be abandoned. There is that which harbours some evil purpose;—the friendship of him who can “smile, and smile, and be a villain.” Such friendships will not bear the test of adversity; and yet so common have they been in the world that we are sometimes disposed to believe there is more of truth than fancy in the representation of the poet,

“ And what is friendship but a name,
A charm that lulls to sleep;
A shade that follows wealth or fame,
But leaves the wretch to weep?”

(4.) Yet let us not despair. Let us not come to the conclusion that there is *no* true friendship; no love which will make sacrifices; no affection that is counted dearer than life itself. Such friendship existed between Damon and Pythias; such friendship was beautifully illustrated in the case of David and Jonathan. In all the trials of

David, the son of Saul never forsook him, and never gave him occasion to suspect the reality or the depth of his love. With what exquisite beauty David sang of that attachment when Jonathan was dead! "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me; thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. i. 26).

(5.) There may even be, however, *real* piety and *real* friendship which may shrink back for a time from the pressure of severe trial. We are not to infer that *because* it thus shrinks back it is not sincere, and that it can never rally. It may not yet be disciplined and confirmed. Thus it was with the disciples of the Saviour. We must not infer that their professions of attachment for Him had been insincere. The love they had for Him soon rose above the sudden shock; when He had expired on the cross, they went forth to proclaim His name in the face of persecution, in the midst of dangers, and in the prospect of death. So Cranmer had shown through a long life, in its ordinary duties and trials that he was a good man, a true friend of the Saviour. The prospect of death by fire for a moment staggered him, and shook his faith, and made him put his hand to the instrument of recantation; but his faith rallied again, and he rose to the well-known manifestation of his real attachment for the Lord Jesus. In like manner, we are not to conclude that because, on the trial of Paul, no man stood with him, but all forsook him, there was no true love for him or for his Master. It was, indeed, sad and painful, and it could not but be interpreted

unfavourably to religion ; but it is possible that even these persons might on other and even more trying occasions, have subsequently shown true attachment to the Christian cause, and that some of their names may have been enrolled on the honoured list of martyrs as suffering with Paul.

(5.) It is remarkable that amid the severe trials to which the faith of Christians has been subjected, *so few* have shrunk from avowing their attachment to the Saviour. There is no evidence that there has been, even in the most fiery times, and in the severest forms of persecution, one real apostate from the faith of Christ. If there have been *seeming* apostasies, even these have been extremely rare, and all such instances *may be* accounted for on the supposition that such individuals had never been truly converted. Beyond all question, one of the most remarkable facts which have occurred in the world has been the tenacity with which Christians have adhered to their faith,—and that, too, when apostasy was made as easy and as tempting as it could be,—when the slightest possible concession, the simple casting of a grain of incense on a heathen altar, was all that was demanded to save them from being thrown to wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

IV. *The prayer of the Apostle for those who had forsaken him:*—"I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge."

The language and the spirit thus manifested, have a strong resemblance to the words uttered and the spirit

manifested by the Saviour Himself: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34.) Thus Stephen, the first martyr, kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60). It was also a proper carrying out of the principles which Paul had enjoined on his friends in this very church at Rome: "Recompense to no man evil for evil; avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (chap. xii. 17, 19, 21). It was the spirit inculcated by the Master, and the spirit for which He taught men to pray every day (Matt. vi. 12, 14, 15). This is the very spirit of the Gospel; it is demanded everywhere by our religion; and it constitutes a strong distinction between Christianity and the spirit cherished by the world.

The strong propensity of the human heart is to the opposite feeling; and there has been, and there is, a large *growth*, so to speak, of customs in society based on the idea that an offence is *not* to be forgiven, but is to be pursued with a spirit of revenge. To some extent laws are a check upon private vengeance, but there is an "ample margin" left for its secret indulgence. Words, looks, gestures, breaches of etiquette, slander, sudden passion,—these it is difficult or impossible to reduce under any regular control by human government. Now it is on these things that the Gospel acts directly; and it is in respect to them that it has wrought so great changes, and made social life so different from what it would otherwise have been. It has taught men not to

be soon angry. It has taught them to restrain their passions when excited, and not to let the sun go down on their wrath. It has taught them to bear and forbear. It has taught them to forgive an offender, not only to the "seventh time," but until "seventy times seven." The world at the present time owes more to the Christian religion than it is willing to acknowledge; and there is no one among us, who, in his domestic and social relations, has not felt the benefit of the command given by the Saviour in regard to the forgiveness of offences, in securing the blessings of peace and good fellowship where otherwise there would be malice and strife.

In conclusion. Paul's friends, we have seen, left him. Not one of them stood by him when they thought he was about to die. When we come to die, we too shall be alone. From all our worldly possessions we shall be about to part. Worldly friends—the friends drawn to us by our position, our wealth, or our social qualities,—will leave us as we enter the dark valley. From those bound to us by stronger ties—our kindred, our loved ones, children, brothers, sisters, and from those not less dear to us who have been made our friends because they and we are the friends of the same Saviour,—from them also we must part. Yet not all will leave us. There is One who "sticketh closer than a brother;" One who having loved His own which are in the world loves them to the end.

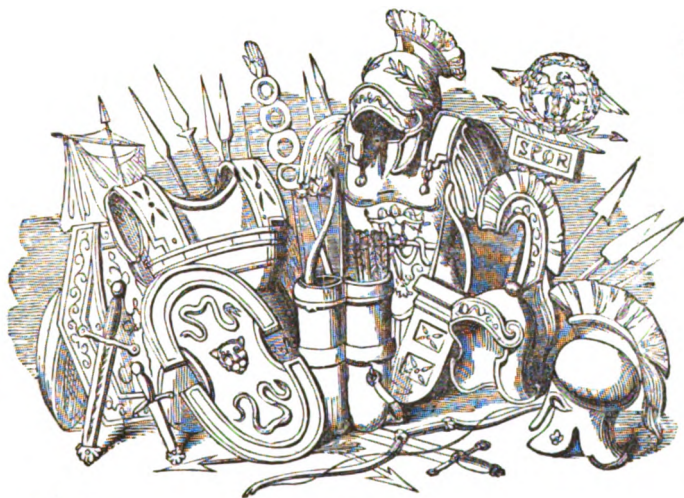
XXIII.

PAUL'S ANTICIPATION OF DEATH.

Second trial impending.—Unfavourable issue apprehended.—Death by martyrdom expected.—Death-scenes, why valuable.—*Paul's final review of life.*—A conflict.—A course.—A trust.—Much had been given up.—Extent of that sacrifice best understood at the close of life.—Much had been suffered.—But still no expression of regret.—Contrast the life of some, —wasted;—perverted; unsanctified.—*Prospect for the future consequent on the review of the past.*—Death-bed salvation possible.—Starting-point in any part of the course.—But no memories of past service.—No fitness in the result.—The crown is of righteousness, but not of merit.—Nor of partiality.—*Last* expression of Paul's confidence and hope.

“ For 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.”

2 TIMOTHY iv. 6—8.



ANCIENT ARMOUR.



THE statement of the apostle—"I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand,"—was evidently made when he was in prospect of his second and final trial before the emperor,—a trial which resulted in his death. For causes now unknown to us, and in a manner which to us is equally unknown, he had been, after an interval (as tradition tells us) of five or six years, brought again as a prisoner to Rome. We are wholly ignorant of the reasons why he was again arrested; of the charges brought against him; of the accusers; of the place, the time, and the circumstances of the trial. It is not probable that those who had failed in securing his condemnation on the first trial could hope to be more successful a second time under the same accusations. The charges under the

second trial were, not improbably, somehow connected with the Roman government, and *may* have been, as has been conjectured, to the effect that he had instigated the act of incendiarism on which Nero founded his furious persecution against the Christians. If the Roman government had a purpose to remove one who was so active in propagating the religion of Christ, it would be easy to identify him with the Christians whom it was determined to destroy; and it would not be difficult to find persons who would bear witness against the leader of that sect. Such a charge would, of course, bring him at once under the cognizance of the Roman tribunals, and, if it were proved, would make him, even though he had the rights of a Roman citizen, liable to the severest penalties of the law. Though years had passed away since that occurrence, yet it would be very possible so to present this charge as to secure his certain condemnation.

Whatever the charge was, on *this* trial he did not expect to be acquitted. In the former imprisonment, and in reference to the former trial, his death had appeared to be by no means an impossible result, but he had considered an acquittal probable. Thus, in the epistle addressed at that time to the Philippians (i. 23—25), he says, "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you; and having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all, for your furtherance and joy of faith." But on the second trial he had no

such hope; and his language in his second epistle to Timothy, which was written during this second imprisonment, expresses the firm conviction of his mind that there was no prospect of escape.

He was evidently looking forward to certain death. The expression "I am now ready to be offered," properly interpreted, can be understood in no other sense. The word "*ready*," in the phrase "ready to be offered," conveys an idea which, although it corresponded with the reality, and although it is expressive of the feelings of a departing believer, is not in the original. That word, in such a connexion, would properly imply that he was *prepared* to die, and that he was *willing* to die:—which, however true it may have been in his case, is not the idea conveyed by the language of the apostle. He merely states the *fact* that he was about to die, or that his work and his life *were* drawing to a close. The single word rendered "I am ready to be offered,"—*σπένδομαι*—occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Philippians ii. 17, where it is rendered "offered," and in the margin *poured forth*,—"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." The Greek word means, properly, to pour out, to make a libation. Then, in the form here used, it means *to pour out oneself*; that is, to pour out one's blood; to offer up one's strength or life, as the blood of an animal was poured out in sacrifice,—or, as Burder supposes, as wine and oil were poured on the head of a victim about to be presented in sacrifice. Paul's idea is that he was then in the condition of the

sacrificial victim on whose head the wine and the oil had been poured, and which was about to be put to death. It is undoubtedly implied, in this language, that the apostle regarded his life as an offering for the good of others, and himself as a martyr to truth and to the cause of Christianity, whose death would do something to promote the cause of religion. As such, the time had come for him to be put to death, and it could be no longer delayed. In that sense he was now "*ready*."

The same thing is implied in the expression immediately following in the same verse: "The time of my departure is at hand." The word rendered "departure," means *dissolution*—ἀνάλυσις—and corresponds literally to the word "dissolution," which we now apply to death—the *dissolution* of soul and body. The word, in classic writings, is often applied to the act of *unloosing* or *casting off* the fastenings of a ship, preparatory to its sailing. Thus applied, the idea of the apostle would be, that he had been bound to the present world, as a ship is fastened to its moorings; that death would be a casting off of those fastenings; and that he was about to spread his sails on the broad ocean of eternity.

The same idea—namely, that he was about to die,—is expressed in the phrase, "I have finished my course;—*henceforth*" (all that now remains, λοιπὸν)—"there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

It is always interesting to learn the feelings of a man when he is about to die. We are soon ourselves to be in that condition; and it is natural that we should have a desire to know how he feels, and a wish to know

how we shall feel, when that event shall be about to occur to us. This interest pertains to every man who is about to die, no matter whether his character may have been good or bad. The dying Christian and the dying infidel are objects of almost equal interest to us, though for different reasons. We wish to know how the past seems to them ; how the future seems to them ; how the world that is vanishing appears ; how the eternal world, on the verge of which they are then standing, appears. We wish to know whether earth then seems valuable ; whether religion appears important ; and whether the dying man has gained anything, or has found anything, which will comfort him in anticipation of his departure.

I shall make use of Paul's experience to illustrate some of these thoughts : and the main idea which I shall endeavour to present, will be that THE REVIEW OF A WELL-SPENT LIFE HAS A CONNEXION WITH A BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL PROSPECT IN REGARD TO THE FUTURE WORLD. "I HAVE fought a good fight ; I HAVE kept the faith ; HENCEFORTH there is laid up for me a crown."

In dwelling upon this, it will be necessary to consider two points :—I. The life finally reviewed ; and II. The prospect of the future life, consequent on that.

I. *The life finally reviewed.* The case of Paul will be considered as illustrative of the last review of life in other cases. This will bring before us several subordinate points.

(1.) *How* he regarded life ; or, what his life *seemed* to him to have been.

(a.) Life, to his view, had been an “agony” or conflict,—“I have fought a good *fight* (τὸν ἀγῶνα). The allusion is to the Grecian games ; to the contest, the struggle, the strife *in* those games for the mastery and for the crown. Such a conflict is often referred to by the Apostle Paul, as an emblem of the efforts, toils, and trials of the Christian life (Phil. i. 30 ; Col. ii. 1 ; 1 Thess. ii. 2 ; 1 Cor. ix. 25). Such an allusion would be easily understood in those times, and the comparison would most aptly set forth the struggles of the Christian life. There was a crown in view ; an appropriate reward. There was need of effort to secure the crown. There was danger of failure by indolence, by want of exertion, by remissness, by inaction. The struggle was not, indeed, as in the Grecian games, one in which there was but a single crown to be gained by all the runners or wrestlers ; or in which, if one man gained the prize, all the others must lose. But it was *as if* there were but one crown ; *as if* there were many competitors and rivals ; *as if* when one gained it, all others must lose it. Though there are many crowns to be distributed, and though the fact that one obtains the reward is no hindrance to its being obtained also by others, yet the loss may be as real and the necessity for effort is as great *as though* there were but one such prize.

(b.) He regarded life as a “course” to be run. “I have finished my *course*” (τὸν δρόμον). The allusion here, also, is to the Grecian games:—the running, or

race. Life *is* such a course. It has a beginning and an ending—a starting point, and a goal. It is a short course; soon run over. It is not to be repeated; if the prize is lost, the course cannot be run over again. In the Grecian games, if the race was lost, the prize passed over to others; in the Christian course, it is *as though* the prize, if lost, were to pass into other hands. A new trial cannot be granted; a new race cannot be run; a new prize cannot be offered. In the Grecian games, indeed, if the prize was not won in one race, a new trial might be granted for another prize, and the race might be run over again:—but not so in respect of life. Whether it has been marked by failure or success, it cannot be gone over again; and this is the meaning of the apostle, when he says, “I have *finished* my course.”

(c.) Life was, to him, a keeping of the faith;—fidelity to his Master, and to his Master's cause; “I *have* kept the faith.” He had adhered steadfastly to the great truths of the Gospel; and he had been faithful to his Saviour, who had commissioned him to go and proclaim those truths to the world.

(2.) *What* had, in his life, *actually* occurred? What was there that Paul would be likely to call to remembrance on this review of it?

(a.) He had, as we have already seen, given up much. All that was brilliant in his early prospects, he had given up. Honour in his own country, and honour abroad; office in his native land, and office (if it could be secured) abroad; wealth, if he inherited it, or wealth that might

have been secured in a lucrative calling; fame, as a scholar; fame, as a defender of the religion of his country; fame, as an orator,—all this he had surrendered. He lived at an age of the world when talent was appreciated, and when there was as wide a field for ambition as any which had ever been witnessed; and there was no reason why he should not have entered with others on that field, and been distinguished there. Yet all this had been abandoned—absolutely and for ever abandoned—for the sake of Christ. We might suppose, indeed, that when Paul gave up his worldly prospects, and became a Christian, he did not *know* fully what he was abandoning; but we cannot doubt that he saw this more clearly—*most* clearly—when in the prison at Rome, he again reviewed his own life. He could not but feel *then*, without any arrogance on his part, that a man who had been enabled to make his name known so far abroad as he had done in the course of life which he had chosen,—who had influenced so many minds and hearts,—who had done so much to form the opinions of men, and to change the religion of the world, *might* have been distinguished in other spheres; and that, if his early plans of ambition had been pursued, instead of being now a prisoner at Rome, and soon to die an ignominious death, he might have been in possession of wealth, or held a position of honour by the side of the great orators or statesmen of his age. A man, at the close of his life, is often in far better circumstances to judge what he has *given up* in the cause of religion than he is in his earlier years, when his

talents are not developed ; or when, as yet, he has in fact little to surrender.

(*b.*) He had been called to *suffer* much, and he could not but remember this. Indeed his life from the time of his conversion to Christ, had been one of sacrifice, toil, self-denial, peril, persecution, and poverty. He had accumulated no property ; but had been, and was, a poor man, dependent often in a great measure on the scanty earnings produced by labouring at the humble occupation of making tents (Acts xviii. 3). He had often been in actual want. He had been without a home ; he had been often alone, a solitary traveller. He had been in dangers by land and by sea ; he had suffered shipwreck ; he had been persecuted ; he had been publicly scourged ; he had been stoned even until he was supposed to be dead (2 Cor. xi. 23—27). Reports unfavourable to him had gone before him ; he had been embarrassed in his movements by the machinations of his enemies ; justice had been denied him before the tribunals of his own country, and before those of Rome. He had been held up to reproach as an apostate from the religion of his fathers, and had been regarded as everywhere a disturber of the peace. Speaking of himself and his fellow apostles, he said, "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were, appointed to death ; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men ; . . . even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our

own hands; being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat; we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, unto this day,"—*περιψημα*, the *scrapings*, the *scum*, for so the word means (1 Cor. iv. 9—13). Such had been the life which he was reviewing, as he stood near the grave.

(3.) What, now, were his views *in regard to* that course? There is no expression of sorrow. There is no intimation that his life had been a failure. There is no utterance of a doubt about the truth of that religion which he had embraced, or about the "crown" which he had laboured to gain. There is no dark shadow coming over his mind as if all this were a delusion; no intimation that the hopes which he had cherished, and which had sustained him in his troubles, were now vanishing away. His conviction of the truth of his religion became deeper as he approached the end; and the prospects of a better life grew brighter and brighter as he now drew near to the reality. It grieved him not now that he had identified himself with the despised followers of the "Nazarene;" it grieved him not that he had travelled so much, that he had toiled so hard, that he had encountered so many dangers.

(4.) We cannot but remark here how different is this from the review which some men have to take of life.

(a.) The folly of a wasted life. "Alas!" said Grotius, "I have wasted my life, laboriously doing nothing."¹

¹ *Proh! vitam perdidit operose nihil agendo.*

But how many utter this exclamation with much more reason than Grotius did! A life of wasted time; of wasted talents; of wasted wealth; of wasted opportunities for doing good; of wasted privileges; of wasted means of grace: a life in which a man might have gained great knowledge, but has gained none; in which he might have been eminently useful, but has done no good; in which he might have made great numbers of the poor and needy happy, but has helped and relieved none; in which he might have prepared for an eternity of blessedness, but has to enter the unseen world with no preparation for it.

(*b.*) The wickedness of a life of perverted powers; a life employed in corrupting others; in leading them into error; in seducing them from virtue; in destroying their religious hopes. How different from the reflections of the apostle Paul, who spent his life to make men better, and to fill their lives and their departing hours with peace, and hope, and joy, are the reflections of a dying infidel,—a man, endowed (it may be), with talents adapted to defend the truth, to explain it to others, to remove their difficulties, and to guide them to God and to heaven; but who has, in fact, spent his life in endeavouring to convince them that there is no God; that there is no future state; that there is no heaven:—that the soul dies with the body, and that all the hopes cherished of a world beyond are mere illusion.

(*c.*) The misery of a life without religion. The life of a man who has had no religion in his best days; who has none as he lies on a bed of death; who has no

prospect of happiness beyond the grave; who has exhausted his powers to gain this world, but has put forth no effort for the world to come; who is rich in this world's goods, but has no treasure laid up in heaven; who has been wise as a counsellor, a statesman, or a philosopher, but not "wise unto salvation;" who has gained much knowledge of the works of creation, but no knowledge of Him that created them; who has been able to give counsel in the senate-chamber or in the cabinet, but has never learned how sinners may be saved; who lies now on a bed of death—over whose remains a splendid monument will soon be reared—at whose burial a nation may weep, but in whose soul there is no godliness; no hope of a better life; no fitness for heaven! How unlike to that of the apostle Paul! Sad the contrast between the reflections of such a man as he leaves the world, and those of the Christian apostle.

II. *The prospect of the future life consequent on this review of the past:*—"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."

There are here two points to be noticed:—

(1.) This view of the future life, in its best form, *must* spring up from a review of the past life.

I do not deny that there *may* be a hope of salvation, and, therefore, of the "crown" of glory, derived from the feelings and purposes of a man, in the closing scene of life:—from repentance and faith first exercised on the bed of death. The merciful spirit of the religion of Christ

admits this; God does not exclude from His favour the penitent sinner, though at the last hour. It cannot be denied or doubted that the dying malefactor who said on the cross, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom," was as welcome in heaven as Lazarus or Mary, or as Paul himself was after the sacrifices and services of his long, laborious, and faithful life. Heaven, in this respect, differs essentially from the "crown" secured at the Grecian games. There, no one obtained the prize who had not entered at the beginning; who did not start when others started; who did not run over the whole course:—none who came in, with fresh and unexhausted vigour, when the race had been partly run, and who, therefore, might outstrip a wearied rival. Justice and equity demanded that all should start "fair;" that all should run over the same extent of ground; that all should run to the same goal. Religion would more perfectly resemble this, if it had required, as it *might* have done, that no one should receive the crown who did not begin the course at a specified time of life—say at twenty years of age, and who did not run and struggle as long as others, life being lengthened out for this purpose. But how many, on that principle, would have been excluded from salvation; how sad would have been the condition of one who had just *passed* the period fixed for the starting, and who would have had a long life before him with no possibility of entering the course. The crown of life is offered to any one and every one who will seek it at *any* time of life, even in the dying hour.

The prospect of this future crown is seen, however, most fully and appropriately in connexion with the review of a *life* spent in the service of the Redeemer. Very different must be the reflections of one who has sought it as the great aim of life—of a long life—from those of one who seeks it when life is nearly ended. Both may—both will, if they are true believers—enter into heaven; both will wear the “crown.” But the one will wear it with a remembrance that his days have been spent in the service of the world; in the ways of pleasure, folly, and ambition; in the indulgence, it may be, of low and sensual pleasures; perhaps in corrupting others, in alienating them from God, in sapping the foundations of truth in their minds, in leading them into sin and error, from which he cannot now recall them. In his case the work of life is, indeed, done, but it is badly done. There is no part of it on which he can look but with regret; there is no part of it which he would not wish to recall that he might live it over again in a better form. The whole course has been a career of folly, save the few moments of penitence and faith on the bed of death. It is too late for the penitent man now to render active service to his new Master; too late to do good in the world; too late to warn and instruct his fellow-men; too late to labour for the spread of the Gospel. The “crown” is, indeed, before him, for he is penitent, and has faith in Christ; but it is a crown which cannot be worn (even while he adores the grace that saves him), without the feeling that it is *not* the appropriate sequence of a life spent in folly and in sin.

The other will wear the "crown" not less with the feeling that it is of "grace," but with the feeling also that it is the *appropriate* issue of a *life*. It fitly follows upon having run over the entire course; of having devoted the best powers to the service of truth; of having endeavoured to do good through many years; and of having nothing to regret in the general aim and purpose of the life.

(2.) The remaining point of inquiry is, On what, in Paul's case, was this hope of the "crown" founded?

He says it was "a crown of *righteousness*, which the Lord, *the righteous Judge*," would give him. We cannot be in danger of mistake as to what he meant by this. On no subject has he, in his writings, expressed himself with more clearness than on the proper ground of hope for the salvation of man; on no subject more clearly than on the foundation of his own hope for salvation (Titus iii. 4—7; Eph. ii. 8, 9; Rom. iii. 20—24; Phil. iii. 7—9). The "crown," therefore, was, in his apprehension, a "crown of righteousness," not to be bestowed on account of his own merit; not because he had deserved it; not because he had any claim to it, except as connected with a promise of grace, but as bestowed on him in accordance with a great plan of salvation—a scheme by which men, themselves sinners, might be treated *as if* they were "righteous;"—a plan by which even in saving men, the justice of God would be vindicated and the interests of right secured throughout the universe. It was a "crown" illustrating the righteousness of *God*; not the righteousness of *men*.

At the same time, however, it would be bestowed by a “*righteous Judge*.”—a Judge not partial ; not bestowing his favours by caprice ; not imparting them in virtue of rank, and station, and position, and wealth, but conferring the crown equally, and with the same pleasure, on all who believe in His name, and who serve Him in a faithful life. No one will wear that crown as the result of partiality ; no one, however, of whom it will not be seen that it was justly bestowed *under the arrangements of redemption*.

The words which we have been considering, are the last words of Paul which we possess in relation to his views of death and of another life. If he uttered any words in his last moments,—if he expressed peace, calmness, and joy when he was about to lay his head under the axe,—those words have not been transmitted to us. Better are the quiet words spoken in the vigour of life, and in the fulness of the mental powers, than those which are uttered amid the excitement and agitation of the dying scene. Better than any fervid expressions of rapture and ecstasy, and transport,—any imagined visions of the Saviour, of God, of “*shining ones*,” of outstretched arms from the heavens to welcome us there,—are those calm utterances of faith, which we have been now contemplating :—“ 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.”

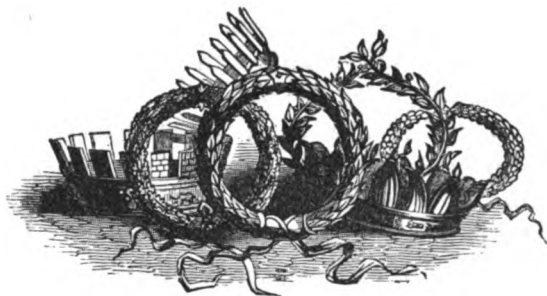
XXIV.

DEATH OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Details almost unknown.—*Loss sustained when a great man dies.*—Traditional account of Paul's death.—Scene of it.—*Death to him a gain.*—Equally so, to all believers.—Concluding remarks.—*The life of Paul a part of the world's history.*—His natural endowments; as a thinker; an orator; a worker; a man of high principle; and a man of tender feeling.—His religious character;—publicly,—and personally.—His title to the designation "*martyr.*"—A choice unregretted to all eternity.

“As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

PHIL. i. 20, 21.



ROMAN CROWNS.



WE know little respecting the death of the Apostle Paul. We have no record of the manner in which he met the final stroke. Yet I wish to make his death the subject of a few remarks; and to find in it, if possible (and it certainly *ought* to be possible), something that may suggest important thoughts on a subject which must soon be of great personal interest to us all.

It is a great event when such a man as Paul dies;—when a mind sagacious to plan, wise to impart counsel, vigorous to execute great designs, is withdrawn from the earth; when lips, once eloquent in the cause of truth, become silent; when he who guided the young, warned the wicked, strengthened the feeble, comforted the sorrowful, animated the desponding, is seen no more; when he who brought the richness of his experience,

and the maturity of his judgment, to aid the great interests of truth and humanity, has passed away. Influence is of slow growth, and is of inestimable value. The world has no wealth to be compared with this, when employed in the cause of righteousness. Influence is that in a man's known talents, learning, character, experience, and position, on which a presumption is based that what he holds is true; that what he proposes is wise.

And as there is nothing more valuable in society than this, so there is nothing more difficult to replace. A city burned may be built again; the rubbish will be cleared away; the streets will be widened and straightened; long lines of private dwellings and public warehouses will rise from the ruins; and a busy population will soon again drive on the affairs of commerce, of manufacture, of trade. Lands which have been visited with drought are soon fresh and green again; the hills and valleys are clothed with verdure and flocks, the yellow harvest falls before the reaper, and the wains groan heavily-laden with sheaves. From the fields where armies have encamped or fought, where the harvest has been trodden down by the passing and repassing legions, where the torch of war has made everything desolate, all traces of conflict are soon removed; for trees are planted, and the earth is rendered fertile by blood, and the little mounds of earth which marked the place where brave men fell and died are levelled, and the plough passes over Marathon and Waterloo, as it did before the battle. But not so, when a great man dies. His

place cannot soon be supplied. The world has *never* been able to find one who could fill the place of the Apostle Paul.

Of the actual manner of his death, we know only what may be stated in few words. Tradition says that it was by being beheaded; and all the circumstances of the case render that probable. The fact that he was a Roman citizen would exempt him, under Roman laws, from death by lingering torture, in the forms in which it was inflicted on many of his Christian brethren. It would save him from the ignominy of crucifixion, and would thus distinguish his death from that of Peter, who had no claims to Roman citizenship, and who, wherever he died, was probably put to death, like his Master, on a cross (comp. John xxi. 18). There were two modes of beheading among the Romans:—the one by the lictor's ax; the other by military execution with the sword. In the former case, the criminal was tied to a stake, scourged with rods, and then beheaded;¹ in the latter case, the executioner was commonly one of the Imperial body-guards, and the execution was performed in presence of a centurion, whose duty it was to see the sentence carried out. It is every way probable that Paul was executed in this latter mode.

The place where he was put to death is fixed with some degree of certainty. "It was not uncommon to send prisoners, whose death might attract too much notice in Rome, to some distance beyond the city,

¹ *Missi lictores ad sumendum supplicium, nudatos virgis cædunt securique feriunt.*—*Livy* ii. 6.

under a military escort, for execution." Tradition affirms that, in the case of Paul, this occurred beyond the city walls, on the south-western side of the city, on the road which led to *Ostia*, the port of Rome. That road was a great thoroughfare when Rome had some commerce; and though outside of the metropolis, and thus free from the dangers of popular tumult and excitement, it would be the most public and conspicuous of all the places in the vicinity of the great city. The traveller now as he goes out of Rome in the south-western quarter, through the gate which opens to the ancient road leading to Ostia, passes at the gate the tomb of Caius Cestus. A pyramid to mark that tomb, the only pyramid in Europe, had been erected in the time of Augustus Cæsar, and consequently not long before the time when Paul was beheaded. Around that pyramid is now the Protestant burial-ground,—“unconsecrated ground,” in the estimation of the inhabitants of Rome. Outside that gate, and in sight of that pyramid,—the only thing still there which it is certain was in existence at that time,—Paul probably suffered martyrdom. Not far from that spot now rises a magnificent structure,—the unfinished church of St. Paul; and near to it the small and ancient church of the “Three Fountains,”—the church erected on the spot where tradition says he was beheaded.¹ As to the manner in which his body was disposed of, we have no knowledge. One legend says that a noble matron

¹ *S. Paolo alle tre fontane.* The head of the apostle, say the monks, bounded three times, and the three fountains of water sprang up where it struck the earth.

named Lucina buried it on her own land, beside the Ostian road; the more common tradition is that it was conveyed to the Catacombs under the city—"those subterranean labyrinths, where, through many ages of oppression, the persecuted church found refuge for the living, and sepulchres for the dead."¹ Probably no reliance is to be placed on either of these statements.

We have none of the dying words of the apostle Paul; we have no account of the melancholy procession to the place of death; we know not whether he was attended by any of his friends, or whether there were any Christians present to witness the closing scene, and to sustain him by their presence and their prayers. It would, indeed, be interesting if we could know that when the time came, and he saw the ax about to descend, he repeated his own triumphant language, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" But the importance of such utterances in the dying hour has been vastly over-rated. Paul, in his own writings, never refers to such dying expressions as proofs of personal piety. Those proofs he found in the *lives* of believers, not in their feelings or their expressions on a bed of death. To the apostle Paul, we know that "to die" would be "gain" (Phil. i. 21). He esteemed it as such, not indeed for *all* men, as if the mere fact of dying necessarily introduces them into a better state; but for *himself* he regarded it as a gain or advantage (κέρδος). He uses the same word in another place in the same epistle (Phil. iii. 7), in reference to what he had "gained," or sought as gain, in

¹ Conybeare and Howson, vol. ii. p. 517.

his early life: "What things were gain to me—(κέρδη) —those I counted loss for Christ." To die would be, in respect to his permanent happiness, what he had *supposed* that those things *would* be when he had sought them,—things which now he had freely sacrificed for the sake of obtaining that higher good to which he was looking forward, and which would be *real* gain. It is easy to see that to die would be a "gain" or benefit to him, if the religion which he professed, and which he defended, was the true religion—a religion from God,—and if he was personally interested in it, or was a true believer. If there was such a heaven as that which he anticipated, a world of perfect and eternal glory, then it would be *better* to be there than to be in a world of sin and sorrow,—of tears and of death.

What Paul thus affirmed of himself is true, and must be true, of all who are in the same circumstances; all who have the same character; all who have truly embraced the same religion. To the martyr, death must be "gain." To the poor, the persecuted, the down-trodden, it must be so. To those whose life is, from any cause, a life of sorrow, it must be so. This is plain. But more than this is true. It will be "gain" for a rich Christian to leave his wealth, and go to heaven. It will be "gain" for the Christian who dwells in a palace to leave his splendid abode, and enter the mansions above. It will be "gain" for the monarch on his throne, if a true Christian, to lay aside his crown, his robe, and his sceptre, and be raised to the condition where all are kings unto God; it will be

“gain” for the man who has won the widest reputation, and “gain” for her who moves in the most attractive circle of social life, if they are Christians, to die :—yes, *to die*, and *to leave all*. Though there be a coffin, and a shroud, and a grave, though there be corruption and decay, yet to die is “gain.” We find it indeed difficult to feel that this is so ; we find it difficult even speculatively to believe that it is so. It may be doubted whether, for the most part, our lives are not framed on the feeling that it is better to *live* than to *die*. Yet it is a truth that for a good man,—honoured, beloved, useful,—with all around him that God ever gives to His children here ;—nay, with all that God *could* give him of earth, it would be “gain” to die. Heaven is a better, a happier, a more desirable world than this is or can be.



I have now finished what I designed to bring forward in illustration of the “Scenes and Incidents in the Life of the Apostle Paul.” I shall close with a few reflections on his character, and on the sources of his influence and power.

The life of the Apostle Paul is a part of the history of the world, and cannot be detached from it. We cannot explain that history *without* admitting the fact that he lived, and that he exerted an important influence in making the world what it has been, and what it is, and

what it is to be. No great mind is ever made which does not affect and mould the future. Homer still sings; Demosthenes still pleads for liberty; Socrates still speaks to men; Solon and Lycurgus still live in the laws of nations; and even the ancient warriors still affect the destiny of mankind. Saul of Tarsus has influenced more minds than they; and any one of them would be less missed in the history of the world than he would be. If *all* the results of his living could be taken into the account, it would probably be found that no man of that age—orator, soldier, philosopher, statesman, poet, or legislator—did as much to affect the permanent condition of the world in future times as he did. The influence of most of those who were his contemporaries was limited to a particular country; *his* influence has extended far already over the nations of the earth, has been augmenting constantly since his death, and will live on to the end of time. When their names shall all die away, his will remain in fresh and ever-enduring and ever-enlarging vigour. In eighteen hundred most eventful years, there has not been a generation which has not been influenced by him.

It is true, indeed, that he owes much of that permanent influence to the fact that he was converted *to the Christian religion*; and that his influence, vast as it has been, is the proper influence of that religion. But still, the fact that *he* has had an influence so vast in connexion with that religion may be referred to as showing what his influence might have been in any other department of human action. The

memory of most of those who took part in propagating Christianity has died away ; and not one other engaged in that work, has so widely spread and perpetuated that religion as Paul.

I. Looking at Saul of Tarsus, then, in respect to those natural endowments, which would have made him great, *whatever* his religion or calling, the following things are apparent :—

(*a.*) He was characterized by profound thinking ; and as a *reasoner*, he would have had a memorable place among men who have influenced the world. It is fair to infer from what he has written though on the subject of religion, and though directed by inspiration, what his powers of mind were in this respect. Jonathan Edwards, who in regard to the *mere* faculty of reasoning is admitted to stand at the head of the race, as Newton does in science, has done but little more than enlarge and expand the reasoning of the Apostle Paul. Beyond all question, Christianity possesses in *one* of its original propagators and defenders a man who is entitled to stand by the side of the great reasoners of the world.

(*b.*) He was endowed with a power of lofty eloquence. It was not, indeed, eloquence of voice and manner ; for, like the greatest of secular orators, Demosthenes, he had some very prominent natural defects as a public speaker. "I was with you," he says, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling ; and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor. ii. 3, 4). In respect to grace of language and manner, he was sensible of the strong contrast between

himself and the orators whom the Greeks were accustomed to hear. It was charged upon him—a charge which he did not attempt to deny—that “his bodily presence” was “weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. x. 10). But the man who could deliver the discourse on Mars’ Hill, or the defence before Agrippa, might, as a public speaker, have placed his name by the side of the most celebrated orators of the world.

(c.) Not less eminent was Paul for native zeal and ardour. When he set an object before him, no matter what, it was accomplished if it lay within the power of man. Whether it was the destruction of the Church by persecution, or the extension of that Church over the whole world, the sole questions were, *Could* it be and *ought* it to be done? Obstacles were no consideration in the way of his undertaking the task, and no thought of them was ever allowed for a moment to embarrass the undertaking. Had he been a warrior, a reformer, a founder of an empire, this trait would have distinguished him in all he did.

(d.) Paul was a man who was controlled by a conviction of what was right; by a sense of integrity; by elevation above everything mean, grovelling, low. This is apparent in all that he has left us in his writings; this would have been his characteristic, even if he had not been a Christian. Stern, severe, rigorous, bigoted, he might have been; but no plan would have been accomplished by trickery; principle would never have been sacrificed to expediency; nor would he have owed his success to cunning, deceit, or fraud. An orator he

was, having great objects to accomplish ; but he was not a sophist, and he would have disdained to owe his triumph to false reasoning, or mere appeals to the passions or prejudices of men. He might have been a statesman ; he never would have been a mere politician.

(c.) Withal, Paul had a heart as gentle, as tender, and as confiding as any man that ever lived. His soul was made for friendship ; and he owed much of his power as an orator to his tenderness of feeling. Of his kindred according to the flesh, he could say, in view of their danger in rejecting the Saviour, that he could wish himself accursed from Christ for their sakes (Rom. ix. 3). His was a heart, which could also expand and embrace the whole human family with a tenderness of which the benevolence of Howard and Wilberforce was but a humble and distant imitation.

2. Equally marked was the *religious character* of Paul, and equally fitted to affect the destiny of men, and the condition of the world.

(a.) His religious principle was absorbing and entire, fixed and immovable. It was with him (whether as a Pharisee or a Christian) the supreme thing ; every thing else was made subordinate to it. After his conversion to Christ, he was still the profound thinker,—having subjects to think upon better fitted to develop his powers of thought. He was still the profound reasoner,—having subjects to reason upon more worthy of his great powers. He was still the man of eloquence,—having subjects better adapted to call forth

his talent ; for the power of speech is most noble, and reaches its highest results, when employed in preaching the gospel. Whitfield at the Collieries, was greater in the results of his speaking than Burke amid the splendours of Westminster Hall on the trial of Warren Hastings, or than Patrick Henry was when summoning the American colonies to freedom. So Paul, when proclaiming Christian truth on Mars' Hill, was greater than Demosthenes when thundering against Philip.

(*b.*) It is not difficult to characterize the religion and the religious system of Paul as a Christian. The grand idea—the central point is the *universality* of the Gospel. Every barrier between men is broken down by the fact that Christ died for all. They are no longer divided into Jews and Gentiles ; into Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians, bond, and free. There is one God ; one Saviour ; one family ; one baptism ; one ground of hope ; one heaven ; one great scheme of salvation. *That* is to be made known to all the world. *That* is ultimately to triumph in the earth. In the gospel scheme, according to Paul, God is all and in all ; supreme and absolute ; having His own plans to execute, and having formed those plans before the foundation of the world. Man is fallen and ruined. He is under the curse of the law in this life, and he is exposed to its eternal penalty in the life to come. As a fallen being, he has no germ of goodness ; no holiness. There is nothing in his nature which can by cultivation and developement become true religion. He must, therefore, be regenerated by the Spirit of God, and *begin* to live anew. He has no merit of his own,

but is to be saved wholly by the merit of his Redeemer. His own works are of no avail in the matter of salvation; but his sole ground of hope is to be found in the Saviour. The benefits of the work of Christ are bestowed upon men freely in accordance with an eternal plan, and so bestowed that the glory is of God and not of man: in such a manner that God in all things will be honoured, and His government best established over the world.

(c.) In regard to personal religion, Paul was humble, earnest, sincere, prayerful. Principle, not feeling—truth, not emotion,—was at the foundation. Duty, honesty, integrity, sincerity, characterized the whole. And all this was connected with an energy that never tired, a love that never became cold.

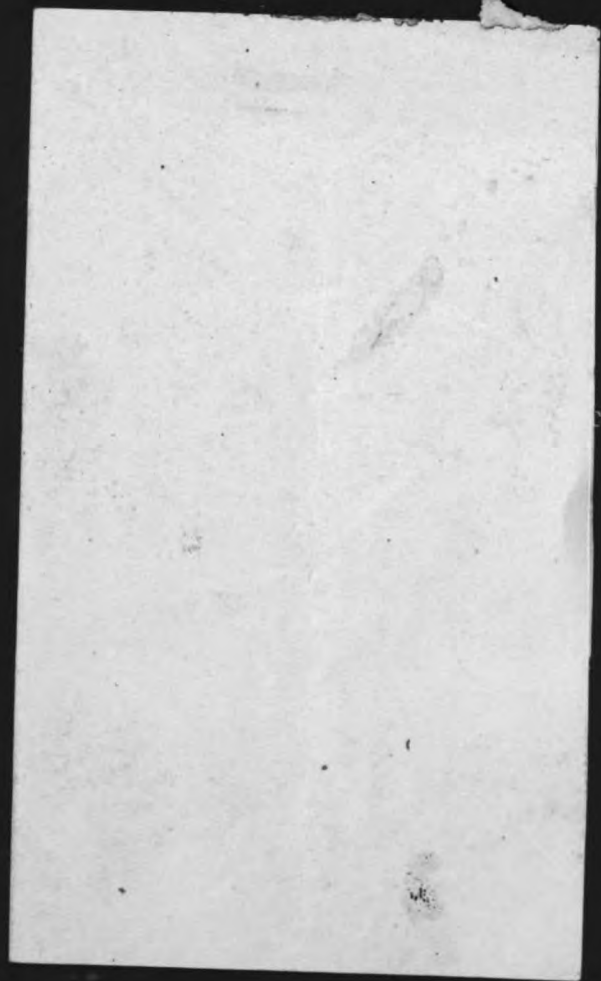
3. Paul was a martyr, and one of the most eminent of the martyrs. He was not *the* first, but he was *one* of the first, for his very life may be considered *as* a martyrdom. The simple idea in being a *martyr* is that of bearing *testimony*, or being *a witness*; and the word is applied to “the martyrs” as such, because they bore witness to the truth of the Gospel in the face of all that was employed to deter them from it. Through suffering, persecution, poverty, sorrow, Paul thus bore faithful *testimony* to the truth of the gospel; and when the time came for him to seal his faith with his blood, he did not refuse to die.

In conclusion. Paul in heaven has seen more than he could have seen on earth as to the results of his conver-

sion to Christ, and of his labours in his Master's service. Can we think that he now regrets the choice which he made, the change which he underwent, when he identified himself with the cause of the Saviour? No :—not now, nor ever will he for one moment in the long eternity before him.

And I would say to those especially who are entering on life with high hopes and brilliant worldly prospects, that they also, if they would renounce all these for Christ, would never repent the decision. No: come poverty; come disappointment; come toil; come care; come persecution; come obloquy, reproach, and scorn; come death in its most fearful form,—the time never would arrive when you for one moment would regret that you had taken such a step. Living, dying, and for ever, you would rejoice that you had been able *to give up all* FOR CHRIST.

THE END.



SCENES
AND INCIDENTS
IN THE
LIFE OF
THE
APOSTLE PAUL