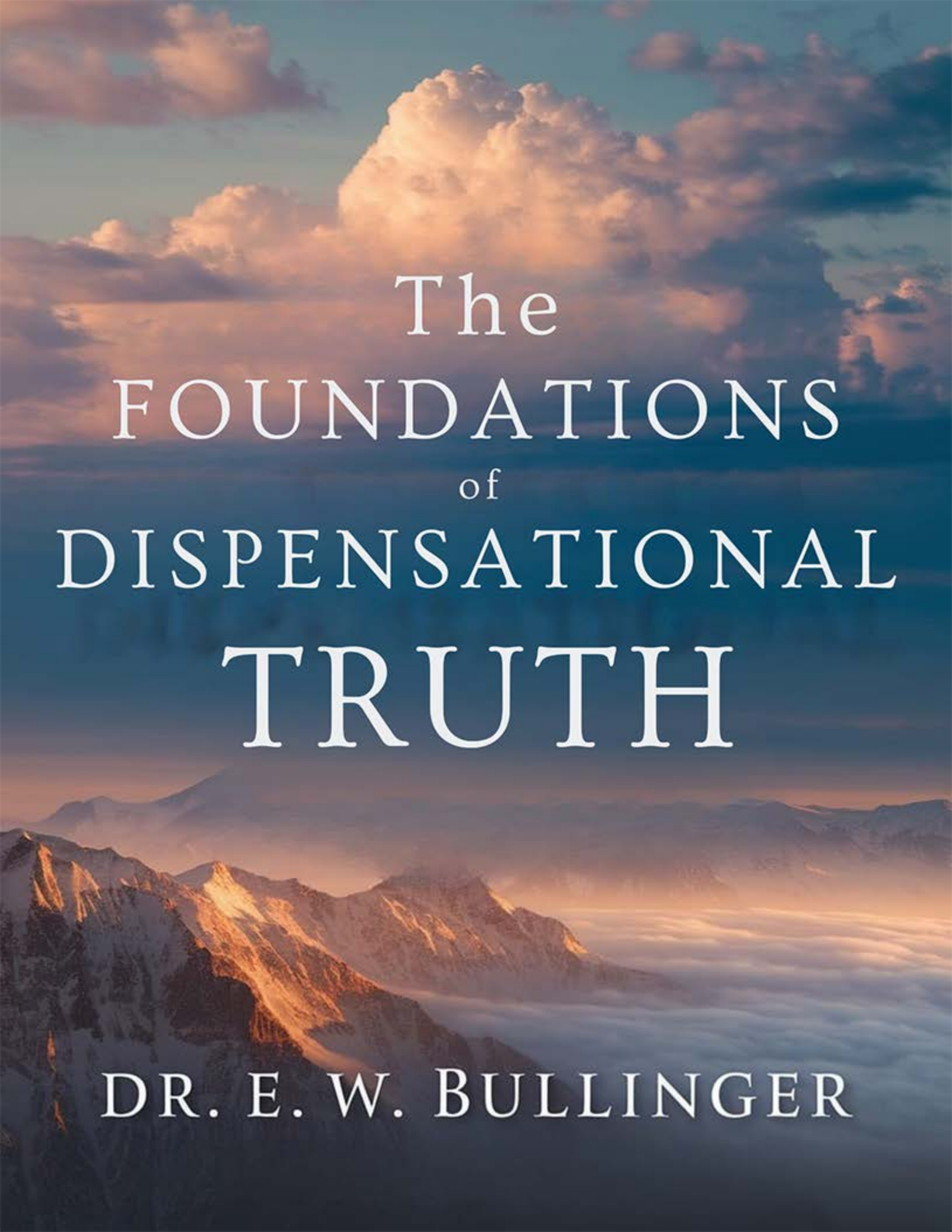

The
FOUNDATIONS
of
DISPENSATIONAL
TRUTH
DR. E. W. BULLINGER

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OF

Dispensational Truth

E. W. BULLINGER, D.D.

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The Foundations of Dispensational Truth

INTRODUCTORY

CHRISTIANS have all been so long tied to the tether of tradition that difficulties are met with in connection with the dividing of the Word of Truth at Acts xxviii. The following papers may help to solve such difficulties, enabling the believer to rightly answer such as question the hope that is in him.

There is one great foundation principle in the science of LOGIC which will meet all the difficulties, if we are careful to observe it. It is this :—

We cannot reason from the particular to the general.

That is to say, we cannot expect to find the *general* principles, which we may regard " the truth," by arguing from certain *particular parts* of the truth. On the contrary, we must reason from the *general* to the *particular*, if we would reason accurately.

The difficulties experienced by some of our readers are due to the fact that they arise from a consideration of only *parts* of the truth. To find the answer to them, it is vain to continue the discussion of them as separate difficult points : we mean difficulties connected with the earlier Pauline Epistles written before Acts xxviii. ; such as ordinances, the one body of 1 Cor. xii., or the spiritual gifts of 1 Cor. xiii., xiv., etc.

It is absolutely necessary that we should first make sure of the great general duty of " rightly dividing the

word of truth " (2 Tim. ii. 15). If that be a Divine precept, it is on the same level as all other of God's commandments ; and then it is our duty to yield as strict an obedience with respect to it, as to any other precept, if we wish to find the truth.

Being once on sure ground as to this, then comes the next great duty :—we have to apply this important and dominant principle to Acts xxviii. and the Pauline Epistles.

This being so, we propose, in this volume, to examine the very FOUNDATIONS of Dispensational Truth ; and endeavour to place them so truly, and fix them so firmly, that once we are well grounded in them, we may build upon them with such certainty that our difficulties will be removed, and our readers will find themselves in a position to answer all their own questions as they may afterwards arise.

What we ask for now, therefore, is *patience*. Let us hold all questions as to this or that *particular* difficulty in abeyance until we are grounded in the great *general* principle. We are not " directors of the conscience," but " ministers of the Word," and our desire is, so to minister it as to leave individual readers to direct their own consciences by the Word.

The Papers will be on

GOD SPEAKING

1. " By the prophets."
2. " By His Son."
3. " By them that heard Him."
4. By " the Spirit of truth."
5. By " Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ."
6. Practical conclusions.

The Lord Hath Spoken

(I.) "AT SUNDRY TIMES AND IN DIVERS MANNERS" (HEB. i. 1)

OUR first task is to make a survey of the whole subject, inasmuch as the fact that Jehovah has spoken to mankind is the greatest fact in the world.

In Heb. i. 1, 2-, He has told us how He has spoken, as to two of these "times" and "manners." These "parts" and "ways," or methods (for these are the meanings of the words), must be rightly divided if we are to arrive at "the truth" with regard to them (2 Tim. ii. 15).

We shall have no difficulty in doing this if we deem them worthy of our closest attention, and set out with the belief that all God's *words*, as well as all His *works*, are perfect (Ps. cxi. 2). All we have to do is to seek out and observe what is written concerning them. We shall find there are *six* of these "parts" and "ways," all arranged in perfect order :—

1. From the creation of man, Jehovah, in the first instance, spake directly, Himself, to individual men, without any human instrumentality or agency. From Adam, onward, to Abel and Cain, to Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and after these to the other patriarchs, down to the call of Moses at the burning bush (Ex. iii. 10). To these "parts," or "times," belongs the Book of Genesis.

2. From the call of Moses, which dates from the formation of the nation of Israel (Ex. i.), Jehovah spoke by human agencies ; and He spoke to "the fathers" of the Hebrew

nation. Moses was the first of the line of prophets through whom Jehovah spoke, and the last was John the Baptist, the greatest of them all (Matt. xi. 11).

Malachi, the last of the Old Testament prophets, ends by foretelling the nearness of the sending of " the Angel of the Covenant," Messiah (*i.e.*, the New Covenant which Jehovah was to make by Him), and of the " messenger " who was to " prepare the way " before Him (Mal. iii. 1). This " messenger " was to be no other than " Elijah the prophet " (Mal. iv. 5), for he had never died, but had been caught up to heaven and was in safe keeping, ready for the delivery of His message.

It is worthy of notice that Moses and Elijah, the first and the last of the Old Testament prophets, are linked together in Mal. iv. 4, 5. John the Baptist was sent " in the spirit and power of Elijah " (Luke i. 17). Had he been " received " he would have been reckoned as Elijah himself (Matt. xi. 14). With John's death the " time " ended when God spoke " by the prophets." To these " times," or " parts," belong the books from Exodus to Malachi, with Matt. i. 1—iii. 12.

3. From that " time " the speaking was again Divine. For God spoke " by His Son " (Heb. i. 2). It was still God speaking, for the Son spake not His own words but the Father's words Who sent Him (see Deut. xviii. 18, 19 ; and John vii. 16 ; viii. 28 ; viii. 46, 47 ; xii. 49 ; xiv. 10 ; xiv. 24 ; xvii. 8). His ministry began with the threefold declaration " It is written " (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10), and it ended with a like threefold reference to the origin and truth of the Word of God (John xvii. 8, 14, 17). To these " times " belong the Four Gospels.

4. From the time of our Lord's Ascension into heaven until the final rejection of Peter's repeated call to the nation to repent (Acts ii. 38 ; iii. 19-26) to Acts xxviii. 25-28, God spoke " by them that heard Him " (Heb. ii. 3). These only " confirmed " what the Son had spoken at " the first,"

and did not go beyond what the Son Himself had said. No new revelation of truth was made, but the old was enforced; the Holy Ghost bearing them witness by His miracles and gifts (Heb. ii. 4), just as the Son had borne witness to His own testimony by the miracles which had been foretold by the prophets. To these " times " belong the Acts of the Apostles, the general Epistles,[1] and the Pauline Epistles written during these same " times," *i.e.*, before Acts xxviii. 23-28.

5. From the close of those " times " God spake once again, *directly*, Himself, by " the Spirit of truth," as foretold and promised by Christ in John xvi. 12-15. He spake not of (or, " from ") Himself, but only what He was to hear from the Father (for the Father kept all these " times and seasons " in His own authority) (Acts i. 7). The Spirit spake, as before, by recording His words in the Scriptures (or writings) of truth, by the pen of " Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ." Then He recorded the precious doctrines which had hitherto been kept secret, and could not be made known until the *facts* of Christ's suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension had taken place, on which these doctrines were to be based. These doctrines are found only in the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians); and to these " times " belong also Timothy, Titus, Philemon (written to individuals).

6. Finally, we have human agency again in the person of John the Evangelist, His servant, who bare record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that He saw (Rev. i. 1, 2). To these " times " belongs the Apocalypse.

We are now in a position to set out the above *six* " sundry times and divers manners " in which God has spoken to mankind (Heb. i. 1). They are arranged in alternation, as follows :—

[1] Which follow the Gospels in the best and oldest Greek Manuscripts, James generally following the Acts.

A[1] | DIVINE. By Jehovah Himself, apart from human agency, to Adam (Gen. i. 28) until the call of Moses (Ex. iii. 10). To these "times" belongs the Book of Genesis.

B[1] | HUMAN AGENCY. "By the prophets" (Heb. i. 1), from the call of Moses (Ex. iii. 10) to the close of John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 12; xiv. 10-12). To these "times" belong Exodus and the rest of the Old Testament and up to Matt. iii. 12.

A[2] | DIVINE. "By His Son" (Heb. i. 1, 2; cp. Deut. xviii. 18, 19), from the beginning (Matt. iii. 13) to the end of His ministry (Matt. xxvii. 66 and the parallel passages). To these "times" belong the Four Gospels.

B[2] | HUMAN AGENCY. "By them that heard" the SON (Heb. ii. 3, 4), from Acts i. 1—xxviii. 20-28. To these "times" belong the Acts of the Apostles, the general Epistles, and the Pauline Epistles written during these "times."

A[3] | DIVINE. By "the Spirit of truth" (John xvi. 12-15), through "Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ" (Eph. iii. 1-12; 2 Tim. i. 8). To these "times" belong the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians), 1, or at least 2 Timothy, and Titus.

B[3] | HUMAN AGENCY. By "His servant John" (Rev. i. 1, 2). To this "time" belongs the Book of the Revelation.

Here we have *six* "sundry times and divers manners." For all through them God was speaking to man. *Six* is the number of *man*, and all that pertains to him. Since the end of those "times," God has never spoken to man, either directly, Himself, or indirectly, by human agency. Man, now, has God's Word, written and complete. Nothing is to be taken from it or added to it. Every man stands on equality before it; and, any one, professing to

have received any revelation purporting to come from God, is to be held " anathema " (Gal. i. 6-9).[1]

At these *six* sundry times God spoke of old ; and, since then, we have indeed, " the silence of God."

But there is to be a *seventh* of these " times." God is to speak again, independently of human agency. He is to speak from heaven (Ps. l. 1, etc.). That will be a *seventh* time, and thus will stamp the whole with the number of spiritual perfection. All is perfect. Not only His speaking as a whole, but all the several times and manners which go to make up all that God has spoken to man.

It is in Heb. i. and ii. that we have the key to the whole. To show that this key is perfect we must look yet again at those two chapters. They manifest and exhibit the same perfections as are seen in all the works of God. The telescope fails to bring all the distant works in the heaven within our view, and the microscope fails to exhaust the minute perfections of His works on earth, or to bring all of them within the limitations of human vision. We may first use the former, and look at these two chapters as a whole ; then we shall be in a better position to use the microscope, and examine some of their infinite perfections.

The two chapters are divided into *four* members, arranged in alternation : the *first* and *third* having for their subject, God speaking ; the *second* and *fourth* having the Son, by Whom He spake.

A | i. 1, 2-. God speaking, by the prophets, in the past.
B | i. -2-14. The Son, by Whom He spake; " Better than the angels " (verse 4) ; " God " (verse 8).
A | ii. 1-4. God speaking, by His Son, in those last days.
B | ii. 5-18. The Son, by Whom He spake (i. 2); " Lower than the angels " (verse 7) ; " Man " (verse 6).

[1] There have been such—and even in the present day there are several such. Those who put them forth are either not in their right mind, or are under the agencies of evil spirits.

This structure is self-explanatory, and is the best commentary on the whole of these two chapters, giving as it does their entire scope and subject; leaving us, by means of these, to arrive at the meaning of its words, and calling our special attention to the points which are emphasised for this purpose.

First, we notice that the four members, being in *alternation*, are set in two pairs, marked by the same letters (A and *A*; B and *B*, in Roman and Italic type respectively); so that A must be read on to *A* (from i. 2- to ii. 1), thus:

> "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . . Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard," etc.

In like manner we must read on from B to *B* (from i. 14 to ii. 5), thus:

> "To which of the angels saith He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? . . . For unto the angels He hath not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," etc.

Thus there are eight things solemnly emphasised for us, in order to call our special attention to them. We must now, therefore, use the microscope; and to observe them more minutely, we must note the order of the words (in the Greek) in the member A (i. 1, 2-).

A | C a | In sundry parts and in divers ways in time past
  | b | God spake
  | c | to the fathers
  | d | by the prophets
  | *C* | *a* | In these last days
  | | *b* | He hath spoken
  | | *c* | to us
  | | *d* | by [His] Son.

Here are eight points set in two series. In our first section we dwell on the first series. We give here its four points, leading us up to the second four which we must reserve for the next section.

1. God hath spoken. That is the first great fact.

2. He spake "in time past," or of old, in contrast with any subsequent speaking.

3. He spake "to the fathers." Not to Gentiles of any kind.

4. He spake "by the prophets," not by the priests. Not by any false prophets called by man (for all such were necessarily "false"), but by "the" prophets in whose writings alone God's words are to be found.

(II.) "BY THE PROPHETS" (HEB. i. 1)

WE have all heard about "the greatest thing in the world," and of the various opinions as to what different minds believe it to be. But if there be one fact greater than another in this world, it is that God hath spoken and made Himself known to man.

There was no reason why He should do so. He was under no compulsion. No necessity was laid upon Him. All things might have gone on exactly as they have; history might have been exactly what it is, the only difference being that man would have remained in a condition of total ignorance on many great and important matters, and would have been wholly unable to understand or explain them.

This is actually the case to-day with all who do not know the great fact that God has spoken; or who, being aware of the fact, do not know or believe what He has said.

"Faith cometh by hearing; and hearing, by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17).

It is by faith, therefore, in what God hath spoken that we understand the ages were adjusted by Him, so that what is seen by the outward eye does not arise or spring from that which appears on the surface, and cannot, therefore, be judged or explained by outward appearance (Heb. xi. 3). In other words, as has been well said, "Things are not always what they seem."

How gracious, therefore, and how wonderful is the fact—that God has spoken and made known to man the secret springs of history, so that we may know and understand something of the "ages" or dispensations as they succeed each other, and learn to understand something of His principles of administration suited to each!

In the earliest ages God spoke directly *to* individuals; as He did to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham and others. But, when He speaks to men collectively, to nations, or to all, then He has always spoken by other men. But by whom did He speak? "Holy men spake from God as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i. 21). At sundry times, and in divers manners, in time past,

GOD SPAKE BY THE PROPHETS.

The great outstanding fact contained in these words is that He spake

NOT BY THE PRIESTS.

No! For prophets are *called*, not made. Called by God, not made by man; not "made with hands."

The prophet is God's spokesman; and no one can be a spokesman for another unless he is called and appointed, and qualified by the sender, and is instructed as to what he is to speak and say, for him by whom he is called and sent.

It was no part of the priest's service to be God's spokesman. His duties were strictly defined. His work was not merely to offer sacrifices (according to the general idea of apostate Christianity) but *to teach the people what God had already spoken by the prophet*. Thus, we read of the duties of the priests, in Deut. xvii. 9-11: "according to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do." They were to "teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses" (Lev. x. 11). Moses was the prophet by whom God first spoke to "the fathers"—to His people "Israel," and it was the duty of the priests to teach what they had heard from Moses.

In Deut. xxxiii. 10, where the two great departments of the priests' duties are mentioned together, we may at

once see which is the greater and more important, from the order in which their two great functions are placed. It is in the blessing of Levi that we find them ; and we read

First : " They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law : " and then—

Second : " They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar."

We have only to think of and contrast what is claimed to-day, by what is called " the Christian priesthood," to see the extent of the apostasy, in which so-called priests burn incense and offer the so-called " Sacrifice of the Mass " ; while, instead of teaching the people what God has said, they do their utmost to prevent the people from knowing what He has written for their learning in His Word.

In former times the priests, who burn the incense, burnt the Scriptures and those who read them, by fire, and afterwards corrupted and perverted them by false translations. To-day, so-called priests destroy them by writing against the Scriptures, sitting in judgment on the Sacred Text, denying the fact that God spake by its writers, and (at the same time) sanctioning the circulation of corrupt translations of it. This is the measure of the apostasy to-day, which is just as real and flagrant as in the worst days of King Jehoiakim.

True, all sins to-day are more refined than they were : but the natural heart of man is as bad as it has ever been. Scientific poisoning is taking the place of violent murder, robbery is superseded by refined calculation. The pistol is gone, but the pen and the false prospectus get the money all the same.

And so with apostate Christianity to-day. The Bible is no longer publicly burnt (except in countries where priests have full power) ; but it is more effectually destroyed by Protestant priests, who treat its miracles as myths, its facts as fables, and its writers as forgers ; and this by men

who receive their emoluments and dignities for the very opposite purpose!

Priests have been the same in all ages. Ezra is the only recorded exception; and the wording of the record seems Divinely designed. He stands out most conspicuously as a model priest. Nothing whatever is said about his offering sacrifices, or burning incense. But this we read :—

> "This Ezra . . . was a ready scribe in the law of Moses which the LORD God of Israel had given" (Ezra vii. 6).
>
> "And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding . . . and he read therein . . . from the morning until mid-day . . . and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law . . . and
>
> EZRA OPENED THE BOOK
>
> in the sight of all the people . . . So
> they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly and gave the sense,
> and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. viii. 2, 3, 5, 8).

Yes, Ezra was a true priest; and if all priests had done as he did, apostasy would be unknown. Israel and Judah would have known no Dispersion, and the so-called "Christian priesthood" would to this day have carried out and carried on the work begun by the Reformers, and have been content to be known as "ministers of the Word."

The present apostasy which we see developing all around us in all the so-called "churches" may be traced directly to this one source. Here we put our finger on the spot whence all the spiritual and religious declension has arisen. The evil is seen and deplored by all; but how few discern the real cause, and set themselves steadfastly to remove it!

They fail to see that priests are human in more senses than one; they are human in themselves, and they are of human manufacture; and this has been so all through the ages. Priests are all "made with hands." In Israel they were "begotten of the will of man and by the will of the flesh," and to-day they are made by the same human will. That is why, therefore, Jehovah never spoke by priests; but only by the prophets.

> "The priest's lips should keep knowledge and they (the people) should seek the law at His mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. ii. 7).

Priests may be thankful that they were not entirely excluded from receiving the Divine call to be God's spokesmen.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel were priests who received this call; but so was Abraham, a patriarch (Gen. xx. 7); David, a king (Acts ii. 30, 31); Daniel, a prince (Dan. i. 3); and so were Elisha, a ploughman (1 Kings xix. 19), and Amos, a herdman (Amos i. 1; vii. 14). For the most part they were obscure men, and unknown but for their fathers' names. And there were prophetesses as well as prophets.

The great fact is that those by whom God spoke were called by Him. None other could give this call, or inform them as to what they were to say. That is why the prophet was called a "spokesman." The Hebrew is "mouth." Aaron was the mouth of Moses (Ex. iv. 16; vii. 1); and the prophet was the mouth of Jehovah (Ezek. iii. 17). "I will put My words in his mouth" was the declaration of Jehovah, concerning the great prophet like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 18).[1]

This is the Divine explanation of inspiration. No clearer definition of it can be given. How it was done cannot be explained, any more than creation can be

[1] Cp. Num. xxiii. 5, 16.

explained. It is for faith to believe it and not for reason to question it. Inspiration is a fact, as creation is a fact. The God Who breathed into man's nostrils " the breath of life " is the same God Who breathed into man's mouth and pen the " words of life." It is as Peter said in Acts i. 16 " this scripture must needs have been fulfilled which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas." It was David's mouth, but they were not David's words. David knew nothing about Judas. How could he have spoken about Judas a thousand years before he was born ? David spoke about Ahithophel ; but the Holy Ghost by David's mouth spake of Judas ; and for the same reason David, " being a prophet " (Acts ii. 30, 31), spake of the resurrection of Christ in Ps. xvi.

In the same way God spoke to Ezekiel :

" Therefore hear the word at My mouth,
And give them warning from Me " (Ezek. iii. 17).

Thus, " God, at sundry times and in divers manners," spake in times past unto the fathers

BY THE PROPHETS, NOT BY THE PRIESTS.

Notice, also, that what He spoke was " to the fathers " ; *i.e.*, to the ancestors of those to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. It was not spoken to Gentiles, though there were many things spoken about the Gentiles. What was spoken was spoken to the Hebrew nation, concerning their own past unworthiness and Jehovah's grace ; their past provocations and Jehovah's forbearance ; their then present punishments and Jehovah's dispersal ; their future restoration and Jehovah's glories.

In other words, the subject of Jehovah's words to them was entirely confined to Israel, and to Jehovah's then principles of administration. These things were peculiar to that particular Dispensation. It follows, therefore, that, if we read that People and those principles into the present Dispensation, we are taking what God spake by the prophets

to and concerning the fathers (*i.e.*, to Israel), and reading them as though they were spoken to and about ourselves, in this present Dispensation. This procedure can result only in confusion.

Hence, this confusion is seen when that which was spoken to Israel of the future blessing of the nation is interpreted of the *present* literal blessing of the Gentiles or of the Anglo-Saxon race !

The same confusion is seen when the prophecies are spiritualised, and all is interpreted of the present spiritual blessing of the Church. It was this latter system of interpretation which led to the former. Sick of this unworthy treatment of the prophetic Scriptures by traditional evangelical commentators who spiritualised its literal statements, relief was sought, and found, by many, in preserving the literal meaning, but interpreting it of another people and another race. We sympathise with those who have been misled by this double mistake, for they gain nothing, but lose. They gain a shadow and lose the blessed substance of which God afterwards spoke by His Son, and since then by them that heard Him, and by His servant Paul, " the prisoner of Jesus Christ " (2 Tim. i. 8).

But this we must leave for our next section.

(III.) " BY HIS SON " (HEB. i. 2)

COMPARING what is said of this speaking by God with what is said of His speaking " by the prophets " at the close of our last section, we learn from the second series :—

1. That God spake again, after the prophets had closed their testimonies.

2. That this speaking took place " in these last days," *i.e.*, the then last days during which His Son spake the words given Him by God. Not the days in which we live now, or in the days yet to come, but in the days of that Dispensation, the days which are past and gone, the days when He spake on earth—" the days of the Son of Man."

3. That the speaking referred to here was " by His Son." Not by any subsequent speaking, or by any other chosen vessel ; not even by the Holy Spirit as promised by the Lord in John xvi. 12-15.

4. That the speaking by His Son was " unto us " : *i.e.*, to the Hebrew writer of the Epistle to Hebrews, and to the Hebrew readers of what he wrote. Not to Gentile readers, but to those who heard what He said, and to those who did not actually hear His voice but had it " confirmed " to them " by them that heard Him " (Heb. ii. 3).

We shall have more to say on this last point later on. The other points are all perfectly clear ; but sufficient attention is not generally paid to the one great fact, that, all through, it was

GOD SPEAKING

whether " by the prophets " or " by His Son." This latter was the subject of prophecy. God had foretold this great and important epoch-making event, when

He said to Moses: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto them a Prophet from the midst of thy brethren like unto thee; unto Him shall ye hearken" (Deut. xviii. 15).

And again: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and will PUT MY WORDS IN HIS MOUTH; and He shall speak unto them all that I SHALL COMMAND HIM. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto MY WORDS which HE SHALL SPEAK IN MY NAME, I will require it of him" (Deut. xviii. 18, 19).

When the time came for God to "raise up" this greater Prophet, He was duly called, and anointed and appointed. He formally received God's commission. The appointment took place under the condition of Num. xi. 29 and xii. 6, for the Holy Spirit anointed Messiah for His prophetic office (Luke iv. 18, 19). Moses was called beside the fires of the burning bush; and "the Prophet like unto him" was anointed beside the waters of Jordan. From that moment "God spake by His Son," and what we call "the Four Gospels" are the record of the Father's WORDS and WORKS (John xiv. 10).

We must never allow this thought to be absent from our minds in reading or studying the Gospels. The fact was ever present with our Lord. Seven times He declares it in John's Gospel alone. And at the risk of being thought tedious, we must once more bring them together here:—

1. "My doctrine (*i.e.*, teaching) is not Mine but His That sent Me" (John vii. 16).

2. "As My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things" (John viii. 28).

3. "Why do ye not believe Me? He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John viii. 46, 47).

4. "I have not spoken of (*i.e.*, from) Myself, but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (John xii. 49).

5. " The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of (*i.e.*, from) Myself, but the Father Who dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works " (John xiv. 10).

6. " The word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me " (John xiv. 24).

7. " I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me " (John xvii. 8).

Thus on these seven occasions the Lord Jesus affirmed that it was God, even the Father, Who spake by Him ; as He spake of old time " by the prophets."

Modern critics who speak of the story of Jonah as a myth ; the Book of Daniel as a forgery ; and the 110th Psalm as not written by David (when its title so declares it, and when the Lord affirms that David himself said it " by the Holy Ghost " (Mark xii. 36)), would do well to reconsider their blasphemies when they talk so glibly about what they cover up under the Greek word *kenōsis* or emptying.

In Phil. ii. 7, the verb *kenoō* is rendered " made Himself of no reputation," but it means : " He emptied Himself." This is taken by the modern critics as meaning that He divested Himself of knowledge as well as of all other things ; and hence, when He spake of Jonah and Daniel and David, He either knew no better Himself or He condescended to the tradition and ignorance of the people. But the answer to all this is—" They say so." The true explanation of *kenoō* is given by the words that follow, which are added in order to show how, and in what manner, He emptied Himself.

He emptied Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world (*kosmos*) was (John xvii. 5). He did this when " He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man . . . and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross " (Phil. ii. 7, 8). This is the Divine explanation of the so-called *kenōsis*, and it is all-sufficient.

The modern critic's explanation lowers the person of our Lord, and robs Him even of His glory as Man. Though He emptied Himself of Divine glory, He was filled with Divine wisdom, and *He spake only God's words*; but He knew men's hearts and read their thoughts.

"GOD SPAKE BY HIS SON."

All that He said, therefore, was in the measured words of Divine wisdom. His words were God's from first to last.

His first uttered words when twelve years old were Divine. He said to His mother: "Wist (*i.e.*, knew) ye not that I must be about My [1] Father's business?" (Luke ii. 49). And His last uttered words were, "It is finished" (John xix. 30). What was "finished"? The Father's business which He came to be about (cp. Ps. xl. 7, 8).

It was the same with His *ministerial* words: all were ordered, both as to subjects and times. The Lord's ministry was occupied with four great subjects.

I. THE FIRST SUBJECT was the proclamation of the kingdom, beginning with Matt. iv. 12 and ending with Matt. vii. 28, 29: "When Jesus had ended these sayings." Every word in that section refers to the kingdom, not to this present Dispensation, or to any other.

II. THE SECOND SUBJECT was Himself—His own blessed Person. It begins by proclaiming Him as Lord (viii. 2, 6, 8, 9); and as the Son of Man (verse 20). All His words spoken and written, from Matt. viii. 1, up to xvi. 20, show that He was perfect God, and perfect Man; and His works were miracles of creation.

III. THE THIRD SUBJECT, beginning with Matt. xvi. 21, was His rejection by His own People Israel who "received Him not" (John i. 11). "FROM THAT TIME FORTH BEGAN Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must

[1] Note the rebuke in these words to those of Mary in verse 48, "*Thy* father and I have sought Thee."

go unto Jerusalem and SUFFER many things," etc. Four times He speaks of His atoning work and His approaching sufferings, and this subject continues down to xx. 34.

IV. THE FOURTH SUBJECT was again the kingdom: not its proclamation now, but its rejection. It begins at xxi. 1, and ends with xxvi. 35. All the parables of this period refer to the coming change of the Dispensations, and tell of the approaching Dispensation during which *the kingdom would be in abeyance*, in consequence of its rejection.

These four subjects are of the greatest importance. They are made up of the words and works of Jehovah by His Son. All are marked by the greatest possible perfection.

We may now set out the four, which are arranged in the order of an *Introversion* in which the KINGDOM is the subject of the two outer members, while the KING HIMSELF is the subject of the two inner and central members.

E | iv. 12—vii. 29. The Kingdom. Proclaimed.
F | viii. 1—xvi. 20. The King. His Person proclaimed.
F | xvi. 21—xx. 34. The King. His rejection accomplished and reign postponed.
E | xxi. 1—xxvi. 35. The Kingdom. Its rejection and abeyance.

Thus, the great subjects—the Kingdom and its Rejection—the King and His Crucifixion—are seen to be the central subjects of the whole Gospel.[1]

In order to understand the above Structure of the Lord's ministry as we ought to do, it is necessary that

[1] It is the same in each of the Four Gospels. Each has the same fourfold division of the Lord's ministry.

The four periods and subjects of the Lord's ministry may be thus presented according to the Four Gospels :—

	MATT.	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
First	iv. 12—vii. 29	i. 14—20	iv. 14—v. 11	i. 35—iv. 54
Second	viii. 1—xvi. 20	i. 21—viii. 30	v. 12—ix. 21	v. 1—vi. 71
Third	xvi. 21—xx. 34	viii. 31—x. 52	ix. 22—xviii. 43	vii. 1—xi. 54
Fourth	xxi. 1—xxvi. 35	xi. 1—xiii. 37	xix. 1—xxii. 38	xi. 54—xvii. 26

we should see the place assigned to it in the Structure of the Gospel as a whole. This, it will be noted, is in the form of an *Introversion*, which brings the most important matter into the central position.

A | i. 1—ii. 23. PRE-MINISTERIAL.
B | iii. 1-11. THE FORE-RUNNER.
C | iii. 12-17. THE BAPTISM.
D | iv. 1-11. THE TEMPTATION.
E | iv. 12—vii. 29. PERIOD I. THE KINGDOM.
F | viii. 1—xvi. 20. PERIOD II. THE KING.
F | xvi. 21—xx. 34. PERIOD III. THE KING.
E | xxi. 1—xxvi. 35. PERIOD IV. THE KINGDOM.
(E, F, *F*, *E* — The four-fold ministry.)
D | xxvi. 36-46. THE AGONY.
C | xxvi. 47—xxviii. 14. DEATH, BURIAL, RESURRECTION.
B | xxviii. 16-18. THE SUCCESSORS.
A | xxviii. 19, 20. POST-MINISTERIAL.

God's speaking by His Son is confined within the above limits, and does not go beyond them. They are the bounds of the Lord's ministerial words.

Three times, immediately before the official commencement (iv. 12), our Lord emphasised the fact that the written word is the beginning, middle, and end of all ministry, in the threefold—" It is written " (Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10). And three times, at the end, when He delivered up His commission into the Father's hands, there is another threefold reference to that same written Word of God (John xvii. 8, 14, 17).

Thus, the period when " God spake by His Son," in the last and closing days of that special Dispensation, is strictly defined and limited. It concerned the " great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord."

He only " began " this wondrous speaking, which ended with His death.

It was enough for that time that God had fulfilled His promise which He had made to Israel by His servant Moses. He had raised up Messiah a Prophet like unto Moses and had put His own words in that Prophet's mouth, with the solemn warning that if those to whom those words were spoken did not hearken to His words, that rejection of them would be required of them (Deut. xviii. 18, 19). That warning was not heeded. Israel rejected their Messiah, and would have none of those words which God had put in His mouth. They rejected the kingdom, and crucified their King.

And now, what remains for His people Israel? " He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, ' Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.' And again, ' The Lord shall judge His People.' " These words were written to those who had refused to hearken to Jehovah's words spoken " by His SON " (Heb. x. 28-30), notwithstanding the solemn warning in Deut. xviii. 18, 19: " I will require it of him."

This shows us that, if God has spoken unto us, since then, by any other agency, we do well to take heed, lest we be guilty of doing despite to the Spirit of grace which has brought His word to us.

(IV.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (Heb. ii. 3)

THIS means by them that heard the Son, by Whom God had spoken (in the Four Gospels), after He had spoken by the prophets in the Dispensation of the Old Covenant.

The prophets had spoken " unto the fathers," and the Son had spoken " unto us " ; and now that they had " heard Him," they confirmed what He had said, and confirmed them " unto us " ; *i.e.*, to Paul himself, and those " Hebrews " unto whom he was then writing.

This speaking (in Heb. ii. 3, 4) is divided into two distinct parts :—

I. The *confirmation* of those who had heard the Son.
II. The *witness* borne to their testimony by God Himself, with " signs and wonders and divers miracles and spiritual gifts."

These are the two parts of the great subject which is now to engage our attention (Heb. ii. 3, 4).

And first, we have to consider the time and manner in which this confirmation was given, *i.e.*, the part of the truth itself ; the way in which it was imparted ; also, the persons who were spoken to, as well as those who spoke. The speaking itself was special and particular ; not general or universal. It was to the " Hebrews," and their " fathers." There can be no mistake about that. Nor can there be any doubt either as to the speakers or to the subjects spoken of. All stands out perfectly clear on the surface ; and, if we do not mix up, or otherwise join together, that which God has separated, all will be clear to our understanding. We can be in no difficulty as to those who had " heard Him." These could have been none other than the twelve apostles.

No other human beings on earth could thus speak for God ; no others had any authority to do so.

" THEM THAT HEARD HIM." That was the one qualification. This it was that governed the eleven in the choice of another in the place of Judas Iscariot. " Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of His resurrection " (Acts i. 21, 22).

They gave two lots—one for Joseph, called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and one for Matthias. " And they prayed, and said : Thou, Lord, Who knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two THOU HAST CHOSEN." May we not feel sure that " the lot was cast into the lap—but the whole disposing thereof was of the Lord " (Prov. xvi. 33) ? And He chose Matthias.

The twelve apostles thus undertook a special mission ; and Matthias was chosen " that he might take part of this ministry and apostleship " (Acts i. 25). By the Figure *Hendiadys*, *one* thing is meant, though *two* words are used, the latter noun qualifying the former, and becoming a superlative Adjective, adding great emphasis to the former :—It means, " this ministry—yea, this APOSTOLIC ministry."

Paul had no part, at first, in this ministry : he had not " companied with the twelve," nor had he " heard " the Lord ; hence he could not be, and was not, in the position to " confirm " what the Lord had said. He must of necessity have a special call, and a particular commission must be given to him. We all know how and when he received both.

Some commentators hold that the eleven were wrong in their action in Acts i., and they consider that Paul was the twelfth apostle. But this is going far beyond what is written for us in the Word ; and we cannot accept it.

Nothing is said as to such action being right or wrong; and where Scripture is silent it behoves us also to be silent. But it is not silent in the face of that solemn prayer, and the direct answer recorded. Moreover, the Holy Spirit endorses it by afterwards speaking of them as "the twelve." On the other hand, Paul *always* dissociates himself from the twelve. He repeats again and again that he was "called, not of men, nor by men." This may refer to the choice of Matthias by the eleven; but it does not necessarily condemn, or approve it. He merely emphasises the fact of his own Divine and peculiar call as a "minister of the uncircumcision"; and, by so doing, he distinguishes the special apostolic ministry of the twelve, and their peculiar qualification for confirming the words of the Lord which they had heard.

The ministry of our Lord in the Four Gospels was thus carried on, after His Ascension, by the twelve. There was no break; nor was there any new testimony beyond the fact that Christ had risen from the dead, and that they were commissioned to repeat and *confirm* what He had said.

To understand what their apostolic ministry (recorded in the Acts of the Apostles) was, we have only to notice what the ministry of the Lord was. We have already seen that it began, on the delivering up of John the Baptist (Matt. iv. 12), with the call to the nation to "Repent!" With the proclamation of the kingdom, and the presence of the King Who had drawn nigh (Matt. iv. 17).

We know now that the call was not regarded; and the record of the Four Gospels is to tell us how the kingdom was rejected, and the King was crucified.

The Lord did not come to found a church, but to be "a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to CONFIRM the promises made unto the fathers" (Rom. xv. 8); as the twelve confirmed His Word. He was not baptized to "institute" a "sacrament" for a church, but "that He should be made manifest to Israel" (John i.

31). It follows therefore, that, in the Acts of the Apostles, the twelve were not commissioned to form or found a church, but to repeat the call of Jesus Christ to repent; to confirm His proclamation as to His person; and to re-offer the King and the kingdom on the one condition of national repentance.

The Acts of the Apostles

A careful study of the Acts will show that the rulers of the people were specially addressed. The call to repentance was made to the whole nation, as such; and the conflict of the twelve was specially with the rulers (see iv. 1-3, 5-21; v. 24-41; vi. 12; viii. 1; ix. 2, 23).

On the Day of Pentecost, this was the sum and the substance of Peter's address: "Repent," he said to "the men of Judæa" (Acts ii. 14), to "the men of Israel" (verse 22; iii. 12), to "all the house of Israel" (ii. 36). "The promise (he said) is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (*i.e.*, the Dispersed of Israel).

The opening words of Peter's address were: "THIS IS THAT which was spoken of by the prophet Joel" (ii. 21), and he goes on to quote what Joel had said about "the day of the Lord." That day was to begin by the pouring out of spiritual gifts, and the manifestation of the Spirit's powers: *and it had begun.* And had the nation repented, all would have followed as God had spoken by Joel. "Wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath" would have followed, bringing about "the restoration of all things spoken of old by the prophets."

While the mind is obsessed with the idea that Joel and Peter were concerned in the formation of the church, it is impossible that their words can be understood. But once it is seen that they both spoke concerning the kingdom, all is clear. We can then follow Peter's proclamation made in Acts ii., and its enlargement and development in chapter iii. The day of the Lord had indeed drawn nigh, and in the

name of that Lord it was being proclaimed. Judgment was about to " begin at the house of God " (1 Pet. iv. 17), " for the Judge was standing before the door " (Jas. v. 9). Peter ends up his pentecostal address with the significant words, " Save yourselves from this untoward generation " (ii. 40). It was a cry for immediate escape from an imminent judgment coming on that very generation (as foretold in Luke xxi. 32).

There is no founding of a church in all this. There was no beginning of a church on that " Day of Pentecost." Language is useless for the purposes of revelation if such language can be so interpreted. Nothing can be clearer than that Peter and the twelve were " ministers of the circumcision," as Christ was ; confining themselves to *confirming* only what they had heard the Lord say from the first.

The Holy Ghost was not yet teaching and guiding into all the truth as promised in John xvi. 12-15, but He was only *bearing them witness* by His *works* ; not yet by His *words*. Hence, in the very next chapter, a wonderful miracle was wrought (Acts iii. 1-11), and Peter at once made it the ground of another and further appeal to the " men of Israel," urging that, though they had rejected and crucified the Holy One and the Just, yet, the God of their fathers had glorified His Son, by raising Him from the dead, and had now commissioned him to again call on the nation to repent, adding the great, wonderful, and epoch-making promise that, on their repentance, their sins would be blotted out, and times of refreshing would come from the presence of the Lord, and He would send Jesus Christ, Who before was preached unto them, and all that God had promised by His holy prophets from of old would then be fulfilled, ending with the memorable words which we must give in full :—

(19) Repent therefore, and turn [to the Lord] for the blotting out of your sins, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence (or, person) of the Lord,

(20) and [that] He may send Him Who was before proclaimed to you—Jesus, Messiah, (21) Whom heaven must indeed receive till the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old. (22) Moses, indeed, said to [our] fathers that a Prophet will the LORD God raise up to you, from among your brethren like me ; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He may say to you. (23) And it shall be that every soul which will not hear THAT Prophet shall be destroyed from among the People. (24) And indeed, all the prophets, from Samuel, and those subsequent [to him], as many as spoke foretold also of these days. (25) Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God covenanted with your (or our) fathers, saying to Abraham, " And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." (26) " To you, first, God having raised up His Son, Jesus, sent Him, blessing you, in turning away each one from your evils " [1] (Acts iii. 19-26).

Again we ask, Where is the *founding of a church* in all this (as Rome teaches) ? or Where is the " church beginning at Pentecost " as some others teach ? Such teaching has blinded the minds of thousands, and made it next to impossible for any to arrive at a clear understanding of what God has written for our learning. This has become " a tradition of the elders " which has made the New Testament of none effect, as surely as the teaching of the Pharisees had made the Old Testament (Matt. xv. 3, 9).

This re-proclamation to repent, and this repetition of the promise of the sending of Messiah as the direct consequence, was carried on *throughout the whole of the Acts of the Apostles*, by Peter and the twelve in the Land and elsewhere ; and by Paul and others in the synagogues of the Dispersion, until it was brought to a head in Rome,

[1] Gr. *ponēros* (pl.), denoting the evils, calamities, and mischiefs suffered, rather than sins committed. These are dealt with at the outset, in verse 19.

where " many " of " the chief of the Jews," on a day being appointed, agreed not among themselves (Acts xxviii. 17-25). Then it became the apostle Paul's special and solemn duty to repeat once more, and for the third and last time, the solemn pronouncement of judicial blindness, first spoken through the prophet Isaiah (Isa. vi. 9, 10).

Once the Lord had repeated it, in Matt. xiii. 13-17 ; and a second time, in John xii. 37-41. On both occasions it was uttered in connection with the rejection of the Lord's words and works. And now, once again and for the third and last time, it is confirmed by Paul in Acts xxviii. 25-27.

Each repetition of this solemn prophecy marked a crisis in the history of Israel. This last was followed shortly after by the destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the Temple, and the Dispersion of the People. The presence of the Jews in our midst to-day is a standing testimony of these things.

This confirmation of what the Lord had said was not confined to spoken words. Those who had " heard Him " *wrote* as well as *spoke*.

The Apostolic Epistles

Hence, we have what are called the " Catholic " or " General " Epistles. But here again this name given to them betrays the misunderstanding which is so common concerning them. They were all written by " them that heard Him." We have not twelve Epistles. Only three were chosen for this duty: Peter, James,[1] and John, with Jude.[2] These writings should therefore be called *the Apostolic Epistles*.

[1] James (Acts xii. 17 ; xv. 13 ; xxi. 18. 1 Cor. xv. 7. Gal. i. 19 ; ii. 9, 12).

[2] Jude, the brother of the above. Compare Jude 1 with Matt. xiii. 55 and Mark xv. 40 ; and see John xiv. 22.

In all the best and oldest Greek manuscripts, these apostolic Epistles follow immediately after the Acts of the Apostles, that by JAMES coming first. This simple fact explains a great deal to us. We are now put in a position in which we are able to understand them, and put an end to all the difficulties, and are able to answer the many questions which are constantly arising with regard to them.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

We can understand how, and why, James was inspired to address his Epistle to " the twelve tribes scattered abroad." We remember that he wrote during that Dispensation, and in that " sundry time " covered by the Acts of the Apostles, throughout the whole of which the promise of God made by PETER, in His name, held good, viz., that, on the repentance of the People, God would send Jesus Christ, and the times of refreshing and revival, and restoration connected with His being sent, should come. We can, in the light of this, understand the words of JAMES, when he tells the believing Israelites that he and they had been begotten by the Word of truth " for US to be a kind (or sort) of firstfruits of His creatures " (i. 18).

This was the teaching received at that time. Paul had already written concerning these " firstfruits," in the very earliest and first of his Epistles (that to the Thessalonians), that at the sending of Jesus Christ, the dead in Christ should first rise, and then they who were alive should " be caught up together with them " (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). These would indeed have been the " firstfruits " of which James speaks in his Epistle (i. 18).

God had promised by Peter that He would send Jesus Christ, on the repentance of the nation. God was not mocking them. We may be perfectly certain of that. Paul, in writing this, was only " *confirming* what the Lord had said." He did not hear it when the Lord had uttered

the words, but the words had been revealed to him by the same Lord Who had spoken them when on earth. Hence Paul could *confirm* them, in writing his first Epistle to these Thessalonian believers.

We must reserve what we have to say on 1 Thess. iv. until we come to the consideration of that Epistle in its proper place and order. Meanwhile, we remark that it was no wonder that JAMES, writing during that Dispensation of the Acts, could say, in a very special sense: "The Judge standeth before the door" (v. 9): for the Lord was not yet *seated*—but, as Stephen saw Him, He was still "standing," as though waiting for Israel's repentance—and ready to "descend from heaven," and to be *sent* in accordance with God's promise made by Peter in Acts iii. 20.

PAUL could write in Heb. x. 12 of the Lord having "sat down on the right hand of God." Yet, this may have been written only in contrast with the priests on earth always "*standing*," because their work was never finished as Christ's work was; and may not have any historical or chronological significance.

JAMES could write about justification by faith; but in writing to the twelve tribes and during that Dispensation, he had to show that it must be a living faith.

A righteousness of God without works had not yet been fully revealed. The Epistle to the Romans had not yet been written. Justification must be like Abraham's faith and like Rahab's. For faith is like the human body. The body without spirit is dead. For, by God's breathing spirit into his nostrils, man "became a living soul"—and without that spirit he "becomes a dead soul."[1] So "faith also" "without works is dead" having no evidences of life,

[1] See the following passages where the Hebrew *nephesh* "soul," in this sense, is rendered "the dead" instead of "dead soul" (Lev. xix. 28; xxi. 1; xxii. 4. Num. v. 2; vi. 11); "dead body" instead of "dead soul" (Num. ix. 6, 7, 10); and "body" instead of "souls" (Lev. xxi. 11. Num. vi. 6; xix. 11, 13. Hag. ii. 13).

and giving no signs of it. Hence, JAMES appeals to Abraham, who "believed God" but manifested that it was a living faith by his obedience in going out from his country and his kindred (ii. 27). In like manner, Rahab's faith was proved to be a living faith when she received the spies in peace, instead of denouncing them and delivering them up to death at the hands of the king of Jericho (ii. 25).

JAMES could also write about the "synagogue" (Jas. ii. 2 margin), as Luke could in the Acts of the Apostles, when Paul was adding his confirmation to Peter's, and preaching "Jesus and the resurrection" to the Dispersion in their synagogues (Acts xvii. 1, etc.).

JAMES could say all these things because he was confirming what the Lord had said; for he was writing to those to whom he could take up Peter's very words, in Acts iii. 14, and say, "Ye have condemned and killed the Just [One] and He doth not set Himself against you" (Jas. v. 6); *i.e.*, against you (the twelve tribes) by taking judgment on you. He yet "standeth before the door" (verse 9); His proclamation is not yet withdrawn. His promise to send Jesus Christ is still open. But, "the coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (verse 8).

THE EPISTLES OF PETER

PETER also wrote, as well as spoke, to "the strangers scattered"; *i.e.*, to the *Diaspora* or Dispersion; and he speaks of the same salvation which the prophets spoke and wrote about; and tells them that the message they ministered was "not unto themselves, but UNTO US[1] (*i.e.*, to Peter, and to the Dispersion (1 Pet. i. 1) to whom he was writing) they did minister the things that are NOW reported UNTO YOU by them that have announced the glad tidings UNTO YOU, by *pneuma hagion* (*i.e.*, by

[1] Or, "unto you" according to all the Greek editors, including Tregelles.

power from on high, Heb. ii. 4) sent down from heaven, into which angels desire to look" (1 Pet. i. 12).

PETER also writes to the believers of their message, as to "a holy priesthood," "a royal priesthood," "a holy nation" (1 Pet. ii. 1-10), and to "the sheep of His pasture" (verse 25). He tells these that "the end of all things is at hand," and exhorts them to be sober and to watch (1 Pet. iv. 7); that "the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at US, what shall the end of them be that OBEY NOT the glad tidings of God?" (verse 17); referring, of course, to his own command in Acts iii. 19-26, and to the "salvation" (Heb. ii. 1-3).

PETER testifies that "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" God had begotten them to an inheritance [1]—no longer an earthly—but a heavenly; and a salvation then "ready to be revealed in the last time," *i.e.*, the season—or end of that Dispensation, that was even THEN "ready to be REVEALED" (*apokaluptō*); for that Dispensation was then drawing to an end, and the time when, the "sufferings" being over, "the glory" was about to follow. We have the same word "*apokaluptō*" in 1 Pet. iv. 13; and v. 1. There was a true sense in which Peter could use the word "*apokaluptō*," as they knew. It was included in the promise to "send Jesus Christ." It is no part of *our* "hope" now. We are waiting for our

[1] We may compare this "inheritance" with what is written of it in

1 Pet. i. and ii.	Rev. xxi. and xxii.
inheritance, i. 4.	The holy city, etc., xxi. 7.
incorruptible, i. 4. undefiled, i. 4.	pure gold, xxi. 10.
fadeth not away, i. 4.	"no more," xxii. 3-5.
reserved in heaven for you (marg. for us).	descending out of heaven, xxi. 10. "the twelve tribes," xxi. 12. "the twelve apostles," xxi. 14.
praise and honour and glory, 1 Pet. i. 7.	"glory and honour," xxi. 23, 24.
precious living stones, ii. 4, 5.	"precious stones," xxi. 12. foundations, xxi. 14.

" calling on high," not for the apocalypse, or " the day of the Lord."

In his second Epistle he exhorted them, in order that " an entrance should be ministered UNTO YOU abundantly into the everlasting KINGDOM of our Lord and Saviour Jesus—the Messiah " (2 Pet. i. 11). He puts himself among " them that heard Him " when he says " this voice WE HEARD when we were WITH HIM in the holy mount " (verse 18).

At the close of his second Epistle he speaks of " the day of the Lord " as coming " like a thief in the night " (2 Pet. iii. 10), and of the solemn judgment scenes accompanying it (verse 11). He follows this up by an announcement of " the day of GOD " which will succeed it (verse 12) ; and of " the new heavens and new earth " which should end it ; and concludes by basing his final exhortation upon it (verse 14)—" that ye may be mindful of the words before spoken by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of US THE APOSTLES [1] of the Lord and Saviour " (2 Pet. iii. 2). When we thus emphasise the pronouns, it is only to note that these apostles were *including themselves* in what they wrote about, and to show that they regarded themselves as being partakers in the scenes of which they were speaking. But, seeing that the proclamation was unheeded, the call to repentance was disregarded, and the promised sending of Messiah to set up the kingdom and restore all things was rejected, it is only in a remote sense that all these personal expressions can be used of and by us.

Then, all was imminent ; now, all that they wrote about is in abeyance. Then, the fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers was very near ; since then it has been remote. This is the only true and real sense which we can make of that apocalypse coming " shortly," " quickly " (Rev. i. 1, 3). Many believers are perplexed at such

[1] The Greek Texts, with that of Tregelles, read " BY YOUR APOSTLES."

expressions as these. They cannot understand how John was told to say that the things he was to write about " must shortly come to pass " (Rev. i. 1). They fail to see that it was perfectly true ; for John wrote immediately before the end of that Dispensation during what he calls " the last hour." He could not write as though he assumed the *rejection* of Peter's proclamation. It was necessary, rather, that he should assume the contrary, and write positively, and not hypothetically, as though he wrote about solemn realities.

But entirely ignoring the great crisis of Acts xxviii., and treating the greatest crisis in all history—the destruction of Jerusalem—as though it were a passing incident, without any effect on Scripture history or prophetic teaching—the Book of Revelation has been wrenched from all connection with Israel and treated as though it were a continuation of Gentile history written in symbols ! Or else the book has been ignored or spiritualised till it has become a negligible quantity as part of God's Word to us.

As to the Book of the Revelation, we must, in this connection, leave what we have to say till we come to the end of the apostolic writings : then we shall see how the confirmation of the Lord's words, " by them that heard Him," all form one harmonious whole, taking its proper and important place as the key to the interpretation of the whole of the New Testament.

(V.) "BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM" (Heb. ii. 3)

The Apostolic Epistles

The Epistles of John

JOHN was one of the first chosen group of three who were called to confirm, by writing as well as speaking, what they had heard from the Lord. He, like each of the other two, was one of "them that confirmed" what began to be first spoken by the Lord (Heb. ii. 3). He did not go beyond it.

We have literally no information as to the dates of his writing outside his own Epistles. No one can help us. Neither ancient writers, nor modern critics, can tell us anything beyond what we can read for ourselves in John's own writings. All else is conjecture. All readers and writers must perforce come back to the internal evidence of this, as well as of all the Epistles. There is no external evidence.

We have not far to read before we come on the words: "Little children, it is the last hour" (1 John ii. 18). This can refer only to the approaching end of the then Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem. John was not speaking of the present day, or of the close of human history, or of the end of the material creation; but of the end of the period when God was speaking by "them that heard" His Son. The end of that particular "time" was indeed near. So near, that it says: "the world (*kosmos*) is passing away and the lust of it" (1 John ii. 17). It was its "eleventh hour."

What was it that then specially characterised that "last hour"? The answer follows. It is not separated from the statement: "Little children, IT IS THE LAST HOUR, and according as ye have heard that [the[1]] antichrist is coming, even NOW many antichrists have arisen, WHEREBY WE have come to KNOW that it is THE LAST HOUR."

[1] See Note on p. 44.

This is the first mention of antichrist in the New Testament; and he is mentioned as being well known; for no explanation is given beyond the reference to the character or "spirit of antichrist" (1 John ii. 22; iv. 3).[1] The question is, How did John know this? It will be said, of course, by inspiration; and this is true. But John says "WE." Therefore others also knew, or might know and understand the sign furnished by these antichrists. The arising of these false christs had been foretold by our Lord, as *the very first sign* of the beginning of this "last time," in the last great prophetic discourse on Olivet.

There were two prophetic discourses, and this fact accounts for the differences, in *time* and *place* and *subject*, between the former, recorded in Luke xxi., and the latter, recorded in Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii.

The one recorded in Luke was spoken "on one of those days, as He taught the people *in the temple*" (Luke xx. 1). For the next note of time is in xxi. 1, "and He looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts *into the treasury*." So that He was still in the temple when He uttered the prophecy recorded in Luke: for the next note of time is in xxi. 37, "and in the day time He was teaching *in the temple*; and AT NIGHT HE WENT OUT, and abode in the mount that is called the Mount of Olives."

But with regard to the prophecy recorded in Matt. xxiv. and Mark xiii. we distinctly read (Matt. xxiv. 1), "and Jesus *went out* and departed *from the temple*." . . . "And *as He sat upon the Mount of Olives*, the disciples came to Him privately" (verse 3). So, in Mark xiii. 1, "He *went out of the* temple . . . and *as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, over against the temple*, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked Him privately" (verse 3).

[1] The article is in the Received Text, but though all the Textual Critics omit it, still, in English, it is necessary. We cannot say "an" antichrist cometh; but, antichrist is equivalent to "[the] antichrist" of whom the Old Testament Scriptures and the prophets had spoken. See Dan., chaps. vii., viii., ix., and xi.

So that we have *two* great prophecies —one (Luke) spoken *in the temple*, the other (Matthew and Mark) spoken later *upon the Mount of Olives.* As parts of the first are repeated on the second occasion, we give the leading points of the three in parallel columns, so that the object of each, and the difference between them, may be clearly seen.

Both accounts open with a summary of events which were to arise in the lifetime and experience of those who heard the words.

The attention of the Lord had been called to the buildings and stones and adornment of the temple : and He replied, "There shall not be left here one stone standing on another stone that shall not be thrown down." [1] This solemn statement called forth the question (on both occasions), "WHEN shall these things be ? and WHAT SIGN will there be when these things shall come to pass ? " *i.e.*, arise, or *begin* to take place (Luke xxi. 7. The same word as in verse 32, not verse 24).

The very first words of the Lord's answer were :

MATT. xxiv. 4-6.	MARK xiii. 5-7.	LUKE xxi. 8, 9.
" Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars : see that ye be not troubled : for all these things must come to pass,[2] but the end is not yet."	" Take heed lest any man deceive you. For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ ; and shall deceive many. And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled : for such things must needs be,[2] but the end shall not be yet."	" Take heed that ye be not deceived : for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ ; and the *time draweth near :* go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified : for these things must first come to pass ; [2] but the end is not immediately " (R.V.).

[1] So completely was this fulfilled that, in *The Throne*, Illustrated Weekly (London), for 21st December 1911, a two-paged article strove to prove from this fact that there never was a temple at all ; and the whole thing was a myth.

[2] Gr., *ginesthai*, arise, or happen.

That is the *beginning*. The Lord then goes on to speak of the events that will next follow: the birth-pangs of the tribulation :—

MATT. xxiv. 7, 8.
" Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows."

MARK xiii. 8.
" Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines, and troubles : these are the beginnings of sorrows."

LUKE xxi. 10, 11.
" Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom : and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences, and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven."

Now it will be observed that, on the former occasion (Luke xxi.), instead of saying, " These are the beginning of sorrows " (as in Matthew and Mark), and going on to continue the description of them, He stops short. He does not go on. He goes back, and tells of something that will take place " before all these " things—the beginnings of sorrows (or " birth-pangs ") of the great tribulation ; and describes

the destruction of Jerusalem.

12. But before all these things.

That is to say, " before " the great tribulation, which ends with the sign of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, these events are recorded in verses 12-24 ; and the closing words are :

24. " And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations : and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

Now in the discourse recorded in Matt. xxiv., instead of going back to speak of the condition of Jerusalem before and until the beginning of the great tribulation, having said "all these are the beginning of sorrows," He *goes on to describe* the tribulation (Matt. xxiv. 9-28; Mark xiii. 9-23), and He continues the prophecy concerning these sorrows up to the moment of His appearing in the clouds of heaven.

It is at this point that in Luke xxi. 25 the Lord takes up the *telos*, or time of the end; and the closing words of each discourse speak of the actual coming of the Lord :—

MATT. xxiv. 29, 30.	MARK xiii. 24-26.	LUKE xxi. 25-27.
"IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."	"But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."	"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

But we are here concerned, not with the actual coming at the time of the end, but with the *first* "sign" which had to do with what John writes about in 1 John ii. 18, "WHEREBY (he says) WE HAVE COME TO KNOW that it is the last hour."

These verses (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30; Mark xiii. 24-26; Luke xxi. 25-27) are in the *third* person; and speak of

what " they " should, in that future time, feel and see. The verses which follow, however, are in contrast with that " them " and " they." The Lord comes back to the then present time, viz., to the *first sign* of the false christs. " BUT when these things (of verses 8 and 9) ARE BEGINNING to come to pass (or arise), THEN look up, and lift up YOUR heads, for YOUR redemption draweth nigh." And He spoke to them a parable, " Behold the fig-tree and all the trees, when they now shoot forth, YE KNOW, of YOUR OWN SELVES, that summer is already nigh at hand. So, YE also, when YE see these things COMING TO PASS, KNOW YE that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say UNTO YOU, THIS GENERATION will IN NO WISE have passed away until all these things shall have BEGUN to come to pass " (Luke xxi. 28-32).[1]

These words were introduced by " verily," and they are true. *That generation did not pass away before the fulfilment of verses* 8, 9, which told of the arising of these false christs or antichrists, " WHEREBY (John says) we know it is the last hour " (1 John ii. 18).

Still more clear will this be when we observe that the word rendered " fulfilled " in Luke xxi. 32 is not the same word which is so rendered in verse 24. There (in verse 24), it is *plēroō*, full-filled ; but here (in verse 32), it is *ginomai*, which means *to begin to be*, or *arise*. They *did* begin to be ; they *did begin to arise* during THAT VERY GENERATION, and that generation did " pass away." The word " generation " cannot mean " race," for that " race " will never pass away. It is the " everlasting nation " (see Isa. xliv. 7).

We have, therefore, a clear and satisfactory interpretation of the words " this generation " without resorting

[1] Granted, that these words *now* refer to those who will yet see the future time of the end (*telos*), yet we cannot *exclude* those who heard the Lord's words, who would have understood them had the nation repented at Peter's call in Acts iii. 19-26.

to any forced manipulations and clever arguments in the effort to make " this generation " mean some other generation in the yet distant future: interpretations which will not stand the test of criticism, or really convince a little child. But looking at them dispensationally, they not only explain themselves, but that other expression also which has puzzled so many, " the last hour," of 1 John ii. 18. And for ourselves to-day, the same sign holds *good*, as to the beginning of the tribulation, which is, of course, yet future.

Through not seeing that, by the rejection of Peter's proclamation of the Kingdom, all is now in abeyance, the Pope is held by some to be the antichrist spoken of. But this sign was to be the *beginning* of that last hour, not a sign of the *continuation*, or the *end* of it. It was the *very first signal*.

If the Pope or Popes be antichrist, then we are left with no " sign " at all; and the words of the Lord are made of none effect. No! the tribulation, together with the Kingdom, is in abeyance. The time for the antichrist's revelation must *precede* the day of the Lord, and is, indeed, the immediate sign of it (2 Thess. ii.).

But JOHN has other references to the then conditional promise of the imminent *parousia* or *presence of the Lord*. In ii. 28 he says: " And now, little children, abide in Him that when He shall be manifested WE may have confidence, and not shrink away in shame from Him at His *parousia*." Again we say that we cannot exclude John himself, and those who read what he wrote.

In iv. 17 he says: " In this our love has been perfected in order that WE may have confidence IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT." For that is what it would have been (and still is to be) for all them that obey not the call to repentance by " them that had heard " the Lord, and gave the command in His name.

In 2 John 7 also, we find still further reference to the

characteristics of the false christs or antichrists of John's day and of that last hour. These we must leave for future consideration.

Our readers will perceive that we are not only giving coherence to other passages which are the cause of so many difficulties in interpretation; but are being provided with a powerful argument against the teachings of the vast majority of those who hold that the Lord *did come at the destruction of Jerusalem*. Among the standard commentators, there are many who hold or uphold that view.

We have taken this point first, in dealing with the apostolic Epistles of John, because it is helpful in determining the date of his Epistle. But there is another point which lies in the very forefront of his first Epistle. Indeed, in the opening words we have an echo of Heb. ii. 3, which reminds us that he was one of " them that heard " God's Son; and was thus qualified and commissioned to *confirm* what " at the first began to be spoken by the Lord."

John commences his first Epistle thus:

" That which (or He Who) was from the beginning, that WHICH (or Whom) WE HAVE HEARD, that which (or Whom) we have seen with our own eyes, that which (or Whom) we have gazed upon, and our hands have handled of the WORD OF LIFE (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and report (or announce) to you the Eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us). He Whom we have seen, AND HAVE HEARD, we announce to you also,[1] that ye also may have fellowship with us; and OUR[2] fellowship indeed is [fellowship] with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and these things WE[3] write to you, in order that your joy may be complete " (John i. 1-4).

John writes to Hebrews especially; as we have already

[1] This word is added in all the Critical Greek Texts.
[2] See note on *hemeteros*, p. 51.
[3] All his critical texts make this " WE " emphatic.

seen, immediately before the close of that Dispensation. We therefore find him using essentially Hebrew expressions and idioms. He speaks of " an Advocate " (or Comforter) with the Father, as he had " heard " from the lips of the Lord (John xiv. 16, 17); and he adds that " He is the propitiation (or atoning sacrifice) for our sins, and not OURS [1] only [as Jews], but for the whole world also [without distinction]." Here, John clearly distinguishes himself and his own people Israel, to whom he was specially testifying of Him Whom he had " heard, and seen."

The Apocalypse

Before leaving the confirmation of " them that heard the Son," we must include the Apocalypse among the apostolic writings, using the words only of those of the twelve who were the writers of the apostolic Epistles.

Here, as we have already intimated, we get further evidence as to the unique Dispensation of the Acts; but we get more, as we always do when we are on a right and true line of teaching. Whenever this is the case, difficulties are unexpectedly removed. But, on the other hand, when we are on a wrong line, difficulties rise up all around till we are compelled to retrace our steps.

Now with regard to the Apocalypse: who of us has not been perplexed with the opening statement that John was to write concerning " things which must SHORTLY come to pass "? In verse 3, it is added, " the time (or

[1] The word is the same as in i. 3 (" OUR " fellowship); ***hemeteros*** equals " ours," and is not the same as " our " in the preceding clause. The former (" our sins ") is the ordinary Personal Pronoun, as is " with us " (in verse 3); but this latter is a much stronger word, and refers to what is " ours " in a peculiar manner, as Jews. Compare Acts ii. 11, " our tongues "; xxiv. 6, " our law "; xxvi. 5, " our religion "; 2 Tim. iv. 15, " our words "; Tit. iii. 14, " our (people)." These are all the occurrences of the word.

season) is near." There must have been a true and literal sense in which these words were to be understood.

Though He, Who sees the end from the beginning, knew that Peter's offer in Acts iii. 19-26 would be rejected, yet He must not, writing by His servant John, assume that that would be the case. John must be instructed to write what would be understood; and he wrote to the assemblies as directed.

In the assured belief that God was not mocking His people by promising to send Jesus Christ on their repentance, no hint of any kind must be given as to the Divine foreknowledge of the end.

The freewill of the people must not be forestalled. Full responsibility must be left with the nation during the whole of that Dispensation, up to that last memorable whole-day conference in Rome (Acts xxviii. 23-29).

We may be certain that Paul left nothing unsaid on that solemn occasion, and left no argument unused, when, " from morning until evening," he " expounded and fully testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets."

The apostle John could do no less. The sending of the Lord Jesus, as promised in Acts iii. 19-26, involved the fulfilment of " all the events which were to come with the revelation and unveiling of Jesus Christ," and included the " restoration of all things which had been foretold by all the prophets."

Hence it could be said, *in a very real sense*, in which it cannot now be said, that the " revelation " of Jesus Christ must " shortly come to pass." The " must," of course, refers to the certainty of His promise, not to the uncertainty of Israel's decision. From the Divine point of view, " must " was the only correct word to be used. It is not repeated at the end of the book, but three times in the last chapter we have " Behold (or surely) I come quickly "

(verses 7, 12, 20); and once, "the time is at hand" (verse 10), or near (as in ch. i. 3).

There was a true and real sense in which the Revelation or Apocalypse could be then spoken of as "near"; and it must have come with greater weight at that time than it can come to believers of the present day. That is to say, it cannot now be spoken of as near *in the same sense* as it was spoken of then.

But there are expressions in the messages to the seven churches also, which have the same local and chronological reference. And if we regard these assemblies as then existing, and receiving these messages direct from Him Whom all who "received the word" (Acts ii. 41; 1 Thess. ii. 13) were then being taught to wait and look for, the words must have come with a peculiar force, such as they do not bring to us in the present day.

"Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and THEY ALSO WHICH PIERCED HIM; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev. i. 7). These are mentioned among the "things which must shortly come to pass" (verse 1), and the time for which was "at hand" (or near) (verse 3). And when we read them in connection with other words in the first three chapters, it is clear that "the day of the Lord" was indeed near.

Peter had declared that "This," at Pentecost, was "that" which was prophesied by Joel; and Joel prophesied of "the day of the Lord" (Joel ii. and iii.).

The messages to Ephesus and to Pergamos repeat the assurance: "I will come unto thee quickly" (ii. 5 and 16, the same word as "shortly" in xxii. 20).

"Hold fast till I come" was the message to Thyatira (ii. 25).

"I come quickly" was the message to Philadelphia (iii. 11, the same word as "shortly" in xxii. 20).

"I stand at the door and knock" was the message to

Laodicea; and it had the same meaning as in Jas. v. 9, "The Judge standeth before the door." No perversion of this solemn message by modern evangelists, who take the words out of their context and add to them the word "heart," can take from them the solemn import they must have had in the eyes of those who first read them, as coming from the pen of the apostle John.

The message to Ephesus, "Thou hast left thy first love," must have had a peculiar meaning to those who received them when read in the light of Acts xix. 10 and 2 Tim. i. 15, where this defection is positively stated.

Yes, "the day of the Lord" was indeed near: and *had the nation repented at the preaching of the twelve, all would have then come to pass.* If not, then the Lord was only mocking the nation by His message through Peter in Acts iii. 19-26. We see no other alternative.

We know now, of course, that the call was rejected. Jesus Christ was not then sent; all is therefore in abeyance, and waits for a yet future fulfilment.

The historical interpretation, which treats the Book of Revelation as though that final rejection of Messiah had no consequences, and that all went on as usual, finding its fulfilment in the events of European history, must strike us as having *no instruction for anyone*, past, present, or future; and the spiritualising treatment of the book robs it of all coherence, when looked at in its chronological setting. This latter is the only treatment which makes the Revelation a book full of teaching for us to-day, as "written for our learning"; a real book having a real mission for the time when it was written, as well as for the present day, and for the yet future day when it will have its literal fulfilment.[1]

[1] See "The Apocalypse," pp. 69, 138. Published by Eyre & Spottiswoode Ltd.

We have placed our consideration of it in this connection, following the Epistles of the same apostle; but there remains

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE:

and, when we come to this—the last of the apostolic Epistles—we find the same characteristics of the last and closing days of that Dispensation as we have in 2 Pet. ii.

We thus reach the conclusion of the united testimony of "them that heard" the Lord, and who thus "confirmed" His words. All the twelve were engaged in this work as speakers, but these three (Peter, James, and John) were singled out as writers; and they, with Jude the Lord's brother,[1] have "written for our learning."

We are now in a position to consider what it was that these apostles had heard from the Lord, and was confirmed by them, during the same Dispensation, and during the same forty years of probation.

[1] As we learn from Gal. i. 19, compared with Matt. xiii. 55 and Mark vi. 3.

(VI.) "BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM" (HEB. ii. 3)

WHAT THEY HAD HEARD

BEFORE we consider the Pauline Epistles it may be well to pause and note what it was that the twelve apostles who spoke, and the three who wrote, had "heard" from the lips of the Son, Whose words and teaching they "confirmed." We shall then be in a still better position to understand the apostolic Epistles.

In our last section we had to look at Matt. xxiv., so that we might understand better what John had written when he spoke of the "many antichrists" whereby he and others knew (and all might have known) and understood that it was "the last hour"—the eleventh hour—before the close of the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles.

We saw what a flood of light was thus thrown on one passage (Matt. xxiv. 34; Luke xxi. 32), which has been a burdensome stone to all Futurists who regard the Acts of the Apostles as the beginning of the Church period, and have not yet given due weight to Acts iii. 19-26, which is the pivot on which Dispensational truth turns. The same light is thrown on the expression

"THIS GENERATION

shall not pass away till all these things begin to come to pass."

Difficulty arises through not seeing that the verb rendered "fulfilled," in Matt. xxiv. 34 and Luke xxi. 32, is not the same as in Luke xxi. 24; and that, even if it were, it was contingent on Acts iii. 19-26 (see p. 57). The moment this is seen, all difficulty is removed. That generation did "pass away," but not before the sign the Lord had given had arisen and come to pass, for many had come in His name, asserting that they were Christ.

This leads us to consider other things which compel us to view that particular generation in its very special character. It witnessed the advent of the predicted " messenger " preparing the way of the Lord Himself, fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi. The voice of John had cried in the wilderness (Isa. xl. 2 ; Matt. iii. 3 ; Mark i. 3 ; Luke iii. 4 ; John i. 23), and prepared the way for the Lord Himself. The wedding feast had been prepared, and Jehovah had " sent His servants " (John and the Lord) to summon those who had been bidden (Matt. xxii. 3, etc.).

That generation stood, therefore, in a very special position, as the Lord testified when He said that the men of Sodom and the Queen of the South should rise in the judgment, and condemn it on account of these its very special privileges.

John fulfilled not only the gracious promise made through Isaiah (xl. 3), but the more solemn promise of Malachi (Mal. iv. 5, 6) which was connected directly with " the great and dreadful day of Jehovah." The Lord Himself declared that John was (*i.e.*, represented) Elijah, for He came " in the spirit, yea, the powerful spirit of Elijah " (Luke i. 17). But that generation would not receive him (Matt. xvii. 10-13).

So true was this, that those who overlook the renewed promise of the " other servants " (Matt. xxii. 4)—" them that had heard Him," who gave the second invitation in Acts iii. 19-26, etc.—believe and teach that the prophecies of Malachi and Isaiah have been actually fulfilled (*i.e.*, filled full) and that Futurists are quite wrong in looking for any future fulfilment of them.

They do not see that the rejection of the " other servants," in the Acts of the Apostles, by that generation which " took His servants, and entreated them spitefully and slew them " (Matt. xxii. 6), only *postponed* the promise of Acts iii. 19-26 ; and that those Futurists are perfectly right who believe in the coming, not only of the Lord, but in the coming of Elijah to prepare His way.

One writer says: "To dream of an Elijah of the future is virtually to discredit the express statement of the Word of God, and rests on no Scripture warrant whatever." [1] Yes; this is true of those who have left Acts iii. out of the account; but not of those who give it its true place and due weight; and see and understand that the promise of God made by Peter is true; and who therefore believe, on the sure warrant of the Word of God, that He will yet fulfil it by sending Jesus Christ, with the "times of refreshing" and "the restoration of all things which have been spoken of by all the prophets."

Only those who give its due place to Acts iii. have an answer for those who hold and teach that *the Lord came at the destruction of Jerusalem.* All others have no answer because they are "foolish and slow of heart to believe ALL that the prophets have spoken; Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25, 26).

The prophecies of the "sufferings" must needs have been fulfilled; but if the Lord came at the destruction of Jerusalem, then the prophecies of His glory have *never yet been fulfilled!* But they were just as clear and minute as those of the sufferings, and must have, in the future, just as literal a fulfilment.

Only when we give its due place to the further invitation by the "other servants" to "them that had been bidden," foretold by the Lord (Matt. xxii. 4), and fulfilled in Acts iii. (and throughout the Acts), can we understand what those who had "heard" the Lord had to confirm; and observe how they gave due place and prominence to what they had heard from His lips.

Many Futurists have great difficulty with several passages in which the Lord spoke as to His coming again, and are unable to fit them in with that "blessed hope" revealed in Paul's later Epistles. We speak from experience: and now

[1] "The Parousia," by Dr Stuart Russell, p. 14.

rejoice in having discovered, in Acts iii., the key to all those difficulties whereby we find the solution of many passages, which for the most part are either ignored altogether, or are explained in a way which seems to regret they are there, instead of seeing that, in the light of Acts iii., we cannot do without them.

In that light we are bound to confess that John, and the Lord Himself, spoke of " the day of the Lord " as being very near. John spoke of " the wrath to come," but he spoke of it not as being in the distant future, but as being then impending. His words are (literally), " Flee from the wrath about to come " (Matt. iii. 7). This was the wrath connected with " the day of the Lord," from which those who " received the word " (Acts ii. 41 ; 1 Thess. ii. 13) had been " delivered " (1 Thess. i. 10).

Yes, " that generation " was indeed " wicked " above all others (Matt. xii. 38, 39-45 ; Luke xi. 16, 24-36). It was " un-toward " (or perverse), and called forth the upbraiding of the Lord (see Matt. xii. 38-45). And those who listened to His words cannot be excluded from their direct intention and interpretation : " except YE repent, ye shall all perish IN LIKE MANNER " (Luke xiii. 1-5).

In other places the Lord emphasised the Dispensational importance of " this generation."

" All these things (He said) shall come upon *this generation* " (Matt. xxiii. 36).

" Whereunto (He asks) shall I liken *this generation* ? " (Matt. xi. 16).

" The blood of all the prophets shall be required of *this generation* " (Luke xi. 50, 51).

And why all this ? Because the Son of Man was rejected of *this generation* (Mark viii. 38).

Another important expression,

THE END OF THE AGE

(rendered " the end of the world "), carries the same

instruction with it. It means "the end of the age"; *i.e.*, of that age, or Dispensation, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place soon after Acts xxviii., and could not refer to the end of the material creation.

Now there are

Four Remarkable Passages

in the Gospel, which, through an inadequate translation, have given rise to a widespread misconception as to Dispensational truth. They are Matt. x. 23; xvi. 28; xxiii. 39; and xxiv. 34.

1. Matt. x. 23: "Verily I say unto you, ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come."

2. Matt. xvi. 28: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

3. Matt. xxiii. 39: "I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

4. Matt. xxiv. 34: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled."

First, we must notice that our particular attention is called to each of these four statements by the emphatic "I say unto you"; and three of these are prefaced by another emphatic word "Verily." We are thus directed to the great importance of these four statements, and are solemnly warned that we are not to ignore or neglect them, still less attempt to explain their meaning away.

First, we notice that, in the former of the two clauses, the negative "not" is not the ordinary negative, but the strongest that could possibly be used, and is frequently rendered "by no means," or "in no wise." The inconsistency in rendering it simply "not" in these four passages has helped to deepen the obscurity which overshadows them.

Further, in the second clause in each case, there is the Greek particle ("*an*"), which, wherever it is found, introduces an element of uncertainty, implies a condition, and makes the whole clause hypothetical.

Having stated the phenomena connected with all four of these passages (the four "tills"), we are in a position to consider them in their order.

I. Matthew x. 23

"But when they persecute YOU in this city, flee ye into another, for verily I say unto YOU, YE shall by no means have gone over (or completed) the cities of Israel till the Son of Man shall have come."

There is a difficulty in this verse for all Futurists who treat the Acts as relating to the founding of the Church; and the faulty rendering of the two clauses has helped to increase the difficulty. Some boldly solve it by asserting that Matt. x. 1-15 referred to the past—the sending out of the twelve; but that verses 16-23 *are future*, while verses 24, etc., again are past. But this is purely arbitrary. There is no warrant whatever for it, of any kind. It is playing fast and loose with a Scripture simply because it does not fit in with their own view of prophetic interpretation.

Those who hold that the Acts relates to the founding of the Church have no place for Matt. x. 23. But it ought to be *essential* to us if our interpretation of the Acts is correct. If it be not so, it is a proof that such interpretation must be wrong. Taking it in connection with Acts iii., and believing that "Israel" means Israel, Matt. x. 23 is full of teaching, especially when we note the meaning of the Greek.

In the first place, the word "not" (as we have said above) is peculiar. It is the strongest negative that can possibly be used: so strong is it that, whenever it was

used by man, he never made it good.[1] Note its connection here. What is so *certain* here is the fact that the twelve, to whom the Lord was giving His charge, should *by no means* have completed their mission until some contingent event might have happened.

And, secondly, for what is so *certain* in the former clause is *uncertain* or *conditional* in the latter. In this, there is (as we have said above) a little word, a Particle ("*an*"), which has no meaning in itself that can be expressed in translation, but which, whenever it is used, makes the whole clause, or sentence, *conditional*. It is used in the latter of these two clauses: "Till (*an*=may be, or haply) the Son of Man shall have come." Or its effect can be transferred to the verb, which might then be rendered "may have come." In any case, the meaning is that the former was a fact that was *certain*, and the latter was *uncertain*.

The twelve are assured that they would *by no means* have gone over the cities of Israel. That was certain. But the coming of the Son of Man was *uncertain*, for it was *conditioned* on the repentance of the nation, in response to Peter's proclamation in Acts iii. Read in this light, we are not merely getting rid of a difficulty (as though we are sorry it is there, but as it is there we must do our best to get over it), but we are getting real instruction from it.

All this, however, is fruitless so long as we are obsessed by the tradition of the ancient and modern "fathers" that "the Church began at Pentecost." That is fatal to a proper understanding of Dispensational truth: for it is a veil over the eyes of Gentile believers; and it is as thick, and fits as closely and tightly over their eyes as the veil that is over the eyes of Jewish unbelievers, who do not see Christ in the Old Testament.

[1] See Matt. xxvi. 33. John xiii. 8; xx. 25. It is the union of the two negatives *ou* and *mē*, which should always be rendered "by no means," or "in no wise," but is more often rendered simply "not." It is most emphatic, and denotes absolute certainty.

Others get over the difficulty by saying the Lord was "coming" by following them into those cities. But "the coming of the Son of Man" was a future event, and could not refer to Him then; for He was then present. The Lord had come. *He was there already!* There was no contingency about that. But the coming then spoken of was a future coming, and was contingent and conditional: not a future coming, some two thousand years distant. It was contingent on the repentance of Israel.

What we learn from Matt. x. 23 is that it was the twelve who were thus commissioned, and no others. It was they who should by no means have completed their mission. It was "the cities of Israel" to which they were sent, not to the whole world (at that time). It related to what would have been His own "second coming" that might take place so *soon*.

Again we say that, read in the light of Acts iii., Matt. x. 23 is no longer a difficulty which has to be met, but a Scripture which we need to throw light on other Scriptures. It is no longer an argument for those who oppose our "blessed hope" by using it to prove that the Lord has already come.

II. Matthew xvi. 27, 28

"For the Son of Man is about to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will render to each according to his works. Verily I say to YOU, there are some of those here standing who shall *in no wise* taste of death until they *may have seen* the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Here again we have (1) the nearness of the coming spoken of. It is not the future tense of the verb "to come," but the present tense of the verb *mellō* (=about to be), and the infinitive mood of the verb *erchomai* (=to come), the two together meaning, as we have translated it above, "is about to come."

Then there is (2) the *certainty* of the double negative: "*by no means*," or "*in no wise*" (not the simple negative "not"), and it is used of the absolute statement of fact that some of those standing there should *by no means* die before they might see the fulfilment of the promised coming.

The foreshadowing, or sample of that coming, six days later, did not need such a strong asseveration as that; still less could it be used of a coming then more than nineteen hundred years distant. And yet the assertion is so positive that infidels do not hesitate to assert that the Lord "deceived His disciples, for (say they) *He has not come yet*."

Thus, theologians and infidels are in the same boat; the one denying the Futurist interpretation, asserting that the Lord DID come at the destruction of Jerusalem; the other upholding the truth of the Lord's words, while maintaining the other truth that the Lord has not yet come. Thus using one truth to upset another truth.

Such is the havoc made of Scripture by ignoring the parable of the marriage-feast, and its fulfilment in the Acts of the Apostles. Both classes of interpreters are "foolish," because they do not believe ALL that the prophets have spoken.

But both alike ignore (3) the untranslatable Particle "*an*," which makes the coming spoken of *uncertain*, and *conditional*, in contrast with the *certainty* of the fact that some should not die till the *uncertainty* of the condition should be settled.

Now see how true this Scripture (Matt. xvi. 28) is. Some of those standing there did not die until they might have seen the Lord coming in the glory of His kingdom, had Israel repented at the proclamation of Peter in Acts iii.

True (as we have elsewhere written), the Transfiguration was an exhibition of what that coming glory would be like. Peter testifies this (2 Pet. i. 16). But the Transfiguration *did not exhaust Matt. xvi.* 27, 28, for there was no coming

of the Lord with His angels, nor was there any judgment " of every man according to his works."

III. Matthew xxiii. 39

" I say unto you, ye shall by no means see Me, henceforth, till ye shall say, ' Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord.' "

Here again, we have certainty in the former clause, and uncertainty in the latter. It was doubtless this *certainty* that made the disciples call His attention to the buildings of the temple, as He departed from it (xxiv. 1) ; and that led the Lord to explain further what was involved in the word " desolate."

The latter clause was uncertain, for the Particle (" *an* ") again points to the contingent condition of the repentance of the nation when it will one day be ready to say, " Blessed is He That cometh in the name of the Lord."

IV. Matthew xxiv. 34

" Verily I say unto YOU, this generation shall by no means pass till all these things may be fulfilled."

Here again, we have the same Divine assurance as to the weighty truth of the whole statement ; and the same two words in the respective clauses. In the former we have the same emphatic *certainty* as to the continuance of that very generation till an *uncertain* condition might be realised.

We need not have pressed the point so strongly in our former paper as to the exact meaning of the verb which refers to the arising of the *first sign* of the tribulation. For there is again the same Particle, " *an*," which makes the whole of the second clause contingent (because it was conditioned on the repentance of the nation in Acts iii. 19-26). Had the nation then repented, *ALL that the*

prophets had spoken would have been then fulfilled; and that generation would not have passed away without witnessing the fulfilment.

In a former section we have dealt fully with this last great prophecy of the Lord on the Mount of Olives, and we saw that, through the condition of Israel's repentance not being fulfilled, all was postponed after the first preliminary sign of its commencement had taken place.

We cannot *exclude* the "YE" and the "YOU"; or imagine that the Lord was speaking, not to them, or merely to *us* now, but to some generation yet to come. It is far more simple and according to truth that we should take all the Lord's words literally, which we can do the moment we deal with them chronologically, and see the true breaks given us so prominently in Acts iii. 19-28 and in Acts xxviii.

If we do this, then at the same time we have an answer for those who maintain that the verses (Matt. xxiv. 29-31; Mark xiii. 24-27; Luke xxi. 25-28) which speak of the actual coming of the Son of Man in power and great glory referred to the destruction of Jerusalem; for we see that nothing which occurred in that solemn event could for a moment satisfy the Lord's plain, emphatic, and solemn words. All was then *imminent.* It cannot be that the many and repeated commands to "watch" were not intended for them, but were intended only for us! Those who heard this command so frequently spoken cannot be *excluded* as though it did not concern them; and if it did concern them, how could it do so except in the way and on the grounds we are striving to emphasise?

Surely the *interpretation* of this charge to "watch," and all the other expressions we have considered, belong exclusively to them, though the *application* cannot be diverted from ourselves to-day.

Some of the Lord's other words (in the first three Gospels) may be considered in connection with these four "tills."

Luke xviii. 7, 8

" And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry to Him day and night, and is patient over them ? I say to you that He will avenge them shortly." [1]

Here again, the Lord was speaking to Israel; and while that avenging was, by the interpretation of the passage, at that time near at hand, yet, by its postponement on account of the fact that Israel did not repent at Peter's call, in Acts iii., the avenging of His elect is a yet future *certainty* (see 2 Thess. i. 4-10).

And the question with which the parable concludes will have as solemn an answer in the future as it would have had in the past, had the condition been fulfilled. " Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, will He find faith on the earth ? "

Matthew xix. 28

" The regeneration " of which the Lord speaks here, belongs to the same " times of refreshing " and of " restoration " as are referred to in Acts iii. 19, 21. In Mark x. 30 and Luke xviii. 30 the same time of regeneration is called " the coming age," or rather " the age about to come."

The parables of the Pounds(Luke xix. 13-27); the Wicked Husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-46; Mark xii. 1-12; and Luke xx. 9-19); the Marriage Feast of the King's son (Matt. xxii. 1-14); all have the same foreground, and look forward to the reckonings as taking place at no distant date.

The parable of

" The Goodman of the House "

very specially emphasises the imminence of the Lord's coming as a motive for watchfulness to *that generation* (Matt. xxiv. 43-51; Mark xiii. 34-37; Luke xii. 39-46).

[1] Gr. *en tachei*, as in Rev. i. 1.

Otherwise, where was the sin, for them, in saying, " My Lord delayeth His coming " ?

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Matt. xxv. 1-13) has its whole lesson in the word " watch," and its special reference to those who heard the Lord's words : " for ye do not know the day nor THE HOUR (not the year, or the century) in which the Son of Man cometh " (verse 13)

THE LAST APOSTOLIC COMMISSION

MATT. xxviii. 19-20 ; MARK xvi. 15-20 ; LUKE xxiv. 47

In connection with the then *imminence* of the coming of the Son of Man, these words receive an intelligent meaning, specially suitable for " them that heard Him," and to whom they were addressed (whatever may be their *application* for us). We must interpret the words in the sense in which those who heard them would have understood them—a sense which they could never have to any others. The promise of the Lord's presence with them related to " all the days—even to the close of the age," *i.e.*, of that Dispensation.

With these words must be read Rom. x. 18 and Col. i. 6 ; but they can be better considered in connection with a subsequent division of our subject : " the witness which God bore " to the confirming testimony of those who heard the words of His Son.

And what they heard further must be left for the consideration of the Lord's words in John's Gospel, which we propose to take up in our next section.

(VII.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (Heb. ii. 3)

What They Heard

The Gospel of John

IT is generally allowed that the Gospel of John was written later than the first three. Some have suggested a late date, near the end of the first century, but the earlier date is held by many ; and what we have already said on 1 John ii. 18 is strong evidence that his Epistles as well as the Gospel were written near the end of that Dispensation which closed with the destruction of Jerusalem. In any case, John's testimony as to what he heard from the Lord must hold an important place in the subject we are considering.

In the very first chapter there is the announcement of *an opened heaven*, in the words of our Lord to Nathanael (i. 51)—the first of twenty-five solemn utterances introduced by the double " Verily." [1] " Verily, verily, I say unto you, From henceforth ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man " (John i. 51).

For long years had the heavens been closed. No heavenly visitant had been seen since Daniel was told to " seal up the vision." No voice of a prophet had been heard since Malachi closed the prophetical books. But now the time was at hand when all things that the prophets had written were to be fulfilled. The servants had been sent forth " to call them that had been bidden to the marriage feast " (Matt. xxii. 3).

The change in the Dispensation is to be marked by an opened heaven. " Verily, verily," is the solemn announcement, not of something in the far-distant future some two thousand years from then—but now—(Gr. *ap' arti*) " from henceforth." Whether this is retained in the text

[1] Ten of these were spoken to His disciples, and fifteen were spoken to others.

or not, the meaning is the same; it was something that Nathanael and others who heard the Lord's words were to behold. He was to be attended by heavenly visitants proclaiming the opening and commencement of heavenly activities.

This had been foretold. The prophets had testified that His coming should be with His holy angels (Zech. xiv. 5; Mark viii. 38; Luke ix. 26). Angels had already appeared to Joseph (Matt. i. 20, 24; ii. 13, 19), to Zacharias (Luke i. 11), to Mary (Luke i. 26), to the shepherds (Luke ii. 10). Angels came and ministered to the Lord Himself (Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43).

It was indeed the coming of the Lord; but first He must suffer, before He entered on His glory. These two were ever closely united. When first He mentioned His "sufferings" (Matt. xvi. 21) He immediately mentioned the "glory" (verse 27). He asked the disciples journeying to Emmaus: "Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke xxiv. 26).

To this the Holy Spirit refers as the basis of the promise of the coming glory in Acts iii. 18, "Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets that Messiah should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. Repent ye THEREFORE," etc.

There was nothing now to delay the coming "glory" but Israel's repentance. The "new covenant" had been made for "the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). "Repent ye THEREFORE, *that your sins may be blotted out*" (Acts iii. 19).

The "other servants" (of Matt. xxii. 4) were being now sent out with the renewed invitation, "*All things are ready:* come unto the marriage feast." Nothing was wanting but Israel's repentance. That was the one condition of national blessing. "The glory that should follow" (1 Pet. i. 11), and the "so great salvation" were "ready to

be revealed " (1 Pet. i. 5). That is why, in the Gospel of John, the end is regarded as very near. The first reference to it is introduced by another " Verily, verily " (John v. 25) : " Verily, verily, I say to you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear, shall live " (*i.e.*, live again in resurrection life).

There was nothing to hinder it, except the rejection of the King and of the Kingdom ; and at this early portion of the Lord's ministry there was nothing, as yet, to show what the result of the proclamation was to be. Had the nation obeyed the call of John and the Lord to " repent," the resurrection was one of the things that would have taken place. It was among the " all things " that the prophets had foretold, as Peter testified. Paul was waiting for it (Acts xxiv. 15 ; 1 Thess. iv. 16).

While in the other Gospels the declarations are concerning "*judgment*" about to come, in John this judgment is associated with " resurrection " ; for both are closely connected together. Hence, when the Lord here, in John v., speaks of resurrection He immediately goes on to associate it with its judicial character.

And note, in this connection, the two titles of the Lord, which show the relation in which He stands to each. As the quickener of the dead, He is " the Son of God." As the Judge of men, He is " the Son of Man," even as Paul testifies in Acts xvii. 31. God, he says, " hath appointed a day, in the which He is about to judge the world in righteousness by THAT MAN Whom He hath appointed, whereof He hath given proof to all in having raised Him from among [the] dead."

In John v. 25 the Lord said the hour for this " now is." The time or Dispensation had arrived. He, the Judge of men, was there, with power as " the Son of God " to raise the dead, and with authority as " the Son of Man " to judge the living and the dead.

In verse 26 He goes on to give the reason : " for as the Father has life in Himself, so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself (27), and gave authority to Him to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." " Wonder not at this, for an hour is coming in which all those in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, those that did good, unto a resurrection of life, but those that practised evil unto a resurrection of judgment " (28).

None of our readers have any doubt about the nature of the resurrection here spoken of. It is a real, literal resurrection of the people who had died and been buried ; not a spiritual resurrection, as some hold. Viewed in this light, verse 24 stands out clearly in its then literal interpretation ; while its application to believers now is not impaired.

" Verily, verily, I say to you that he that hears My word, and believes on Him Who sent Me, has eternal life, and into judgment does not come, but has passed over out of death into life."

The only " passing " that Scripture knows of is the passing into life by *resurrection*, not by death. This latter is quite a new nomenclature, derived from Spiritism ! To those who heard the word of the Lord Jesus, and received it, and believed on the Father Who sent Him, *there was no need for death at all.* That is the great fact. This wondrous fact was stated more clearly and definitely later on in John xi. 24, 25. There the Lord (as we have seen in a former section) declared that He was " the Resurrection," and because of that, even though believers might die, they should live again in resurrection life ; and He declared also that He was " the Life," and because of that, those who were alive should never die at all.

Had the nation repented, all the prophecies of Scripture would have been fulfilled, including resurrection and judgment ; but those who believed had been placed in a

new position. They were already " sons of the resurrection " ; they had been enlightened ; they had tasted of the heavenly gift ; they had become partakers of holy spirit (or power from on high in the bestowal of spiritual gifts) ; they had tasted the good word of God, and the miraculous works of the age about to be (Heb. vi. 4, 5).

Paul developed this " good word " in the very first Epistle he ever wrote (1 Thessalonians), and assured those who " received the word " that there was a new hope for them. If they died, they were sure of a resurrection ; while those who were alive would not get before them ; they would be raised first, and then both parties together would be caught up to meet the Lord.

For them the sting of death had been taken away (at least in sure and certain hope), and a glorious victory over the grave was in store. " The age about to come," on the point of being revealed (Heb. ii. 5), was full of glorious and blessed hope. It was not going to be made subject to angels, but to the sons of the resurrection (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3).

It was quite possible that many who heard the Lord's words might be alive and remain till the end of that age, and enter thus on the glories of the age about to come, had the nation repented at the proclamation of the other servants (Matt. xxii. 1, 2, and the Acts).

When the Lord informed Peter as to the manner of his death, Peter inquired as to the manner of John's death. " Lord, but what of this one ? " meaning John. The Lord answered, " If I will him to remain till I come, what [is it] to thee ? " Therefore this report went out among the brethren, that that disciple does not die ; however, Jesus did not say to him that he does not die, but " If I desire him to remain till I come, what [is it] to thee ? "

The moment we realise that the " coming " referred to was a definite event that might occur within the limit of that existing generation, not only do all the various

interpretations of this Scripture vanish, but all that was said stands out in all its clearness and simplicity.

Seeing that the Lord could hardly have meant that John might possibly be kept alive for some two thousand years or more, theologians have not been able to understand, or accept, the words in their very natural, simple, and obvious meaning. But once we see that the coming of the Lord might have actually taken place in the lifetime of some, at least, of His disciples (of whom John was one) (Matt. xvi. 27, 28), all difficulty and mystery vanishes.

As to Peter, he for one was told definitely, and therefore knew that *he* would die, for so he testifies (2 Pet. i. 14, 15). Hence his impulsive curiosity to know about John. The Lord's somewhat veiled reply was a check to his intrusive inquiry; but the disciples obviously understood the Lord to mean that John would not taste of death until he saw the Lord's return, as before clearly and definitely stated in Matt. xvi. 27, 28. Here also the language is equally plain: "If I will that he tarry till I come." It is no wonder that the disciples who had heard the words of Matt. xvi. 27, 28 should understand the words of John xxi. 22, 23 in precisely the same way.

John's being alive and remaining, as the Lord afterward puts it in John xi. 24, 25, and as the Holy Spirit by Paul puts it in 1 Thess. iv. 16, suggests it as probable (not merely assumes it as possible) that John would be one of those who would not "taste of death." The Lord does not deny it, neither does He imply that John might live for some nineteen hundred years.

If Paul could write to those who had "received the word"[1] in Thessalonica, and say, "WE which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord," surely it was no great matter that the disciples should so understand the words of the Lord concerning John.

[1] Cp. the same phrase in Acts ii. 41 and 1 Thess. ii. 13.

In this Gospel (for it was John himself who wrote down these words) the Lord Himself constantly associated these three things : " The RESURRECTION, the JUDGMENT, and the LAST DAY." This phrase, " the last day," is peculiar to the Fourth Gospel. In the other Gospels it is only " the day," " the day of judgment," " the end of the age," *i.e.*, the end of that Dispensation of which the days were fast running out. These expressions, taken in connection with what was said concerning them, could not possibly refer to the yet future end of the material creation, *then* nearly two thousand years distant.

All that was said was not merely prophecy, but it was practical instruction, specially referring to the time then present, and of special value and importance to those who heard it. All these various terms, together with the *parousia*, are synonymous and contemporaneous ; and are associated with the end of that age, and with what the Lord continually speaks of as " this generation."

In John it was the thought of " judgment " and " resurrection " that was specially associated with the then impending end of the Jewish economy. Note how constantly the Lord refers to it.

" This is the Father's will Who sent Me, that [of] all that He has given Me I should not lose [any] of (=out of) it, but should raise it up in *the last day* " (John vi. 39).

" This is the will of Him Who sent me, that everyone who looks upon the Son, and believes on Him, should have life eternal ; and I will raise him up at *the last day* " (John vi. 40).

" No one is able to come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draw him, and I will raise him up at *the last day* " (John vi. 44).

" Martha said to Him, ' I know that he (Lazarus) will rise again in the resurrection in *the last day* ' " (John xi. 24).

" He that rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings,

has one Who judges him: the word which I spoke, that shall judge him *in the last day*" (John xii. 48).

A child would naturally understand that the Lord was giving vital instruction of *practical importance* to those who heard Him; and that He was speaking of something very near at hand, and not something many centuries distant.

Taken by themselves, apart from what was revealed later, we can well understand that many should argue, and indeed believe, that the Lord did actually come at the end of that age (or Dispensation), which closed with the destruction of Jerusalem. But those who hold and teach this ignore altogether the solemn contingency definitely mentioned by the Lord Himself, and afterward publicly and openly proclaimed by Peter in Acts iii. 19-26.

If God had never made the national repentance of Israel the condition on which He would blot out their sins, send Jesus Christ, and fulfil all that the prophets had foretold, then there would be some ground for the utterly mistaken and erroneous belief that Christ was sent and did actually come at the destruction of Jerusalem.

But it is impossible that we should cut out, as with a penknife, that important Scripture, and treat the Bible as though that passage had never been written in it. We have not seen Acts iii. once referred to in the writings of those who hold and put forth such false teaching. But Acts iii. is equally ignored by many who are waiting for the coming of the Lord to-day for the accomplishing for them of "that blessed hope." These ignore, not only Acts iii., but all these words of the Lord which we are now considering as recorded in the Gospels.

Those who are daily looking for the Lord to come for them at any moment must be greatly perplexed with many things the Lord said about His coming. They surely must wish that He had never spoken in this way. These latter get the ground of their belief from the later Pauline Epistles, and then, either entirely ignore the Lord's words,

or so misunderstand them that they get false views with regard to their own great hope; some looking for the Lord's coming at any moment; others postponing it until many things foretold have taken place.

All the divisions among Christians on this great and important subject, and all their divergent views about the "second coming" may be traced back to this ignoring of Acts iii. and xxviii., and hence mistaking the purpose and contents of the whole Book of the Acts of the Apostles, reading into it blessed truths which were not revealed till after the end of that age, the last days of which the Lord so frequently spoke of.

They do not see that the "great salvation" was then "ready to be revealed," and that the glory that was to follow was contingent on only one thing—the national repentance of Israel. But as that did not take place, all has been postponed; all is in abeyance, and meanwhile, we have the subsequent revelation as to the things which concern "the glory of His grace." No wonder, therefore, that these glories of grace are not appreciated or understood, and that all is confusion in the minds of so many who thus ignore such important Scriptures.

What, for example, do such make of the Lord's words in John xii. 31, "Now is the judgment of this world (Gr. *kosmos*), now the prince of this world shall be cast without"?

The Holy Spirit was sent at Pentecost to convict the world concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world (Gr. *kosmos*) has been judged (John xvi. 11). This does not refer to a mere spiritual change in the history of the world. This could never satisfy the definite assertion of the Lord that what He spoke of was nigh at hand—indeed, that the time had set in which should end with the judgment and the casting out of Satan. But this also is of course postponed; and a subsequent revelation is afforded us telling us how it will yet be effected (Rev. xii. and xiii.).

Our Lord's language refers to a definite and final judicial transaction which might then soon take place. Satan was bringing his great conflict of the ages to a close. He sought the Lord's life in Bethlehem; he had wrestled with Him in the wilderness; he had agonised with Him in the garden; he had entered into Judas for His betrayal; and had seen Him hung upon the cross, and placed in the tomb.

But his victory was to be short-lived. By His death the Lord was to accomplish the destruction of him who had the power of death (Heb. ii. 14). This wondrous end of the great conflict was thus soon to follow on Satan's final effort to thwart the counsels of God.

Nothing hindered this grand consummation but the unbelief and impenitence of Israel. But we know how all this was postponed. Doubtless it was the same Satanic effort that was directed to the blinding of Israel's eyes during the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles. Paul could testify that "Satan hindered us"; and by his active influences, which are seen at work all through the Acts, he succeeded in effecting a postponement of his destined end. Satan was judged at the cross. There, a judgment-summons was obtained; but execution has yet to be put in, and the usurper cast out into the earth, and from the earth to the lake of fire.

The Lord's words in John xvi. also have regard to the then imminent execution of this judgment; but no hint of any possible postponement was then given; nor could it then have been given, when we consider the circumstances. No. The Lord did not come at the destruction of Jerusalem, for *Satan is not yet cast out.* Rev. xii. and xiii. still wait for their certain fulfilment, and will find it in "the day of the Lord." The Lord saw it in vision, and thus united Luke x. 17 with John xii. 31 and xvi. 11; and we do not see how any other interpretation can satisfy all the requirements of these passages.

The Lord always spoke of His return as very near. He did not assume that Israel would not repent. He was, for the most part, silent as to the contingency. He said :—

" If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself " (John xiv. 3). In saying this, He was not speaking of what could not possibly take place for over nineteen hundred years. He was speaking for *their comfort*; and that would have been poor comfort and cold, if He were referring to the then far-distant future.

" I will not leave you orphans: I am coming to you " (John xiv. 18).

" Ye heard that I said to you ' I am going away, and I am coming to you ' " (John xiv. 28).

" A little [while] and ye shall not look upon Me; and again, a little [while] and ye shall behold Me, because I go away to the Father " (John xvi. 16).

" Ye, therefore, now indeed have grief, but again, I will behold you, and your heart shall rejoice " (John xvi. 22).

All these comings relate to one and the same act; and that was spoken of *as near at hand*. The words, from their very simplicity (read apart from Acts iii.) have been the very reason of their perplexity. The Acts of the Apostles enables us to understand them all as meaning exactly what they say. But once shut out Acts iii., and it becomes impossible for us to realise the manner in which the disciples must have understood them. To them it must have been a brief and temporary absence between His going to the Father and His being sent by Him in accordance with His promise. In any case, the Lord's coming again was spoken of as definitely as was His going away; and as there was no such coming again at the destruction of Jerusalem, it is necessarily postponed until the conditional repentance of Israel shall be fulfilled.

Meanwhile we have the special revelation as to our own out-resurrection from among the dead, and of our calling on high. Hence our seat of government is now already *existing* in heaven, and we look for our Saviour to come from thence to change these bodies of our humiliation, and make them like His own glorious body. This is our own present " blessed hope " (Phil. iii. 11-21).

(VIII.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (Heb. ii. 3)

The Pauline Epistles

WHEN we come to the Epistles of Paul, we have to treat them chronologically, and to divide them into two categories—earlier and later.

The earlier series was written before Acts xxviii., and the later written after the formal rejection of the proclamation of the offer of the King and the Kingdom by Peter and the twelve during the Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles. These two series are of equal importance ; but, at the same time, they are distinct and separate. Together, they stand in a separate category from that of the apostolic Epistles of Peter, James, John, and Jude.

Though the exact order of the separate books of the New Testament cannot be determined by manuscript authority, yet there is no doubt as to the order of the five groups into which they are divided in all the best and oldest manuscripts ; nor yet as to the order of the books in the group of the Pauline Epistles. The present order of the books of the New Testament in the English and all modern Versions has come down to us through the Latin Vulgate, which order the dead hand of Jerome has fastened upon all succeeding generations.

Nothing therefore is to be learned from the present order of the books as we find them in the A.V. or R.V. The only things that are certain are—

I. That in all the best and oldest manuscripts the separate books are divided into five groups :—

1. The Four Gospels.
2. The Acts of the Apostles.
3. The Apostolic Epistles.
4. The Pauline Epistles.
5. The Apocalypse.

II. That while the order of the books may vary in the first and third groups, they never vary in the fourth group. The Pauline Epistles (other than those to individuals and to the Hebrews) have never yet been found in any Greek manuscript except in the order in which we have them in our English Versions.

This fact tells us that, whatever may be the teaching of the chronological order, *i.e.*, the order in which they were written, the order *for us* to-day is none other than the canonical order (beginning with Romans and ending with 2 Thessalonians). It is not that one order is right and the other wrong. Both are right; neither is wrong.

Both are important, but not equally so: for while the chronological order is full of most important information for all who would understand Dispensational truth, the canonical order is full of deepest instruction as to doctrinal and experimental truth. Neither can be set aside or ignored by us without incurring blame before God, and serious loss to ourselves.

For those who first received them, the chronological order was of greater importance—in fact, all-important. But for us to-day, since the rejection of the testimony of "them that heard Him" and the consequent postponement of the Kingdom, the canonical order is the more important.

This difference is manifested by the great and significant change which took place when the Holy Spirit was overruling the order in which the Pauline Epistles were to be presented to us: for the first great fact is, that no Greek manuscript exists where there is any deviation from the order in which we have them in our English Bibles to-day; and the second great fact is, that the Epistles to the Thessalonians, which were the *first* written, are placed *last*.

Not one of our readers will believe that we owe these two facts to chance. And for ourselves, we prefer to

believe that we owe them to the perfection of a Divine ordering. And this being so, we shall find an all-sufficient reason for them if we look for it.

It must be evident to us at the outset, that as long as Jehovah's promise to " send Jesus Christ " was not withdrawn, while it was still open to Israel to see the fulfilment of " all that the prophets had spoken " on the one condition (of repentance) laid down, while the imminence of the Lord's speedy coming was everywhere the testimony of " them that heard Him," whether spoken or written, the waiting for God's Son from heaven, and deliverance from the wrath to come would necessarily be the central point of all testimony during that Dispensation of the Acts.

The Pauline Epistles cannot be exempt from this conclusion. If any are disposed to hold that the promise made in Acts iii. was withdrawn at any time before Acts xxviii., it is incumbent on them to point out where such an epoch-marking event is recorded. But this cannot be done. There is not a tittle of evidence that can be produced. Indeed, the very first Epistle written by Paul (1 Thess. i. 10) emphasises this, and the second letter cannot even be understood apart from it.

But for us now, to-day, this is not the great and important point. Israel did not repent; the nation did not fulfil the required condition; and now the great promises made in Acts iii. are postponed, and all the blessings there promised are in abeyance.

The first question that arises is, Where do we Gentile believers come in? No " promises " have been made to our fathers, such as Paul describes in Rom. ix. 3-5. We Gentiles have no claim to any " inheritance " such as that which Peter speaks of in 1 Pet. i. 3-5. No " covenants " had been made with any Gentiles (apart from their connection with Israel); where then is our standing? and what ground have we for any blessings at all? None whatever.

Our position is clearly defined in Eph. ii. 11, 12: "At that time" (it is written) "ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

During the whole of the Acts of the Apostles all testimony centred round Israel and Israel's earthly blessings. The olive tree was still standing. Some branches had been broken off, and Gentile branches were being grafted in. But now that the olive tree has been cut down, into what are we Gentile believers to be grafted? With or in whom are we to "find an inheritance"?

The answer is, "In Christ." But this wondrous truth could not be revealed while the other way inheritance was still open! There cannot be two modes of obtaining the inheritance open at one and the same time!

This brings us to the secret of it all. This shows us the reason for the change in the order of the Pauline Epistles. The one important truth for us to learn is that our standing is in Christ alone; that all our hopes are in Him; that all our claims are no longer on Abraham, Israel, or "the fathers," but "in Christ," "in Whom WE have found an inheritance also" (Eph. i. 11).

Hence it is not with the Epistles to the Thessalonians which *we* are to begin, but with Romans. It is there we must begin. We cannot look for the Lord before we know Him. We must first know what our *hope* is before we can wait for its fruition. We must be first instructed as to our standing in Christ before we can know anything of what was to be revealed in place of the hope of Acts iii.

Now we are in a position to see why, of necessity, the canonical order of the Pauline Epistles was changed; and why the last written is placed first, and the first written is placed last.

It is, as we have before said, not that one order is right

and the other order wrong. Both are right, as is perfectly clear when we once rightly divide them.

THE CANONICAL ORDER OF THE PAULINE EPISTLES

A | ROMANS. Foundation truth and Doctrinal teaching necessary for all, in all Dispensations of the Gospel of God.

B | 1 and 2 CORINTHIANS. "Reproof" for *practical* failure to understand the Doctrine of Romans.

C | GALATIANS. "Correction" of *Doctrinal* failure in understanding the teaching of Romans.

A | EPHESIANS. Foundation truth and Doctrinal teaching necessary for the Dispensation of the Mystery; Christ the Head over all things for His body the Church.

B | PHILIPPIANS. "Reproof" for *practical* failure to understand and carry out the teaching of Ephesians: not holding the members.

C | COLOSSIANS. "Correction" as to *Doctrinal* failure to understand the teaching of Ephesians: "not holding the Head."

THESSALONIANS closing all up with the now postponed hope of the Lord's coming.

It is not within our object now to go further in the *canonical* order of the Pauline Epistles. This must wait till we deal with it in its proper place. What we are now concerned with is the *chronological* order, for this belongs to the foundations of Dispensational truth.

Paul was not among those referred to in Heb. ii. 3, and described as "them that heard Him." He had not companied with those who were with the Lord all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among the twelve

(Acts i. 21). Therefore he could not be one of the twelve in any sense whatever. This does not interfere in any measure with the importance of the Pauline Epistles, for he heard the Lord from heaven. He was instructed gradually by the Lord Himself, and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Without, therefore, detracting anything from the importance of the *canonical* order of the Pauline Epistles, we must do our utmost to discover the real instruction to be derived from the *chronological* order ; and this brings us to

The Earlier Pauline Epistles.

The exact dates of these are not agreed upon by individual authorities.

There being no external evidence as to these, all students are thrown back on *internal* evidence ; and here all stand on the same level : all are able to draw their own conclusions. We append the dates, as generally received, but these are open to some revision should further evidence require it.

The Chronological Order

1 Thessalonians, A.D. 52, Corinth.
2 Thessalonians, A.D. 53, Corinth.
1 Corinthians, A.D. 57, Ephesus (Spring).
2 Corinthians, A.D. 57, Ephesus (Autumn).
Galatians, A.D. 57, Corinth (Winter).
Romans, A.D. 58, Corinth (Spring).

Acts xxviii. 25, 29, A.D. 62.

Ephesians, A.D. 62 } Spring } From
Colossians, A.D. 62 } Spring } Prison
Philippians, A.D. 62, Autumn } From Prison in Rome.
1 Timothy, A.D. 67,[1] Corinth.
Titus, A.D. 67,[1] Corinth.
2 Timothy, A.D. 68, Rome (Prison).

[1] See Note, p. 87.

The importance of the preceding table, with the pivot in the centre, on which the whole depends, must be obvious.

Between the two captivities came the missionary journeys made or proposed, and the reference to a second and later imprisonment. These missionary journeys referred to in the note below [1] are outside the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, *and therefore have no place in that book.* It is evident that this last stage of Paul's later ministry of the Dispensation of the Mystery cannot be ignored without incurring serious responsibility before God.

We have now, therefore, to consider the testimony of

THE EARLIER EPISTLES OF PAUL.

We have three accounts of the apostle's call, (1) in Acts ix. 6, where nothing is said by the Lord beyond directing him where he was to go to find out what he must do.

The Lord told Ananias concerning Paul, and said (to allay his fears): "He is a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel. For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts ix. 15, 16). This was said to Ananias, not to Paul. Nothing more is recorded at this stage beyond the fact that Ananias laid his hands upon him and Paul received *pneuma hagion*, or "power from on high" (in the shape of "spiritual gifts").

The whole of Paul's commission is only gradually revealed. It was probably announced to Paul at one and the same time, but revealed to others only in due time, according as the purposes of God were developed. Not till nearly the close of the first part of Paul's ministry do we learn all that was said in Acts ix., so that we must

[1] It is probable that 1 Timothy and Titus were written earlier, and cover both the earlier and later periods; and that between these and the Second Epistle to Timothy came the journeys to Macedonia (Phil. ii. 24, 25), Colosse (Philem. 22), Spain (Rom. xv. 24), Dalmatia (2 Tim. iv. 10), Ephesus (2 Tim. iv. 12); fulfilling his statement that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles (Acts xxviii. 28).

not mix up with the first part, that part which related to the second part, in connection with the great secret (or the Mystery).

His full commission is made known to us only in the later and supplementary accounts recorded in Acts xxii. 12-21 and xxvi. 12-20, as he approached the dividing line. In Acts ix. the time had not yet come for making known anything relating to the later ministry; and until it did, he joined his testimony to that of the twelve. In that way he testified "to the Jew first," and it was in that sense, and in that sense only, that "he became as a Jew to the Jews."

It is specially interesting to note this illustration, because of its direct bearing on what he subsequently wrote to these same believers. We may note first, what "his manner was" in his carrying out his first ministry (Acts xvii. 2). There was something very special about this "manner," for he refers to it again in 1 Thess. i. 9; ii. 1. He and Silas had come from the prison at Philippi, and he did in Thessalonica what he was accustomed to do elsewhere. He went into the synagogue, "and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He did not need any bands of music; he required no "solo singers," no "quartettes," or "choral introits" or "anthems"; no tricks or contrivances of an effete "religion"; no new fashions or modern methods; no singing on their knees, or of any special number of "Amens," etc., etc. He merely "went in unto them and three Sabbath days reasoned with them OUT OF THE SCRIPTURES."

Not out of the newspapers. There were, we may be sure, no "pulpit references" to any public events in Thessalonica, or in the Roman Empire. He did not concern himself with the "housing" of poor Thessalonians, or with their "slums," water-works, or drainage. He was concerned with only one thing, and that was "the Scriptures." And why? Because he had not lost faith in them! Because, as he tells them in his subsequent letter,

it was the " Word of God which ye heard of us, not the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God " (1 Thess. ii. 13): that Word, he tells them, which " effectually worketh in you that believe."

That was why it worked out in their sounding forth the Word of the Lord throughout Macedonia, Achaia, and elsewhere (1 Thess. i. 8). That was why the apostle " reasoned with them out of the Scriptures." He did not criticise them. He did not reason about the Scriptures, but he reasoned out of them. And in thus using the written Word, he was seeking only to make known the Living Word; for he adds: " Opening and alleging that the Messiah must needs have suffered." Just as Peter had based his appeal in Acts iii. 18, so Paul based his appeal, and his object was to show " that this is Messiah—Jesus whom I announce to you " (Acts xvii. 3).

From verse 7 we learn another point which he " reasoned out of the Scriptures," which was that this Jesus was soon coming to reign as king. For this was the special charge made against him before the magistrates (verse 7). Here we learn, therefore, how Paul confirmed the teaching of the twelve, and did not go beyond it. On this teaching the assembly in Thessalonica was based, and in it they were nurtured. This, we are told, was the apostle's " manner " wherever he went. His special ministry at this stage was carried on in the synagogues of the Dispersion.

There is no sign, so far, that the Divine offer made by Peter had been withdrawn. On the contrary, everything shows that it was still open, and that Israel was still the object of this ministry. True, in two places Paul met with such opposition from the Jews that he " turned to the Gentiles." But these were both exceptional, and purely local; they did not influence in any way the special ministry in which Paul was engaged, or change its character.

In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas fulfilled their mission to the Jews, telling them that " 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," etc. (Acts xiii. 46, 47). But at the very next place (Iconium), " they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews " (xiv. 1) ; for Acts xxviii. 28 had not yet been reached.

At Corinth, likewise, " when they (the Jews) opposed themselves, and blasphemed, Paul shook his raiment and said unto them, ' Your blood be upon your own heads ; I am clean : from henceforth we turn to the Gentiles ' " (Acts xviii. 6). So he did ; but he did it by turning into a house " which joined hard to the synagogue " (verse 7), and at the very next place he reached (Ephesus), " he entered into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews " (verse 19).

These events show that they were purely local, and not at all on the same lines as the great proclamation, made once for all, in Acts xxviii. 28 : " Be it known, therefore, unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."

While Paul thus " became as a Jew to the Jews," joining with the twelve in confirming the ministry of the Lord Jesus, and conveying Peter's proclamation of the kingdom throughout the synagogues of the Dispersion, we may be sure that his testimony in no wise clashed with that of the twelve, and what that was we have already seen. The same God bore the same witness to him, as to them, in " signs, and wonders, and divers miracles, and spiritual gifts " (Heb. ii. 4).

It will be an interesting study now for any of our readers to go through the Acts again, noting specially the references to the kingdom and the King " by them that heard Him," and learn the character of the testimony of Paul in the synagogues. While we are prepared to find a difference, and an advance, between the apostolic Epistles and the earlier Pauline Epistles, we are also prepared, at the same

time, to find a difference between Paul's own epistles written at the beginning of that earlier confirming testimony, and those written nearer the end of it.

Special communications were made to him by the Lord. Paul did not retire into Arabia for three years for nothing. What he heard when caught away into the third heaven and Paradise could not be uttered at that time; and one reason would necessarily be Dispensational requirement. Having regard therefore to these limitations, we must consider these earlier Pauline Epistles chronologically; and while recognising the similarity of his testimony to that of the twelve, we must be prepared for seeing some advance and development in his teaching in view of his special call as a minister of the Gentiles. If he had heard, or knew, anything of the "great secret" (the Mystery) before the close of the Acts, one thing is certain: he had not committed it to writing; nor did he receive any commission to do so until after Acts xxviii.

His testimony would differ from that of the twelve, in that while theirs rested on what they had "*heard*" from the Lord while He "went in and out among" them on earth, Paul's testimony rested, so far as his *speaking* was concerned, on what he received by communications by the same Lord from heaven, in Arabia and elsewhere; and so far as his *writing* was concerned, it rested on the direct Divine inspiration in special fulfilment of the Lord's own promise in John xvi. 12-15. His *writing* was, therefore, necessarily in contrast with what the twelve had "*heard*." Their testimony was chiefly oral; his was to be committed to writing. This explains his last instructions to Timothy in 2 Tim. iv. 13: "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the BOOKS, but ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS."

Before Acts xxviii. 25, 26, Paul was "delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands OF THE ROMANS" (verse 17). But after that, though a prisoner still, he was

" the prisoner OF JESUS CHRIST " (Eph. iii. 1). Before Acts xxviii. 25, 26, Paul was bound with " this chain " " for the hope of Israel " (verse 20) ; but after that, he says, he was " in bonds for you Gentiles." If Paul knew anything personally about the Mystery before Acts xxviii. he could hardly have made it known even to individuals without entirely upsetting their Dispensational standing. Though it was not committed to writing, yet we can in no wise assert that he did not mention it to one and another, who were prepared to receive it, or be *initiated* into it. This is the meaning of the word " perfect " in 1 Cor. ii. 6.

In any case, his testimony would be, doubtless, somewhat in advance on that of the twelve, even in view of his commission in Acts xxvi. 15-18 ; but especially as the end of that Dispensation drew near, and he saw " the day approaching."

We may therefore be prepared to see some difference between Romans (the last Epistle before Acts xxviii.), for example, and that to the Thessalonians (the first so written). But on the other hand, we shall not be slow to notice all the points wherein Paul's testimony concurred with that of " them that had heard " and " confirmed " the words of the Lord Jesus.

(IX.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

WE have already seen that the ministry of the apostle Paul was for, and from a certain time associated with, " them that heard " the speaking of the Son. The twelve had heard what He spake on earth ; Paul heard what He spake from heaven. We have thus a double confirmation ; and though we expect to find the same testimony given on the same lines, we may expect also to find some advance upon it.

When Paul was called, Peter's proclamation had been already made ; and all who believed were baptized with John's baptism unto repentance, in view of the return of the expected Messiah, whom God had promised to " send," and " the times of refreshing," and the restoration of all things which should fulfil all the prophecies which God had spoken by the prophets (Acts iii. 19-26).

We are not concerned therefore with the particular shades of meaning which may be given to the words used to describe the expected *sending* of Jesus Christ. We are not " building from the top " by a discussion of the usage of the words *parousia*, *epiphaneia*, or *apokalupsis*. Whatever words were used, *one thing was meant*, viz., the sending of Jesus Christ, in connection with which, " ALL that the prophets had spoken " would have received fulfilment in due course, including the Revelation given by John's writing.

There was plenty of time for all that was necessary to be included in " the restoration of all things." Another forty years of probation for Israel was given between the Crucifixion of the Messiah and the destruction of Jerusalem—a period which was nearly covered by the Dispensation of

the Acts of the Apostles. It must be evident to all who will give their attention to the great dominating fact of Peter's proclamation following immediately on Pentecost, that the whole of that Dispensation was unique. It had one purpose, one subject, one object, one testimony, given by one special class of witnesses, and by no others. All is summed up in Acts iii. 19-26—a Scripture which, though not cut out of their Bibles by most of its readers, is nevertheless practically ignored.

The traditions that Christ came to found a Church, and that that Church was founded at Pentecost, have made Acts iii. 19-26 absolutely meaningless, for it has no place whatever in those traditions of men, and is made of none effect by them. The consequences, as affecting a right dividing of " the Word of truth," and a true understanding of the rest of the New Testament, are most serious and important. All the " difficulties " manifested by those who seek to have their " questions " answered, are caused by the confusion that has been thus brought about.

The earlier Epistles of Paul are hopelessly obscured by their not being studied chronologically. Let us look at them again in the light of the order in which they were written ; and let this particular thought of the sundry times and divers manners have its due weight in their interpretation.

I. Thessalonians

This was the first written Scripture of that Dispensation after the proclamation of Peter in Acts iii. 19-26. All beside 1 Thessalonians was oral. Unless we are to believe that God was really mocking His People Israel, that He had no intention of fulfilling His promise to " send Jesus Christ " and " restore all things," and fulfil all prophecies, we must believe that His first written Scripture which followed that proclamation would necessarily have had special reference to it.

The Epistle starts from that promise of God; and unless we read it in that light, it is impossible for us to perceive the teaching which God intended to convey by it. It was addressed to an assembly at Thessalonica of those who believed the testimony of those who were confirming the Word of God's Son. It was no modern "church" with its organisations and institutions, but a simple assembly of those who had "received the word" of Peter and Paul, and were "waiting for God's Son from heaven."

The promise had been made; Paul had taken it there, and Acts xvii. tells us how he went, and what he said. There "was a synagogue of the Jews" there, "and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."

Not out of his own head, but out of the Scriptures. He was not *founding a church* with its "services" so called, and institutions and organisations, dramatic performances and whist drives. No, only the Scriptures. He had the old Scriptures, not any modern criticism of them. He needed none of the modern methods, tricks, and contrivances, which are the staple of an effete system of "organised Christianity," for he had all he needed in the "Scriptures of truth"—the Written Word, and the Living Word. So he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and setting forth that the Messiah must needs have suffered as Peter testified (Acts iii. 18), and have risen again from among the dead, and that this is the Messiah—Jesus, Whom I announce to you" (Acts xvii. 1-3).

What more he announced appears from the charge brought against him and Silas before the magistrates. It was that they said, "There is another (and a different) King, one Jesus" (verse 7). Here then was a confirmation of Peter's proclamation. Here was their "work of faith" (verse 3) in "turning to God from idols" (verse 9); the very word used by Peter in Acts iii. 19 ("be converted").

Here was their " labour of love " (verse 3) in " turning to serve the living and true God " (verse 9). Here was their " patience of hope " (verse 3) in turning to God " TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN " (verse 10).

The heavens had received Him ; He was to be sent from thence (Acts iii. 20, 21). That was why they " waited for God's Son from heaven " (1 Thess. i. 9, 10). That Blessed One for Whom they waited had been raised from among the dead, and had " delivered them from the wrath about to come." John the Baptist had given the same warning (Matt. iii. 7). The Lord had spoken of it (Luke xxi. 22, 23). The apostle again mentions it in chapter ii. 16. There he tells them that this wrath was coming upon the nation for an end (*eis telos*), but in v. 9, he could say, " God hath not appointed US to wrath, but to obtain deliverance [from it] through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is why they " waited for God's Son from heaven."

It will be noted that the apostle includes himself as waiting for this deliverance. Paul has been charged with having been mistaken in thus waiting for and expecting the Lord, by those who seek an excuse for their own neglect. But it is clear that he held it as a very present hope both for himself and for those to whom he wrote—a hope, the fulfilment of which was to be enjoyed together, and at the same time.

God had promised to " send " His Son ; that was why Paul and those to whom he wrote at Thessalonica were waiting. Paul was consumed with a great wish to see them and be in their presence, and see their face. He longed, he says, to go to them " with much desire, even I Paul ; and this, once, and even twice, but Satan hindered us." Nevertheless, he had great joy when he remembered that it was not for long. For, he asks, " What is OUR HOPE, or joy, or crown of boasting ? Are not even YE before our Lord Jesus Christ at His *parousia* ? For YE are OUR glory and OUR joy " (ii. 17-20).

In the third chapter he again expresses his great desire to see them (verses 5-10), and prays (verses 11-13) that "God Himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ may direct OUR way to YOU. But [in any case] may the Lord make you to exceed and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we also [do] toward you, to the end that He may establish YOUR hearts blameless in holiness before God, even our Father at the *parousia* (or presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His holy [angels]" (iii. 11-13).

Was not this "presence" very near to these Thessalonian believers who had obeyed Peter's call, and repented and "turned to the Lord," and waited for the speedy fulfilment of the Lord's promise? It was no far-off matter with them. It could not have referred to a presence which is even now far off. It was a near, yea, even a then present hope to be realised by these very believers who were thus being addressed—a hope that even they themselves might live to see and enjoy.

In the fourth chapter he makes a further revelation of truth as to this hope—a truth which the twelve could not reveal. Both they and he had said much with regard to those who were *alive*; much about their repentance, and turning to the Lord, and waiting for Him to be sent from heaven; but what about those who had fallen asleep? How could they participate in this promised sending of Jesus Christ, and be the apostle's "crown of rejoicing"?

Those who had fallen asleep had repented; they had turned to the Lord; they had been waiting for Him. To meet this difficulty the apostle comforts them with a "word of the Lord." With this he answers their questionings, allays their grief, and gives them hope. He says, "I would not that ye should be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are falling asleep,[1] in order

[1] This is the reading of all the critical Greek texts, including Tregelles.

that ye be not grieved, even as the rest also, who have no hope: for

A | a | If we believe
  | b | that Jesus died
  | c | and rose again,

A | *a* | So [we believe] also that
  | *b* | those who are fallen asleep
  | *c* | God, through (or by means of) Jesus, will bring [again from the dead] together with Him."

In this verse we have two corresponding statements: one concerning the Lord, and the other concerning His people. The first in each case respectively ("a" and "*a*") has for its subject, *faith* (or what we believe); the second ("b" and "*b*") speaks of *death*; and the subject of the third ("c" and "*c*") is *resurrection*.

The Lord had died. But God, who "brought again from among the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. xiii. 20), would BRING AGAIN from the dead, in like manner, by means of Jesus (as in 2 Cor. iv. 11), those who had fallen asleep.

This was not the mere assertion of the apostle. He was only confirming that word which had already been spoken by the Lord to Martha, when He was not speaking of the Church or revealing the Mystery, but when He was revealing a further fact concerning resurrection.

Martha believed in the first and second resurrections; but there was another. She had begun her words to the Lord:—"If Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." It was concerning this statement the Lord was teaching her. He was telling her that His presence meant resurrection, as she truly said; and it meant more. It meant not merely preservation of temporal life, but resurrection for those who died, and preservation unto eternal life for those who should be "alive and remain,"

and thus know Him as " the Life." His words may be thus read :—

B | John xi. 25-. Even I am the resurrection,
C | -25-. And the life.

B | -25. He that believeth on Me, even though he die—he shall live [again in resurrection].
C | 26. And every one who [is] alive, and believing on Me, shall by no means die at all (or for ever).

This was " the word of the Lord " which Paul was now *confirming*, when he said :—

" For this we say unto you by a word of [the] Lord, that WE, the living, who remain unto the *parousia* (or presence) of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those who are fallen asleep [in death], because the Lord Himself, with a shout [of command], with an archangel's voice, and with a trump of God, SHALL DESCEND from heaven, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then WE, the living who remain, shall be caught away, together with them in clouds, for [the] meeting of the Lord, into the air, and THUS (*i.e.*, in this way and manner) WE shall be always with the Lord. Wherefore encourage one another with these words " (1 Thess. iv. 13-18).

Paul was here confirming what the Lord had said in Matt. xxiv. " Immediately after the tribulation of those days " (which would have taken place within those forty years of probation covered by the Acts of the Apostles, the wonders in heaven and on earth would have been seen, as already foretold by Joel (Joel ii. 30, 31), which Peter declared to be " that " which was signified and portended on the Day of Pentecost) : " then shall be seen the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a trumpet [yea] a great

sounding [trumpet],[1] and they shall gather together His elect out of the four winds from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. xxiv. 29-31).

This "great trumpet" is the "trump of God" in 1 Thess. iv.; and the gathering is the gathering of "them that are alive and remain." This is the work assigned to the angels; but the raising of those who had fallen asleep was to be effected by God Himself, "through Jesus."

The Lord went on at once to teach His disciples by the parable of the fig tree, and said: "When its branch is become tender, and the leaves are put forth, ye know [by experience] that the summer is near. Thus, YE ALSO, when YE SEE these things, get to know that it is near—at the doors. Verily I say unto you, IN NO WISE[1] will THIS GENERATION have passed away, until all these things MAY COME TO PASS. The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but MY words shall NO WISE[2] pass away" (Matt. xxiv. 32-35).

No words could be more solemn, more certain, or more definite, or more unmistakable. *That generation did not pass away*, till those things might have come to pass. All was conditional on Israel's repentance. The Lord had given the sign "whereby" "that generation" might know that the FIG TREE was putting forth leaves, that the summer of NATIONAL restoration was near, and that "He Himself was near, even at the doors" (Matt. xxiv. 33). That sign was the arising of many coming in His name, saying, "I am the Messiah." That sign did take place, and those who heard the Lord's words did SEE it, and thereby did know that the end of that Dispensation was "near," and that it was "the last hour" of it (1 John ii. 18).

[1] The Figure is *Hendiadys*, by which *two* nouns are used, but only *one* thing meant, the second noun having the force of a weighty superlative adjective. The Greek is "a trumpet and a great sound," which the A.V. and R.V. both give in the margin, and render it "a great sound of a trumpet."

[2] Greek *ou mē*, the strongest possible negative.

James had written and said, " the Judge *standeth before the door* " (James v. 9), and " the coming (*parousia*) of the Lord has drawn near " (v. 8). The Lord sent the same message to Laodicea, " Behold, I *stand at the door* and knock " (Rev. iii. 20).

Peter's address on the Day of Pentecost linked on the events of that day with " the day of the Lord," showing again that " THIS " signified " THAT " which was prophesied by Joel concerning that day when (as Joel said), " for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance (that is the ' salvation ' of 1 Thess. i. 10, and v. 8-10), as Jehovah hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call " (Joel ii. 32). Could any doubt this when they heard Peter's appeal : " For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all who are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call " (Acts ii. 39) ? Who those were that are " afar off " we may learn from Daniel's prayer (Dan. ix. 7).[1]

When Paul identified his confirming testimony with that of " them that heard Him," did he not belong to " this generation " (of which the Lord spoke) ? Did he not see the signs ? and, not knowing whether Israel would repent and turn to the Lord, did he not use the pronouns " WE " and " US " with a special and personal reference to himself ? Was not this a then present hope, shared in equally by the apostle and those to whom he wrote ?

Through not seeing this great fact, Paul has been thoughtlessly charged with labouring under a " mistake." True, it is granted on all hands, that he did write of it as a hope

[1] " O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day ; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near, *and that are far off*, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee." Compare with this Acts ii. 14, 22, 36, 39, and with Joel ii. 32, and there can be no doubt as to how we are to understand all these Scriptures.

in which he was personally concerned : therefore it is said he was mistaken !

But this is our very point. He was not mistaken ! How could the Holy Spirit indite Paul's words in any way which would assume that Israel was going to reject the promised offer to " send Jesus Christ " ? Impossible. All was real, and solemnly earnest.

In the fifth chapter (1 Thess. v.) Paul again speaks of " the day of the Lord." As Joel had done, and as Peter had done when he said that " this " gift of tongues at Pentecost was " that " which Joel had spoken of as associated with " the day of the Lord."

Paul says the same : but he goes on to explain how the " sudden destruction " would come on those who rejected the testimony then given ; and how they should " by no means escape." But he adds that it shall not be so with those who " received the word " and believed the testimony. These were not " sons of the night." These were not acting as those who go to sleep in the night ; but were awake and watching ; " waiting for God's Son from heaven " (i. 10) : " Let US who are of the day (he says) be sober, having put on the breast-plate of faith, and love, and [as] a helmet, salvation's hope, because God hath not appointed US for WRATH, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, the [One Who] died for US, that, whether WE may watch or [whether] WE may sleep,[1] together with Him we may live ; wherefore encourage one the other with these words, even as ye are doing also " (v. 8-11).

Finally, the apostle concludes the whole epistle with a prayer which sums all up in another brief reference to the *parousia* of the Lord, which was regarded as being so near that those who read his words might be preserved from

[1] This is the same word as in verses 6, 7, not the same as in iv. 13, 14. It denotes the opposite of wakefulness and watchfulness : not the sleep of death.

death and dissolution altogether, and be among those who should be " alive and remain " " to meet the Lord in the air." He says : " Now the God of peace sanctify you wholly (to the end) [1] ; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved whole (in every part) [2] blameless AT the coming (*parousia*) of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that promised, Who will perform [it] also " ; *i.e.*, the promise of 1 Thess. iv. 16, which was based on God's promise by Peter, also in Acts iii. 19-21.

That promise was for all who should obey the call to repent and turn to the Lord, " I adjure you [by] the Lord (were his closing words) that this epistle be read to all the brethren." [3] Had Israel obeyed God's call to repentance, by Peter, His promise, " He shall send Jesus Christ," would have been kept ; and " ALL the Scriptures of the prophets " would have stood sure, and would have been fulfilled and all things restored. But Israel did not repent. A few small assemblies here and there " received the word " (Acts ii. 41 ; 1 Thess. ii. 13) and obeyed ; but the nation, as such, rejected the double call of Peter and the twelve in the land and elsewhere, and of Paul in the synagogues of the Dispersion.

But the question for us now is : Has then Israel as a nation, as a whole, forfeited this promised blessing ? or is it merely postponed ? Will not these " times of refreshing " ever come ? Will God not send Jesus Christ ? and will He not yet fulfil all that the prophets have spoken ? Assuredly He will. And that is why the *first* written epistles are put *last* in *our* canon of Scripture. The dispensational, historical, and *chronological* order no longer speak to us as they did to them. For believers to-day the *canonical* order in which, by Divine ordering, they come into our hands, is the order that concerns us now. We, too, wait for the Lord. But on what grounds ? Was the promise made unto *our*

[1] *Holoteleis.* [2] *Holokleron, i.e.*, alive.
[3] The word " holy " is omitted by all the critical Greek texts.

fathers? Was it made unto *us*, and to our *children* (Acts ii. 39)? Assuredly not.

Where then do we "sinners of the Gentiles" come in? On what ground do we claim this promise? Have we any title to an "inheritance"? What is that title? The answer to these questions is the key to the canonical order of the Pauline Epistles. We, as Gentiles, have no right, no claim, no title in ourselves. We inherit no promise made to our fathers. But we have and inherit all IN CHRIST! This, however, we learn *not* from the earlier epistles of Paul but from the later epistles.

At the outset of Ephesians we come upon the whole secret. "Wherefore, remember, that YE being in time past

> Gentiles in the flesh . . .
> called uncircumcision,
> without Christ,
> being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,
> and strangers from the covenants of the promise,
> not having hope,
> and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 11, 12).

Here, in these seven solemn statements, we learn our position by nature as Gentiles. Then follows the blessed promise, "But now, IN CHRIST JESUS, ye who were once afar off are become near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. ii. 13).

But again we ask: On what ground are we then brought nigh? The only answer is that given in Eph. i., "IN HIM, in Whom WE obtained inheritance also, being predestinated according to the PURPOSE of Him Who worketh all things according to the COUNSEL of His WILL: for US to be to the praise of His glory, who have foretrusted in the Messiah, IN WHOM YE ALSO, having heard the word of the truth—the glad tidings of your salvation, IN WHOM, having believed also, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit (of the promise, John xvi. 12-15),

which is the earnest of our INHERITANCE unto the redemption of the acquired possession, unto the praise of His glory " (Eph. i. 11-14).

Here then is where we ourselves and our readers come in. Here is our title. We have ALL—and more—not because we are in Abraham, but because we are " IN CHRIST " ; not because we are in the " covenant of promise " made to Abraham and his seed, but because we were predestinated in eternity ; " chosen IN HIM BEFORE the overthrow of the world " (Eph i. 4), *i.e.*, as recorded in Gen. i. 2, when " the world that then was " became a ruin—empty and desolate.

This is the opening statement of the later epistles of Paul. But before we can understand this, we have to learn the foundation doctrines which were set forth later than 1 Thess. in the epistle to the Romans. There we have the great question of Jew and Gentile explained and settled. This is why that epistle is now placed *first*. This is why it is necessary for us to-day to begin with Romans. Believing Jews and Gentiles in that day (just as necessarily) had to begin with Thessalonians.

Here we see the Divine reason for the *canonical* order of the whole of the Pauline Epistles. They had their inheritance in Abraham : we have " an inheritance also " as well as they, but it is " in Christ." And yet there are those who think we (as Gentiles) have " lost " something ; and are robbed of our hope, because Israel's blessing is postponed ! But it is all the other way round. It is we who have robbed Israel of the promise of 1 Thessalonians ; and as is often and proverbially the case, there is the usual disagreement over stolen property.

When we come to consider the later Pauline Epistles in which the " Spirit of truth " fulfilled the Lord's promise in John xvi. 12-15, " He will guide you into all the truth," we shall find that we have lost nothing ; but have gained all that there is yet to be known both of grace and glory.

We need not rob Israel of its postponed hope. For instead of being " caught away into the air " (1 Thess. iv. 17), we have the glorious promise of a " calling on high " (Phil. iii. 14). Instead of a raising of " the dead in Christ " (1 Thess. iv. 16), we have the promise of " an out-resurrection from among the dead " (Phil. iii. 11).

And yet because " the hope of Israel " is in abeyance, some of us fancy that we have lost something ! Surely we can afford to leave them their hope, " forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching out to the things [that are] before " ; if by any means we may arrive at that out-resurrection, and pressing towards the goal unto the prize of our calling on high (Phil. iii. 14).

Our hope now " in Christ " means much more for us than 1 Thess. iv. did for Israel then. We also are waiting for God's Son ; our *politeuma* (or seat of government) [already] exists in the heavens " from whence we are awaiting the Saviour also—the Lord Jesus Christ Who will transform [1] our body of humiliation that it may be conformed to [2] His body of glory " (Phil. iii. 21).

This is our " blessed hope." May the Lord speedily bring it to pass !

[1] *Metaschēmatizō* = to change the form or appearance.
[2] *Summorphos* = having a like form with.

(X.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (Heb. ii. 3)

The Earlier Pauline Epistles

2 Thessalonians

WE now come to the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, written by Paul probably within a year after the first Epistle, while still in Corinth, and some twenty years or more after the Ascension of the Lord.

The forty years of probation for Israel had run out half their course; but plenty of time remained for the fulfilment of all that had been foretold by the prophets concerning the " restoration of all things," the rise of the antichrist, the wonders in heaven and on earth foretold by Joel (Joel ii. 28-32), and by our Lord (Matt. xxiv. 4-35), and by John in the Book of the Revelation.

We have seen that all these things were " near " to that generation; they were " shortly coming to pass " (Rev. i. 1); the judge was still *standing*; He had not yet taken His seat; He was *standing* " at the door " (James v. 9), and He was still *knocking* at it (Rev. iii. 20). The day of the Lord had not yet actually set in, but it was " near—even at the doors " (Matt. xxiv. 33).

The tribulation had not set in, but troubles were increasing on all hands for those who " received the word " (Acts ii. 41; 1 Thess. ii. 13). " The beginning of the birth-pangs " of the tribulation were being felt, as the Lord had foretold (Matt. xxiv. 9); " Then will they deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and ye will be hated by all Gentiles on account of My name, and then many will stumble (Dan. xi. 34, 35), will deliver up one another, and many false prophets will arise and

will mislead many ; and because lawlessness shall have been multiplied, the love of the many (or the most part) shall grow cold. But he who endures to the end, he shall be saved." The Thessalonian believers were beginning to experience the truth of these words. So much so, that the apostle was falsely reported to have said or written that " the day of the Lord had actually set in " [1] (2 Thess. ii. 2). This was the immediate reason why Paul wrote this second Epistle to these Thessalonian receivers of the word.

When he wrote the first Epistle he could praise God for their " work of FAITH, and labour of LOVE, and patience of HOPE " (1 Thess. i. 3). But when he wrote this second Epistle, he says nothing about their " hope " ! He thanks God for their FAITH which had grown exceedingly, and for their LOVE which abounded (2 Thess. i. 3), but he does not mention their " hope," because this false report had for the time marred, if not destroyed it.

In the first Epistle he had assured them that " the day of the Lord " would come as a thief in the night, " and sudden destruction should come on unbelievers " ; but that day should *not* overtake *them* " as a thief." They were to put on HOPE as a helmet, the hope of salvation (1 Thess. v. 8), and deliverance from " the *coming* wrath " (1 Thess. i. 10).

No wonder that their hope was upset when they heard (the false report) that the same apostle had said " the day of the Lord " was actually " present," and ***they had not been delivered.*** In this case " that day " ***had*** overtaken them " as a thief " (1 Thess. v. 1-11).

[1] This is the meaning of the words in 2 Thess. ii. 2.
All the critical Greek texts read " Lord " instead of " Christ."
And although the English expression " at hand " occurs twenty times, yet in not one of these is it the rendering of *enistēmi* ; while *enistēmi* occurs seven times, and is nowhere else rendered " at hand." It is rendered " present " five times (Rom. viii. 38 ; 1 Cor. iii. 22 ; vii. 26 ; Gal. i. 4 ; Heb. ix. 9), and once, " shall come," *i.e.*, be present (2 Tim. iii. 1). It means to set or stand in (as a vessel to the shore), so as to be present.

No wonder he exhorts them not to let anyone deceive them. By no manner of means (neither by a spirit, nor by a message, nor by an epistle); and he gives them a sure sign and token "because, he says [it will not be] unless the apostasy shall have first come, and the man of sin[1] shall have been revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. ii. 3). He then goes on to describe his *apocalypse* and the manner of his revelation, so that they could be in no doubt that, until that apostasy had come and that *apocalypse* had taken place, they might be perfectly sure that "the day of the Lord" had not actually set in.

The word was "received" by them in trouble, as we learn from Acts xvii. 5, and that trouble did not decrease, as we may gather from 1 Thess. ii. 14-16. Here then we are to look for the reason of the writing of this second Epistle.

The apostle had promised them "rest," by the word of the Lord, before that day should come. They would be caught up and delivered from the "wrath" of that day. And now, in the interests of that "hope" which he had thus given them, and of their "gathering together unto Him" which he had promised them (2 Thess. ii. 1), he writes this second Epistle to them.

To him and to them that "rest" was very near. They were to have, he said, "rest with us" (*i.e.*, with himself and Silvanus and Timothy) (i. 1), not "when" (as in verse 10), but in, or at the apocalypse of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with His mighty angels, in flames of fire, taking vengeance on those who [would] not know God, and on those who [would] not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who (as a class) shall suffer the penalty of eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when HE SHALL HAVE COME to be glorified in His saints, and to be wondered at in all them that believe in that day (because our testimony to you was believed) (1 Thess. i. 10; Acts xvii. 1-3).

[1] Tischendorf and Tregelles read "lawlessness."

The words " when He shall have come " tell us that before the day of the Lord with all its " wrath " is manifested, the Lord would already have come, and taken them, both writers and readers of that Epistle, unto His " rest." That day was among the " all things " spoken of by the prophets, which Peter declared in Acts iii. 19-26 would be fulfilled in the sending of Jesus Christ. But the fulfilment of that great prophetic announcement was conditional on the repentance of the nation.

Alas ! we know that that condition was not then fulfilled. From the very first, national repentance was the one condition of national blessing, as may be seen from Lev. xxvi. 40-42 and Hosea v. 15, etc., to the present time. That repentance is yet future ; but it is certain. The prophecy of it will yet be fulfilled, as foretold in Zech. xii. 10-14, Matt. xxiv. 30, and confirmed in Rev. i. 7.

All this shows us that the " rest " of which the apostle wrote was regarded as a reality, and as being *very near*. It was not to be brought to them individually by *death*, but collectively and " together," according to the promise of 1 Thess. iv. 17. It was thus dependent on the sending of Jesus Christ before His apocalypse or revelation described in 2 Thess. i. 7-9. That great unveiling will not be until He shall first have come to be glorified in His saints (verse 10).

As the nation did not repent, the condition was not fulfilled ; and the hope not being realised then was postponed. Those who looked and longed for that " rest " fell asleep, and are now " the dead in Christ " ; but they will yet enjoy it with those who shall be " alive and remain " at the sending of Jesus Christ.

These things being so, it follows that the same signs as to the apocalypse of Jesus Christ remain to-day for all who have eyes to see and " ears to hear."

No one need be deceived, either by the teachings of a class of commentators who maintain that the Lord did

come at the destruction of Jerusalem, or by the vain assertions of politicians who would have us look for heaven on earth from their various schemes; or by the false hopes and promises of modern Socialists (Christian and otherwise); or by the blasphemous teachings of the New Theology which dreams of "realising the Kingdom of God on earth" without the King; or by the vain efforts of those who labour for "peace on earth," not seeing or knowing that men murdered "the Prince of Peace."

All these turn the statements of God's Word upside down. For that Word assures us that the day of the Lord will not come until the apostasy shall have come. The Church says it will not come until the world's conversion comes. The Word declares that the world is not bad enough, modern teachers assure us that the world is not good enough! and, being ignorant of God's Word, they are labouring to bring about "the restoration of all things" without the sending of Jesus Christ!

Could there be surer evidence for us that though the apostasy has not yet culminated, it must be far on its way when Modern Criticism is enthroned in the churches, and the secrets [spirit and workings] of lawlessness are rampant both in the Church and in the State?

The Thessalonian believers had their "signs", and we in our day have ours. By them we know that the day of the Lord draweth near. But what promise have *we* of deliverance from it? What assurance have we that it "shall not overtake" us? Where is the "rest" for us, which was promised to them?

We can quite understand how that promised "rest" was so *near* to their hopes, when we read these epistles in their chronological setting as written during that Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles; but not, when we read into them this present Dispensation of the Mystery, to-day. That is why so many make much of 1 Thess. iv., but make nothing of 2 Thess. i.; as they still do to-day.

We can quite understand, and fully sympathise with, those who like ourselves have spoken or written on 1 Thess. iv. as being the great charter of our hope of the Lord's coming. But we ought thankfully to relinquish it when we find we have a better hope; which we can enjoy all the more because we need not reproach ourselves with having robbed Israel of their hope, which is only postponed, and will yet have a wondrous and literal fulfilment for them.

It may, after all, be *the pattern* of our hope, as presented later in Phil. iii. 11, 14. The realisation of our hope may be framed on the same model as theirs. The order of the two events may well be the very same—

First, our "out-resurrection" (*exanastasis*) corresponding with their resurrection (*anastasis*), and

Second, our "calling on high," corresponding with their being "caught up."

What do we lose? Is it not a gain? and a glorious gain? All we have to do is to make a restitution of stolen property, to give up what we have (it may be innocently) taken, and rejoice in what is really our own by *a special deed of gift* from our Saviour, for Whom we look.

We and all our readers have long been cured of an unconscious and Biblical *kleptomania* by which every promise of blessing was taken from Israel and given over to the Church; while we were in the place of the burglar. He is careful to take the silver and leave the plate, and so we were careful in our selection, and left all the curses and judgments for Israel and took the blessings for ourselves. There was method in our mania, but it was wrong, nevertheless. Let us now be consistent and content; and while enjoying all that God has promised, yea has made ours in Christ, let us live looking for the Saviour (Phil. iii. 20, 21); waiting for our "calling on high" (verse 14); and if called to fall asleep, let us be sure and certain of that blessed hope which ensures our "out-resurrection out from among the dead." Again we ask, what have we lost?

When we are called on high, will there be no Bibles left on earth ? Are those whom we leave, and who will then believe and come to a knowledge of the truth, to be left without any hope either of escaping the terrors of the day of the Lord, or the knowledge of what is provided for them in 1 Thess. iv. and Rev. v. ?

If we take away 1 Thess. iv. from them, and make it *our* hope now, what remains for those who are left, to save them from the coming wrath, or to bring others out of the great tribulation ? We make every Scripture to centre in ourselves ! But we are not everything, or every one. There are others besides ourselves who need salvation and require a hope. Let us be content with what God has revealed for us. It is quite good enough ; yea, it seems too good to be true !

Let us then leave those things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, and press toward the goal for the prize of our calling on high by God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Phil. iii. 14).

(XI.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

2 THESSALONIANS ii

WHEN we come to the second chapter of this second Epistle, we learn more about the " all things " which had been spoken of by the prophets as being fulfilled in connection with the Lord's coming.

The apostle believed what our Lord and they " that heard Him " had spoken, viz., that His coming had *drawn nigh* (Greek *eggizō*, Matt. iii. 2, translated " at hand " in iv. 17 ; x. 7 ; Mark i. 15). See also Luke x. 9, 11 ; xxi. 20, 28 ; Rom. xiii. 12 ; Heb. x. 25 ; James v. 8 ; 1 Peter iv. 7 ; and *eggus* in Luke xxi. 31 ; Rev. i. 3 ; xxii. 10.

But that was a very different thing from the false report that the apostle had said that " the day of the Lord " had already *set in*. The verb *enistemi* does not mean the same thing as *eggizō* (see note, p. 108). So that, while the coming of the Lord *had drawn nigh*, " the day of the Lord " had not actually *set in*. Even then, as the apostle penned 2 Thess. ii., there were at least two events which had to take place—(1) the apostasy, and (2) the revelation of the lawless one.

We can well understand that those Thessalonians who had " received the word " (1 Thess. ii. 13 ; cp. Acts ii. 41) and believed it, had been " shaken in mind " and were " troubled." The verb *saleuō* means to be shaken, so as to be excited and disturbed (see Acts xvii. 13), and *throeomai* means to be terrified.[1]

[1] It occurs only here and Matt. xxiv. 6 and Mark xiii. 7, all referring to the same cause.

They had need to be both one and the other if " the day of the Lord " had actually set in, because the apostle had promised that " that day should not overtake them as a thief " (1 Thess. v. 4), but that, before it came, those who had died would be raised and caught up together with those who would be " alive and remain," to meet the Lord in the air, so to be " ever with the Lord " (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). This was the comfort wherewith they were to " comfort one another " (1 Thess. iv. 18; v. 11).

But if " the day of the Lord had already set in," that comfort was gone. The exhortation was all in vain. They had been misled; apostles had deceived them, and their hope had gone. No wonder the apostle could not mention the word " hope " in 2 Thess. i. 3, as he had in 1 Thess. i. 3. No wonder he besought them in the interest of the precious truth of the *parousia*, or (speedy) presence of the Lord, and of their thus " gathering together unto Him " in the air, not to be " troubled."

The reason why they were not to be deceived was that that day could not come without two great signs, which we have named above. We need not say more about them here; for that is not the point now. The question is, did they happen in the lifetime of those to whom the apostle was writing? Have they happened since? or are they yet to take place?

There are many who believe that those two signs were seen, and did actually come to pass; or, it is argued, that it would have been useless to give them information about " matters which were not at all urgent, and which in fact did not concern them at all." But the matters *were urgent*. It did concern them to know and learn that the apostle had not misled them, that their hope was still a real and blessed hope. It did matter that they need not be excited or terrified.

The apostle was led to dwell on the " lawless one " so as to prove to them that he could not have been already

unveiled then. Moreover, the one inspiring Spirit knew that the words would matter to *us* in this later day. So that *we* may not be misled, or suppose that the Lord's day has already set in now. Those who hold that Nero was the lawless one, and those who hold that the Popes represent him, would both mislead us; for they take away from us the only signs which God has given to be our guide on this important subject.

We are like the Thessalonian believers as to these signs. They had the promise that "the day of the Lord" should "not overtake" them (1 Thess. v. 4), and we in our day have a precisely similar blessed assurance. They looked for an *anastasis* or resurrection of their sleeping fellow-believers, and a rapture of those who should be "alive and remain." We also look for an *ex-anastasis* for the sleeping members of the one body, and their and our heavenward call. The latter is (or should be) a very present hope with us, as the former was to them.

The same signs assure us that our blessed hope must be realised and enjoyed before the apostasy is fully developed and the lawless one is unveiled. We, therefore, *do not look for these signs*, but for the Lord. We are not looking for antichrist, but for Christ.

True, we see the beginnings of the coming apostasy, the former of these two signs; and we see enough to tell us what will be its nature, and what form it will take. The daily papers teem with evidences of this; and, as in that day the disciples were to look up, for their redemption was drawing nigh, so we may look up in a still truer sense for our heavenward call. There should be nothing between our hearts and this. It waits for no events on earth. There is nothing that *must* happen. It is to be a call, and it is the call of Him for Whose voice we are listening.

The word (*klēsis*) occurs eleven times, and is always used of a Divine call: whether it be His calling which sets us before Him in grace, or which presents us before

Him in glory. These are the two parts of His calling; and all who receive the one, must be recipients of the other also. We thus learn that while the hope in 1 Thess. iv. is for those who shall be left, we have a hope peculiarly our own. Instead of losing anything, we have an immense gain.

The realisation of the hope in 1 Thess. was dependent on Israel's repentance; and when that takes place (Rev. i. 7), then we see the glorious fruition in Rev. vii. How do those multitudes out "of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues stand before the throne"? There is not a word said about how they came to be there. The angel answers John's inquiry as to who they were simply by saying, "These are they who came out of[1] the great tribulation." That is all. But they must have got there in some manner; and what could that be but the one of which we read in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17?

Had Israel repented, that promise must have been fulfilled in those who read and received the word of promise; for "all that the prophets had spoken" would have been fulfilled, and these believers would have been "caught away" before it could "overtake" them. In that case Rev. vii. would have been the record of its fulfilment. But Israel did not then repent. Consequently, "all that the prophets have spoken" is postponed, and 1 Thess. iv. and Rev. vii. are still future and will be accomplished to the very letter.

The great multitude of Rev. vii. will yet be seen in heaven, and they can get there only by being miraculously "caught up" thither by resurrection and rapture. That is clear; for it is emphatically stated that it shall be "so" or rather *thus*, in that manner, that they should ever be with the Lord.

We have now noted all that is said about the Lord's

[1] Lachmann reads "away from great tribulation" instead of "out of the great tribulation."

coming in the first two epistles ever addressed to an assembly of believers after the Lord had ascended into heaven. They can be properly understood now, only when read in their chronological order, and in the light of Acts iii. 19-26, and xvii. 1-9.

Only thus can we get to know the meaning of the apostle's words of warning, of instruction, and of hope. He had a meaning for everything he said, and we can properly interpret his words only in proportion as we thus rightly divide the word of truth.

(XII.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

THIS Epistle was written next after 2 Thessalonians, and we may expect to find the same conditions ruling here, as in those addressed to the Thessalonians who " received the Word " (Acts ii. 41) proclaimed by Peter in Acts ii. 39, 40 ; and iii. 19-26.

We may trace the same Dispensational teaching here, as in all the earlier Pauline Epistles written during the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, before its close in Acts xxviii. ; and this, in turn, will explain many passages in those epistles which have hitherto created difficulties in the minds of present-day readers, which they have not been able to reconcile easily with other passages, and with their old traditional views.

At the very outset we come upon the word *apocalypse*, as being that which these believers in Corinth were ardently awaiting. To them, therefore, the apocalypse, or unveiling, of our Lord Jesus Christ was near. The words in 1 Cor. i. 7 mean " looking earnestly for the time when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be unveiled," *i.e.*, revealed to sight. Had that great unveiling been then in the far-distant future, that earnest expectation (for the word for " wait " is the same as in Rom. viii. 19) would have been wholly out of place (unless we are to assume that they had been misled).

The word apocalypse always refers (when used of the Lord's coming) to His visible manifestation in Person. This, therefore, was and must have been the event which Paul and these believers in Corinth looked for. But

we and our readers are all fully conscious that this is not "our hope" to-day. We are all believing that that day shall not "overtake us as a thief," but that we shall be removed before "the day of the Lord" sets in. Therefore, to meet with this word here is a real stumbling-block.

But the habit of most readers is, in a case of this kind, to go on just the same as if the difficulty did not exist at all, regardless of the word or expression which has raised the difficulty; thus practically ignoring the passage which contains it. It is a great mistake to do this. For we go on carrying our burden, when further examination would not only remove it, but add to our knowledge and deepen our conviction as to the importance of every word by which God has spoken to us.

It is so here. If we look at this passage again, we read that they were enriched by Christ in all discourse and in all knowledge[1] according as THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST (*i.e.*, the testimony given by Christ) "was CONFIRMED in you (*i.e.*, 'by them that heard Him,' Heb. ii. 3), and was borne witness to by signs and wonders and spiritual gifts (Heb. ii. 4), so that YE are not behind in any gift, awaiting THE *apocalypse* of our Lord Jesus Christ Who will confirm also you unto the END, unimpeachable in THE DAY OF OUR LORD Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. i. 4-8).

Here we have "THE apocalypse" as the object of their hope; "the day" which they were then awaiting ardently (as the word implies[2]). But *we*, as we have said, are not ardently waiting for this. According to Phil. iii. 20, 21, "OUR (very emphatic) seat of government EXISTS[3]

[1] We note that the word here is *gnōsis*, used of ordinary knowledge, not *epignōsis*, full or complete knowledge, which has a powerful influence on the one who possesses it. This latter is the usual word in the Prison Epistles.

[2] Gr. *apekdechomai* = to wait ardently for. Cp. Rom. viii. 19, 23, 25.

[3] Gr. *huparcho* = to exist as a reality. It is not "is," as though it were the verb "to be."

already in [the] heavens, from whence we are ardently awaiting (the same word as in 1 Cor. i. 7) the Saviour also [the] Lord Jesus Christ." Not to be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," etc., as described in 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. That is the *apocalypse*. But WE are ardently waiting for "the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform the bodies of our humiliation (*i.e.*, OUR VILE[1] body) that it may be fashioned (*i.e.*, made like to, or conformed to) the body of His glory (*i.e.*, HIS GLORIOUS[1] body)"; if we are alive and remain; or if we fall asleep, then our hope is "to arrive at the OUT-resurrection THAT (resurrection) FROM among the dead" (Phil. iii. 11, 14, 20, 21).

This is our blessed hope to-day. But having robbed Israel of their hope in 1 Thess. iv., most of us have no place for this hope, given to us in Phil. iii., and so we calmly and quietly leave that chapter (Phil iii.), and either spiritualise it and say it does not mean a resurrection of the body, or else entirely ignore it. But we cannot get away from the fact that these Corinthian believers were awaiting the apocalypse. It says so.

Moreover, the Dispensation of the Great Secret which concerns the sphere where grace reigns in all its glory, had not yet been made known to the sons of men. Therefore, a believer in the Dispensation of the Acts had to look forward to the judicial character of the day of the Lord. Hence we read in 1 Cor. iii. 13-15, "The work of each one will become manifest, for THE DAY will declare [it] because in (or with) fire it is revealed" (*apokaluptō*). Again we have the apocalypse, and it is exactly what it says in 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. "And the fire[2] will prove the work of each one, of what sort it is. If the work of any one shall

[1] By the Figure, *Enallagĕ*, the emphasis is placed on the Adjective, a Noun being substituted for it, for this purpose.

[2] All the critical Greek texts read, "the fire itself."

abide which he built up, he shall receive a reward. If the work of any one shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but himself shall be saved, but so as through fire " (1 Cor. iii. 13-15).

Surely we are not here on the ground of grace. For " if [it is] by grace [it is] no longer of works ; else grace no longer becomes grace. But if of works, it is no longer grace, else work is no longer work " (Rom. xi. 6).

And note, it is THE DAY, which will declare it, *i.e.*, " the day of the Lord," according to 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

To get out of the difficulty which we have created for ourselves, various shifts have been resorted to ; and many of us are to this day in trouble over it, and are not agreed as to whether the " work " here referred to is general or ministerial. Some are even sorry the passage is here !

It must be manifest to us all that we are not here upon the same ground as the Epistle to the Ephesians. " The day " referred to is a day of discrimination. The work is " the work of faith and the labour of love," which had been manifested by those who had " received the word," in Thessalonica, and which is praised and described in 1 Thess. i. All these labourers were warned as to whom they " added to the assemblies " (Acts ii. 47), for when human instruments did the work (v. 14 ; xi. 24, etc.), that work must needs be tried. The " day " when this trial takes place was to be revealed " with fire " (1 Cor. iii. 13). This had already been declared through Malachi : " Who may abide the day of His coming ? for He is like a refiner's fire. . . . For, behold, the day cometh that shall burn as a furnace, and all the proud, yea all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble " (Mal. iii. 2, 3 ; iv. 1).

This was the testimony of John the Baptist as to the character of the day, which he proclaimed to have drawn nigh. " He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire " (Matt. iii. 12 ; cp. 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, etc.). But we have another passage in the next chapter where the apostle

exhorts : " Judge not anything before [the] time, until the Lord may have come, Who will both bring to light the hidden things of the darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then praise shall become [a possession] for each, from God " (1 Cor. iv. 5).

When we thus point out the *special* reference of such a passage to the time when, and the people to whom it was addressed, we have in our minds, of course, the *interpretation*. We do not, of course, mean to say or to imply that there is no *application* for us, or that it was not written for our learning. It will be well for us and our own happiness if we can treat it as " a very small thing " when we are judged by others ; and are able to leave all our self-constituted judges to the Lord (there will be many of them !). With all these special points there are eternal truths and practical exhortations which are of age-long importance.

This is hardly so with the passage in the next chapter, where the apostle speaks of delivering up an unclean brother to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved IN THE DAY OF THE LORD Jesus (1 Cor. v. 5). This surely refers to that day as then being so near to them.

In the next chapter he says nothing to prevent us from drawing the conclusion that " that day " was so near that, even those to whom he wrote, and himself also, would participate in the judging of angels in the age to come.

" Know ye not that the saints will judge the world ? [1] and if BY YOU the world [1] is judged, are YE unworthy to judge the smallest [matters] ? Know ye not that WE shall judge angels ? much more than things of this life " (1 Cor. vi. 2, 3).

If that were not an argument acquiring sufficient cogency from the nearness of the apocalypse, it certainly is so in the next chapter, where the apostle's advice rests

[1] Gr. *kosmos*.

solely on that fact. In 1 Cor. vii. 29 we read, " But this I say, brethren, the time [is] short." The word rendered " short " occurs only here and in Acts v. 6. It means " wound up "; and that is the meaning here. " The time (or season) is wound up," *i.e.*, that Dispensation was nearly at an end. What then did it matter about marrying, or weeping, or rejoicing, or buying, or selling ? The reason follows : " for the fashion (or form) of this world [1] passeth away." This shows how near the end that Dispensation was considered to be.

Who has not experienced the difficulty as to the interpretation of this passage when taken from its context and interpreted of us in this present time ? How many have been perplexed and come to us for advice as to whether they ought to marry, or do any of these things ?

Our answer is and should be, yes, certainly. What was advisable in the special and peculiar circumstances of that time would not be wise for us to act on in the same measure and degree in the present day. To them the nearness of the end was a solemn reality. One apostle was labouring here, and another there, and no means were available to let them know how Peter's proclamation was being received in one place or another.

There was no daily publication of the news. No one could know whether it was being generally received or rejected. We must try and put ourselves in the position of believers in those days. They had no telegraphs or telephones. The chief of the Jews in Rome had heard little or nothing about Paul and his doings in Jerusalem (Acts xxviii. 17-21).

All they knew was that the sands of time were running out. So the apostle writes to these believers in Corinth and says " the time is short," *i.e.*, " the time is shortened henceforth," meaning that the interval between the time he was writing and the coming of that day was extremely contracted.

[1] Gr. *kosmos.*

In view of the shortness of the time then remaining, some had written to Paul from Corinth as to their getting married, and he advised them rightly and correctly for that special season. His advice was that if a man was unmarried it was *then* " good for a man so to be " (ch. vii.).

The whole chapter must be read in the light of the days in which it was written and read. Then we can understand it and see its wisdom. But if we read it into our own day, we reap a harvest of confusion and difficulties. It was written on purpose that believers might avoid the scenes which we see from time to time, when, believing the word of some deluded man or woman, people get obsessed with the idea that " the end of the world " (whatever that may mean for them) is coming on a certain day. From such excesses these Corinthian believers were preserved, although they realised how near might be the end of that Dispensation, because their faith rested on the word of the Lord, spoken by " them that heard Him."

But we are not in that position to-day. We have no such word. Our " calling on high " and the out-resurrection from among the dead are Divine certainties ; but we have nothing to tell us how near or distant they may be. The *facts* are certain ; but the *time* is uncertain. The facts rest upon the word of the Lord ; but we have no word as to the time, as the apostles had. The only outward sign divinely given to us is (1) that the apostasy shall first come, (2) then the man of sin, (3) and finally, " the day of the Lord." The apostasy is approaching ; but how near it may be, or how far it may be advanced, we cannot tell. We can only watch it as it overflows the Church and the churches with its unbelief and lawlessness, and look " on high " for our prize, " look for the Saviour," and the wondrous change which He will effect on these mortal bodies, " look " for the out-resurrection from among the dead.

For " our hope " anticipates the hope of Israel. It appears to be much on the same lines, and in much the

same order. The only difference is the certainty of *their* "times and the seasons," and the uncertainty of *ours*; the connection of *their* hope with "the day of the Lord" on earth, and the closer connection of "*our* hope" with the heavens, where our *politeuma* exists; that waiting for us, while we are ardently awaiting and looking for it. Thus the teaching of 1 Corinthians is precisely on the same lines as that given by "them that had heard" the Lord. There was no fresh line of truth; though there was a development of it as the end drew nearer.

In 1 Cor. x. 11, we have another example of how the apostle associated himself, personally, with the realisation of the hope he set forth. We say nothing about the difference of "standing" of those to whom he wrote in x. 1-10, and of those whom he addressed in the later Prison Epistles. There is nothing in these later Epistles about anyone "thinking he standeth," or being "overthrown," or "destroyed of the destroyer"; the Dispensation of the Mystery has something more worthy of "the glory of His grace" than that.

But there is something in 1 Corinthians that we do not find in the Prison Epistles. There is the approaching end of that age. In ch. x. 11 the apostle tells these believers in Corinth that "all these things" happened to the fathers of these same people—during their forty years of probation of the wanderings—and they were as "types" of the then present forty years' probation of the Dispersion. They were "types"; and were written (he says) "for OUR admonition, on whom THE END OF THE AGES HAS ARRIVED."[1] And the consequence of this is added: "so that he that thinks he stands, let him take heed that he fall not."

[1] All the Critical Greek Texts read the past tense, "has arrived." The word is peculiar. It is *katantaō*, which is one of some thirty-two words translated "come," and occurs only thirteen times. It is always used in the sense of "arrival."

This sounds like a foreign language to those who are familiar with the Prison Epistles. No such solemn warnings are found there, nor are there any exhortations founded on such a ground, for all in those later Epistles is connected with " the glory of His grace."

In 1 Cor. xv. we come to a passage which treats of resurrection, which, as we have seen, had been already mentioned in the Epistle to the Thessalonians. The apostle had there declared the *fact*. Now he proposes to *explain* it. There are fourteen Greek words rendered " declare," but this one means to make known by way of *explanation*.[1]

At the time the apostle wrote 1 Thessalonians, all that had been made known about resurrection was to be found in the Old Testament and in the words of the Lord; and there it was written that there would be *two;* the one to " life," the other to " condemnation " (Dan. xii. 2; John v. 28, 29); one of the " just," the other of the " unjust " (Acts xxiv. 15). But nothing had been made known as to the " order " of these, or that the former would be " out of " or " from among " the others, leaving them for a subsequent resurrection.

The Lord always used this particular phrase when speaking of His own resurrection or that of His people. He always said " from (Gr. *ek*=out of, or from among) the dead." His disciples at first did not understand Him, and " questioned among themselves what the rising FROM the dead should mean " (Mark ix. 9, 10, 31, 32).

In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul had repeated a word of the Lord (John xi. 25, 26), and added a new revelation showing that the very *presence* of the Lord meant " *life* " for His people.

[1] It is rendered " make known " sixteen times out of the twenty-four times it occurs, and " declare " only four times. The others are significant: once " give you to understand " (1 Cor. xii. 3); once, " do to wit " (*i.e.*, make you to know, 2 Cor. viii. 1); " certify " (Gal. i. 11); " wot " (Phil. i. 22).

But we need not go further into this. We are concerned with 1 Cor. xv., and with showing that what is revealed in that chapter, though it *makes known* a great deal of precious truth connected with revelation, yet does not go beyond 1 Thess. iv. It explains that which had been kept a "secret" by God till then (1 Cor. xv. 51). He says, "Behold I tell you a secret; we all shall not fall asleep [in death],[1] but we all shall be changed," etc. That would be a resurrection from among the dead. But our point now is that neither of these was the *out-resurrection* out from among the dead. That was still a secret, a further secret which was not made known till afterwards in Phil. iii. 11.

Our readers will easily see the difference if we set them out thus :—

The one in 1 Cor. xv. 12, 13, 21, 42, is *anastasis nekrōn*, or *tōn nekrōn*, the resurrection of the dead.

The other in Phil. iii. 11 is THE EX-*anastasis tēn ek nekrōn*, THE OUT-RESURRECTION [one] OUT from among the dead.

This latter was not revealed till *after* the close of the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, but was kept secret until it was made known *in* the new Dispensation of the Mystery. It is connected with and related to our prize, which is our CALLING ON HIGH, or the heavenward call of Phil. iii. 14.

This wondrous truth is still a secret to thousands, because it has been hidden from all readers of the Authorised Version. There, the *adverb* "ON HIGH" (as we have before pointed out, more than once) is translated as though it were an *adjective*, "HIGH," as though merely qualifying the *nature* of the calling. Whereas the *adverb* has to do with describing the *direction*, or manner, of the calling. However,

[1] The same word as in 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, 15, which means to fall asleep unwittingly, and is thus used of DEATH; but not the same word as in 1 Thess. v. 6, 7, 10, which means to compose oneself for sleep, and so be unwatchful.

we shall have more to say on this subject when we come to Philippians.

It is sufficient now for us to notice and remember that without Phil. iii. 11, 14 we should know nothing more about "our hope" than the Thessalonian believers knew in the Dispensation of the Acts, which was then running out.

At any rate Paul knew that he had not lost anything. And he exhorts us in Phil. iii. 17 to be "followers together of Him"; and he could add,—"forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I press toward the goal, unto [1] the prize of our heavenward call by God in Christ Jesus. As many, therefore, as [are] initiated should be of this mind. And if in anything ye are minded otherwise, this [glorious hope] also God will reveal to you. But whereto we attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind."

[1] So all the critical Greek texts.

(XIII.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

2 CORINTHIANS

THE second Epistle to the Corinthians is, in many ways, in contrast with the first; as is the case with the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. The second of each was called forth by circumstances which had arisen since the writing of the first, respectively.

But the testimony is all in the same direction. Tribulation had set in, in 2 Cor. i. 4, as in 2 Thess. i. 4. In 2 Cor. i. this trouble was mainly personal; though those to whom the apostle wrote were " partakers of the sufferings." Part of the apostle's personal trouble was much the same as in 2 Thessalonians. There his word and promise had been doubted; here his apostolic commission was questioned.

As in the former case he laboured to confirm their *hope* in God which had been impaired; so in this case he laboured to confirm and establish their confidence in his word as to his calling and ministry.

These troubles were internal among themselves: but there were others which were external arising from their enemies, in fulfilment of Matt. xxiv. 9-12, where the Lord had described the beginnings of the birth-pangs of the tribulation itself: " They shall deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and ye will be hated by all Gentiles on account of My name; and then many will stumble, and will hate one another, and many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many," etc.

In the eleventh chapter the apostle enlarges on his share in these tribulations (verses 23-33). He introduces

this, not as the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy, but to establish his apostleship with them. They were to " examine themselves " as to whether they did not recognise the signs of his apostleship by their own standing in the faith [1] (xiii. 5-10).

But, returning to the earlier chapters, we note further references to the character of the times in which they found themselves. After a defence of his ministerial position in ch. iii. he refers again to his ministerial credentials, and goes on (in ch. iv. 8-12) to refer again to the tribulation of which they had such evidence.

He gives them the same hope of resurrection as he had given to the Thessalonians (1 Thess. iv. 13-17). Instead of saying, " If we believe," he says, " Knowing that He Who raised up the Lord Jesus will raise up US also by Jesus [2] and will PRESENT US with YOU." This is the same presentation as that mentioned in 1 Thess. ii. 19 and iii. 13 as taking place at the *parousia* of the Lord. He was looking forward to sharing this presentation with them. He was not looking forward to some still future presentation, which was (at that time) in the far distance ; but to a then present hope, to be shortly realised ; and so near as to be manifesting its power by enabling them to endure their tribulations. " For this cause (he says) we faint not, though our outward man is brought to decay, yet our inward man daily acquires new strength."

Why was this ? " Because (he goes on to say) the momentary lightness of our tribulation works out for us an excessively surpassing [and] eternal weight of glory : we not considering the things seen, but the things not seen : for the things seen are temporary, but the things not

[1] Not as a duty with regard to themselves by way of *introspection*, as generally alleged, but as *a duty to himself* by way of evidences, and the " proof " of Christ speaking by him (verse 3).

[2] *Dia Iēsou*, as in 1 Thess. iv. 14, showing that these words there are connected with *resurrection*, as here, and not with sleep (*i.e.*, death).

seen [are] eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle be taken down, we have a substantial building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For, indeed, in this [house, *i.e.*, body] we groan, longing to be clothed with our house (*i.e.*, spiritual [1] body) which [is] from (or out of) heaven: if [2] indeed being [thus] clothed, we shall not be found naked (*i.e.*, without a body at all)."

In all this the apostle is amplifying the promise of 1 Thess. iv. 17. Nothing is said there about any change taking place, either in the risen or raptured bodies. But here further light is thrown on the earlier promise. They are taught that the dead were not to be raised and the living caught away *as they were*, with their bodies unchanged; but that they were to have bodies like the angels (Matt. xxii. 30), received then and there, from heaven, clothed upon by God.

Paul is not formulating here a dogmatic creed relating to eschatology. He is administering comfort (as in 1 Thess. iv.) to those who were beginning to experience the birth-pangs of tribulation. He had given that new and wondrous hope (enlarging on the promise of the Lord in Matt. xxiv. 31) and explaining further the promise he had given in 1 Thess. iv. 17.

In verse 4 he repeats verse 2, " for we who are in this tabernacle groan, being burdened: since we do not wish to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by the life. Now He Who wrought us out for this same thing [is] God, Who [3] gave to us the earnest of the Spirit (in Acts ii.)." " Being always confident, therefore, and knowing that being at home

[1] The Greek is *oikētērion*, which occurs only here, and in Jude 6 where it is used of angelic, or spirit bodies, which supplies the correct meaning here.

[2] Assuming it as a fact, not implying a doubt, which we have indicated by supplying the word " thus."

[3] All the critical Greek texts omit " also."

[here] in the body, we are from home, away from the Lord (for by faith we walk, not by sight)." That is, they had the Lord's promise that, at His coming, by resurrection or rapture they should be for ever present with the Lord.

Until He should come, therefore, and while they were still in the body (*i.e.*, in the flesh), they were " absent from the Lord." Therefore, he adds, " we are confident, and are well-pleased to be rather from home, out of the body, and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore we are ambitious, whether being at home, or being from home, to be well-pleasing to Him. For WE ALL MUST be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, in order that each one may receive the things done in the body according to what He did, whether good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. But to God we have been manifested; and I hope in your consciences also we have been manifested."

Now here is the whole context of the oft quoted but disjointed and therefore inaccurate sentence, " Absent from the body, present with the Lord," and it must surely be clear to us all, when we thus read it in its context, and in the new light of the time when these words were written by the apostle.

We can see now, how these eschatological statements are intended to confirm and explain the great promise given previously in 1 Thess. iv. 17. Those who " received the word " (Acts ii. 41, 1 Thess. ii. 13) had that promise of being present with the Lord (1 Thess. iv. 17). In the immediate context (2 Cor. iv. 14) he had spoken to them of being presented (and therefore of his being present together) " WITH YOU "; and he had comforted the Thessalonian believers with the very same hope in 1 Thess. ii. 19 and iii. 13.

Jude also, when he wrote about the " common " and coming deliverance, or salvation of which the Lord spoke, and which those that heard Him confirmed (Heb. ii. 3),

commended them to God and said, "Who is able to keep YOU from falling, and to PRESENT YOU faultless before the PRESENCE of His glory with exceeding joy."

The expansion of this promise in 2 Cor. v. must be interpreted on the same lines. That "presence with the Lord" was to be a reality; and it was near to them in a very special sense. When those who had fallen asleep should be raised, and those who were alive caught away together with them, it might be in *unchanged* bodies for aught that is said in 1 Thess. iv. Hence, in 2 Cor. v., this further instruction is given, and they are told about the bodies which they would then receive from heaven.

That is why they longed, not for death, but for resurrection, change, and rapture, so that "clothed upon" with spiritual bodies, they might be raised and caught up together and be "present," yea, "for ever with the Lord."

In 1 Cor. xv. 51, he had already told them of this as a fact, and said, "We shall all be changed." Now in 2 Cor. v. he explains *how* this change will be accomplished. This was the blessed limit of all their labour, the happy boundary of all their care. They were not hoping to fall asleep in death; but they were resting on the assurance that if they should fall asleep they would be raised, and changed, and caught away. We cannot separate 2 Cor. v. from 1 Thess. iv. 17, where they were distinctly told that "SO," *i.e.*, thus, in this manner, and in no other, they would be always together with the Lord.

In 2 Cor. v. 10, the apostle connects all this with another and solemn accompanying fact. He says:—

"WE MUST ALL appear before the judgment-seat of Christ."

How we have all of us struggled with this statement! Because we know that we, whose standing in this present Dispensation of the Mystery is all of grace, cannot be judged by our works. Hence, we have all endeavoured to show that the judgment here spoken of was for *service*.

But nothing is said about any such distinction here; and works, as such, are mentioned in connection with this judgment in the first Epistle (1 Cor. iii. 13, 14). "Works" are also in question when the Lord speaks of His coming to each one of the seven churches of Asia (and to one of them twice) *during this same period.* See Rev. ii. 2, 9, 13, 19; iii. 1, 2, 8, 15.

We remember also, how we have said that the *bēma* was used by the Greeks of the raised dais, from which the prizes were given; though we were confronted with the fact that it is *never so used by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament*! The word "*bēma*" occurs twelve times and is ten times translated "judgment-seat,"[1] and once "throne" (Acts xii. 21). An examination of these passages will at once show that the Holy Spirit uses it only of a *tribunal for pronouncing judgment.*

The difficulty which we, and many who will read these words, have wrestled with, has been of our own creating: but when we look at it Dispensationally, and in its setting in the chronological order of the sacred writings, the supposed "difficulty" not only disappears, but unites its testimony with all the other Scriptures which we have been considering.

Moreover, this appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ, which was ever before the minds of believers in the Dispensation of the Acts, was not some contingency still in the far distant future; but *it concerned them individually* and personally. Paul unites himself with them, "WE must."

And not only so, but there was a *necessity* for it, demanded by the fulfilment of "all that the prophets had spoken" of this coming judgment; which was

[1] Matt. xxvii. 19; John xix. 13; Acts xviii. 12, 16, 17; xxv. 6, 10, 17; Rom. xiv. 10; and 2 Cor. v. 10. The twelfth occurrence is Acts vii. 5, when it is used with another word, and in a different connection.

conditioned on the repentance of the nation. "We MUST" says the apostle. It was necessitated by all the prophecies of the Lord's Coming. Moreover, the statement is not isolated. It is repeated in so many words in the latest of these *earlier* Pauline Epistles, "We shall ALL stand before the judgment seat of Christ. . . . So then EACH ONE OF US shall give account concerning himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 10, 12).

This language is perfectly consistent with the Dispensation of the Acts, and not only so, but it was the only way in which the truth could be put. When we reflect on, and read again the language used in the Prison Epistles, we must see the vast change which had taken place. Surely we cannot fail to see that in those Epistles such statements would be not only entirely out of place, but absolutely impossible.

All we have to do is to read them through again and learn what we were in times past (Eph. ii.), and what we are now and shall ever be by grace. How can those who have "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," stand before His judgment-seat?

How can those who are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ" (Eph. i. 3); who are "chosen in Him before the foundation (overthrow) of the world" (Eph. i. 4); who are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6); who have in immediate prospect the blessed promise of a prior resurrection or *exanastasis*, that resurrection out from among the dead, and a "calling on high" by Him (Phil. iii. 11, 14); who have their political status already, now, existing in the heavens, from whence we look for the Saviour; not to judge us but to change us; not merely to raise us, and clothe us upon with spiritual bodies, but to transform our vile bodies and make them like unto His own glorious body (Phil. iii. 20, 21); who are "perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. i. 28); who have been "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the holiest

of all," in the light of the heavenly *Shekinah* (Col. i. 12); who "have the redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. i. 14); who "are complete in Him" (Col. ii. 10); to whom He says, "having forgiven you all trespasses" (Col. ii. 13)—how, we ask, can there be *necessity* for such to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to be judged in respect of any imaginable thing whatsoever? Impossible.

And yet all this wondrous standing given to us in the riches and glory of His grace, is made of none effect, and is utterly lost to those, who, of their own will, force themselves back into a position which obtained in a Dispensation which has passed away.

What despite is thus done to the grace of God! What loss is sustained by the doers thereof! What difficulties are thus created and thrust into the Word of God, and what vain and ceaseless efforts are made to get them out!

Whereas, once rightly divide the precious "word of truth" according to its times and Dispensations, and then, not only are all these difficulties removed from the Scriptures (difficulties which are the subject of the questions put by most inquirers), but we are free to learn something of the peace of God and the grace of God; what He has made Christ to be unto us, and what He has made us to be in Him.

(XIV.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (Heb. ii. 3)

The Earlier Pauline Epistles

Galatians

IN the Epistle to the Galatians there is no special mention of the *parousia*, but the Epistle confirms the fact that the same struggle was going on ; that the same confirmation was being given by " them that heard " the Lord ; and that the same opposition and persecution was being encountered from the Jews to whom the glad tidings were being announced.

It opens with the same thought as in 1 Thess. i. 10. The Lord Jesus is the One " Who gave Himself so that He might deliver US from this present evil age " (i. 4). This is the same deliverance as that recorded in 1 Thess. i. 10, though the points of view (and therefore the words) are different.

In 1 Thess. i. 10 the word is *ruomai*, which means to deliver or snatch away from a sure and certain coming wrath. In Gal. i. 4 it is *exaireō*, which means to pluck out, lift up and bear away out of this present age, before the wrath comes.[1] In other words it refers to the rescue and deliverance of 1 Thess. iv. 17. The statement (in the Greek) is " so that He might deliver us out of the present evil age." The word " present " means the then present age in contrast with " the age about to come " (as in Rom. viii. 38 ; 1 Cor. iii. 22).

If we give all the occurrences of this word, it will help

[1] The following are all the occurrences of *exaireō*, from which our readers may gather the fulness of the meaning for themselves : Matt. v. 29 ; xviii. 9 ; Acts vii. 10, 34 ; xii. 11 ; xxiii. 27 ; xxvi. 17 ; Gal. i. 4.

our readers to judge for themselves.[1] In the phrase " this present world " the word rendered world is the Greek *aiōn*, and means an age. *Aiōn* became the Latin *ævum*, an age. It is not *oikoumenē*, which means the inhabited world (and sometimes, in the New Testament, the Roman Empire). It is not *kosmos*, *the world*, or material creation. It is not *gē*, *i.e.*, *the earth*, and sometimes *the land* or *soil* : but it is *aiōn*, or age, as arranged and ordered by God Himself (Heb. i. 2 ; xi. 3 [2]).

So that " this present age " in Gal. i. 4 stands specially in contrast with " the coming age " (Heb. ii. 5).

In the churches of Galatia, the *apostasy* referred to in 2 Thess. ii. 3 [3] was setting in, and would have been the fulfilment of that prophecy, in strong contrast with the repentance of the nation. The plague had begun, as we may see from the apostle's earnestness in contending with it. It was an " evil age " of which he was writing to those assemblies ; and the rapid growth of departure from the faith is manifested throughout the epistle. And " from that present evil age " the blessed truth was, that our Lord Jesus had given Himself that He might come and pluck them out of and bear them up to be for ever with the Lord, as the apostle had already written to the assembly in Thessalonica.

But there is another passage which is, we are sure, not generally understood ; but which receives some light from the position in which we find it in this earlier epistle of Paul. It is in ch. iv. 25, 26.

[1] The Gr. is *enistēmi*, and it occurs seven times : Rom. viii. 38 ; 1 Cor. iii. 22 ; vii. 26 ; Gal. i. 4 ; 2 Thess. ii. 2 (where it should be rendered " *is now present*," and not " is at hand "); 2 Tim. iii. 1 (=shall be present) ; and Heb. ix. 9.

[2] Not " made the worlds " as in the A.V. ; or " framed " in the R.V. ; but *fitted* as in Rom. ix. 22 ; " perfectly joined together " (1 Cor. i. 10), etc., and this in accordance with Acts xvii. 26, where we read of God's " having determined [the] fore-arranged seasons."

[3] It was referred to in other Scriptures (see Matt. xxiv. 12 ; 1 Tim. iv,; 2 Tim. iii.; iv. 3, 4).

> " For this Hagar is [or represents] Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds with the present Jerusalem, and [or, which] is in bondage with her children ; but the Jerusalem on high is free, and [she] is [our] mother."

This will be enough for us to quote here, but the whole context must be studied in connection with it. The great point is the contrast between the two Jerusalems. For there are two ; and the one is as great a reality as the other. There was, when the apostle wrote these words,

The Jerusalem which then was, and
the Jerusalem which is yet to be.
The earthly Jerusalem, and
the heavenly Jerusalem.
The old Jerusalem, and
" the new Jerusalem."
The Jerusalem which was below, and
the Jerusalem " which is above."
The Jerusalem which was the mother of bondservants,
and the Jerusalem which (the apostle could say to his faithful converts) is OUR Mother.

To understand the apostle's teaching here we shall have to compare and contrast what is said on this same subject in the Apocalypse.

To connect the two it will first be necessary to consider the date of the writing of the Apocalypse. As to the date, the evidence is divided between an earlier or a later date ; that is to say, whether it was written during that age (to which Gal. i. 4 relates), and therefore before the destruction of Jerusalem, or whether it was written after that great time-dividing event.

We declare here for the earlier date on the authority of the Syriac version, which was quoted by Melito [1] as early as A.D. 170, and is thus older than any other authority and much older than any Greek manuscript extant. Now,

[1] A bishop of Sardis, noted as a Christian writer.

as to the Syriac (Peshitto) version, this great fact stands clearly out; that notwithstanding the grievous and hostile divisions of the Syrian communions, yet all the manuscripts of that version "exhibit a text in every important respect the same"[1] though used by all these rival churches.

The heading (in the Syriac version) reads :—

"The Revelation which was made by God to John the Evangelist in the island of Patmos, to which he was banished by Nero the Emperor." This would give the date as during his reign, which was from A.D. 54-68.[2]

Irenæus[3] (about A.D. 178), speaks of John "who saw the Revelation. For it was not long since he (or it) was seen, but almost within our own generation about the end of Domitian's reign." The last sentence is ambiguous, and probably means that *John was seen*, for this sense is required by the context, which treats not of authorship or dates, but of why the *name* of antichrist is not mentioned.

As those who favour the later date for the Apocalypse, follow Irenæus, their testimony is not independent, and therefore has no weight. The later date would be the period of Domitian's reign which was from A.D. 81-96, *i.e.*, *after* the destruction of Jerusalem. The importance of this point will be immediately seen; for in Nero's reign (the earlier date) Jerusalem and the temple were still standing, and are both spoken of as such in Rev. xi. 1, 2, 8.

But the real evidence as to the date, is in the book itself. In ch. i. 1 it is distinctly stated that the book of "Revelation" was given "to shew unto His servants the things that *must shortly come to pass.*"

In ch. i. 3, "Blessed is he that readeth . . . *for the time is near.*"

In ch. iii. 10, the time of trial *is about to come.*

[1] SCRIVENER. *A Plain Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, vol. ii., p. 8.

[2] Nero committed suicide on 9th June, A.D. 68.

[3] *Heres*, verse 30 quoted by Eusebius (A.D. 318)., iii. 18; verse 7.

In ch. iii. 11, Behold I come quickly.

In ch. xvi. 15, Behold I come as a thief.

Three times in the last chapter we have, " Behold I come quickly," viz., in xxii. 7, 12, and 20.

We write all this because of its bearing on Gal. iv. 25, 26.

It is in Rev. xxi. 9-27 and xxii. 1-5 that we have " the New Jerusalem," " the holy city," unveiled, and all its glory and beauty described. This is the " heavenly " city which had been revealed to Abraham's faith. He must have *heard* of it, or it would have been impossible to " look for it " as he did. Abraham looked for " *the* city, which hath *the* foundations, whose " Artificer and Constructor is God " (Heb. xi. 10).

Who can read Rev. xxi. 10-17 without comparing its surpassing beauty and glory with the Jerusalem which then was, or that now is ? Those who " received the word " proclaimed by Peter (Acts ii. 41 ; cp. 1 Thess. ii. 13), received it by faith, and with Abraham's faith, were made blessedly free ; and enjoying that wondrous liberty, they looked for " the city which hath the foundations," " Jerusalem which is above."

They were no longer in bondage under the law of Sinai, bond-slaves of Hagar, but freemen, the sons of Sarah, having Abraham's faith and Abraham's hope. Abraham saw it from afar and was glad. These believers saw it drawing exceeding near, and were exhorted to " rejoice " (Gal. iv. 27-31). They looked, as Abraham had looked, for a glorious reality. Their hope was that they would be taken out, and taken up from that " present evil age " and delivered from that " wicked generation."

Jerusalem below had shed the blood of the prophets, yea, the blood of Messiah ; she was in bondage to the law with all her sons ; but those who received and believed the word proved themselves the true sons of the father of the faithful and looked and longed for his heavenly city, " the new Jerusalem," which the apostle could truly speak

of as *our* mother. Jerusalem below was as yet untouched by the coming enemy. "The wrath had come upon it for an end" (1 Thess. ii. 16), but that end had not yet been consummated.

The stones of the temple yet stood one upon another; but the end was approaching; and had the nation repented at the preaching of them that had heard the Lord, the Messiah would have been "sent," and all that the prophets had foretold of coming judgments and the glories of the promised "restoration," would have received a blessed and happy fulfilment.

It is very important that we should understand the position of those who "received the word," both as to the Old Testament Dispensation, the Dispensation in which they then lived, and as to the present Dispensation of the Mystery. It will help us, if we remember that all through the Old Testament Dispensation, Abraham's seed consisted of two kinds. This was foreshadowed from the earliest revelation made to Abraham. It was to be like "the dust of the earth," [1] but it was also to be like "the stars of heaven." [2]

These were all along the types of two classes of Abraham's seed; one that would look only for blessings associated with the earth, and would thus "walk by sight": the other which would look for heavenly blessings and heavenly realities, and would "walk by faith"—even that faith of their father Abraham, referred to in Gen. xv. 6.

The first revelation to Abraham was in connection with the *earthly* portion (Gen. xiii. 16), and "the land which thou seest" (verses 14, 15). But the later revelation was concerning "things not seen"; even the promised seed, who was yet unborn. And it was in connection with Abraham's faith as to this further revelation that it is written, "Abraham believed God, *and it was counted unto him for righteousness*" (Gal. iii. 6). Abraham was righteous

[1] Gen. xiii. 16; xxviii. 14. [2] Gen. xv. 5; xxii. 17; xxvi. 4.

before this, when he believed God. See Gen. xii. 4; xiii. 1, 14; and ch. xiv. But ch. xv. begins, "After these things the word of Jehovah came unto Abraham," and made him a *further promise* as to his Seed, which is Christ (Gal. iii. 16). Abraham believed this further revelation, and "it was counted to him for righteousness."

Those who "received the word" in the Dispensation of Acts were made righteous; and those who to-day believe *the further revelation* made in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians are going to get a further blessing also. It will be "counted" to us for something; and we are content to wait, and see what it is going to be. These Galatians, and other believers of that Dispensation, walked by the faith of their father Abraham. He looked for a "heavenly" hope, connected with Messiah's day. He saw it by faith, and "was glad" (John viii. 56).

The heavenly seed, all along, desired "a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God was not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16). They lived in faith (Gal. iii. 11), and they "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13). All these are spoken of as being

"PARTAKERS OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING"

and, had the nation repented, they would have been "caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv. 17).

When Israel got to Kadesh Barnea, the nation might have gone up at once into the promised land over "the hill country of the Amorites." But they would not believe; and wandered forty years in the wilderness.

When the Lord came ("the prophet like unto Moses"), and called for repentance and faith, it was like Kadesh Barnea over again. They were practically on the borders

of the land once more. But the nation, as such, repented not, and had another corresponding forty years of dispersion.

In Acts xxviii. 26-28 they were brought once more to another crisis like that of Kadesh Barnea of old. But once again the nation failed; and its blessing was again postponed.

And now, meanwhile, the revelation of a secret has been given to us in the later Epistles of Paul. Those who believe it will receive a greater blessing than that which was made to Israel; and will thus anticipate it. It is not merely a "heavenly calling"—a calling, heavenly in its character—but it will be a call up to heaven itself, for which we wait; a call which relates to *direction* ("upward") and not merely to *character*. We who believe this later revelation (as Abraham believed the later promise in Gen. xv.) have something "counted" to us which we shall see ere long.

But meantime, who are they who really believe it? Only the few, we fear; for as it was in Gal. iv. 29, "even so it is now." The many around us are like the Galatian believers. They are "partakers of the heavenly calling," but are "willingly ignorant" of the Mystery, the great secret connected with Christ exalted as Head over all to His body, the Church. They talk about heaven; they sing about "Paradise"; their only hope is "to die and go to heaven." They know not the blessed hope of "the heavenward call." In response to the Lord's promise, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself," they say, "No, Lord, You need not come for me, I am going to die and come to You"! They need no resurrection, and look for no ascension!

It is this, to-day, which distinguishes the two great classes of believers. To each it will be "according to their faith." But theirs will be a *postponed hope*, as was Israel's at Kadesh-Barnea.

(XV.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

ROMANS

THE Epistle to the ROMANS, though the last written of the *earlier* of the Pauline Epistles, as to the chronological order, is placed first in the canonical order, *i.e.*, as we have them to-day in all versions of the Bible ; and indeed, in all the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament ; for not one MS. has ever yet been seen with the Pauline Epistles in any other order. That is why we call it the " canonical " order. The reason for these two different orders has already been explained ; so that we need not say more about it now.

The two great points for us to remember concerning this Epistle are these :—

1. That being the last of the earlier Pauline Epistles, it was nearer the close of the Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles ; and consequently, that as it was written before Acts xxviii. 25, 26, we may expect to find in it some special references to the *Dispensational change which was then drawing near*. And

2. That being *one* of the earlier Epistles, we must expect to find the same references in Romans as to the special *facts which characterised that then present Dispensation*, as we find in those Epistles.

And if we look carefully we shall find them, for they are on the surface.

The Epistle to the Romans stands out prominently among the earlier Epistles, while it is, on the other hand, quite distinct, dispensationally, from the later Epistles written from his prison in Rome.

The structure of Romans specifically sets this forth. Without going into its minuter details, its broad outlines stand out distinctly, and are shown to be

A | Doctrinal. Chs. i.-viii.
B | Dispensational. Chs. ix.-xi.
A | Practical. Chs. xii. 1-xv. 7.
B | Dispensational. Ch. xv. 8-10.

From the earliest promise to Abraham it was made quite clear that all nations were to be blessed through Abraham, and with his seed. This is soon manifested in the Dispensation of the Acts.

To Peter "the keys of the kingdom" were given, showing that to him was given the privilege of announcing it, first to Israel, and then to the Gentiles. In Acts ii. 14 Peter first proclaimed it saying, "Ye men of Judæa, and all that dwell at Jerusalem." In verse 22, "Ye men of Israel"; and in verse 36, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly . . . for the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (verse 39).

Who were included in this expression may be seen from Daniel's prayer, when he prayed, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto *all Israel, that are near and that are far off*, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them" (Dan. ix. 7).

Only God's people, Israel, were summoned in this first proclamation referred to by our Lord in Matt. xxii. 4-7; and this was the subject of Peter's proclamation down to the end of Acts ix. Then in ch. x. Peter used the other key, when he was sent by God down to Cæsarea; God having first taught him that what He had cleansed, Peter was not to treat as unclean. This lesson Peter learnt and testified to (Acts x. 34-43).

From that time those of the Gentiles who "received

the word " of the Lord by " them that heard Him," were grafted into the olive tree of Israel, and thus became partakers of Israel's religious privileges.

Now Rom. ix., x. and xi. were written to instruct them and us as to the relationship of these " wild olive branches " to the branches of the parent stock; and the privileges of Gentile believers are shown to be neither greater nor less nor other than those of the stock of Israel into which they had been grafted.

The olive tree had not yet been cut down : for the process of this grafting was going on when Paul wrote to them. These Gentile grafts were thus duly warned that if " some " of the original unbelieving branches were broken off, these Gentile grafts were not to boast as though the natural branches were broken off to make room for them (the grafted branches), because the natural branches were broken off through unbelief, and the Gentile branches were grafted in by faith. Hence the warning that the same unbelief would lead to the same cutting off (Rom. xi. 17-22).

Yea (the whole argument concludes), how much more shall the natural branches of Israel, which were then being broken off, be grafted in again " if they abide not in unbelief " (Rom. xi. 23, 24) ?

All these are references to the then impending change of Dispensation. There is nothing here of the doctrine of the Prison Epistles which treat of, and unfold, " the glory of God's grace," and reveal the fulness of the secret which " from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God " (Eph. iii. 9).

Romans, being one of the *earlier* Epistles of Paul, partakes therefore of the *Dispensational character* of the Acts of the Apostles, so far as the standing of Jew and Gentile before God is concerned. But it has also the same references to *Dispensational change* (which was conditioned by the repentance of Israel) as we find in all the other Pauline Epistles which were written during that Dis-

pensation. And being nearer than any of them to the coming crisis, we may expect to find still more definite references to it.

We have not to read far before we come upon a solemn reference to "the day of wrath" referred to in the very earliest Epistle (the first to the Thessalonians). There we read of "the wrath" which had already come upon the nation "for an end" (not "to the uttermost" as in A.V. and R.V., for the Greek is simply *eis telos*=for an end); viz., either the end according to God's counsels as recorded in the prophets (if they repented); or the end (for a time) of their national existence, and the postponement of their national blessing until such time (if they continued impenitent); for that will yet follow Israel's national repentance,[1] "when it shall turn to the Lord." This is "the wrath to come" of 1 Thess. i. 10, from which those who had "received the word" had been and would be delivered in the manner described in ch. iv. 16, 17.

Now when we open Romans we find there the same "day of wrath" referred to; not as to something some nineteen hundred years distant, but as something very near at hand, and in which those whom the apostle addressed were, or might be, personally concerned.

> "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against *the day of wrath* and revelation (=*apocalypse*) of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. ii. 5, 6).
>
> And again:
>
> "As many as have sinned without law shall perish also without law; and as many as have sinned in (or, under) the law shall be judged by the law . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel" (Rom. ii. 12, 16).

[1] See Lev. xxvi. 40-42; 1 Kings viii. 46-53; Hos. v. 15; xiv. 1, 2, 4.

" The day " here referred to, which was according to Paul's gospel, is the same day that John the Baptist had already proclaimed when he said " flee from the wrath about to come " (Matt. iii. 7) : and it was the day and " the judgment " referred to by our Lord, when He declared that it should be " more tolerable " for Tyre and Sidon and even for Sodom than " FOR YOU ", *i.e.*, for that " wicked," " adulterous," " untoward " generation which had seen " the days of the Son of Man " (Matt. xi. 20-24).

It was the day which would see the meeting of that age and the age that was " about to come " ; the day of that then existing generation in which " the Son of Man " would, as the appointed judge, " render to every man according to his deeds " (Matt. xvi. 27).

Of course that day is now future to us at this present time because the nation did not repent ; but it was very present and imminent to them in that day in a manner and in a degree which it is not to us in this day.

Coming judgment and following glory are alike postponed ; and those who believe God in His subsequent revelation of His secret purposes have the blessed hope of being with Him before " that day " shall arrive.

We have a further reference to that then present age of suffering ; and to the imminence of the glory which should follow in ch. viii., which we will translate and set out according to the structure :—

C[1]	18. For I reckon that the sufferings of the time now [present] are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory about to be revealed (=*apokaluptō*) unto us. (Cp. 2 Cor. iv. 17).[1]	Reason as to our suffering with Christ.

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 17, " Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

D^1	19. For the earnest expectation of the creation ardently awaits the *apocalypse* of the sons of God.	Expectation.
C^2	20-. For, to vanity was creation subjected, not voluntarily, but on account of him who subjected [it].	Reason for the expectation.
D^2	-20. [Waiteth, I say, (from verse 19)] in hope.	Expectation.
C^3	21. Because the creation itself also shall be freed from its bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.	Reason for the expectation.
D^3	22, 23. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth (as in birth-pangs) until now, and not only [it] but ourselves also, having the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, ardently awaiting the sonship, the redemption of our body.	Expectation.

The first thing that is clear in this passage is the fact that the deliverance was near at hand; and not some nineteen hundred years distant. "The glory which is about to be unveiled to us," (Gr. *tēn mellousan doxan apokaluphthēnai eis hēmas*). The mention of birth-pangs is another proof that the "deliverance" was near.

It is further clear that this glorious consummation was ardently expected. "*The glory about to be revealed*" was the countervailing hope in view of "*the wrath about to be revealed.*" Both were part of the *parousia*.

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" the Lord had asked on the way to Emmaus.

"Christ must needs have suffered," Paul had declared in Thessalonica.

And having suffered, nothing was needed but the repentance of Israel for the realisation of " the glory that should follow."

It was not for " death " that the Thessalonian believers were waiting, but for " God's Son from heaven." And THUS to *ever be with the Lord*; even so also, it was not for death that the Corinthian believers were waiting, but for their " house " (or spiritual body) from heaven, that so they might be " absent " from this body of humiliation, and be " *present with the Lord* " in their " changed " and glorified bodies.

Death could not have been the subject of this ardent expectation. Death would be no compensation for the sufferings of that " present time." " The redemption of the body " is to be brought about by a glorious resurrection, not by sufferings and death. The apostle was not thus mocking these suffering ones. He was comforting, cheering, and encouraging them to bear up under their tribulations. Moreover, the death of these suffering believers could never have brought deliverance to a groaning creation. For the earnest expectation of creation ardently waits for the manifestation of the sons of God, and this in glory, not in death. They will not and cannot be manifested in the grave, but in the glory.

The very word used for this " expectation " implies, nay, necessitates the fact that it might possibly be very near at hand. It is *apokaradokeō*, and means *to wait with uplifted head*, implying not merely a vague longing but a waiting with the assurance and persuasion of the nearness and reality of what, with uplifted eyes, they looked for.

But the word " creation " cannot be extended to inanimate creation, such as mountains, hills, and seas; or even animate creation without the knowledge of revelation. It must refer and be limited to those animate beings who have *will*, and can exercise *hope*, and can experience *bondage*, and can intelligently *expect* and long for deliverance from it. More-

over, these animate beings are divided into two classes—those who have already the first-fruits of the Spirit, and those who have not the first-fruits of the Spirit.

It was to animate human beings that the gospel was to be proclaimed, " to every *creature* " (the same word), and which *was* proclaimed to every *creature* under heaven (the same word), as is positively so stated in Col. i. 23. Humanity groans, but unconsciously. It knows not the cause, or the consequence. It experiences the vanity and lives in a conscious struggle to free itself. To this fact we owe the conflict of political parties in our midst, the " unrest " of peoples, and the wars between nations. All are searching for freedom and liberty ; but they know not the cause of their bondage.

MAN HAS REJECTED GOD.

Eve believed the devil's two great lies in Gen. iii. 4, 5,

" YE SHALL NOT SURELY DIE."

and

" YE SHALL BE AS GODS,"

and thus became under bondage to Satan.

The first man " *was not deceived*." It does not say he did not know. But we may well believe that it was " not willingly " that he fell. But he fell, all the same, whatever the reason might have been, and with the woman, became " in the transgression " (1 Tim. ii. 14). Yes ! We may well believe it was " not willingly." The word " deceived " tells us the whole story.

If Satan had been the ruler of " the world that then was " (Gen. i. 1 ; 2 Pet. iii. 6), and brought about its " overthrow " (Gen. i. 2) and " overflow " (2 Pet. iii. 6) ; then we can understand why he should seek Adam's overthrow (Gen. iii.) when God had given " the first man dominion "

(Gen. i. 28) over " the heavens and the earth which are now " (2 Pet. iii. 7).

And we can understand why the same Satan (or adversary) should seek the " overthrow " of " the Son of Man " to Whom God afterward committed " dominion over the works of His hands and put all things under His feet " (Ps. viii. 6). We can thus understand the temptation in the wilderness, and the agony in the garden.

Satan is " the god of this world " as to its religion (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4) ; and " the prince of this world " as to its politics : and humanity has become " subject " to his dominion.

But there is another side of this subjection to vanity. When men believed the devil's lies there is a sense also in which God subjected mankind to vanity by giving them up. The word " vanity " throughout the Old Testament is another word for *idolatry*. Idols are constantly called " vanities," or nothings, " lying vanities " (Ps. xxxi. 6 ; Jonah ii. 8 ; Jer. x. 8, 15) ; and in the New Testament also. See Acts xiv. 15.

In Psalm lxxxi. Jehovah said unto Israel :

> " Hear, O My people, and I will testify unto thee :
> O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto Me :
> There shall no strange god be in thee ;
> Neither shalt thou worship any strange god. . . .
> But My people would not hearken to My voice ;
> And Israel would [have] none of Me,
> SO I GAVE THEM UP
> unto their own hearts' lust ;
> And they walked in their own counsels " (Ps. lxxxi. 8-12).

If this was the case with Israel we must not be surprised at the judicial subjection to these " vanities " in the case of the Gentiles. Three times over in the first chapter of this very Epistle it is definitely so stated. In verse 21 we read : " Because that when they knew God, they glorified

Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became *vain* (the same verb) in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man," . . .

" WHEREFORE GOD GAVE THEM UP."

Again, we read that they " changed the TRUTH of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, Who is blessed for ever, Amen.

FOR THIS CAUSE GOD GAVE THEM UP."

And again; " even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge,

GOD GAVE THEM OVER."

(Rom. i. 21-28).

So that there may be a sense in which humanity was judicially made subject to vanity, and thus were " concluded (or shut up) in unbelief " (Rom. xi. 32). The subjection was thus *instrumentally* the work of Satan; *actually* it was due to the fall of man; and *judicially* it was the act of God.

The consequences may well be described as " groaning." On the part of those who have not the first-fruits of the Spirit, it may be unconscious, and without knowledge of the reason. Man does not see that having rejected and murdered " the Prince of peace," it is indeed " vanity " for him to be talking and seeking after peace, apart from Him, but he is " groaning " all the same.

But those who had the first-fruits of the Spirit, poured forth, as in Acts ii., were ardently expecting the promised deliverance. They were experiencing the very birth-pangs of its being brought forth and manifested at the appearing of the sons of God in glory. There was a true sense in which, as they were nearing the end of that Dispensation,

it was " nearer " to them than when they first believed the blessed promise of the sending of Jesus Christ and the restitution of all things of which the prophets had spoken (Acts iii. 19-26).

These are the words of this very Epistle (Rom. xiii. 11, 12) :—

" And this, knowing the time, that [it is] already the hour, we should be roused out of sleep, for

NOW [IS] OUR SALVATION NEARER

than when we [first] believed.

THE NIGHT IS ADVANCED,
THE DAY HAS DRAWN NEAR."

The whole passage should be read (Rom. xiii. 11-14) ; for it bears out to the full the point we are pressing, viz., that, had the condition as to Israel's repentance been fulfilled, the Lord would then have come. But Israel did not repent, and the result was that promises and blessings were alike

POSTPONED.

And so creation now is " henceforth expecting," not, it may be, with the same hope of a speedy fulfilment. But, nevertheless, those of us who have believed God's subsequent revelation have the blessed hope of the *exanastasis* (if called to " fall on sleep ") ; or of " our heavenward call " (if alive and remaining), as in Phil. iii.

The Epistle to the Romans closes (in one of its post-scripts) with the promise

" THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BRUISE SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET SHORTLY."

This assurance must refer back to the original promise of Gen. iii. 15, and points to the close of " the great conflict of the ages," fulfilling as it will " all that the prophets have

spoken" concerning this glorious consummation. *Then* it could be spoken of as coming to pass

"SHORTLY."

But through the continued impenitence of Israel that hope was

POSTPONED.

Nevertheless, we also, who have "trusted" after that we heard the word of the truth, the glad tidings of OUR salvation, in which, having believed also, we are "sealed by the Holy Spirit of the promise"—the promise of a deliverance which waits for no conditions to be fulfilled, but which may be realised now, at any moment. See Eph. i. 13, 14.

The deliverance of humanity from its groaning waits, as of old, for certain conditions to be fulfilled, and for certain events to take place; but our deliverance and rapture depend upon nothing but the "call" of Him with Whom "our life is hid" and in Whom we are now "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies," from whence our "call" will come.

There are other phenomena connected with this Epistle, and its special relation to the Prison Epistles. For example, the question as to the date when it was completed and issued by the apostle in its final form. The remarkable postscript (xvi. 25-27) was added at least five years after the Epistle was commenced in A.D. 58. This postscript, as we have more than once pointed out, refers to the double ministry of the apostle—(1) the gospel of the grace of God, which had been promised before in the writings of the prophets; and (2) the ministry of the Mystery of Christ and the Church, which was not the subject of promise, but was made known to the apostle by direct revelation from GOD, as set forth in Ephesians.

Chs. ix., x. and xi. form a remarkable section, and

are of the nature of an appendix. If these chapters were added by Paul as late as the postscript, their connection with Acts. xxviii. 28 would be very apparent. Chronologically, therefore, Romans is connected both with the earlier and later Epistles; and its deep spiritual teaching is the true foundation for the later Epistles, as we have often seen.

(XVI.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

ROMANS

WE have already stated that while we may expect to find the same references to the then expected nearness of the fulfilment of all the prophecies connected with the promised sending of Jesus Christ, yet we shall also necessarily find *an advance in doctrinal teaching*, especially as the end of that age-time (of the Acts) drew near. And this is the case. So much so that the Epistles to the Romans and Ephesians come to us more like treatises than letters; and look backward as well as forward.

They are the only two Epistles in which Paul associates no other name with his own; for he had received his gospel by direct revelation from God, and later on, the Mystery, in the same special manner (Gal. i., Eph. iii.).

CANONICALLY, they stand at the head of the two groups, respectively :—

Romans.	**Ephesians.**
Corinthians.	Philippians.
Galatians.	Colossians.

Thessalonians.

Corinthians and Galatians are two separate commentaries on Romans, the one practical and the other doctrinal. Philippians and Colossians are two separate commentaries on Ephesians, the one practical, the other doctrinal.

But looked at CHRONOLOGICALLY, we see such an advance in Romans that it becomes linked with Ephesians, and the two together become the *two central epistles of Pauline teaching*, standing, as they do, chronologically on either side of the dividing line of Acts. xxviii.

Ephesians is built on the deep foundations of Romans.

As long ago as 1907 we wrote on this very subject, so that this is no new subject belonging to 1911-12. We said :—

" Ephesians is the beginning of the Mystery according to God's purpose : but Romans is the foundation of the Mystery according to man's apprehension of it.

" In apprehending the Mystery, therefore, ourselves, we do and must begin at Romans ; not at Ephesians. And to teach it to others we must not press the full truth upon neophytes.

" In Ephesians we get the great secret set before us as a whole ; even the truth as it reveals the great and glorious Head in heaven, and as it concerns the members of His body on earth.

" In Romans we get the foundation and the component parts of the Mystery. Hence Paul, in writing to the Romans, does not speak of it as the Mystery, because it is only the foundation doctrine on which it is built.

" Let us look at Romans viii. and see the wonderful relation of that chapter and of that Epistle to the three Prison Epistles, in which we have the Mystery directly revealed :

Rom. viii. 1-39

A | 1 - 4. Foundation of the truth taught in EPHESIANS. Once dead in trespasses and sins, but now alive in Christ.

B | 5-13. Foundation of the truth taught in PHILIPPIANS. The practical working of the flesh in those who have died in Christ, as it affects the members. Christ being in us.

B | 14-27. Foundation of the truth taught in COLOSSIANS. ONCE alive in sinful flesh, but now dead to it; our minds set on Christ, the Head, our hope of glory.

A | 28-39. Foundation of the truth taught in EPHESIANS. The purpose and love of God towards us in Christ, predestinating us to glory in the sight of angels, principalities, and powers.

"If we read Rom. viii. carefully in the light of the above, we shall surely see the great point, viz., *that the* EIGHTH *chapter of Romans is the great link between the earlier and later Epistles*; and is so framed that the foundation truths of the Mystery may be grasped 'in the inner man,' and be 'spiritually discerned.' Not until we have mastered the truths of Rom. viii. shall we be able to 'apprehend' the actual declaration of what the Mystery IS, according to the mind and purpose of God, as set forth in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians.

"Surely we ought to be teaching those fundamental truths of Romans without which it is impossible for the revelation of the Mystery to be either *received as a doctrinal fact, or apprehended as a spiritual reality*.

"Once the fundamental teaching of Rom. v. 12-viii. 39 is apprehended, and its relation to the Mystery is discerned, all the other epistles fall into their proper chronological order, and their place and teaching is at once seen in relation to the two great central and dogmatic Epistles, Romans and Ephesians.

"CORINTHIANS shows a *practical* falling away from the teachings of Romans, which is seen in their occupation with themselves and with their teachers, resulting in efforts to make corporate unity (1 Cor. i.-iii.).

"GALATIANS shows a *doctrinal* falling away from Paul's gospel of salvation in Romans.

" ROMANS, which closes up the earlier Epistles, corrects what is false, lays the true foundation of ' the gospel of the grace of God,' and prepares the way for the ' gospel of the glory of Christ,' and the revelation of the Mystery, which is developed, referred to, and taught in the later Prison Epistles.

" 2 Tim. i. 15 marks the beginning of the present distress, turning away from Paul and his teaching. All was well as long as those in Ephesus held fast to the apostle's teaching ; but as soon as they ' turned away from ' Paul and his teaching concerning the Mystery trouble began, and the downward steps of apostasy are clearly stamped on and seen in the second Epistle to Timothy, who was living in Ephesus, and therefore knew all about it.

" The loss of that precious truth was the beginning of the corruption in practice and doctrine in the Church, which ended in the darkness of the Middle Ages.

" Only by going back to Ephesian teaching, and to the foundation of it as seen in the Epistle to the Romans, and by the recovery of the truth of the Mystery, can the Church regain what has been lost in doctrine and life.

" It was not by new methods in service, new fashions in worship, or new theology in the pulpit, or by any such modern devices, that saints were led to see and know themselves as ' seated in the heavenly regions in Christ ' (Ephesians), to know ' the power of His resurrection ' (Philippians), or to apprehend that they are ' complete in Him ' (Colossians).

" It was the working out of the precious truths of these Epistles, the foundations of which had already been revealed in that to the Romans.

" The Mystery commands consideration of the saints in a *corporate* aspect, as the joint members of the one body : but, as in Romans this component part of the Mystery is not gone into, an element is wanting ; and therefore the Mystery itself is not *directly* taught in Romans.

The relation between the Head and the members of the body is not even named.

" It is the eighth chapter of Romans that links that Epistle to the higher and later revelation of the truths taught in Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians; for Romans is the Epistle which, chronologically, immediately precedes these Prison Epistles.

" It is when we know the Mystery from these latter Epistles that we see how the eighth of Romans contains the fundamental doctrines on which the truth of the Mystery is based; and how, apart from that, it cannot be truly and subjectively understood and enjoyed."

In order to understand the Mystery (of Ephesians) as a ***spiritual reality***, we have need to consider the ***subjective*** foundations of Pauline doctrine.

What then were

THE FOUNDATIONS OF PAULINE DOCTRINE?

As the apostle of the nations, Paul had a Dispensation committed to him, the administration of the Mystery which was " hid in God from the ages and generations." It is evident, therefore, that there are deep things of God, and hard to be understood in the inspired writings of this chosen vessel, as we have already reminded our readers.

Now it is not only in the " deep things " that he has more to communicate than other writers, but also in the simpler or more fundamental elements connected with the truth of God concerning Christ, and it may be through not recognising this latter point that the mistake has been made of confounding or mixing up the distinct aspects of truth given to us by the Holy Spirit in the writings of Paul and John.

For instance, the new birth and the two natures in the believer. To be no longer " in flesh but in spirit " is a deeper and fuller truth than being " born again " (or rather, begotten from above). It is to be in a new creation, not

only " born again " *in this world*, in this creation, but to be *in spirit life*, where Christ is, " our life hid with Christ in God."

It is only in the Pauline Epistles that we are told to reckon ourselves dead with Christ—this relates to our *whole personality* in this world, *in this creation* ; not only dead as to our old nature, or evil principle within us. " Our old man," or " the old man," in Paul's writings includes *more* than is expressed by the more common phrase the " two natures in the believer." " Our old man " does not merely mean " sin " as a principle or nature within us, but it means our whole past *creature* life as descended from Adam and Eve. " The body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness " is a far deeper subjective truth to faith than recognising and judging our evil nature or " sin " within us. All who believe what is taught in John's writings can accept the truth of the two natures ; but the Mystery is not revealed in John's writings. " Ye must be born again " is not only true now, but will be true also when Ezek. xxxvi. is fulfilled, and the Millennial Kingdom is come.

But will not the Pauline Mystery of " Christ and the Church " be then an accomplished and a completed fact ? To be " dead with Him " now is more than to be " born again " : for those who are dead with Him will reign with Him ; and it is here where faith and faith-obedience come in, as in the postscript to Romans. To take God at His word and to believe His promises in Christ, is not only to be acquitted and saved from judgment, but it is also to have faith *imputed to us for righteousness*, as we are taught in Romans.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows how many sinners of the Gentiles believe His good news or " gospel concerning His Son " ; He knows how many in and from their *hearts* reckon themselves to be dead with Christ, not only as to the evil principle or sin within them,

but also as dead in ruined creature life—and dead to and *from* the rudiments of the world. The law of *sin* and *death* means *more* than " sins and sin."

Rom. v. 12 refers to " the law of sin and death " and to failure in responsibility in creature life as descended from Adam and Eve, not only to " sin " in the believer, which latter is found in John's writings.

And so " the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus " sets the one who is dead with Christ (by faith) " *free from the law of sin and death.*" Justification or justify*ing* of life (*dikaiōsis*) refers not only to " sins " but to this " law of sin and death." It is not " transgression of law (*parabasis nomou*) " which is in question, but the sin and death which have *passed through* from Adam and Eve to all their descendants.

So long as creature sin and creature ruin and creature death are not seen in Rom. v. 12-viii. 39, and only " sin " and " sins " are taken as the subjects dealt with, the consequence is that a defective and incomplete foundation is laid for the deeper teaching of Paul relating to the Mystery in Ephesians.

Now here was the great failure in the exposition of the Romans which mars the (in many ways) excellent teaching of " Brethren." Alas ! many who have come under their doctrinal system talk of being " out of the Seventh of Romans," thus clearly indicating that they have never as yet been truly in it.

When " the law of sin and death " has been the deep and humbling experience (*as* led on by the Spirit), and *creature ruin* is known in *addition* to " sin " within—and the two natures in the believer, then *we* who believe God are, indeed, dead and risen with Christ, and Christ *alone* is our life. Christ as the " hope of glory " is more than being " born again." To assert, therefore, that all who are " born again " are in the position to which God calls us in Ephesians, is to leave out the all-important subjective

teaching of Romans v. 12-viii. 39, and to go beyond what is written.

Again (in Romans) we should remember that the subject is not how the *believer* in Christ *is justified*, but how and in what way God *justifies a sinful and ruined creature*. What Christ is to the saint is found in Corinthians (1 Cor. i. 30) and elsewhere ; but in Romans it is the *justifying by God of the sinner who is also conscious of being a lost and ruined creature.*

Now it is not only that God forgives and acquits us of our past sins when we believe His gospel concerning His Son, but that as " he that is dead is justified from sin," so we who believe God and count *ourselves*, as individuals (not our " old nature " only), to have died with Christ, are by faith and to faith SET FREE from " the law of sin and death " ; and by faith (and by grace) enjoy " justification of life." We are thus in a new creation ; we are in Christ and " our life is hid with Christ in God." Such, in " the riches of grace," is our spiritual standing.

The Spirit of God inspired the apostle John to write his Epistles and Gospel years after the close of the Pauline Ministry. At the end of the twentieth chapter of his Gospel we see that " life " is promised to all who believe what is therein written about Christ, so that we cannot now say that there is no " life " except through reading the Pauline writings.

But God's way into Canaan was by the " hill-country of the Amorites," though thirty-eight years afterwards He brought the children of the rebels in by way of the Jordan. We ask again, Why was God grieved with *that* generation for forty years ? They would not believe Him.

To believe God is to take Him at His word (by His grace and drawing). Can God be really believed and taken at His word as in Ephesians, which tells us of His great love and wondrous promises in Christ, unless we first of all believe what *He* tells us as to the cross, and death and precious blood of Christ in Romans ?

Is it not a " calling on high," as well as salvation and eternal life, which He (after Romans had been written) has now recorded for our faith? The path by the way of " the hill country of the Amorites " is not yet closed!

That is to say, Israel's crisis, when only two men (Joshua and Caleb) believed God (Deut. i. 19-32; Num. xiv. 1-11), was enacted over again, during the forty years of Israel's dispersion, when again the way by the hill country to Canaan, without crossing by the Jordan, the river of death, was laid open to faith in 1 Thess. iv. Again the nation refused it by the rulers in the land (Acts vii.), and by the Dispersion in Rome (Acts xxviii.).

And now, in our day, we have the application of these types which were written for our learning; we have a similar crisis. While the realisation of the type by Israel is postponed, we to-day are at *our* Kadesh-Barnea. We have a precious revelation of a way—not over an earthly " hill country," but of a heavenly way—by a " heavenward call," to reach not an earthly Canaan, but heaven itself, where we already have our seat of government (Phil. iii. 20, 21).

God has revealed this for our faith in the Prison Epistles; and the question is, will we believe God? Many, and in increasing numbers, are believing God. But the vast majority even of those who are told of it are like the majority of the spies, and refuse to believe what He subsequently revealed; and, as of old, it is the " ten " who oppose the " two." What God thinks of their " unbelief " may be seen in the words of Ps. xcv. 8-11, which are sung at least every week in all our churches. (Read this in connection with Heb. iii. 7-19.)

Let us not mind or be shaken if we are only as the " two "! Joshua and Caleb both entered in and enjoyed their promised land. Even so shall we: some though they may fall asleep will have an *exanastasis*, an out and prior resurrection, and others by a " heavenward call "

will reach that glorious land, where our seat of government already exists, and whence we look for the Saviour to receive us to Himself.

It will thus be seen how the teaching of Romans must be necessary for the *foundation* of such a "blessed hope," by revealing for our faith how our God and Father has altogether justified us, and made us meet, even now, to be partakers of the inheritance of the holiest of all in the light (Col. i. 12), having so highly favoured us in the Beloved.

(XVII.) " BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM " (HEB. ii. 3)

THE EARLIER PAULINE EPISTLES

ROMANS

WE cannot conclude our remarks on the Epistle to the Romans without attempting to meet the difficulty of ascription or doxology with which it concludes, in ch. xvi. 25-27.

It is obvious that this is not a mere BENEDICTION such as that with which other epistles conclude ; or like that in verses 20 and 24. It is clear also that a DOXOLOGY forms no part of the *teaching* of the Epistle. It is an ascription of " glory " to God for what He has power to do, and for what He had *revealed*. Nothing beyond this one fact is here stated or taught. That is to be done in its own proper place, in the Epistle next written—the Epistle to the Ephesians.

We now propose to show how the inclusion of his doxology here forms the starting-point, and indeed the text, of the Epistle which is immediately to follow ; Romans being the *seed* and Ephesians the *fruit* ; both standing together in the very centre of the chronological order of the Pauline Epistles.

That difficulties about the concluding verses of Romans have been experienced is well known ; and this is exemplified in the notes in the margin of the R.V. Much has been said on the subjects by such scholars as Dean Alford, Bishops Lightfoot and Gore, as well as by Dr Hort. We need not repeat this ; but we may here give a portion of what we wrote elsewhere in 1909. We reproduce it, in order to show that the question is not

opened or raised by ourselves; but our attention is distinctly called to it by the condition of the original manuscripts.

It is partly a matter of documentary evidence, and partly a matter of internal evidence; and in any case, it has nothing whatever to do with the Higher Criticism or its methods.

Many of the most ancient transcribers were cognisant of a difficulty, to which they give expression in various ways; though, of course, they could not do so by way of comment. So the question is not one of our raising.

Anyone who goes to the original manuscripts must recognise that he is in the presence of a difficulty; and in facing it, we are not doing so for any special purpose connected with interpretation, but to find a solution that shall do honour to the Word itself. If, in doing this, other difficulties are solved, and our own interpretation finds support, we cannot be otherwise than satisfied.

There is no question whatever about the genuineness or authenticity of these verses. Let this be clearly understood. The evidence is overwhelming as to that. But the difficulty is there, and has to be accounted for.

The facts are these:—

(1) The doxology itself is variously placed in the different manuscripts.

(2) In over 190 it stands after ch. xiv. 23.

(3) In two or three manuscripts it is omitted altogether.

(4) In one there is a space left after verse 24; and in another a space is left after ch. xiv. 23.

(5) In some manuscripts it stands in both places.

(6) Even in the manuscripts where the doxology stands as we have it in the A.V., the benediction in verse 24 is omitted. This variation is exhibited in the R.V.

All this furnishes overwhelming evidence for the accuracy of the text as preserved in the A.V.; and shows us that all the excitement among the transcribers was

caused by the fact that the truth of the Mystery had long been lost, and by their having been unaware of the suggestion (which we are not the first to put forth) as to its being a doxology *subsequently added*.

Of course, "higher" and unbelieving criticism has utilised all the above facts against the genuineness of the doxology; and its attacks have been met by arguments which are almost as injurious. But against all these theories is the stubborn fact of documentary evidence. All else is nothing but the desire and caprice of copyists, who did not understand what they were copying.

The proper and invariable ending of an epistle is the benediction ("The grace of our Lord," etc., more or less full), and *not a doxology*. For even when there is a doxology as well, the benediction always comes after it. In four epistles there is a doxology as well as a benediction, viz., Philippians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Romans. But the benediction in these, except Romans, comes last. See Phil. iv. 20; 1 Tim. vi. 15, 16; and 2 Tim. iv. 18.

If the doxology in the Epistle to the Romans be not the postscript (as we suggest), then it stands out as the only exception to this rule which is observed in every other epistle; for we have (1) the benediction (xvi. 20); then (2) a second benediction (xvi. 24), which is a *bona fide* postscript necessary to complete, and completely ending the Epistle. But then follows, after all this, a doxology, reopening the Epistle, introducing entirely fresh matter, and the Epistle is left to end in a manner quite unlike that of every other epistle the apostle ever wrote.

Our suggestion as to its being a later addition *by the same hand which wrote the Epistle* (1) at once explains all the facts we have stated above; (2) shows the cause as well as the groundlessness of the various attempts to amend the text; (3) completes the exquisite structure of the Epistle as a whole, which we shall show below;

and (4) lets in a flood of light from the teaching which follows from it.

It is this last which will probably form the chief ground of objection, for it will be resisted more from the conclusions which flow from it than from the suggestion itself.

1. It affords additional evidence to the fact that Paul was not commissioned to commit the truths of the Mystery to writing until after he was in Rome, and in prison.

2. It does not disturb the fact that the Pentecostal Dispensation, recorded in the Acts, was complete in itself.

3. The interpretation of the Epistle falls into line with the other earlier Epistles (Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians), which do not go beyond the scope of the Acts, viz., that "gifts" and "ordinances" which are mentioned only in these earlier Epistles, and in the Acts, pertain only to that Dispensation, which was the period of childhood, when all was "in part"; and when all that was "in part" was to be done away as soon as that which was perfect was come. That which is perfect came soon after the apostle's arrival in Rome, and is incorporated for us in the later Pauline or Prison Epistles. All that pertains to this perfection of standing which we find in the earlier Epistles (especially Rom. i.-viii.) not only remains to us, but is the foundation of "that which is perfect."

Now for us to go back from that which is perfect to that which is "in part" is surely a great mistake, which cannot be made without loss. And to do this under the impression that we are giving honour to the Word is a greater mistake still, and the source of much of the confusion that is abroad.

The Word, in itself, is perfectly clear and simple, and it is only our traditional beliefs which have created all the difficulty. When these beliefs are brought in and made part of the Word itself, confusion is complete,

and deliverance is hopeless, until we find the light that will bring us out of it.

We submit that our suggestion as to the doxology explains the whole of the phenomena, removes all the difficulties, and shows that the minds of the various copyists were needlessly disturbed.

And had not the truth of the Mystery been lost long before the date of our oldest manuscripts, no perplexity could have entered into the minds of transcribers. On the other hand, it is just because we have recovered that truth that we are guided and enabled to see the fitness of the simple solution which makes everything harmonious, and retains the Greek of Rom. xvi. exactly as it stands in the most ancient manuscripts, and as it is represented in the A.V.[1]

To suggest that we are in this matter pursuing the methods of the Higher Critics, shows that their ways and means are imperfectly understood. They *suppose* things which create the difficulties instead of removing them ; and everything is evolved from their own imagination, quite independent of any documentary authority. What is the effect of this suggestion as to the structure of Romans ? So far from marring the structure, it perfects and completes it. We have

A | i. 1-6. The GOSPEL, always revealed, never hidden.
  B | i. 7-15. Epistolary.
    C | a | i. 16—viii. 39. Doctrinal.
      | b | ix. 1—xi. 36. Dispensational.
    C | *a* | xii. 1—xv. 7. Practical.
      | *b* | xv. 8-12. Dispensational.
  B | xv. 13—xvi. 24. Epistolary.
A | xvi. 25-27. The MYSTERY. Never revealed, always hidden.

[1] Not the R.V., for that omits the benediction in verse 24.

It is evident from this, that without this doxology (ch. xvi. 25-27) the structure of the Epistle as a whole would be incomplete. It must either have formed part of the original Epistle, in which case it upsets the whole of its Dispensational teaching ; or it must have been added later, on the apostle's arrival in Rome, in order to complete the structure, in which case it upsets nothing.

From all this it appears that the doxology would have been out of place had it formed part of the original Epistle as sent by the apostle ; and finds its true place if added by him while living in Rome among those to whom he had sent it. The Epistle itself was already there before him ; and when the time came to put into writing among the apostle's parchments (2 Tim. iv. 13) the revelation of the Mystery, the doxology could be then added as being at once the inspired conclusion of Romans, and the inspired introduction to Ephesians.

Thus the Epistle to the Romans was, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, expanded into a treatise—a treatise which gives a complete explication or unfolding of the gospel of God concerning His Son.

(XVIII.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Considered Historically and Dispensationally

THE writings of Professor Ramsay which reaffirm and emphasise the genuineness and authenticity of this important and unique Book of Scripture, and the more recent references to it in Professor Harnack's *New Testament Chronology*, interesting as they are from the point of view of Modern Criticism, will be of even greater service to theologians generally if they help to draw attention to what is as yet a strange and widely prevalent misconception as to the real purpose of the Acts of the Apostles, the last of the historical books of Scripture.

In the Four Gospels we have, portrayed in plain and strikingly solemn language, the rejection and crucifixion of the One who was and is the true King of Israel, the true Servant and Prophet of Jehovah, the lowly and yet glorious Son of Man ; and the One who was and is the Eternal Son of the Living GOD.

This rejection is set forth in order, and by a number of historical incidents, in the Synoptic Gospels ; while, at the commencement of John's Gospel we are told what the solemn and tragic result of His Incarnation was ; namely, that He came unto His own and His own received Him not (i. 11).

Regarded from the historical standpoint, we see that the Four Gospels have a very deep significance if we would rightly apprehend the full force of the expression, " the gospel of the grace of God." This expression is not met with in the Word of God until we come to the twentieth chapter of the Acts, verse 24. Indeed the word " grace " does not once occur in the first two Gospels,

while in Luke and John it is referred to only to show what it was that man rejected when he rejected Christ. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The well-beloved Son of GOD came and tabernacled among us, but man hated both Himself and the Father Who sent Him in love and grace.

The Four Gospels mainly set forth Christ's good news about GOD, whereas in the Epistles we have, for this present interval, GOD'S good news about Christ, that is, "the gospel of the grace of GOD" concerning His Son.

So, too, with the book of the Acts of the Apostles, regarded from this same historical standpoint. It is not only the coming of the Holy Spirit to Israel with the "signs following," as in Joel, but we have the solemn record of the rejection of the Spirit, and of the offer, made with accompanying miraculous signs, of the Return or *parousia*, to introduce the Kingdom of the Risen Christ, those "times of refreshing" which cannot come to Israel and the world generally, so long as the "blindness" is upon the chosen earthly people.

"Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost," was the witness of Stephen; "as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of Whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers" (Acts vii. 51, 52).

Let us notice some things recorded in the Acts which ceased when the period of thirty-three years was over: a unique interval in or between the "age-times"; the special character of which has not been sufficiently emphasised.

Just as Christ was offered to Israel and was deliberately refused, being a stone of stumbling to "both the houses of Israel," so too, was the offer made by the Holy Spirit, through Peter, that if there was a national repentance on

the part of the Jews of Judæa and of Israel in the Dispersion, those " times of refreshing " would come, and GOD would send back the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts iii. 19-21, R.V.).

Stephen saw Him " standing " at the right hand of GOD (Acts vii. 56). For not as yet had He sat down to wait " until His enemies should be made His footstool " (Heb. x. 12).

It was first of all to the synagogues of the Jews that the apostles Paul and Barnabas went. The Greek word for " synagogue " occurs twenty times in the Book of the Acts—not once in the Epistles of Paul.

The sentence of national blindness, foretold in Isaiah vi. seven hundred years before this critical point in Israelitish history, was impending over the favoured nation. The Lord Himself had twice referred to this solemn sentence of judicial blindness; but it was left to the apostle Paul to follow in the steps of Isaiah and to say, " Here am I, send me " (to deliver this solemn message). When at Rome, as recorded in Acts xxviii., he addressed the Jews for the last time *as a corporate body* at the close of his ministry, so far as going to them in their synagogues was concerned; he quoted that " one word "—that solemn sentence of blindness which now for nearly two thousand years has darkened the eyes and hardened the hearts of that still rebellious and unbelieving people.

The apostle had already warned them in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 46), " Since ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." [1] It was then that they were being provoked to jealousy by them which were no people, and made angry by a foolish nation, who asked that they might on the following Jewish Sabbath have the privilege of hearing for themselves those good tidings of the proffered return of Christ, and of the coming of that time when it was foretold that not only

[1] This was only *local*, not *national*, as may be seen from xiv. 1. Cp. xviii. 6 with xviii. 19. Note the contrast in xxviii. 28.

would the tabernacle of David be restored, but the Gentiles also should share in the blessings ; as it is written, " Rejoice ye Gentiles with His people " (Deut. xxxii. 19-21, 43).

" The prisoner of the Lord for you Gentiles," after he had pronounced the sentence of blindness of Isaiah vi., was sustained in his prison at Rome ; and he was soon afterward inspired to write the most profound of all the sacred writings—the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, and the Colossians, oracles of GOD which contain the deepest truth concerning Christ and the Church, the Mystery hidden during and from " the age-times," to which there is no allusion in the Acts of the Apostles.

The transitional and unique period of time—" the generation "—recorded in the Acts, was concluded before the epistles of the captivity were written, and so, when it is affirmed that " the Church began at Pentecost," we must remember that Pentecost had its Jewish application first, as in Lev. xxiii. 15 ; and must not allow this partial truth to carry with it a wrong application.

We must also bear in mind that the revelation of the Mystery " hid in GOD " was not set forth until " the age-times " were over ;[1] and the period covered by the Acts formed the closing epoch of those age-times before the present interval of grace began—Christ, " the hope of glory." This mystery among the Gentiles contains a deeper and fuller revelation of " the gospel of the glory," than is revealed in the Acts.

After the glorious translation of the Church of the Mystery according to Phil. iii. 11, 14, 20, 21, when these bodies of our humiliation will be transfigured into the likeness of the body of His glory, then, it may be, the

[1] The Epistle to the Romans was written in A.D. 58, but the postscript (ch. xvi. 25, 27) in which the Mystery is mentioned was written later, of course by the same writer. Compare this postscript with the very similar words in Eph. iii. 20, 21. This postscript has long puzzled transcribers and textual critics ; and, not being understood, has led to putting out verse 24, as in the R.V. See p. 170.

broken-off events which commenced at Pentecost with the miraculous speaking with tongues and "special signs," will again begin to run their course, to be followed by the remaining portion of the unfinished prophecy of Joel, "And I will shew signs in heaven above and in the earth beneath, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered." Yes, for when GOD'S judgments are going on in the world, the people of the earth will learn righteousness. But the Mystery, which ran its course during the break in "the age-times," as plainly revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, will have been "preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up in glory" (1 Tim. iii. 16).

Again, this recognition of the peculiar and unique nature of the thirty-three years' history recorded in the Acts leads to a very important question as to the Dispensational teaching of the *chronological* order of the Pauline Epistles.

The earlier Epistles, especially 1 and 2 Thessalonians and 1 Corinthians, were written before the close of the historical period covered by the Acts, when the *parousia*, or return and Kingdom of Christ, was still being offered to Israel and the nations.

Have we not here an answer to the insinuation that Paul was mistaken in hoping that the *parousia* might occur even while some of those who were then waiting for GOD'S Son from heaven were still alive, and who might therefore be actually "preserved in spirit, soul, and body," till the day of His then expected *parousia* (1 Thess. v. 23)?

So long as the offer was being made, within the period covered by the Acts, of *the possible immediate return of Christ*, is it not natural to suppose that those earlier Epistles of

Paul, written before that offer was definitely refused by Israel (both by the nation in Jerusalem and the Dispersion in Rome), and containing special allusions to the *parousia*, would be, *in their* scope, *in accordance with the then distinct offer and Dispensational dealing of GOD?*

It is remarkable that it is only in these earlier Epistles written before his imprisonment at Rome, and during the course of that period covered by the Acts, that the *parousia* is mentioned. The word "*parousia*" does not once occur in Ephesians or Colossians; and the translation referred to in Phil. iii. is in connection with the "calling on high," and the prize which was connected with the great Mystery of Christ and the Church. This mystery, or secret purpose of GOD, was not declared while the *parousia*, which would more immediately precede the Kingdom, was then offered to faith.

To His faithful and beloved servant when in prison in Rome, GOD fully revealed this wondrous glory of Christ as the future head of the universe, with the Church as His fulness (*plerôma*). This deeper and more exalted truth followed that rejection of the *parousia*, and of the Kingdom of 1 Thess. iv. that was now indefinitely postponed; possibly to be taken up again as a distinct offer, only when the Mystery, hid in GOD (to which there is no allusion in Thessalonians), should have been consummated, or "received up in glory."

That *parousia* will surely come, notwithstanding the long postponement; for none of GOD'S words can fall to the ground: but may not the "blessed hope," as in Phil. iii. and 1 Tim. i. and Titus ii., be fulfilled even before that more public *parousia* comes?

It will also be evident, when the foregoing historical aspect of the Book of the Acts is recognised, that the miracles and "powers of the world to come," which were so distinct a feature of that exceptional period, naturally ceased when the testimony of the Holy Spirit

which they were intended to emphasise, was finally rejected by Israel, as Christ Himself had been.

To pray now (though doubtless with pious intent), for a renewal of Pentecostal gifts while the Mystery is still being preached among the Gentiles, is surely not according to knowledge: for may not the "blood and fire and pillars of smoke," and other celestial and terrestrial terrors soon follow that renewal of Joel's prophecy, which is only in abeyance so long as this wondrous day of grace is yet "preached among the Gentiles"?

(XIX.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

BEFORE we take up the Prison Epistles, written after Acts xxviii. 29, 30, it is absolutely necessary that we should have a very clear understanding of the great dividing line which separates the *earlier* from the *later* Pauline Epistles.

In order to gain this understanding we must have a clear view of the scope and design of the Acts of the Apostles as being a Dispensation characterised by

CONCLUDING ISRAEL'S BIBLICAL HISTORY.

Of no book of Scripture has the key been more effectually lost, or more difficult to recover. The eyes of Christendom have been blinded by the tradition, originated by the Popes of Rome, that " Jesus Christ came on earth to found a church, and that He gave the keys to Peter, and Peter gave them to the Pope." This, or the milder and more modern form of expression, " The Church began at Pentecost," is the root of all the darkness, which, like a thick veil, hides the truth from the churches to this very day.

Through the unfortunate translation of *ekklesia* by " church " in Matt. xvi. 18, instead of " assembly " or " congregation " (as in the Old Testament), the Romish and Protestant figments have brought forth the pernicious fruit that, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have the formation of " the Christian Church."

And Christians, to-day, not knowing that for some fifty years after the destruction of Jerusalem there is a perfect blank in Ecclesiastical history, have supposed and assumed that " organised Christianity " as we see it to-day is merely the *continuation* of what we read in the Acts of the Apostles : but this is far from being the case.

"The years that followed the destruction of Jerusalem are in truth the most obscure in the history of the Church."

So writes Dr Samuel Green in his *Hand-book of Church History*.[1] He goes on to say:

"When we emerge into the second century we are, to a great extent, in a changed world. Apostolic authority lives no longer in the Christian community: Apostolic miracles have passed. . . . As Dr Arnold has finely said,[2] "We stop at the last Epistle of St Paul to Timothy with something of the same interest with which one pauses at the last hamlet of a cultivated valley, where there is nothing but moor beyond. It is the end, or all but the end, of our real knowledge of 'Primitive Christianity'; there we take our last distinct look round; further, the mist hangs thick and few and distorted are the objects we can discern in the midst of it."[3]

[1] Published by the Religious Tract Society of London.

[2] *Rugby Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 336.

[3] Further information as to the great time of silence after the destruction of Jerusalem, may be added from some standard authorities:—

The late Dean Stanley, in his *History of the Eastern Church*, thus writes on the transition from the New Testament to the Christianity of the earliest of the Fathers. He says:

"The stream, in that most critical moment of its passage from the everlasting hills to the plain below, is *lost to our view at the very point where we are most anxious to watch it.* We may hear its struggles under the over-hanging rocks; we may catch its spray on the boughs that overlap its course; but the torrent itself we see not, or see only by imperfect glimpses. *It is not so much a period for Ecclesiastical history, as for Ecclesiastical controversy and conjecture.*

"A fragment here, an allegory there; romances of unknown authorship; a handful of letters of which *the genuineness of every portion is contested inch by inch*; the summary examination of a Roman magistrate; the pleadings of two or three Christian apologists; custom and opinions in the very act of change; last, but not least, the faded paintings, the broken sculptures, the rude epitaphs in the darkness of the catacombs; these are the scanty though attractive materials out of which the likeness of the early Church must be reproduced. . . . *This chasm once cleared, we find ourselves approaching the point when the story of the Church once more becomes history.*"

Similar testimony is borne by *The Edinburgh Review* (April 1870)

The oldest known writing is the *Didachē*, or " the teaching of the Twelve Apostles to the Gentiles." It remained undiscovered till 1883, since when it has been published in several forms and translations. The generally supposed date being in some part of the second century.[1] It consists of moral precepts and duties ; rules as to fasting, baptism, the Eucharist, and ritual observances, as unlike what we read in the Acts of the Apostles as can be imagined ; closing with solemn warnings as to " the last judgment." Whatever may be the meaning of the word " sacrifice " in a quotation from Mal. i. 14 in connection with the Eucharistic service, it shows that already those seeds had been sown which bore so abundant a harvest of heresies in later times.

Judged by internal evidences, apart from any chronological data, the degeneration is so evident that, instead of being regarded as the early writings of a pure Christianity,

in reviewing Renan's *St Paul*. Having brought the history to the point when the apostle reached Rome, the Reviewer proceeds :—

" *Once arrived there*, once securely planted in that central and commanding position, strange to say, *the Church* with all its dramatic persons *suddenly vanishes from our view*. The densest clouds of obscurity immediately gather round its history, which our eager curiosity in vain attempts to penetrate. *It is gone, amid a wreath of smoke, as completely as when a train plunges into a tunnel*. The arrival of St Paul at Rome marks for the origin of Christianity *the commencement of a profound night* ; illumined only by the lurid fire of Nero's horrible festivities. . . . The history of St Paul's life, *and the history of the Apostolic age, together abruptly end* ; black darkness falls upon the scene, and a grim and brooding silence—like the silence of an impending storm—holds, in hushed expectation of the day of the Lord, the awestruck, breathless Church."

Thus, all that we have (as Gentile believers) for our spiritual, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical *guidance* are the Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy) ; and all that Hebrews had for their *guidance* is the Epistle specially addressed to them. But both we and they have the whole Bible " for our learning."

[1] " It seems wisest not to place the complete work much earlier than A.D. 120, and there are passages which may well be later." *Encyl. Brit.* 11th (Camb.) edition, vol. viii., p. 202.

we cannot fail to see in it the beginnings of a corrupt Christianity and of the apostasy foretold in 2 Thess. ii. 3, which would have had its place in those last days, even if the ministry of "them that heard" the Lord had accomplished its purpose.

The postponement of the *parousia* by the destruction of Jerusalem was the result of the "grievous wolves," of whose coming "after his departure" the apostle Paul knew by Divine inspiration. When once these had entered in, the teaching of which the *Didachē* was a specimen, was the result (Acts xx. 29). This is the only "apostolic succession" which is referred to in the Word of God. The *Didachē* reveals the beginning of that corruption of truth which ended in "the dark ages," and was developed and consummated in the worst errors of the Church of Rome, to which so many in the present day are seeking to return.

Ignorance of this *hiatus* in ecclesiastical history has led to the ready acceptance of the hypothesis that "the Church began at Pentecost." The consequence of this has been that the Four Gospels, as well as the Acts of the Apostles, are read into the Pauline Epistles, and with many readers take their place; or those Epistles are treated as a negligible quantity because they cannot, in this connection, be properly understood.

Nothing can be clearer than the emphatic statement which opens the second Dispensational portion of the Epistle to the Romans (xv. 8-12).

> "Now I say that Jesus Christ was A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION for the truth of God, TO CONFIRM THE PROMISES MADE UNTO THE FATHERS."

The first of these promises is seen in Gen. xii. 2, 3. It was made to Israel's father, Abraham, in these words:—

" I will make of thee a great nation,
And I will bless thee
And make thy name great ;
And thou shalt be a blessing ;
And I will bless them that bless thee,
And curse him that curseth thee ;
And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

In this sevenfold promise each item is indicated, and emphasised by the figure *Polysyndeton* (the repetition of the conjunction " and "), as being a " promise " absolute, and without any conditions. It was thus *an unconditional covenant*, and therefore, so far as Jehovah is concerned, it must be, *and will yet be*, faithfully fulfilled to the very letter, notwithstanding Israel's past unfaithfulness and continued disobedience.

This unconditional covenant contained the foundation and essence of what are described as " the promises made unto the fathers " ; and the ministry of Messiah had for its one great object the confirmation and performance of those " promises," which would have ended by making the nation of Israel the channel of blessing to " all the families of the earth."

Rom. xv. 8 thus determines the scope of the Four Gospels, and enables us to discern the true purpose and object of the Lord's ministry as

" A MINISTER OF THE CIRCUMCISION."

The word " circumcision " used in this connection is full of significance. It emphasises the difference between Israel and all other peoples on the ground of *religion*, as the word *Hebrew* does on the ground of *language*, and the word *Israel* on the ground of *race*, and the word *Jews* on the ground of their *Dispersion* and nationality.

This guides us to the scope of the Lord's ministry, and when we study that ministry as set forth in the

Four Gospels, we find that in each it consisted of two subjects :

THE KINGDOM, AND THE KING.

Taking the Gospel of Matthew as an example, we find the following order : [1]—

A	iv. 12—vii. 28.	THE KINGDOM	PROCLAIMED.
B	viii. 1—xvi. 20.	THE KING	
B	xvi. 21—xx. 34.	THE KING	REJECTED.
A	xxi. 1—xxv. 46.	THE KINGDOM	

We thus learn that the ministry of our Lord was confined to " the circumcision," and was devoted to the confirmation of the promises made by God unto the fathers of the Israelitish nation ; and thus could not have had for its object anything to do with the " founding of a church," or with the setting up of " the Christian religion."

We have this set forth in the Lord's own parable of " the marriage feast." Twice He taught in parables concerning the kingdom : in Matt. xiii. with regard to the *proclamation* of the King, and in Matt. xxi. and xxii. with regard to the *rejection* of the kingdom.

One of the later parables is that of the vineyard. Having sent His servants repeatedly to receive the fruit of His vineyard, and these being shamefully ill-treated, He at last sent His own Son—His well-beloved, Whom they slew. In this we have the history of the Prophets and of the Four Gospels.

In the parable of the marriage feast we have His servants (John the Baptist and the Lord) sent to tell them who had already been bidden (by the Prophets in the Old Testament) that the feast was ready, but

" THEY WOULD NOT COME."

This was the result and the end of the Lord's ministry.

[1] The number of verses apportioned to these subjects in each of the Gospels varies, and forms an interesting subject for study.

Then we have the sequel, which is the condensed history of the Acts of the Apostles :—

" He sent forth other servants (Peter and the twelve) saying, tell them which are bidden :—
' Behold I have prepared My dinner ;
' My oxen and fatlings are killed,
' And all things are ready ;
' Come unto the marriage feast.'
" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise : and the remnant took his servants and treated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof he was wroth, and sent forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city " (Matt. xxii. 1-7).

What is all this but the history of the Acts of the Apostles (condensed), and of " the destruction of Jerusalem " ?

This tells us that the Acts of the Apostles is

AN HISTORICAL BOOK,

and an historical book occupying an altogether unique position in the Word of God. It closes the historical books of the whole Bible. The history of Israel's failure would have been wanting in completeness, and *left without any conclusion* but for the history set before us in this last historical book, which is given to us for this end. Without it we should have had the history of the Lord's rejection in the land, and learnt how " by wicked hands He had been crucified and slain," but we should have been left in total ignorance of the fulfilment of the Lord's prophetic parable of Matt. xxii. 1-7.

And though profane history would have told us of the destruction of those murderers, and of the burning of their city, we should have known little of the real cause and nothing of the renewed proclamation of forgiveness for the nation notwithstanding its greatest of crimes ; nothing

of the wonderful grace of Jehovah in turning that crime into the greatest of blessings for them if they would receive and reverence His Son ; nothing of the wondrous promise to send Him with these blessings in His hands, to fulfil all Jehovah's prophecies of glory for His people and His land—and all this on the one condition that they would manifest their national repentance by reverencing His Son.

Moreover the Acts of the Apostles, so far from being " the beginning of the Church," is the fulfilment of the ancient prophecy of " The song of Moses," concerning Israel's history, recorded in Deut. xxxii. 1-43. It was the duty of every Israelite to know this song by heart ; for it is a concentrated prophecy of Israel's whole history from the beginning down to the very end of the Apocalyptic judgments and the opening of millennial glories.

God had promised to be a God to Abraham and to his seed after him (Gen. xvii. 7). But Israel had been guilty of idolatry, which in all the Prophets is spoken of as (spiritual) adultery, and had never turned back with all her heart to Jehovah (though He was a husband to them). The nation had refused to repent ; under the ministries of the prophets, the successive ministries of John the Baptist, of the Lord Himself, and of the Holy Ghost bearing witness to " them that had heard Him " with signs and wonders and divers miracles and spiritual gifts ; and so sentence of excision was at length pronounced.

Thus, in the Acts of the Apostles, we have the outward historical record (from the Jewish point of view) of that which (from a Gentile point of view) is presented in the inner and parabolic form in the Dispensational portion of the Epistle to the Romans.

The teaching of the olive tree in Rom. xi. has nothing whatever to do with the Christian Church ; but expresses, as by a parable, the whole historical transition detailed at length in the Book of the Acts.

Deut. xxxii. 20, 21, and Isa. xxviii. 14-21 combined

with Hab. i. 5 are quoted alike both in Acts and Romans as the Scriptural warrant for the historical record of the one and the Dispensational teaching of the other.

If now we take this key in our hands we shall find that it will give us the following, as—

The Structure of the Acts as a Whole

(*Introversion and Extended Alternation*)

C | i. 1-3. Introduction.
D | E | i. 4—ii. 13. Jerusalem. Mission of the Holy Spirit. Equipment of the twelve for their forthcoming ministry.
F | ii. 14—viii. 1-. The ministry of Peter (and others) to the nation in Jerusalem and in the land.
G | viii.-1—xi. 30. Peter's ministry in the land of Israel (1) to Jews, and (2) to Gentiles.
H | xii. 1-23. Jerusalem. Peter's apprehension and imprisonment, subsequent abode (Cæsarea), and close of his ministry.
D | *E* | xii. 24—xiii. 3. Antioch. Mission of the Holy Spirit. Equipment of Paul and Barnabas for their forthcoming ministry.
F | xiii. 4—xiv. 28. The ministry of Paul (with others) to the Dispersion; apart from Jerusalem and the twelve.
G | xv. 1—xix. 20. Paul's ministry to the Dispersion in association with the twelve (becoming " as a Jew to the Jews ").
H | xix. 21—xxviii. 29. Jerusalem. Paul's apprehension and imprisonment, subsequent abode (Rome), and close of his ministry.
C | xxviii. 30, 31. Conclusion.

Only a few words are now required to call attention to the great divisions set forth above and presented to the eye.

At the time the history of the Acts commenced, the fulfilment of this song had reached Deut. xxxii. 20, and it remained to be seen whether to

> " A very froward generation,
> Children in whom is no faith,"

there should then be fulfilled the words that follow in verse 21.

A | a | " They have moved Me to jealousy
  | b | With that which is not God ;
  B | c | They have provoked Me to anger
  | d | With their vanities :
A | *a* | I will move them to jealousy
  | *b* | With those which are not a people ;
  B | *c* | I will provoke them to anger
  | *d* | With a foolish nation."

These words furnish the key to the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. This key is put into our hands by the Holy Spirit Himself in order that we may see in the history recorded in the Acts the fulfilment of Deut. xxxii. 21 (without which that verse would be left without any fulfilment at all !), and the reasons for the transfer of the position of privilege possessed under " the promise made unto the fathers " to the Gentiles, as such (not to a church or churches).

In the member " E " we have the Lord Jesus making the promise to endue them with spiritual power, and explaining the Dispensational position to the eleven, and " speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The question of the eleven shows what He had said. The Lord must have explained that whatever might be the result of the proclamation which was about to be made, yet the kingdom would in the end be " restored,"

according as all the prophets had foretold. For they ask, "Wilt Thou *at this time* restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The question was only as to the *time*, not as to the *fact* (i. 6).

In the member "F" we have the twelve eye-witnesses of the transactions in the land from the days of John the Baptist to the Resurrection, who were again to give the call to repentance, and to repeat the great proclamation that on the repentance of the nation Jehovah would send Jesus the Messiah, and not only restore again the kingdom to Israel, but would go further, and fulfil all the prophecies which God had foretold and promised by the mouth of all His prophets.

In the member "G" we see Peter exercising the ministry committed to him in Matt. xvi. 19, and using the keys given to him to open the kingdom (1) to Jews in the land, and (2) to Gentiles in Samaria and Galilee.

These Gentiles were admitted to a participation in Israel's privileges in order to fulfil the many prophecies which had foretold the rejoicing of Gentiles with God's people Israel, and are all condensed in the concluding words of "the song of Moses" (Deut. xxxii. 43):—

J | e | Rejoice, O ye nations,
  | f | With His people:
  | K | For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
  | *K* | And will render vengeance to His adversaries.
J | *e* | And will be merciful to His land,
  | *f* | And to His people.

All was ripening for this glorious consummation. "The powers of the age about-to-come" were being manifested. Peter was "binding" and "loosing," exercising judicial functions, working miracles greater than those wrought by Christ (according to Christ's own word in John xiv. 12), striking dead those who were dishonest, raising from the dead those who had fallen asleep.

The signs predicted by Joel ii. 28-32 were beginning to be witnessed, signs of "the great and notable day of the Lord," which would issue in "the restoration of all things spoken of by the holy prophets which have been since the world began." "This" which was seen at Pentecost was "that" which had been foretold by Joel. We have this fact stated emphatically by the Holy Spirit through Peter. All was ready, and all would then have come to pass and would have ended with the glorious reign of Christ and His saints, had the nation obeyed Peter's call.

But side by side with this, the apostasy of the nation in the land was approaching its climax. Satan also was working and preparing his antichrist, using Herod for the purpose of making the first breach in the twelvefold apostolic body by the murder of James, and the attempted murder of his leader Peter; and then, with unparalleled blasphemy exalting himself as God, which will be equalled only by the antichrist himself (Acts xii.).

In the member "*F*" we have the fulfilment of the prophecy of Deut. xxxii. 20, 21, and we find "the Jews filled with jealousy" (xiii. 45-51), and the nation threatened by excision, while in the member "*G*" we have the inclusion of the Gentiles (as such) (xiii. 41-47) confirmed by the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv.).

The admission of Gentiles as such to *the privileges of Israel* roused the jealousy of the Jews of the Dispersion (Acts xvi. and xviii.); and it was during this period that Barnabas was replaced by Silvanus, Timothy, Trophimus, Tychicus, and others as Paul's associates in the ministry. It was, moreover, during this period that Paul's earlier Epistles were written, viz., 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians.

The book closes and the history culminates with that quotation from Isa. vi. 9, 10, which is repeated for the third and last time,[1] giving the Divine prophecy of Israel's

[1] The other two being Matt. xiii. 14, 15 and John xii. 39-41.

judicial blindness. A few years later was fulfilled the prophetic parable of the marriage feast, when the King

> " Sent forth His armies,
> And destroyed those murderers,
> And burnt up their city " (Matt. xxii. 7).

Since that epoch-making event, the solemn effect and the full meaning of which, few, if any, can fully comprehend or even imagine, Israel has continued with the veil over their hearts and eyes. On the one hand we see, to this very day, Gentile hatred manifested in anti-Semitism ; and on the other hand Jewish hostility never more bitter against " the conversionist " movement.

The Jewish history, which closed with the Acts of the Apostles, will not be resumed from the Biblical and Dispensational standpoint which JAMES referred to when he quoted Amos ix. 11, 12, in combination with other prophecies, in Acts xv. 13-17, *until* God's purpose relating to the Mystery (or Secret) which had been *hidden* from the prophets (1 Pet. i. 10-12 ; Eph. iii. 9) shall have not merely been " preached among the Gentiles," but the body of Christ shall have been " received up in glory," and united to its glorious Head (1 Tim. iii. 16 ; Phil. iii. 14 ; Col. iii. 4).

Then there will be a change in the Holy Spirit's present working, and a return to His original purpose at Pentecost, taking up and fulfilling the remaining verses of " the song of Moses " (Deut. xxxii. 22-43), bringing on " the great and notable day of the Lord " (Joel ii. 28-32), and " restoring again the kingdom to Israel " (Acts i. 6), and to " the remnant whom the Lord shall call " (Joel ii. 32 ; Acts ii. 39 ; Dan. ix. 7), by means of the Apocalyptic judgments culminating in the heavens opening and the Lord's descending in the air (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17 ; Acts iii. 20) as the Son of Man, when His feet shall stand on that very Mount of Olives whence His disciples had seen Him ascend (Acts i.

11, 12), so fulfilling His own promise made at His ascension (Acts. i. 3, 6).

We must leave till later the further consideration of this subject, showing that the special Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, so far from being the beginning of " church history," was really the Biblical conclusion of Israel's past history, and was further characterised—

By being a period of *expectancy* based on Jehovah's promise in the Prophets and in Acts iii. 19-26.

By the apostolic *confirmation* of the Son's words (as recorded in the Gospels), and

By the Divine *witness* borne to that confirmation (recorded in the Acts) " by signs following " (Mark xvi. 17-20), consisting of " signs and wonders, with divers miracles, and gifts of *pneuma hagion* (spiritual gifts) according to His own will " (Heb. ii. 4 ; 1 Cor. xii. 11).

Then, and not before, shall we be in a position to appreciate the evidence we have already given that the earlier Pauline Epistles did not go beyond, but belonged, and conformed, to the characteristics of the Acts' Dispensation, and not till then shall we be able to understand the new Dispensation (in which our happy lot is cast) revealed in the later Prison Epistles addressed to assemblies (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians).

(XX.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A Dispensation of Expectancy based on Jehovah's Promises

AS the confirmation of "them that heard Him" was based on the Son's words; and as God's witness to their confirmation was based on the Holy Spirit's works, so the state of expectancy which characterised the Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles was based on Jehovah's words. To see this we need go no further back than Malachi, the last of the prophets.

The Old Testament ends with the grave indictment of Israel's moral condition; an indictment which charged the nation with hypocrisy, contempt of God's laws, and apostasy; an indictment which the nation had the hardihood to repudiate on every count. This was a condition which called for and betokened coming judgment. The very title of Malachi's prophecy is most solemn, significant, and instructive, "the burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by the hand of Malachi." It points to the crisis which the nation had reached. It can be understood only as we study it in the light of

"the Day of His Coming."

Among its closing words was the declaration which links it on to the opening of the New Testament history.

> "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (iv. 5).

The New Testament Dispensation opens with the fulfilment of this promise of Jehovah in the person of

JOHN THE BAPTIST who came to fulfil his mission by calling on the nation to REPENT; the ground being that the kingdom from heaven which had been the subject of Old Testament prophecy had drawn nigh, and was thus "at hand."

"The Messenger of the Covenant" (Mal. iii. 1) Himself declared concerning JOHN:

> "If ye will receive [him], this is
> Elijah who is about to come" (Matt. xi. 14).

This determines the scope of the gospel history.

The purpose of the Messenger of the Covenant was not to "found a church"; but it was "the day of His coming" in which the faithful remnant was to be saved, and the apostate nation judged; in which the gold and silver were to be refined, and the dross rejected (iii. 3); in which the "jewels" were to be gathered (iii. 17), and the "stubble burned up" (iv. 1); in which the "sons" were to be "spared" (iii. 17), and the "wicked" trodden down (iv. 3). In the midst of the darkness of dismay for the wicked, "the Sun of Righteousness would arise with healing in His wings" for the faithful.

The door of hope was not yet closed. Elijah would be sent; and if the nation would repent and return to Jehovah, the "curse" with which the prophecy closes might be averted.

After four centuries this "day of His coming" drew near. The Dispensation marked by expectation was begun. There were those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25), and "that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38), and others who "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark xv. 43), and who trusted that the Crucified One "had been He That should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21). "All men mused in their hearts concerning John" (Luke iii. 15). Expectation characterised the Dispensation covered

by the Four Gospels; and this same expectation was carried over into the Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles and continued to the end of that book. This expectation was based on the word of Jehovah Himself.

We now give six passages from the Acts which manifest and prove that EXPECTANCY was its great characteristic; and so far from "the Church" beginning at any part of the book, this condition of expectancy goes on up to the very last chapter.

(1) THE FIRST PASSAGE: (Acts i. 3, 6)

At the very commencement we are told of the subject of the Lord's teaching during the forty days between His Resurrection and His Ascension. It was

"THE THINGS PERTAINING TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

No other subject is named; and it is not for us to suppose that the Lord occupied the attention of His disciples with anything else. How He treated it may be surely gathered from Luke xxiv. From that it is clear that His hearers needed to be wise of heart and quick to believe ALL that the prophets had spoken about it (verse 25).

The disciples were in this respect the same as the Jewish hearers of the Lord, and like all Jews in the present day. They were quick to believe what the prophets had spoken concerning THE GLORY, but "slow of heart to believe ALL," which included much concerning the Lord's SUFFERINGS. They did not wish to believe that their Messiah was to suffer: so, among other efforts to explain these prophecies away, they invented the theory of two Messiahs; one, "Messiah the son of David," who would *reign*; and the other, "Messiah the son of Joseph," who would *suffer*.

It may be that John the Baptist referred to this when he sent two disciples to ask, " Art Thou He that should come or are we to look for another ? "[1] (Matt. xi. 3). The Lord did not answer " yes " or " no," but quoted the prophecies (Isa. xxxv. 5, 6 ; xlii. 6, 7) which were neutral as to the intent of the question, but quite sufficient to furnish the evidence which truly answered it. To correct this error in the case of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, the Lord asked them :

> " Ought not Messiah to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ? " (verse 26).

The Holy Spirit, in a later day, declared by Peter that the prophets " testified beforehand the sufferings of Messiah, and the glory that should follow " (1 Pet. i. 11). Belief of what the prophets had written left only one difficulty outstanding, and that was the question of " time," *i.e.*, what period of " time " would elapse between " the sufferings " and " the glory." This difficulty had been experienced by the prophets themselves when they

> " Searched diligently . . . searching *what*, or *what manner of time* the Spirit of Christ in them was signifying, testifying beforehand the sufferings [pertaining] to Christ, and the glory after these [sufferings] " (1 Pet. i. 10).

The disciples to whom the Lord was speaking in Acts i. 3 " concerning the kingdom of God," were perplexed by the same question which had troubled the prophets : " they asked of Him, saying, ' Lord, *at this time* restorest Thou the kingdom to Israel ? ' " But it was not for them " to get to know times or seasons which the Father placed in His own authority " (Acts i. 7).

The *time* of restoration depended on the fulfilment of other prophecies. The oldest of all had been spoken by

[1] Gr. *heteros* = a different one. Not *allos*, another (similar) one.

Jehovah to Moses in Lev. xxvi., where, after describing Israel's sins, and the judgments of captivity and dispersion, He ended with the one unalterable condition made between Him and the nation of Israel *in Mount Sinai* by the hand of Moses :

" If they shall confess their iniquity,
And the iniquity of their fathers,
With their trespass which they trespassed against Me
And that they also have walked contrary unto Me :
And that I also have walked contrary unto them,
And have brought them unto the land of their enemies.
IF THEN their uncircumcised hearts be humbled,
And they THEN accept of the punishment of their iniquity :
THEN will I remember My covenant with Jacob,
And also My covenant with Isaac,
And also My covenant with Abraham will I remember :
And I will remember the land " (Lev. xxvi. 40-42).

This was the Scripture remembered and pleaded by SOLOMON in the height of Israel's glory at the dedication of the temple, in the closing words of his prayer (1 Kings viii. 46-53).

This was the Scripture which EZRA remembered in his prayer (Ezra ix. 15 ; x. 11).

This was the Scripture remembered by NEHEMIAH in his prayer (Neh. i. 5-11) and by the LEVITES in their prayer (Neh. ix. 26-36).

This was the Scripture which was remembered by DANIEL in his solemn prayer (ch. ix. 4-19), " as it was written in the law of Moses " (verse 13).

This Scripture is the basis of HOSEA'S appeal :

" O ISRAEL, return unto the LORD thy God ;
For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity,
Take with you words, and turn to the LORD : Say unto Him,

Take away all iniquity,
And receive us graciously :
So will we render the calves of our lips.

. . . . . .

I will heal their backslidings,
I will love them freely :
For Mine anger is turned away from him " (Hos. xiv. 1-4).

. . . . . .

" Who is wise, and he shall understand these things ?
Prudent, and he shall know them ? " (verse 9).

Lev. xxvi. was the Scripture which was the ground of JOHN THE BAPTIST'S proclamation, " REPENT, for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near " (Matt. iii. 2).

The opening words of the Lord's ministry were based on the same Scripture :

> " From that time (when John's ministry had ended [Matt. iv. 12]) began Jesus to proclaim and to say, REPENT : for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near " (Matt. iv. 17).

This was the basis of PETER'S appeal on the Day of Pentecost ; when those whom he addressed asked, " Men and brethren, what shall we do ? Then Peter said unto them :

> " REPENT, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of *pneuma hagion.* For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off (*i.e.*, the Dispersion, Dan. ix. 7), even as many as the LORD our God shall call " (Acts ii. 37-40).

This Scripture was the basis of PETER'S second appeal in Acts iii. 19-26.

Alas! all these appeals were alike unheeded; and the history of the Acts closes PETER's ministry with the rejection of the testimony by the nation, in Jerusalem and the land in the stoning of STEPHEN, and Peter's own imprisonment; while Paul's ministry closes in Acts xxviii. with the formal rejection of his appeal by the scattered tribes in Rome, the capital of their Dispersion, after an appointed all-day conference with "many" of "the chief of the Jews" (verses 17-28).

After that final and formal rejection their city was destroyed, their temple burnt: and all that they have to-day of that sacred temple area is

A WAILING PLACE,

while throughout their Dispersion they continue to bewail, not their national sin, but its consequences; not their crime, but their calamities.

For forty days the Lord spoke to them "concerning the kingdom of God," explaining why He must needs have SUFFERED, and assuring them that in the Father's own time He would "enter into His glory." Meanwhile they were to make proclamation of repentance, as the one condition of national restoration and blessing.

(2) THE SECOND PASSAGE (Acts i. 11)

This also made the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles a Dispensation of expectancy. Immediately after the Lord had ascended, the disciples were assured by angelic testimony that

> "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall SO come, IN LIKE MANNER as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i. 11).

They were standing on Mount Olivet, and were thus

reminded of Zechariah's prophecy (xiv. 4) concerning the coming day of the Lord's return when

"HIS FEET SHALL STAND UPON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES."

These words were spoken to the disciples. They referred only to the *fact*, not to the *time*. The Lord had already instructed them that "the Father had put that in His own authority." But they must, from that moment, have lived in the constant hope and expectation of the fulfilment of that promise. They did not go about their business with the settled conviction that that fulfilment was not to take place until some nineteen hundred years had run their course; for had not the Lord Himself declared while He was yet with them, how;

"A little while, and ye shall NOT SEE Me:
And again a little while, and ye SHALL SEE Me" (John xvi. 16).

The omission of any reference to *time* perplexed them, as it had the prophets; and as it had troubled the two going to Emmaus, and the eleven in Acts i. 6. Hence, they at once questioned among themselves as to what *time* the Lord meant: "What is this that He saith "A little while'? We cannot tell what He saith."

But the Lord with great solemnity replied,

"Verily, verily, I say unto you . . .
Ye shall be sorrowful,
But your sorrow shall be turned into joy . . .
Ye now therefore have sorrow;
But I will see you again
And your heart shall rejoice,
And your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 17-22).

Still there was no intimation as to *time*; but this assurance caused them to return to Jerusalem after the Ascension "WITH GREAT JOY." Are we to believe

that they would have gone back " praising and blessing God continually " if they had not believed the Lord's word ? or if they had thought He meant that this joy was not to be realised till after some nineteen hundred years ? Is it possible that, in the same breath, the expression " a little while " meant only a few days in the first clause, and nineteen centuries in the next clause ?

Surely it is impossible ; and it is equally impossible to suppose that their " great joy " on hearing that solemn promise was misplaced. The only explanation that satisfies all these difficulties, is that the promised *parousia* might possibly take place at no distant date, the one condition being the obedience of the nation and of the Dispersion to the demand for repentance.

Surely it must be evident that the result of this proclamation to " repent," could not properly have been assumed at that time one way or the other.

(3) The Third Passage (Acts ii. 16-20)

" THIS is THAT which is spoken by the prophet Joel :
It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God,
That I will pour out from My Spirit upon all flesh ;
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
And your young men shall see visions,
And your old men shall dream dreams ;
And on My bond-servants, and on My bondwomen in those days
I will pour out from My Spirit :
And they shall prophesy :
And I will shew wonders in heaven above,
And signs in the earth beneath ;
Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :
And the sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before that great and notable day of the Lord come "
(Joel ii. 28-32).

In this passage we have a Divine and authoritative interpretation of JOEL'S great prophecy. We all know but too well how we have struggled with this passage in order to clear up the difficulty involved in explaining—" this is that," and how unsatisfactory we have inwardly felt it to be. But all is clear, the moment we look at the passage in its Dispensational perspective.

JOEL is speaking by the Spirit of the events which should take place " in the last days " of that Dispensation, *before*, and leading up to, and ending with, " the day of the Lord." " The last days " of verse 17 are " those days " of verse 18, and the beginning of JOEL'S prophecy was being fulfilled before their very eyes. They refer to " the day of His coming " of Mal. iii. 2 and iv. 1 ; and " those days " of Matt. xxiv. 29. All speak of the same events, notably the latter words of the Lord Himself ; and all speak of those days as being near at hand.

How much more simple, and easy, and satisfactory it is to believe God's Word, than to explain it away because on the one hand we cannot suppose that JOEL is prophesying of the shibboleth—" the Church began at Pentecost " ; and on the other hand we cannot believe with the vast majority, that " the day of the Lord " actually did come at the destruction of Jerusalem !

Nothing will satisfy PETER'S quotation and interpretation of JOEL'S prophecy, except the Dispensational truth that Pentecost saw the beginning of the events which should lead up to, and end in, the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (which was the subject of JOEL'S words), and that the complete fulfilment of them was suspended and postponed on account of Israel's continued and persistent disobedience to the call to repent, on which the prophecy was based.

The promise which involved the pouring out of the Spirit upon " all flesh " was not then fulfilled, for the same reason. This of itself shows that the only reason was because of Israel's impenitence, and not because of the

failure of Jehovah's word. The fulness of that pouring out on all flesh is therefore postponed.

This is a satisfactory solution of all the difficulties with which mistaken views have surrounded this important Scripture.

(4) The Fourth Passage (Acts ii. 40)

> "And with many other words did he (Peter) testify and exhort them, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

These concluding words of Peter's first address establish the fact that the generation, to which Peter referred, was the same as "this generation" of which our Lord had spoken in Matt. xxiv. 34. It was the same generation—that "wicked and adulterous generation," that was warned by John the Baptist to flee from the coming wrath. It was that same generation which had the unparalleled privilege of seeing and hearing the Son of Man Himself, which was filling up the measure of its iniquities, and over which judgment was then impending.

Luke had chronicled in his Gospel the events of that generation beginning at 4 B.C. and ending with the Lord's death in A.D. 29, thus covering the Lord's thirty-three years. The generation which heard the appeal of Peter in Acts ii. began from A.D. 29 and ran from thence to about A.D. 62, covering another and similar period of about thirty-three years, and ending with Acts xxviii. 25, 26. "This untoward generation" of Acts ii. was therefore the same which had heard the proclamation of John the Baptist and the Lord to "repent and turn to the Lord."

This brings us to

(5) The Fifth Passage (Acts iii. 12-26)

It is needless to quote this long passage in full. Our readers must find and read it for themselves and receive

the words as coming direct from God the Holy Spirit. Fortunately none of these passages depends on any inadequate translation or any peculiar interpretation. Each one is clear, plain, and perfectly easy of understanding. All that is needed is a childlike faith to believe God, and to hear what He has caused to be "written for our learning."

At the close of Peter's address in Acts ii. 40, we have a brief outline showing how those "that gladly received his word were baptized"; and how they were enlightened by it and were already "tasting the heavenly gift," and "became partakers of *pneuma hagion*" (*i.e.*, spiritual gifts); and had "tasted the good word of God" and "the mighty works (or miracles) of the age about [to come]."

Peter's hearers are thus described in Heb. vi. 4, 5; and in Acts ii. 44 we are told how they tasted the Divine socialism of the kingdom; by having "all things in common," which the world is now vainly reaching after, tired of man's evident failure to attain anything like good government; and how they had tasted "the signs and wonders" which were wrought by the apostles; and how they sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all as every man had need. These were not the signs of the founding of the Church. At any rate we see no such signs now, nor are we likely to do so! These were among the signs of the new age, which was even then about to come.

"They continued daily with one accord in the temple." They were not occupied with framing an "organised Christianity." But they were worshipping the God of their fathers in His own temple in Jerusalem. They were "not forsaking the assembling of themselves together," but exhorting one another and the more so as they saw "THE DAY APPROACHING"; "the day" of which JOEL had prophesied and PETER had testified.

In one thing they differed from all other Israelites who refused to believe the new revelation of Dispensational

truth which God was then making tnrough the apostles, *they ceased to offer sacrifices*, and therefore broke their bread (*i.e.*, " ate their meat ") no longer in the temple courts but " at home " in their own houses (Acts ii. 46).

Those who continued to offer sacrifices, denied the offering of the one sacrifice of Christ, offered " once for all " ; and such are described in Heb. x. 29 as " treading under foot the Son of God, counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing," of which He had said, " this [cup] is My blood of the new covenant which is shed for the remission of sins " (Matt. xxvi. 28).

This " new covenant " having been made, formed the very basis of PETER'S second appeal, in this fifth passage in the Acts now under consideration. It was brought about by one of the " many signs and wonders " done by the apostles (Acts ii. 43). The miracle took place probably some few days after the Day of Pentecost. We are not told what time elapsed, but it was on one of those days on which " Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour " (about our 3 P.M.), Acts iii. 1., and the lame man was healed at the gate of the temple.

The miracle produced so great an effect on the people that they were " filled with wonder " and amazement. This led to Peter's *second* address in which he charged home on the people the enormity of their guilt in denying the Holy One and the Just and desiring a murderer to be spared, and killing the Prince of Life, closing with the words :

> " And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did your rulers also.
> " But those things which God before announced by the mouth of all His prophets that Messiah should suffer, He hath thus fulfilled. THEREFORE repent ye and turn [to the Lord], FOR THE REMISSION OF YOUR SINS, so that there may

come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the LORD, and [that]

HE MAY SEND JESUS CHRIST,

Who was before proclaimed to you, Whom heaven indeed must receive till the times of restoration of all things which God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets from ages [past] " (Acts iii. 18-21).

PETER went on to quote MOSES (Deut. xviii. 18), and specially to mention SAMUEL. And why SAMUEL? Because SAMUEL was the prophet who first denounced Israel's sin in rejecting Jehovah as their King, and desiring a man instead, like the nations around them. How suitable and how solemn was this reference to SAMUEL'S name at this critical moment in the later history of Israel, when the nation was again rejecting their king, and the promise of Jehovah to " SEND " Him to reign over them !

We need not dwell further on this important address of PETER'S. And surely it is hardly necessary for us to press home the solemn alternative that on any other interpretation we are to suppose that the Holy Spirit Who was speaking by Peter, was mocking the nation by promising to " send Jesus Christ," when that sending was not then imminent, on the condition named. Surely those " seasons of refreshing " and those " times of restoration " were not then some nineteen centuries away in the far distant future.

What urgent motive for *immediate* national repentance would such a promise have been ?

The Lord Himself had spoken of these " times " as the " regeneration " (Matt. xix. 28), which is the equivalent for this " restoration." This latter was the work of John the Baptist who would have been, had they received him, the Elijah which was for to come (Mark ix. 12). This " time " is fixed for us in verse 20 when the sending, or coming, of Jesus Christ is specified, as the period in

which all the prophecies concerning the glories were to be realised. Alas! the condition demanded was not complied with. Neither the nation nor the Dispersion repented; hence all the expected blessings were necessarily postponed, and are therefore now in abeyance.

They could not be fulfilled in the establishment of "the Christian Church." No amount of holiness on the part of individuals could produce the physical marvels connected with the "restoration" spoken of by the prophets, when the desert should blossom as the rose, and waters should break out in the wilderness (Isa xxxv., etc.). There was certainly no such "restoration" at the destruction of Jerusalem, as many vainly imagine. That was followed by a still further "scattering," and not the promised "gathering." We have only to read Jer. xxx. and xxxi. to be convinced of this.

There remains only one other passage to be considered.

(6) The Sixth Passage: (Acts xvii. 30, 31)

This was uttered by the apostle Paul to Gentiles in Athens. There he was not speaking of the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, but stating facts, and among them was this:

> "God now charges all men everywhere to repent, because He set a day in which He is about to judge the [habitable] world in righteousness by a Man Whom He appointed, having given proof to all by having raised Him from among the dead."

Only two remarks are needed:—

(1) that the "day" spoken of here, is the same "day" which has been referred to in all the Scriptures we have quoted, and

(2) that the verb translated "He will judge" is not the future tense of the one verb to *judge*, but is a combination

of two different verbs, viz., the present tense of the verb *mello*=to be about to; and the infinitive mood of the verb *krinō*=to judge.

Again we note that the apostle was not speaking of an event that would take place nearly two millenniums distant, but of a judgment that might then ere long take place; and in asserting this fact he is referring to and "confirming" the words of the Lord in John v. 22, 27.

The above six passages from the Acts of the Apostles are sufficient to establish our second point, and to show that, without further argument, this book covers a unique and distinct Dispensation characterised by being a period of EXPECTATION.

(XXI.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Dispensation of CONFIRMING Testimony

WE have now to show that the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles was a Dispensation marked by the confirmation of the Lord's words, spoken by Him during His ministry on earth. This is categorically stated in Heb. ii. 3.

The Epistle to the Hebrews opens with the great and solemn fact that the Bible, as a whole, claims to be the Word of Jehovah. This claim settles for us the whole question of inspiration. For if that claim be not true, then the Bible ceases to be even a good book. This claim, therefore, is all-important for us: for, whether "by the prophets," or "by His Son," or by the evangelists, or apostles, it is Jehovah who is the Speaker; and all the recorded words are equally Divine, and not one verse is of greater *authority* than another.

The design of the enemy in printing "red letter Testaments" is at once detected as an attempt to blind the eyes of Bible students, by getting rid of the later promised words of "the Spirit of truth" revealed through Paul "the prisoner of Jesus Christ," which in 2 Tim. i. 8 are put on an equality with all Jehovah's speaking. This fact condemns all books which make the words spoken by Christ of greater importance than other words spoken by the inspired writers or speakers; or which make the "teaching" of one of greater authority than that of another. Each and all spoke "the words of Jehovah." Christ Himself claims to have spoken these words and no others.

Now see how this fact throws wondrous light on the

opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, as shown by the structure of the first two chapters :—

A | i. 1-2-. GOD SPEAKING by the prophets and His Son.
B | i. -2-14. THE SON ; " God " (verse 8), " much better than the angels " (verse 4).
A | ii. 1-4. GOD SPEAKING " by angels " (verse 2) and His Son (verse 3) and by " them that heard Him " (verse 4).
B | ii. 5-18. THE SON : " Man " (verse 6) : made " a little lower than the angels " (verse 7).

From the above structure we learn that we shall understand these two chapters only as we see that the member B (i. -2-14) must be treated as a parenthesis with regard to the members A (i. 1-2-) and *A* (ii. 1-4) ; and that *A* (ii. 1-4) must be treated as a parenthesis with regard to B (i. -2-14) and *B* (ii. 5-18). In other words, we must read on from i. 2-ii. 1 ; and from i. 14-ii. 5. Then only shall we see the force of the word " THEREFORE " at the beginning of ch. ii. 1, and the force of the word " FOR " at the beginning of ii. 5.

All this puts verses 3 and 4 (of ch. ii) in their proper perspective, and enables us to see their scope and importance. Verse 3 gives us our present subject ; for it stands in relation to the whole Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles *retrospectively*, as the Lord's parable of the marriage feast in Matt. xxii. 1-7 does to it *prospectively*. Both refer to the whole Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles ; the latter (the parable) being concerned with giving the *outward* historical facts as to the speakers ; while the former (Heb. ii. 3) is concerned with the *inward* subject of the words which were spoken.

Heb. ii. opens with a call to hearken and give heed, for the reason that, since the word spoken by angels (the Law) was CONFIRMED (*bebaios*), none who heard it did escape its pains and penalties for disobedience. How then should those Hebrews escape who neglected so great a

salvation which had begun to be spoken by the Son, and had been CONFIRMED (*bebaioō*) to them by those who had heard Him ?

Note this double confirmation, which is lost in the A.V. and R.V. translation, by rendering the first word " steadfast," instead of " confirmed " like the second word. It should be the same word in each case (as we have indicated above). The word (of the Law) spoken by angelic mediation was *confirmed* by " a just recompense of reward for every transgression and disobedience," even so the word of the " so great salvation " spoken by the Lord was *confirmed* by those who heard Him. Hence the consequence of not heeding the Lord's words thus confirmed would be still more serious ; and this greater transgression and disobedience would be followed by a similar just recompense in the judgment foretold by our Lord.

The destruction of their city (Jerusalem) was near at hand, as is shown by the solemn warning toward the close of the Epistle, connected with this very speaking of the Lord Jesus :

> " See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven : Whose voice then shook the earth : but now He hath promised, saying, ' Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.' And this word, ' yet once more,' signifieth the removal of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. . . . For our God is a consuming fire " (Heb. xii. 25-29).

The certainty of this coming recompense of judgment was then impending, not only on account of the Lord's words, but also on account of the words of those who had

heard Him and had confirmed His words. Here we reach the heart of our subject. Those who heard the Lord only repeated and completed the testimony which had been borne by Him. The latter is the subject of the Four Gospels, and the former is the subject of the Acts of the Apostles. The one was the call of the servants first sent forth to tell those who had been bidden to the marriage feast that the feast was ready.

The King's Son of the wedding feast (Matt. xxii. 1-7) is the same person as the well-beloved Son of the vineyard let out to husbandmen (Matt. xxi. 33-41) : and the end is the same, viz., the miserable destruction of " those wicked men." As that destruction did not come until shortly after the end of the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles, we have an unanswerable proof that the two parables cover the whole of the Acts period ; and that the testimony of the Gospels and the Acts are the two parts of *one and the same Dispensation*.

This is why the ministry of " them that heard " the Son was only the *confirmation* and conclusion of the ministry which the Lord " began." The beginning of each was with the same word, " Repent." See Matt. iv. 17 ; Acts ii. 38 ; iii. 19, etc. This repentance of Israel was not necessary for the founding of a church ; but it *was essential as the foundation of Israel's blessing*. It looked backward to the one condition of blessing as laid down in Lev. xxvi. 40-42. That blessing is defined as the redemption of Israel (Luke xxiv. 21) to be " accomplished in Jerusalem " (Luke ii. 38), and as being " the consolation of Israel " (Luke ii. 25, foretold in Isa. xl. 1, etc.) for which those who believed God were waiting (Mark xv. 43).

There was nothing about the foundation of a church in all these prophecies concerning Israel. This is clear from what is revealed of the continuation of the Lord's ministry in Acts i. 3, 6. JOEL, who is quoted in Acts ii. 17-21, was not prophesying about the beginning of a new

Dispensation, but about the ending of the old. The " promise " of Acts ii. 39 was the promise made to Israel—and not to the Church. Of Peter's second call to repentance in Acts iii. we have already spoken ; and the outpouring of the Spirit's gifts we have already seen to be a foretaste (Heb. vi. 4) of Joel's prophecy concerning Israel.

In the succeeding chapters of the Acts we have further and abundant evidence of the *confirming* words of Peter, as we read his arguments with the rulers of the nation in proof of the resurrection of the Lord, and of its place in the counsels of God in chs. iii. and iv.

In Acts v. we see the exercise of the executive power which had been committed to Peter who had " the keys of the kingdom " (not of the Church), and the power of binding and loosing, including even the power of life and death.

This first period of the Acts closes with Peter's testimony in Jerusalem (the capital of the land), and the murder of Stephen.

Acts viii., ix., x., and xi. tell how Peter, having opened the kingdom of heaven to Israel in Jerusalem, proceeded to do the same in Samaria and Cæsarea among the Gentiles. This also was in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and of God's original " promise " to Abraham in Gen. xii. 3, and was not the introduction of anything new. And ch. xii. closes Peter's ministry with his imprisonment, deliverance, and subsequent abode.

In ch. xiii. we have the separation and equipment of Paul and Barnabas by another Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit Himself designated them for the mission " whereunto He had called them " for the carrying to " the dispersed of Israel " the glad tidings of Christ's resurrection.

They commenced in Cyprus and continued their ministry " in the synagogues of the Jews " (xiii. 5). In the opening of their ministry in Antioch of Pisidia they addressed the assembly as " Men of Israel " (xiii. 16), and proceeded to give an outline of Israel's history, and to show how " the

God of this people of Israel chose our fathers," bringing the history down to the resurrection of Messiah, and closing with the proclamation of " the forgiveness of sins " (xiii. 38, 39), and of solemn warning as to the rejection of the proclamation (xiii. 40, 41). This is just how Peter had begun in Acts ii. 38 and iii. 19. Paul concluded his ministry in Antioch, as Peter had closed his in Cæsarea, by declaring the " counsel " of God as to the inclusion of Gentiles as such in God's original promise to Abraham (xiii. 46-49).

This brings us to another matter which ought to be noted here, viz., the similarity of method pursued by the twelve when they had been sent forth by the Lord (Matt. x. 14 ; Mark vi. 11 ; Luke ix. 5) " to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," " proclaiming the kingdom of heaven at hand," and obeying the Divine injunction, " whosoever shall not receive you . . . shake off the dust of your feet against them."

In Acts xiii. 51 this is what Paul and Barnabas did in Antioch of Pisidia, as the twelve had done in the Land.

In verse 26 are these significant words :

> " Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham and whosoever among you that feareth God, to YOU is *the word of this salvation sent.*"

And in verse 46 Paul adds these remarkable words :

> " It was NECESSARY that the word of God should FIRST have been spoken to YOU, but seeing YE *put it from you* . . . lo ! we turn to the Gentiles."

And he goes on to support his surprising declaration by quoting Isa. xlix. 6 :

> " For SO hath the Lord commanded us :
> ' I have set thee [Israel] to be a light of the Gentiles,
> That thou [Israel] shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.' "[1]

[1] This prophecy relates by interpretation to Messiah, but by application of the same Holy Spirit it is used by Paul of Israel.

The Old Testament Scriptures abound with prophecies as to the part Israel was, and is yet, to take in bringing the gospel to the nations of the earth; and when these prophecies shall be fulfilled, the present day "missions to the heathen" will appear as child's-play compared with the miraculous results when Israel as God's own chosen missionaries shall take the field, and be as "life from the dead" in proclaiming "the gospel of the Kingdom," and become a light and salvation to the Gentiles.

But to return to Acts xiii. Where shall we find justification for this action on the part of Paul and Barnabas in *continuing* to present the gospel to Gentiles in spite of the impenitence of obdurate Israel? It was not according to Old Testament prophecy that the gospel which had been ordained to come through Israel was to flow on covering the earth *independently of Israel and of God's prophetic word.* This indeed is the teaching of present-day theology, but it was no part of Divine revelation.

The fact was that this *special acceptance* of the gospel in Acts xiii. through a special Jewish "vessel," was also prophetic and effective even though Israel should be indifferent to it. The apostle discusses this fully in that wonderful Dispensational parenthesis of Rom. ix.-xi., in which he proves from Old Testament Scriptures that its purpose was *temporary*, and was designed to "PROVOKE TO JEALOUSY," in fulfilment of the ancient prophecy respecting Israel in "the song of Moses" (Deut. xxxii. 20, 21).

We are distinctly told so in Rom. x. 19-21, where we read:

> "But I say, did not Israel know? First Moses says,
> 'I will PROVOKE you to jealousy by [them that are]
> NO PEOPLE,
> [and] by a foolish nation, I will ANGER you.'[1]

[1] Note this in Acts xxii. 21, 22.

But Isaiah is very bold and saith :

' I was found of them *that sought me not* ;
I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.' "

And then, by way of contrast, he adds :

" All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people,"

So in Rom. xi. 14, the apostle says :

" If by any means I may PROVOKE to JEALOUSY them which are my flesh, and might save some of them."

In the whole of Paul's ministry among the Gentiles during the Dispensation of the Acts we do not find even a hint that he is proclaiming a NEW REVELATION ; or revealing a SECRET, " hidden from the ages and generations," or founding a church ; or setting up a new institution. On the contrary, he positively asserts at the very close of his public ministry, immediately before his departure for Rome :

" Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue UNTO THIS DAY witnessing both to small and great, SAYING NONE OTHER THINGS than those which THE PROPHETS and MOSES did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the People AND TO THE GENTILES " (Acts xxvi. 22, 23).

This positive statement shows that Paul was not only *confirming* the word which " began to be spoken by the Lord " ; but that, like the Lord's own ministry, Paul's was based entirely on the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures, " Moses and the Prophets." From this it is conclusive that there can be no Dispensation of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles, and certainly no revelation of

the Mystery (or Secret) as subsequently made known in the later epistles written from his prison in Rome.

The Acts' ministry is brought to a definite close in accordance with the apostle's categorical statement in Rom. xv. 19.

> " From Jerusalem, and in a circuit unto Illyricum I have brought to a completion[1] the glad tidings of Messiah."

Another fact is apt to be overlooked that throughout the entire Dispensation of the Acts they still had " a continuing city," Jerusalem, though it was about to be removed (Heb. xiii. 14). The temple was still standing ; its services were carried on ; sacrifices were being offered ; the Jewish Feasts were observed ; and Paul recognises the official Scriptural position of the one who held the office of high priest (Acts xxiii. 5). As a believing Jew, Paul continued to observe the Feasts :

> " I must by all means keep this FEAST that cometh, in JERUSALEM " (Acts xviii. 21).
>
> " For he hasted if it were possible for him to be at JERUSALEM, the DAY OF PENTECOST " (Acts xx. 16).

In Acts xvi. 3 it is to be noted that Paul observed the rite of CIRCUMCISION.

In Acts xxi. 24-26 we find Paul fulfilling the Law as prescribed in Num. vi. 2, 13, 18, to show that nothing had happened to alter the conduct of Jewish believers who kept the law (verse 20), and that while Gentile believers were relieved from this observance (verse 25), yet Paul is careful to show that he " walked orderly, and KEPT THE LAW."

[1] There is nothing about " preaching " here. The word is *plēroō*, which is rendered " complete " in Col. ii. 10 ; iv. 12 ; " end " in Luke vii. 1 ; Acts xix. 21 ; and " accomplish " in Luke ix. 31. In Rom. xv. 19 R.V.m. reads " fulfilled."

In all this we are not first to assume that Paul was living in *our* Dispensation, and then condemn him for acting deceitfully in Acts xxi., and for walking contrary to the subsequent revelation as to ordinances made in the Prison Epistles. Paul was living in the Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles; and this raises quite another question; and that is: Are we to-day, AS GENTILES, CALLED TO THAT GOSPEL that Paul THEN preached? If so, our standing is exactly the same as that of those to whom he preached.[1] And we also are bound to "walk orderly and keep the Law," as so many are seeking to do. If so, we are on the same footing before God as Israel then was, and our claims are based on the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament. If so, and if our calling dates from Pentecost, or indeed, from any point during that period, then our standing in God's sight is exactly the same, and no higher and no lower than that of Israel in those twenty-eight chapters.

Our hope is as high and no higher than those to whom the apostle spoke and wrote in his earlier Epistles during that very same period.

And what was that Hope?

We are left in no doubt as to what it was, for in the very first Epistle that the apostle wrote (1 Thess.) it is very clearly stated and described. But it was no higher than that given by the Lord in His own ministry. Paul only "confirmed" that which had been spoken "by the word of the Lord" in John xi. 25, 26. True, it was expanded and explained in 1 Thess. iv., but it is not another or a different hope. It was not what is called "the hope of the Church," as distinct from "the hope of Israel." It was the same hope, only it was more clearly described and set forth.

[1] Bearing in mind Acts xv. 19-21,

" The word of the Lord " as to this hope, was given by Him in John xi. 25, 26. All was bound up in Him as " the Resurrection " and " the Life." That is to say, both were to be found and enjoyed only in Him and through Him and by Him, even as He explained :

> " He that believeth on Me, even though he may die he shall live (*i.e.*, live again in resurrection life—I will be to him ' the Resurrection ').
> And every one that liveth (*i.e.*, is alive), and believes on Me, shall in no wise [1] ever die. I will be to him the Life."

This was the Lord's word to Martha. And this is " the word of the Lord " in the first epistle the apostle ever wrote. He expanded it by inspiration thus :

> " That we the living, who remain unto the *parousia* (or presence) of the Lord, shall in no wise precede those who are fallen asleep ; because the Lord Himself, with [the] assembling shout, with [the] archangel's voice, and with [the] trump of God **SHALL DESCEND FROM HEAVEN**, and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we, the living who remain, shall TOGETHER WITH THEM be caught away in [the] clouds, for [the] meeting with the Lord in [the] air ; and THUS always with the Lord shall we be."

In these words we have the expansion and description of the Lord's words in John xi. 25, 26, and revealing further details concerning the resurrection. But it was the *confirmation* of what He said as stated in Heb. ii. 3.

And it was the *parousia*, or presence of the Lord. This

[1] Gr. *ou mē* = by no means, or in no wise ; the strongest negative that could be used.

was the Lord's word all through the Gospels. It is the word of *confirmation* in 1 Thess. iv.

And this word "*parousia*" is found only in the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and in the *earlier* Pauline Epistles written during that Dispensation.

We meet with it *four* times in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians; *three* times in the second Epistle, and once in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. *But never again.* The apostle Paul does not use the word after that, and the mention of it in 1 Corinthians takes us back to a point of time parallel with Acts xix. In vain we look for the word "*parousia*" after this. The hope of the *parousia* is further expanded in the Epistles to the Corinthians; but *the word* is not used in the connection.

In 1 Cor. xv. the "resurrection" is fully explained as being the "first," and as being associated with "the trump" of 1 Thess. iv. In 2 Cor. v. the rapture is explained as involving a "change" (of which nothing is said in 1 Thessalonians); and as being "clothed upon" with a spiritual body before being "caught up," without which there could be no "presence" (or *parousia*) with the Lord. But *there* is all that was revealed concerning the hope, up to the end of that Dispensation. And why? Because Israel remained impenitent. Because the condition on which that hope depended was unfulfilled.

Acts xxviii. is the turning-point of Israel's Biblical history, and God has been pleased to tell us fully and exactly how that point was reached, and how it ended. In that chapter (Acts xxviii.) we are told that the proclamation ended in Rome, the capital of the Dispersion, as it had ended in Jerusalem, the capital of the land. Peter's imprisonment ended the one and Paul's imprisonment ended the other.

The "chief of the Jews" (the synagogue rulers) were formally assembled; they themselves had appointed

the day; the meeting with Paul lasted the whole day, "from morning till evening," during which Paul

> "expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the prophets;"

ending with the quotation of the solemn sentence of judicial blindness pronounced by Jehovah by the hand of Isaiah (vi. 9), which, though it had already begun before the apostle reached Rome (Acts. xxviii. 15, 20, 25), *from that time took full effect*. Here then we reach the end of the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles.

Not a word have we read of the founding of a church as a new organisation; not a word beyond the *confirmation* of what Jehovah had begun to speak by His Son. There is no reference to any secret which had been "hidden from the foundation of the world"; no mention of any new hope which should take the place of the postponed *parousia*. We Gentiles should have been left still "without hope" but for the later epistles subsequently written for our obedience of faith. Only in these do we read of God's "riches of *grace*" (Eph. i. 7; ii. 7) and "riches of *glory*" (Eph. i. 18; iii. 16; Phil. iv. 19; Col. i. 27).

True, there had been gifts of grace and promises of glory before this, but these "riches" are spoken of only in the later Epistles of Paul! Yet, notwithstanding this, some have urged that to the elders of the assembly in Ephesus Paul said he had not shunned to declare "all the counsel of God" (Acts xx. 27). Those who thus misuse this passage put the emphasis on the wrong word. It is not on "all," but on "counsel."

Paul had not shunned to declare "all the COUNSEL of God." But the "counsel" of God is not the PURPOSE of God (Eph. i. 8, 11, etc.). The "purpose" of God, which concerned the secret, was "BEFORE the foundation of the

world" (Eph. i. 4); but the "counsel of God" (which concerned Israel and the kingdom) was "FROM the foundation of the world." [1]

The two words are contrasted in Eph. i. 11, where we read that now, in Christ,

> "We (Gentiles) have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the PURPOSE of Him Who worketh all things after the COUNSEL of His own will." [2]

The "*counsel* of God," which, in Acts xx. 27, the apostle declares he had not shunned to declare unto them, is defined in verse 25 as having concerned "the kingdom of God." It could not, therefore, have concerned the Mystery (or secret) which had not then been revealed; and which, when it was revealed in the Prison Epistles, is seen to have nothing to do with "the kingdom of God."

All through the Acts' Dispensation Paul had confined himself to declaring "the counsel of God." But the "purpose" of God was not made known until God Himself revealed it to Ephesian believers in the Epistle addressed to them after that Dispensation had closed, Eph. i. 10 being quite outside the testimony given in the Acts of the Apostles.

How sad that any should slight the "purpose" of God revealed in these "treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3) opened to our wondering gaze in the later Epistles of Paul; and voluntarily put themselves back into the condition of Jews during the Acts' Dispensation, and take that as their present standing before God!

Alas! they do not see that in acting thus they are disdaining that pleasant land which is filled with the "riches"

[1] Matt. xiii. 35; xxv. 34; Luke xi. 50; Heb. iv 3; ix. 26; Rev. xiii. 8; xvii. 8.

[2] "The determination of His own desire." The "purpose" of God revealed in Eph. i. 10 is thus quite outside Acts xx. 27.

of the grace and glory of God; and where the hope of *anastasis* (resurrection) is changed for *ex-anastasis*, and a being "caught away into the air" is changed for a "calling on high" into heaven itself—the highest sphere of all (Phil. iii. 11, 14); yea, that "blessed hope" which may be realised now, at any moment, and this without robbing Israel of its own assured hope, which shall be enjoyed when the happy day of its repentance and turning to the Lord shall have at length arrived.

(XXII.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A Dispensation of Divine Witness

Borne to the confirmation recorded in the Acts by "signs and wonders and divers miracles and gifts of *pneuma hagion*" (Heb. ii. 4).

THE last of these four characteristics of the Acts of the Apostles is that recorded in Heb. ii. 4, which reads, according to the Greek, as follows :—

> "God bearing witness with [them] by signs, both wonders and various mighty works, and distributions of *pneuma hagion* according to His own will."

This witness had been borne by God all through the ages. When He spoke by the prophets their words were attested by miracles and mighty works, as well as by the immediate fulfilment of certain prophecies which were attested by "signs," as in Isa. vii. 11, 14 ; viii. 18 ; xx. 3 ; Jer. xliv. 29 ; Ezek. iv. 3 ; xii. 6 ; xxiv. 24, 27, etc.

When Jehovah "spoke by His Son," the miracles He wrought were exactly those that had been foretold by Jehovah through the prophets. Had they been different, or even greater miracles than those which had been foretold, they would have been no evidence that He was the Messiah.

It would not have been enough if they had been miracles, even though more startling in their character. It was not a case of miracles as miracles, but of their being those of which God had spoken in such Scriptures as Isa. xxix. 18 ; xxxv. 5, 6 ; xlii. 7. The Lord appealed to these very Scriptures as His credentials in answer to the question of John the Baptist.

It was the same when Jehovah spake "by them that

heard Him" (the Son). God bore them also witness by more abundant tokens that He had sent them, and that they were speaking the words which He had given them to speak, and were His own messengers speaking in His name.

There are various words used in the New Testament for such signs, and they are all brought together in this one verse, the only place where this is done (a "wonder" in itself!). Before we go further we must have a clear understanding of all the words describing the various departments of this Divine witness. Each has its own particular meaning and usage, but unfortunately for the English reader, these are not distinguished in the A.V.

Taking them in the order in which they are given in this verse, we have:—

1. First, "SIGNS." This is the Pl. of the Greek *sēmeion*, and means a sign and nothing else. When it is used of a miracle it always has respect to *its signification*. It occurs in the Four Gospels forty-eight times (thirteen in Matthew; seven in Mark; eleven in Luke; and seventeen in John). It is rendered "sign" each time in Matthew and Mark; ten times in Luke (and once "miracle," Luke xxiii. 8); but in the seventeen times in John it is rendered "miracle" thirteen times, and "sign" only four times. In fact, no other word is used for a "miracle" in John. So that wherever the word "miracle" occurs in John, our readers may strike it out and write "sign."

2. The second word is "WONDERS." This is the Pl. of the Greek *teras*. This, of course, has respect to *the effect produced* on those who witnessed the mighty work. It occurs only three times in the Gospels (Matt. xxiv. 24; Mark xiii. 22; John iv. 48); but nine times in the Acts; once each in Rom. xv. 19; 2 Cor. xii. 12; 2 Thess. ii. 9; and here in Heb. ii. 4.

3. The third word is "MIRACLES." This is the Pl. of the Greek *dunamis*, but it does not mean and should

never be translated " miracle," because our English word " miracle " is the Latin word *miraculum*, which means " a wonder," and should therefore be confined to the rendering of *teras*, the second of these three words.

This third word, *dunamis*, means *power* (inherent power) ; and is preserved in our words " dynamite," " dynamics," " dynamo," etc.[1] As used of a miracle it has respect to the *inherent power* by which it is wrought. When used of a miracle it is rendered, generally, " mighty work " (six times in Matthew ; three times in Mark ; twice in Luke) ; " mighty deeds " (2 Cor. xii. 12) ; " wonderful work " (Matt. vii. 22) ; " miracle " (Mark ix. 39 ; Acts ii. 22 ; viii. 13 ; xix. 11 ; 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28, 29 ; Gal. iii. 5 ; and here, Heb. ii. 4).

4. The fourth is called in the A.V. and R.V. " GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST." But the Greek means " distributions of holy spirit " (*pneuma hagion*), and these were not " gifts " but " distributions." [2] And these are stated to be " according to His (God's) own will " (as in 1 Cor. xii. 11), or " as it hath pleased Him " (1 Cor. xii. 18).

Now note that this " distribution " was not " of the Holy Ghost." A person cannot be distributed, but " gifts " can ; and so were these " gifts of *pneuma hagion* " (for there are no articles). To understand the true meaning of this expression we must, by a careful study, gather its usage. It is used in two principal ways, with the article or articles and without articles.

Now the expression is used without articles, " *pneuma hagion*," fifty-four times, and most unfortunately, it is rendered every time " the Holy Ghost " or " the Holy

[1] It is to be distinguished from *kratos*, which also means power. But *kratos* is power put forth and seen in action, and especially in government, as preserved in our words " aristocracy," " theocracy," " democracy."

[2] The Gr. *merismos* occurs only here and Heb. iv. 12, and has regard to the " diversities " of 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.

Spirit." And consequently, no stronger rendering is left for the many more times where the Greek has two articles:

to pneuma to hagion,
the Spirit the Holy.

So that, though we have two totally different expressions, both are rendered in exactly the same way; hence the English reader is defrauded of his right to know exactly what is revealed for his learning; and he cannot learn owing to the great misfortune of this confusion.

It is perfectly clear that *with* the article or articles it denotes "the Holy Spirit," and *without* the articles it is simply *pneuma hagion*; which, if translated, should be rendered "holy spirit" *without articles and without capital letters*. This expression occurs fifty-three times, and we give them all in the note below,[1] so that our readers may have all the facts on which our teaching rests. But, so far, this does not help us much. We still need to understand what is meant by "distributions of Holy Spirit" (or *pneuma hagion*).

What was it that was thus distributed during the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles as part of the "witness" that God bare? We are not left without a true guide to the meaning of *pneuma hagion*, and we shall find it if we note the following facts:—

1. In Acts i. 4 the Lord commanded the apostles "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for *the promise* of the Father which (saith He) ye have heard from Me."

[1] The following are the fifty-three passages in which *pneuma hagion* should be rendered "holy spirit":—Matt. i. 18, 20; iii. 11; Mark i. 8; Luke i. 15, 35, 41, 67; ii. 25; iii. 16; iv. 1-; xi. 13; John i. -33; vii. -39; xx. 22; Acts i. 2, 5; ii. 4-; iv. 8, 31; vi. 3, 5; vii. 55; viii. 15, 17, 18 (here the texts vary), 19; ix. 17; x. 38; xi. 16, 24; xiii. 9 52; xix. 2, 2; Rom. v. 5; ix. 1; xiv. 17; xv. 13, 16; 1 Cor. ii. 13; vi. 19; xii. -3; 2 Cor. vi. 6; 1 Thess. i. 5, 6; 2 Tim. i. 14; Titus iii. 5; Heb. ii. 4; vi. 4; 1 Pet. i. 12; 2 Pet. i. 21; Jude 20.

2. They had heard from Him in Luke xxiv. 49, when He said :

> " Behold, I send *the promise* of My Father upon you ; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued (or clothed) with power from on high."

In both these passages the apostles were commanded to wait in Jerusalem, and what they were to wait for was the fulfilment of " the promise " which the Father had made.

3. That promise was " baptism with *pneuma hagion*," according to the Lord's own explanation in Acts. i. 5, after He had risen from the dead,

> " FOR John indeed baptized with water, but YE, ye shall be baptized with *pneuma hagion* not many days hence."

4. From this it is clear that while in Acts i. 5 the Lord calls this " promise " *pneuma hagion*, in Luke xxiv. 49 He calls it " power from on high."

We are all acquainted with the ancient and fundamental axiom that " things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another." It is therefore perfectly clear that the expression " *pneuma hagion* " must mean " power from on high," and that power was the inherent power (*dunamis*) explained above. It was, therefore, power to perform the " signs and wonders and mighty works " of the preceding clause of Heb. ii. 4.

The fulfilment of " the promise of the Father " took place " not many days hence," on the Day of Pentecost ; and the manner in which it was fulfilled is thus written : " *they were all filled with pneuma hagion* (*i.e., power from on high*), *and began to talk different tongues according as the Spirit* (*Gr. to pneuma*) *GAVE to them to utter forth* " (Acts ii. 4).

Here the distinction between the Holy Spirit (*to pneuma*),

the GIVER, and the GIFT with which they were filled (*pneuma hagion*), is unmistakably clear and indisputable.

And so is another use of the expression in Acts vi. 3, where we have the words of the twelve to the multitude of the disciples :

> " Look ye out, brethren, from among yourselves seven [men] full of holy spirit (*pneuma hagion*) and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this business."

Surely, if these men were full of " the Holy Spirit " Who is called " the Spirit of wisdom," they would already have had " wisdom." But no ; wisdom is added as being something supplemental to *pneuma hagion.* Evidently they might have possessed the gift of *pneuma hagion*, and yet be destitute of wisdom ; they might have been " spiritual men," and yet not be " business men " ; they might have been accustomed to *pray*, but yet not have understood how to pray ! And this was a matter of " business " which required " wisdom " *plus* spiritual gifts.

By these wrong translations the whole of these passages which relate to *pneuma hagion* have been misunderstood, and the teaching of Heb. ii. 4 has been thereby lost. These spiritual gifts of *pneuma hagion* were part of God's witness which He bore to the testimony of " them that had heard " His Son and confirmed His words during the special Dispensation covered by the Acts of the Apostles. These " signs and wonders and mighty works and gifts of *pneuma hagion* " were " THE ACTS " of the apostles which give that book its distinctive name.

These are the " Acts " which it is the purpose of that book to record. And strange to say, the Holy Spirit Himself has recorded them in such a way as to compel us to compare the " Acts " of PETER with the " Acts " of PAUL—these two forming the subjects of the two great divisions into which the book falls.

These two divisions we have already seen set out in

the structure of that book as a whole in Sect. xix. p. 190. Not only is the order itself perfect; but the nature and number and character of these "Acts" are given in a sevenfold enumeration, both those of Peter and those of Paul. Indeed, the comparison is actually made by Paul, and is categorically stated.

In Gal. ii. 8 we have this general declaration of the whole matter:

> "He that wrought effectually in PETER to the apostleship of the circumcision,
> The same was mighty in ME toward the Gentiles."

Here we have a plain statement which definitely invites us to examine it to see if those things were so.

Let us, like the Bereans of old, do this (Acts xvii. 11).

1. PETER'S *first* miracle was the healing of a man lame from his mother's womb (Acts iii. 1, etc.). PAUL'S *first* miracle of healing was the same, that of a man "impotent in his feet," being a cripple from his mother's womb" (Acts xiv. 8, etc.). Who chose these identical words but the Holy Spirit Himself? and why did He thus choose them except to call our attention to this correspondence of PETER'S miracles with those of PAUL'S, and thus to direct us to search out the other correspondences and look for the same Divine inspiration?

2. PETER'S *second* miracle was a miracle of judgment in striking Ananias and Sapphira with sudden death (Acts v. 4, 9). Hearing Peter's solemn words in verses 3, 4, and v. 9,

> they "fell down straightway at his feet and yielded up the ghost."

The effect was that

> "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (verse 11).

PAUL'S corresponding miracle also was a miracle of

judgment in striking with sudden blindness one who opposed him—Elymas, the sorcerer—recorded in Acts xiii. 8-11. After a denunciation similar to Peter's, he ended by saying:

> "And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season. And immediately there fell on him a mist and a darkness; and he went about seeking for some to lead him by the hand" (verse 11).

A similar effect is recorded in this case:

> "Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (verse 12).

3. The *third* reference to Peter's miracles is a general one, and is recorded in Acts v. 14-16:

> "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also multitudes out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folk and them which were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed every one."

Exactly similar is the record of a group of miracles wrought by PAUL in Acts xix. 11, 12:

> "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Here we have the same kind of miracles: the "shadow" of Peter, and "handkerchiefs" of Paul. These were the "works" which were spoken of by the Lord as being the "greater" which the apostles should work (John xiv. 12).

These were " greater " than those wrought by Christ, the one most like them being that of the " woman," who required only to " touch " the Lord's garment.

4. PETER'S *fourth* miracle was on a certain man named Æneas, who had kept his bed eight years and was paralysed (Acts ix. 33, etc.).

PAUL wrought a similar miracle connected with disease when another man, " the father of Publius, lay sick of a fever and of dysentery " (Acts xxviii. 8).

5. PETER'S *fifth* miracle was on a believer, named Tabitha, also called Dorcas, " full of good works and alms deeds which she did." This good woman became sick and died. On Peter's arrival and prayer she was raised to life again, and presented alive to the " saints and widows " to their great comfort (Acts ix. 36-41).

PAUL also wrought a similar miracle on a young man whom he raised from the dead. His name is likewise given (Eutychus); and he was a hearer and doubtless a believer of what he was hearing from Paul's lips. He fell into a deep sleep, and falling down from the third storey was taken up dead. Paul went down and embraced him, and after that, even as Paul said, his life was in him; and when Paul had gone up again,

> " they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted " (Acts xx. 9-12).

6. The *sixth* miraculous event in connection with Peter was a vision. This vision he received at Joppa, which was directly associated with his special ministry. It is recorded in detail in Acts x. 11-16, and we need not quote it here. This vision is in connection with another which Cornelius saw respecting the same event (Acts x. 3-6).

It is sufficient for us to note that to PAUL several visions were vouchsafed; and these likewise were all intimately connected with *his* special ministry. All will at once call to mind the vision of the glory of the risen Lord vouchsafed

in wondrous grace to PAUL while on the road to Damascus to persecute Him in the persons of His people (Acts ix. 3-11).

Other visions were vouchsafed to Paul. There was the

> " vision of a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might receive his sight." These are the Lord's words to Ananias in another vision (Acts ix. 12).

The vision of the man of Macedonia at Troas saying,

> " Come over and help us " (Acts xvi. 9, 10).

The vision of the Lord to Paul at Corinth saying :

> " 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 vision of the Lord when he had come again to Jerusalem, and while he was in the temple :

> " I was in a trance, and saw Him saying unto me, ' Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem : for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me.' " The dialogue with the Lord is continued to the end (Acts xxii. 17-21).

The vision in the night following ; when again

> " 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 at Rome also ' " (Acts xxiii. 11).

The vision on board the ship when he said to the crew :

> " there stood by me this night the Angel of God, Whose I am, and Whom I serve, saying, ' Fear not, Paul ; thou must be brought before Cæsar ; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee ' " (Acts xxvii. 23, 24).

Is it by chance or by design that we have *seven* records of these signs and wonders of God's witness during the Acts of the Apostles ? Surely we must say nothing but

an inspired record could present such perfection of number, and of correspondence in character.

And of these visions and revelations there were *seven* vouchsafed to Paul. Yes, and one more (an *eighth*, the number of resurrection) revealing things which related to post-resurrection secrets which could not be uttered (2 Cor. xii. 1). It is remarkable also that it is the only reference to these " visions " outside the Acts of the Apostles, and this in one of the *earlier* of the Pauline Epistles.

This brings us to our last remark concerning the character of the Divine fourfold witness which consisted of " signs,

and wonders,
and divers miracles,
and gifts of *pneuma hagion*."

And that is, that not once do we meet with any of these four words in the later Pauline Epistles written after the close of the Acts of the Apostles. In vain we look for the words " signs " (*sēmeion*), or " wonders " (*teras*), or " miracles " (*dunamis*), or even " spiritual gifts " (*pneuma hagion*). *Not one of them can be found in the later Pauline Epistles written after* Acts xxviii. 25, 26. They are all plentiful throughout the Acts, and we meet with them in the earlier Epistles,[1] but not afterwards. In the Apocalypse, when the devil, the beast, and the false prophet attempt to enforce their claims, we see these signs, etc., again, but not elsewhere. (See Rev. xii. 1 ; xiii. 13, 14 ; xv. 1 ; xvi. 14 ; xix. 20 ; cp. 2 Thess. ii. 9.)

Surely this is a most suggestive fact. If they existed, why are they not mentioned ? Why this sudden silence as to such wonderful works if they were going on right up to the very end of that book ? But this is not the end of the wonderful phenomena.

We have yet to consider another aspect of them in the closing verses of Mark's Gospel.

[1] Rom. i. 11 ; xv. 19 ; 1 Cor. i. 7 ; vii. 7 ; xii. 1, 4, 9, 10, 28, 29, 30, 31 ; xiii. 2 ; xiv. 1, 12, 22 ; 2 Cor. xii. 12 ; Gal. iii. 5.

(XXIII.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A Dispensation Characterised by "Signs Following"

WE have shown that the statement in Heb. ii. 4 referred wholly to the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, and described God's witness which He bore so miraculously to the verbal testimony of "them that heard" His beloved Son, confirming what the Lord Jesus had begun to speak concerning so great a salvation.

But the Lord, in proclaiming that "so great salvation," had already promised that this Divine witness should be given to His apostles, in order to confirm their testimony. The promise was made on the occasion of the *second* of His last three [1] commissions. It is recorded in Mark xvi. 15-18. This was carried out forthwith; and it found its fulfilment during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles.

It will be necessary to examine this very carefully, for from the earliest days of this Dispensation to the present time, the enemy has sought by various means to overcloud this great truth. From the time this great promise was given, he sought to throw doubts upon its genuineness; and in our day his aim is to distort its interpretation and pervert its application.

[1] That there were *three*, given on separate occasions after His resurrection, is clear from the records of the three Gospels.

The *first* was in Luke xxiv. 47, on the day of His resurrection, and was carried out by Peter and them that heard.

The *second* in Mark xvi. 15-18, to the eleven as they sat at meat, and was carried out by them and "them that heard Him" at once, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

The *third* in Matt. xxviii. 19, 20, in Galilee, after He had left Jerusalem.

Not until the issue of the R.V. in 1880 was the general reader of the Bible put into possession of the information as to this first assault of the enemy on this passage (Mark xvi. 9-20).

There we find this marginal note on verse 9 :

> " The two oldest [1] Greek manuscripts [2] and some other authorities [3] omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending [4] to the Gospel."

The answer to, or rather the refutation of, these suggestions may be briefly stated thus :—

1. Of all other manuscripts consisting of eighteen uncials (*i.e.*, written in ancient capital letters) and some six hundred cursives (*i.e.*, written later in running-hand) which contain the Gospel of Mark, there is not one that omits these twelve verses.

2. As to Ancient Versions, the Syriac (A.D. 170), the Latin Versions (cent. 2), Jerome's (A.D. 382), and others, all of them older than any MS. now extant, contain these twelve verses.

3. As to the " Fathers," whatever may be their value (or otherwise) as authorities on doctrinal matters, their testimony as to matters of fact, as to whether these verses were or were not in the manuscripts or versions which they read and quoted, cannot be questioned ; and the late Dean Burgon (in his work on this subject) gives the names of nearly a hundred ecclesiastical writers (older than the oldest Greek manuscripts which we now possess), and also the reference to their works where they quote one or other of these twelve verses ; which proves conclusively

[1] They mean the oldest two.

[2] They mean the Vatican MS., known as " B " (now in Rome), and the Sinaitic MS., known as " ℵ " (now in Leningrad).

[3] Such as modern Textual Critics ; Tischendorf, who omits them, and Alford, who puts them within brackets.

[4] *I.e.*, at verse 8, Tregelles has " according to Mark " ; Alford has " [the Gospel] according to Mark."

that these verses must have been in the original Gospel of Mark.

We will show below our own reason why doubts arose as to the genuineness of these verses; though why the Revisers should throw those doubts on them without stating or even hinting at the vast mass of evidence in their favour, must be left for others to explain.

For our purpose now, we confine ourselves to verses 17 and 18 :—

" These signs shall follow them that believe.
1. In My name they shall cast out demons.
2. They shall speak with new [1] tongues.
3. They shall take up serpents.[2]
4. And if they should drink anything deadly, it shall in no wise injure them.
5. They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall be well."

The history of the Acts of the Apostles is a record of the fulfilment of the promise as to these five " signs." The apostles

" having gone forth, proclaimed [the good news] everywhere,
the Lord working with them
and confirming the word by

THE SIGNS FOLLOWING " (verse 20).

1. For the signs confirming the promise as to the casting out of demons, see Acts v. 16; viii. 7; xvi. 18; xix. 12.

2. For the second sign, speaking with tongues, see Acts ii. 4, 11; x. 46; xix. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28, 30; xiii. 1, 8; xiv. 2, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 22, 23, 26, 39.

3. For the third sign, taking up serpents, see Acts xxviii. 3-5, and cp. Luke x. 19.

[1] Tregelles omits " new."
[2] Tregelles adds " in their hands."

4. For the fourth, the drinking of any deadly thing, there is no recorded instance in Scripture, though we may feel sure such cases must have occurred.

5. For the fifth, the laying of hands on the sick and healing them, see Acts ix. 17 ; xx. 10 ; xxviii. 8, 9. Compare Matt. ix. 18 ; Mark v. 23 ; vi. 5 ; Luke iv. 40 ; xiii. 13 ; Heb. vi. 2.

These are the recorded examples of the fulfilment of the Lord's promise in Mark xvi. 18, 19, and of God's witness in Heb. ii. 4. There were doubtless many more that are not recorded, as is the case of those wrought by the Lord, as Jehovah's witness to His testimony (John xx. 30, 31 ; xxi. 24, 25). But these that are written are quite sufficient to prove the testimony borne by " them that heard Him " ; and we may well marvel at the unbelief of those who witnessed such signs and yet remained impenitent.

They are specially called " signs " because they pointed to the great object for which they were given—viz., their *signification*. For they signified the " witness " of Jehovah, the God of Israel, Who throughout Israel's history had manifested His presence and His power in testifying to the proclamation given by His own appointed ministers sent in His name.

After the final rejection of Jehovah's messenger by the chief of the Jews of the Dispersion in Rome, there was no further need of such " signs," for Christ's promise ended with those to whom it was made, and God's witness ceased with " them that had heard " His Son. The cessation of " signs and wonders " had been foreshadowed ; yea, had been positively foretold.

In Paul's first Epistle to the assembly at Corinth, where these signs and spiritual gifts (*pneuma hagion*) had been most abundantly bestowed, in which letter we have the fullest record concerning them, there is a formal declaration on the subject. Doubtless these " gifts " were common to

all the assemblies during the Acts' Dispensation ; though it is in the Epistle to the Corinthian assembly that we read most about them.

Paul writes to the assembly at Rome of his desire to see them that he might impart unto them some spiritual gift (Rom. i. 11 ; xii. 6-8). In his letter to Hebrew believers he reminds them they had tasted of " the heavenly gift." James also speaks of the gifts (Jas. i. 17) ; and Peter refers to them (1 Pet. iv. 10).

But it is in the first Epistle to the assembly at Corinth that we find a formal and lengthened instruction concerning them and their use. In ch. i. 7 he exhorted them to " come behind in no gift," and the reason given is their " waiting for the *apocalypse* of our Lord Jesus Christ." In ch. xii. 1 he writes " concerning spiritual gifts," and in verses 4-11 describes their " diversities of administrations " and " operations," emphasising the fact that though they were diverse in their character, they were all given by one and the same Holy Spirit, bestowed according " as He will," and were distributed " as it hath pleased Him."

They were nine in number :—

1. The " word of wisdom " (verse 8) as seen in the case of Stephen (Acts vi. 3, 10), who had also the gift of " faith " and " power," and did great wonders and miracles among the people (verse 8).

2. " The word of *knowledge* " (as seen in Stephen in Acts vii.).

3. " To another *faith*, by the same Spirit " (verse 9).

4. " To another the gifts of healing."

5. " To another the operations of mighty works " (Gr. *dunamis*, verse 10).

6. " To another *prophecy*."

7. " To another the *discerning of spirits*."

8. " To another [divers] kinds of tongues."

9. " To another the interpretation of tongues."

Then, after instruction as to their use, he ends by exhorting them :

" Covet earnestly the greater gifts, and yet a more surpassing way I show unto you " (1 Cor. xii. 31),

and he goes on to show that the surpassing way was " LOVE " (1 Cor. xiii.) ; just as in Rom. xii., after having spoken of various " gifts " in verses 6-8, he goes on to add (in verse 9),

" Let LOVE be unfeigned."

The " greater gifts," we are told in 1 Cor. xiii. 13, are " faith " and " hope " and " love." These three are distinguished from all others inasmuch as they were not mere " gifts " given as *credentials* to prove their Divine mission, or for confirming their testimony. All such were to " cease," but these three were to " abide," being " greater gifts " because they would never cease. All other gifts were for time, and for that Dispensation ; but " these three " were for eternity. " Faith " would end in *sight* that would see the King in His beauty and would never grow dim. " Hope " would end in *fruition* which would never fade away, and " Love never faileth," for it has to do with " the things which are not seen," and these are eternal.

Paul, in 1 Cor. xiii., having in verses 1-7 extolled this greatest of the " greater gifts," and stated this culminating and surpassing reason,

" Love never faileth,"

having, we say, explained wherein this greatness consists, he goes on to enhance this greatness by telling the Corinthian believers that those " spiritual gifts " were all to be done away. He singles out three of them :

the gift of prophecy (xii. 10),
the gift of tongues (xii. 10),
the gift of knowledge (xii. 8),

and tells them that they will all cease and be done away.

It is a pity that the one verb (*katargeō*), which occurs four times in verses 8, 10, 11, is translated in four different ways in the A.V. The R.V. renders it three times "done away," and once "put away." So the real sense of the whole passage is hidden from the English reader, and its real point is lost. It will be clearer, and the strong emphasis will be seen, if we give the whole passage with the uniform rendering.

"LOVE NEVER FAILETH:

But whether [there be] prophecies,
they shall be *done away*;
whether tongues, they shall cease;
whether knowledge, it shall be *done away*;
(For we get to know in part; and we
prophesy in part,
But when that shall have come which
is perfect,
that [which is] in part shall be
done away.
When I was an infant, as an infant
I spoke; as an infant I thought;
as an infant I reasoned;
but when I became a man,
I *did away* with the things of
an infant.
For we see now by means of a mirror,
but then, face to face;
now, I get to know in part,
but then, I shall get to fully know,
according as I have also been known).
And now abideth faith, hope, love,
these three things;
but [the] greatest of these is love."

Here it is clearly stated that these spiritual gifts were

to be done away ; and they are thus set in marked contrast with the three things which will abide for ever. We may be certain, therefore, that the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles was the period characterised by infancy. Had the conditions of growth remained, it would have developed into manhood. That is infancy's normal end.

What was it that hindered that normal development in the case of Israel ?

Why did not Israel become a blessing to all the nations ?

Why did not the expectations of a groaning creation issue in the glory that was about to be revealed ?

Why were not the prophecies which God had spoken by all His prophets then fulfilled ?

There is only one answer, and that is *the impenitence of Israel* ; the disobedience which refused to listen to the call which gave the keynote to the book, " Repent " (Acts ii. 28 ; iii. 19). There is no other reason ; no other can be found. And we find it in the Acts, exactly where we should look for it—in the closing chapter of that book.

If further evidence is needed, we have it in the extraordinary fact that not one of those terms, " signs," " wonders," " spiritual gifts," " *pneuma hagion*," is to be found in the later Epistles of Paul, written after Acts xxviii. We look in vain for any one of them after that. On the other hand, we have positive evidence that the signs did cease at that crisis ; for Paul himself never used any one of them afterward.

What do we read among the last words of his very last Epistle ?

" TROPHIMUS have I left at Miletum sick " (2 Tim. iv. 20).

And in the same chapter :

" Only LUKE (' the beloved physician,' Col. iv. 14) is with me " (2 Tim. iv. 11).

What do we read in one of the Prison Epistles of

EPAPHRODITUS, his " brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier " ?

> " He longed after you all (the Philippian believers), and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For, indeed, he was sick nigh unto death ; but God had mercy on him ; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow " (Phil. ii. 25-27).

Is this the same Paul who laid his hands on the sick and they recovered ?

Is this the same great apostle of whom it is written :

> " And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his skin [1] were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons,[2] and the diseases departed away from them " (Acts xix. 11, 12) ?

Is he the same apostle who writes to Timothy :

> " No longer drink water, but use a little wine on account of thy stomach, and thy frequent sicknesses [3] " ?

Is this the apostle of whom we read in the last chapter of the Acts, immediately before the crisis :

> " And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay oppressed with fevers and dysentery ; to whom Paul having entered, and prayed, [and] having laid his hands on him, healed him. So when this had taken place, the rest who had sickness in the island came and were healed " (Acts xxviii. 8) ?

Yes, it was the same apostle ; but it was not the same Dispensation. He is the same Paul, but the steward of quite a different ministry. That is why we do not see a single

[1] Gr. *chrōs.*

[2] Gr. *simikinthion.* These words occur nowhere else in the New Testament.

[3] Gr. *astheneia.* The same word used of the fatal sickness of Lazarus (John xi. 4), and of the diseases which Paul healed in the island of Malta (Acts xxviii. 9).

one of those " signs and wonders," nor meet with even one of the words used in describing them after the close of the Acts. Throughout that Dispensation they abounded, according to the Lord's promise ; and in the last of the earlier Epistles, the apostle points to them as the credentials of his apostleship, where He says :

> " Truly the signs of the apostle were wrought out among you in all patience, in signs and wonders and mighty works " (2 Cor. xii. 12).

Again, the Lord said most positively :

> " These signs shall follow them that believe " (Mark xvi. 17).

The promise was made respecting " believers," not merely the apostles and elders.

If the present Dispensation dates from Pentecost or indeed from *any* point in the Acts, or during the Acts' period, this solemn and sublime promise of the Lord Jesus Christ is our own undeniable birthright in every detail ; and these " gifts " should have been seen throughout this Dispensation, and to-day, on every side, as an unimpeachable testimony to the fact that we are " believers." In that case, they would form the testing marks of " believers."

The logical conclusion must remain undisputed that if it were true that these " signs shall follow them that believe," those who have not these " signs " must be unbelievers. But, witness the pain and anguish in the homes of multitudes of faithful and devout believers to-day and for some sixty generations past. Sickness and suffering stalk through the earth unhindered by any such heavenly signs. Our most cherished loved ones fall like flowers before the inevitable scythe, and wither as the grass of the field. The broken sobs from broken hearts, and agonising prayers no longer suffice to bring again the bloom to the cheek blanched by the power of death.

The only " signs " we see that are getting universal among " them that believe " are congregations swayed by impassioned speech and thrilling music. But *these* are *not* the signs named in the Lord's promise. The disconnected jargon issuing from excited assemblies and darkened rooms, sometimes mixed with blasphemy, though simulating the " gift of tongues," does not identify those deceived thereby as being believers having the " signs " that " shall follow."

The " signs following " them that believed during that brief Dispensation were for ALL. To-day all assemblies are alike entirely destitute of such gifts as the Lord promised by name. Are we to conclude from this that there are no true believers whom these " signs " *can* follow ? Those isolated cases where the stoutest claims are made to Pentecostal " rights " do not exhibit in any degree the " signs " enumerated by the Lord as following all that believe.

How much better to seek the commendation of the Berean believers, who " searched the Scriptures," and see whether these signs really are for us during this present Dispensation. We have seen that Paul himself did not exhibit any one of them after the close of the Acts' Dispensation. This, we believe, is undisputed by those who seem to wish it were otherwise. It is urged by such that they were only wrought on unbelievers for their conviction. To this there are two answers :—

1. This was not the case, for the greatest of all were exercised by Peter when he raised Dorcas from death and presented her to her fellow-believers (Acts ix. 36-41) ; and by Paul when he raised Eutychus to the comfort of believers (Acts xx. 9-12).

2. They were used chiefly by believers themselves in their assemblies and in their worship.

But let us try this question on the Berean plan, and bring it to the test of Scripture.

The same Word which promised these " signs " predicted

also that they should be " done away " ; and this is a very strong expression.

It is rendered " *bring to nought* " (1 Cor. i. 28) ; *abolish* (2 Cor. iii. 13 ; Eph. ii. 15 ; 2 Tim. i. 10) ; *put down* (1 Cor. xv. 24) ; *destroy* (Rom. vi. 6 ; 1 Cor. vi. 13 ; xv. 26 ; 2 Thess. ii. 8 ; Heb. ii. 14), etc.

Those who claim that these signs might continue, or ought to have continued, directly contradict these plain statements in 1 Cor. xiii. Thus brought to the bar of Scripture verity, it is at once manifest that such persons are deceived by the great enemy of the Word of God ; or are self-deceived, or are impostors.

There are yet two further points to be dealt with :—

(1) The place of these signs in relation to Israel's Dispensational position, and to the apostle's ministry to the Gentiles, and

(2) The explanation of the note on Mark xvi. 17, 18, in the R.V., as bearing on the so-called " tongues-movement " of the present day.

(XXIV.) THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Dispensational Teaching as to the Signs Ceasing

WE have yet to consider the manifestation of the "signs and wonders" during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles, and their cessation afterward, in the light of the Epistle to the Romans, written on the borderland of the coming change.

In that last Epistle (chronologically), which practically divides the earlier from the later Pauline Epistles, the apostle foreshadows the gathering darkness of Israel's fast-approaching night. As the inspired words were divinely breathed into him he saw revealed to his astounded heart the solemn consequences of the hardening of heart and the continued impenitence of his beloved Israel.

In the Dispensational parenthesis of chs. ix., x., and xi., he was reminded of the greatness of Israel's past in history, and of the glory of Israel's future as revealed in the prophets: "The adoption, the glory, the covenants, the promises," with "gifts" unlimited, and his heart (like that of Moses of old) bursts forth in personal and uncontrollable grief. He begins this Dispensational parenthesis:

> "I have great grief and unceasing sorrow in my heart (for I myself was wishing to be anathema [cut off] from Christ) on behalf of my brethren, my kinsmen according to [the] flesh."

As the result of Israel's disobedience at the call for repentance was borne in upon him, bitter tears must have stained the face of the apostle. He had suffered much on behalf of his nation, as witnessed by his labours more

abundant, his stripes above measure, the prisons frequent, the deaths oft, the rods, the stonings, the shipwreck, the night and day on the heaving deep, the eight perils, the weariness, the pains, the hunger, the cold, the nakedness. All, as far as bringing his nation to repentance was concerned, in vain.

All these sufferings for Israel's sake rose up before his memory, as his faithful pen, borne along by the power of *pneuma hagion*, was tracing the deepening gloom, the long night that was to come before the fulfilment of the prophecy, which declared :

> " The Redeemer shall come to Zion and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob " (Isa. lix. 20),

and the proclamation go forth :

> " Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee " (Isa. lx. 1).

For the same prophecy went on to foretell :

> " For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people " (Isa. lx. 2).

That darkness had long since happened to Israel, when at Messiah's coming,

> " The people which was sitting in darkness had seen a great light, and to them who were sitting in [the] region and shadow of death, light had sprung up " (Matt. iv. 16).
>
> " From that time Jesus began to proclaim and to say, ' Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near ' " (Matt. iv. 17).

But the result of the shining of that great light is summed up in one brief inspired sentence :

> " He came unto His own [possessions], and His own [people] received Him not " (John i. 11).
>
> " [Jehovah] sent His servants . . . but they would not come " (Matt. xxii. 3). That is the history of the

Gospels. " Again He sent forth other servants . . . but they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise ; and the remnant took His servants, and entreated them shamefully, and slew them " (Matt. xxii. 5, 6).

That is the history of the Acts.

And now was fulfilled the prophecy by Isaiah which foretold not merely the " darkness," but the " blindness " ; not merely " gross darkness," but " hardening." For he tells these Israelite believers in Rome :

" I do not wish YOU to be ignorant, brethren, of this secret (*i.e.*, the secret referred to in Matt. xiii. 11), that ye may not be wise in your own [eyes], that a hardening in part has happened to Israel, until the *plērōma* of the nations shall have entered in, and so all Israel shall be saved " (Rom. xi. 25, 26) : even as it standeth written

a| " Out of Zion shall come the Deliverer.
b | He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.
a|And this is My covenant with them (Isa. lix. 20 ; xxvii. 9).
b | When I shall take away their sins " (Jer. xxxi. 33, 34).

That hardening and that darkness are no longer " in part," they affect the whole and cover the earth.

It is not within our scope now, to dwell on the coming glories of Israel's morning when " the Sun of Righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings " ; when He that scattered Israel will gather him out of all nations whither He hath driven him, to bring them into the land of Israel.

We mention it thus far, because we wish to emphasise the fact that when the apostle went to Rome the darkness was settling down, and the moment was near for the completion of the Lord's parable on which the history of the Acts is silent :

" When the King heard thereof [of the way His messengers had been treated] He was wroth ; and He sent

forth His armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city" (Matt. xxii. 7). That was the destruction of Jerusalem.

But this is not now our subject. We are speaking here of the Dispensation of Israel's night, and of the fulfilment of Jehovah's words by His prophet Ezekiel concerning "the valley, full of dry bones" (Ezek. xxxvii.); when Israel is indeed "*lo ammi*" (not My people). This it is that marks the character of Israel during this present Dispensation.

Israel's casting aside is so complete that they are thus represented in verse 11:

"Son of Man, these bones are the whole [1] house of Israel: behold they say:

'Our bones are dried,
And our hope is lost;
We are cut off for our parts.'"

While this whole house of Israel is, in God's sight, as "dead" ("slain," verse 9), Israel with all its "signs" is no more before Him.

The Gentile promises and blessings, likewise fully foretold in the prophetic books of the Old Testament Scriptures, are all dependent upon Israel's "light," when they "shall be for salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. xlii. 6; xlix. 6). When the time comes for this (and may it speedily arrive!), when Jehovah shall speak again and say:

"The LORD shall arise upon thee,
And His glory shall be seen upon thee" (Isa. lx. 1-2),

then will be fulfilled for the nations the words which follow:

"And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising" (Isa. lx. 3).

We do not stop to consider the details which follow,

[1] The Figure (*epizeuxis*) used for "the whole" greatly emphasises the *totality* that is meant.

concerning the coming glories for Gentiles ; but we press the fact that

Israel as a nation before God is " dead."
Its bones are " dried."
The fig tree is withered.

The Old Testament promises for Gentiles are buried in the grave with Israel (for they are dependent on Israel's rising). They are in abeyance till the dawn of Israel's glorious morning. Is it possible that the modern theory as to Israel's being continued in the Anglo-Saxon race can stand in the light of such prophecies ? We can understand why so many should have at length rebelled against what is called the *spiritual interpretation* of those prophecies. We share in that rebellion ; we understand those prophecies as literally as any can do ; but we interpret them of the future Israel which God will raise up, the Israel that will bring forth the fruits which the old Israel failed to do, and entailed upon themselves such disastrous results (Matt. xxi. 43), and not of any " race " now living on the earth.

On the other hand, as to the old and general belief that " the church " (so-called) has inherited Israel's position before God, we ask : Can it be believed that eighteen centuries of " church history " with its " dark ages," its corruptions, its spasmodic reformations, its innumerable divisions, its internecine feuds, and last of all, its prophesied culmination in " the great apostasy " so destitute of " the faith once delivered to the saints " that the Lord Himself declares :

" As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the Son of Man " (Matt. xxiv. 36-39) :

can it be believed that this speaks of the fulfilment of Old Testament Gentile promises ? To answer in the affirmative with all the jaunty optimism of " the churches "

discloses a total disregard for " that which standeth written," but is entirely consistent with an advanced apostasy.

Alas ! the promises of blessings for Israel are for the present " dead," and the Gentile blessings dependent on Israel are buried in Israel's grave. Both are alike in abeyance until the day of Israel's national repentance. This is why the " signs and wonders " of the Dispensation of the Acts ceased with Acts xxviii. These " signs " were the birthright of Israel, and never belonged to " the church " or " the churches " in any shape or form. They were born with the nation. The very call of Moses to make Israel a nation and to lead it out of Egypt was accompanied by a " sign " (Ex. iii. 12).

These " signs " had a signification. They spoke. For before Jehovah sent Moses He gave him two more signs and warned him :

> " If they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the *voice* of the first sign, then they will believe the *voice* of the latter sign " (Ex. iv. 8).

Our readers have only to consult a Concordance to see that the nation was, as it were, " brought up " on " signs."

When, through their backsliding, the signs were withdrawn, they lamented, saying :

> " We see not our signs ;
> There is no more any prophet."

And when the promised Messiah came, it was no wonder that they constantly asked Him for a " sign," and that He replied and said :

> " Except ye see signs, ye will not believe " (John iv. 48).

No wonder the ministry of the Lord was accompanied by " signs," and

No wonder that the eight " signs " in John's Gospel are so full of signification setting forth Israel's impotence and Messiah's glory.

No marvel that "those who heard Him" had their testimony supported by a long succession of "signs and wonders."

No marvel that those "signs and wonders" ceased with Israel's national existence.

There was no further need for them, and they were buried in Israel's grave until the time shall come when they shall see the greatest "sign" of all:

> "Then shall appear the 'sign' of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the 'tribes' of the earth (or land) mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30).

It has ever been the work of the great enemy of the Word of God and of the people of God to blind their eyes as to the truth of the Written Word and the glory of the Living Word. To blind them especially as to "rightly dividing the word of truth," well knowing that the truth can never be found, learned, understood, or obeyed unless it is thus divided, and divided rightly as to its subjects and its times or dispensations.

Now, as to our last point in connection with these "signs following." Why has such a cloud of confusion been thrown over these last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel? What is the explanation of the long note on them in the R.V.?

About the confusion itself there is no need to speak; and about the baselessness of it there is no need to say more than we have already said. But about the cause of the doubts and the consequent confusion there *is* need to set forth our own explanation which arises naturally out of, and is indeed suggested by, what we have already said as to these "signs and wonders."

When Israel had been cast aside, and Jerusalem destroyed shortly after the close of the Acts of the Apostles (Matt. xxii.

7), there was no longer any need for a *confirmation* of the Lord's testimony by " them that heard Him " (Heb. ii. 3) ; and consequently, there was no need for a *Divine witness* to be given of any confirmation by such " signs and wonders " (Heb. ii. 4). From that time, and for some fifty years and more, there is a complete blank in ecclesiastical history.

Now the most ancient Greek manuscript is not older than the fourth century. This is a fact on which all modern critics are agreed. We can well understand how any transcriber of such a manuscript, when he came to the end of Mark's Gospel, would look around, but would not see any such signs and wonders following them that believe ; and as he could not doubt his own senses, would naturally doubt the accuracy of the text he was about to copy. He might well suppose that there must be some mistake on the part of a previous scribe whose writing he was copying. He would surely have believed what he read if he had any evidence as to its truth. Consequently, he might mark it as of doubtful genuineness or question its accuracy ; or he might leave it out altogether.

We suggest that this is the explanation of the Revisers' note against Mark xvi. 9, which we repeat here :

> " The two oldest Greek manuscripts and some other authorities omit from verse 9 to the end. Some other authorities have a different ending to the Gospel."

In addition to this we would suggest that it is to the same cause, but by a different line of reasoning, that certain evils which have recently arisen in the churches are due.

Certain Christians (more or less emotional by nature), fully and earnestly believing in the truth of God's Word, read these last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel. They, in their turn, see none of these " signs following " them that believe. Like those ancient transcribers, they have their

doubts also. Unlike them, they do not doubt the accuracy of the Word, but they doubt the genuineness of their own faith in it.

There must be something wrong with themselves and with believers generally; they believe the Word, but know nothing about dividing it rightly, and hence they come to the conclusion that they *ought* to have these "signs following," and end by *determining* that they will have them! They then become an easy prey to the great enemy, whose one aim is to blind the eyes of all believers that they may not see Christ the Living Word, Who is revealed only through the truth of the Written Word.

To this end the enemy (as we have written before) will occupy the mind of the sinner with his sins; the penitent with his repentance; the believer with his faith; the servant with his service; the saint with his holiness; anything to keep him occupied with himself instead of with Christ, for from Him alone "virtue goeth forth," the current of which (so to speak) is "cut off" by the veil which comes between. It may be the filthy rag of the sinner or the beauteous veil of the saint, but the effect is the same. It is so with these seekers after signs. They are occupied with "the Holy Spirit" of God instead of with Christ, the Son of God; and with "signs" which have lost their signification.

We hear of "tongues," but not about taking up serpents; about "healing," but not about raising the dead; about not taking medicine, but not about drinking poison with impunity. Instead of casting out demons they are more likely to become possessed by them. Satan can imitate some of the "signs," as Jannes and Jambres imitated God's "signs" given by Moses and Aaron. We do not know of one of the many false religions which has not "HEALING" in some form as one of the main planks in its platform. However they may differ in other things, they are all

alike in this, from Babism in the East to Dowieism in the West; the ramblings of "Christian" Science to the "silence" of the very latest cult; from "the order of the Star of the East" to "the mystical order of the Inner Sun."

These latter are ignorant of the Word of God itself; while the former are uninstructed in rightly dividing it as to its Dispensational truth and teaching. All is leading up to the "strong delusion" which is fast coming and will be readily accepted as light. God's Word has told us that the "signs and wonders" which characterised the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles were to be "done away." If any refuse to believe this Divine statement, they will become a prey to the false statements of others.

There is such a thing as

"War on the Saints,"

and it is only things that appear to be "good" that will deceive believers. Things openly wicked would in vain be used as snares by the enemy. They must appear as though they were something better than what believers have already got. The snare consists of this.

We know full well that the so-called "Revival in Wales" did not stand the test of the Word, which declares that "God is not the author of confusion." But we dared not state our belief then, as we should have been condemned on all hands.

A certain man, a Spiritist, had greatly injured us by putting a false report of an "interview" in the Spiritist Magazine called *Light*. He came up from Wales to make his apology and confession. He told us he had been obliged to give up Spiritism as it was ruining his health, and he had been down to Wales to see the "Revival." He was greatly amazed when we told him he had only exchanged one form of Spiritism for another! But he was speedily convinced.

And now the truth is out, and the book, which has attracted much attention, entitled *War on the Saints*, will confirm any reader of the truth of it, and should warn for ever from looking for "signs and wonders" during this present Dispensation.

(XXV.) THE SPHERES OF FUTURE GLORY

THERE is still something more to learn concerning the Dispensations before we can rightly understand the unique position and wonderful teaching of the later Pauline Epistles written from the prison in Rome.

These Dispensations are commonly spoken of as two, the old and the new, but we must bring them, as all else, to the bar of the Written Word to see whether we have learned from man or from God, from tradition or from revelation. To some extent we shall all agree.

1. We shall all be agreed that the great subject of the Old Testament prophecies is a restored Israel and a regenerated earth (Matt. xix. 28). It is surely unnecessary to quote the many prophecies which tell of the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Num. xiv. 21 ; Ps. lxxii. 19 ; Isa. vi. 3 ; xi. 9 ; Hab. ii. 14).

We are at one with all our readers in taking these prophecies in their literal meaning ; and in not attempting to explain them, or rather fritter them away, by any spiritualising interpretation which deprives them of all their truth and power.

We all look forward also to the time when " He that scattered Israel will gather him " (Jer. xxxi. 10) ; when they " shall all be taught of God " (John vi. 45 ; Isa. liv. 13) ; when " the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our LORD, and of His Christ " (Rev. xi. 15) ; and when the earthly Jerusalem shall be restored in more than all its ancient glory.

That kingdom and sphere of blessing and glory will be *on the earth* ; and the new Israel, with a heart of stone changed to a heart of flesh and with a new spirit, will bring forth " the fruits of righteousness " (Ezek. xxxvi. 24-36 ;

Matt. xxi. 43). This will be the regeneration (or *palingenesia*) when the apostles will be seated " on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel " (Matt. xix. 28). This will be the first and lowest sphere of blessing. It will be *on* earth, and ***under*** the whole heaven. These are the " *people* of the saints of the Most High " (Dan. vii. 27). All the nations of the earth will share in this blessing according to God's original promise to Abraham.[1]

2. But Abraham and his spiritual seed are " the saints of the Most High " as distinct from " the people " (of these saints) on the earth (Dan. vii. 18, 22, 25), and occupying a distinct place in the *heavenly* sphere of this same kingdom. These, according to the Lord's words in Luke, are " equal to the angels," " sons of the resurrection " (Luke xx. 34-36), raised in the " first resurrection " before the thousand years of earthly blessing for Israel and for the nations " under the whole heaven " (Deut. iv. 19; Rev. xx. 4-6). These belong to " that great city, the holy Jerusalem," which John saw " descending down from heaven, having the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious." This " holy Jerusalem " is fully described in Rev. xxi. 9-27. It is the " city which hath THE foundations " for which Abraham had been taught to look (Heb. xi. 10) when he " saw Christ's day and was glad " (John viii. 56): for, as " faith cometh by hearing," Abraham must have *heard*; and this " hearing " must have come " from the [spoken] word of God " (Rom. x. 17).

This is the " inheritance " of those who, as Peter declares to the believers of the Dispersion, " have obtained like precious faith with us." That " inheritance " is " incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in HEAVEN for you." The Greek, by the figure *Homoioteleuton*, emphasises this " inheritance " as being

[1] Gen. xii. 3, 4; xvii. 4; Ps. xxii. 27, 28; lxvii. 4; Isa. ii. 4; xi. 10, 12; xlii. 1, 6; xlix. 22; lii. 15; lv. 5; lx. 3, 5, 11; lxvi. 12, etc. (*But see Note, p. 272.—ED.*)

not earthly, but *aphtharton, amianton, amaranton* (1 Pet. i. 4). The inhabitants of that heavenly city are declared to be " the bride, the Lamb's wife " (Rev. xxi. 9).

From the call of Abraham there have ever been these two seeds, the earthly and the heavenly. The one was likened by Jehovah to " the dust of the earth " or " the sand of the sea " (Gen. xiii. 16 ; xxii. 17) ; and the other was likened to " the stars of heaven " (Heb. xi. 12 ; Gen. xv. 5). Both expressions suggest multitude, but the former is specially associated with *earthly* blessing, while the latter points to " the partakers of a heavenly calling " (Heb. iii. 1), who, like their father Abraham, looked for a heavenly portion and a heavenly blessing, for the city " which hath the foundations." (*See Note, p. 272.—ED.*)

> " These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is a HEAVENLY ; wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God ; for He hath prepared for them a city " (Heb. xi. 13-16, R.V.).

Where and what could that city have been if it was not the city which John was shown " descending out of heaven from God," the foundations of which are specially described in Rev. xxi. 19, 20 ? All through the ages, from Abraham's day to the present, these " partakers of a heavenly calling," the faithful remnant may be traced. They formed " the congregation of the Lord," and are continually spoken of as such.

Not all Israel were tabernacle and temple frequenters

and worshippers. Not all carried out the laws given by Moses, or offered the prescribed sacrifices, attended "the feasts of Jehovah," or carried out the ordered ritual. Those (probably the few, as we see it to-day) who gathered to the stated worship of Jehovah are called the "assembly" or the "congregation."

The Hebrew word for "congregation" is from *kāhal* (from which doubtless we have our English word "call"). The verb means to *call*, *assemble*, *gather together*; and the noun is used of any assembly thus called. Seventy times in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament it is rendered *ekklēsia* (the word for "church" in the New Testament).[1]

It is actually used in the expression "the *ekklēsia* (or church) of the LORD" in Deut. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, 8; 1 Chron. xxviii. 8; Micah ii. 5. In Neh. xiii. 1 it is "the *ekklēsia* (or church) of God." It is this *ekklēsia* (or church) that is referred to as "the congregation" in Ps. xxii. 22; xxvi. 12; xxxv. 18; xl. 9, 10; lxviii. 26.[2] In Ps. xxii. 25 it is spoken of as "the great *ekklēsia* or congregation," and in Ps. cxlix. 1 as "the *ekklēsia* of the saints." This is what David means in Ps. xxii. 22, when he says:

> "In the midst of the *congregation* will I praise Thee" (verse 22), and
>
> "My praise shall be of Thee in the great *congregation*" (verse 25).

This is the usage of the same word in the Gospels when the Lord said:

> "Upon this rock will I build My *ekklēsia*" (Matt. xvi. 18).

He did not, when addressing Israelites, use the word

[1] The Hebrew word is rendered "congregation" eighty-six times; "assembly," seventeen times; "company," seventeen times; "multitude," three times.

[2] In Num. xvi. 3 and xx. 4, the Hebrew *kāhal* is rendered in the Sept. *sunagōgē* = synagogue. In the R.V. this is rendered "the assembly of the LORD."

in the new, exclusive, and special sense in which it was *afterward* to be used in the revelation of "the secret" in the Prison Epistles; but in the larger and wider Old Testament sense which His hearers would understand as embracing the whole assembly of Jehovah's believing and worshipping people who were "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb. iii. 1).

When the Spirit by Stephen speaks of "the *ekklēsia* in the wilderness" (Acts vii. 38) He means this congregation of pious worshippers. Those who were *kept* secure "under the shadow of the Almighty" during the thirty-eight years of penal wanderings in the wilderness (see Ps. xc. and xci.)

When the Lord added to the *ekklēsia* such as were being saved (Acts ii. 47) after Pentecost, He added them to the hundred and twenty who *before* Pentecost assembled together in the upper room, and who

> "continued daily in the temple (no longer offering sacrifices and partaking of the food furnished thereby), but breaking bread (or eating, as in Luke xxiv. 30, 35 and Acts xxvii. 35) at home, with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.
>
> "And the Lord added to the church (*ekklēsia*) daily such as were being saved" (Acts ii. 46, 47).

It is true that the words "the church" (Gr. *ekklēsia*), in verse 47, are omitted by all the Textual Critics (even the most conservative and least "modern"), Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Alford, Westcott and Hort, and the R.V.; but we lay no stress on the omission here, because even as it stands, it is used in the Old Testament sense of "the congregation of the LORD," and not in the later sense, as found in the Epistle to the Ephesians; for they would not have understood it (neither should we to-day, if we had never seen that later Epistle).

When Paul says he " persecuted the *ekklēsia* of God " (1 Cor. xv. 9; Gal. i. 13), he does not use the word in a sense which he had at that time never heard of, or had even the remotest idea of. His words must be understood in the same sense in which he then used them; and we must not read into any passage of Scripture that which was the subject of a *subsequent* revelation; especially when the sense is perfectly plain and clear as it stands.

The word *ekklēsia* in the Gospels, Acts, and the earlier Pauline Epistles must be taken by us in the sense of its Old Testament (Septuagint) usage as meaning simply the *congregation*, or assembly, or company of Jehovah's worshipping people, " partakers of a heavenly calling," having a heavenly hope, a heavenly sphere of blessing, and looking for their part in the " resurrection unto life."

It had been revealed of old that there would be a resurrection (see Job xix. 25-27; Hos. xiii. 14; John xi. 24); but it was subsequently revealed also that there would be *two* resurrections—one to life and one to judgment. Paul testified of the former as being the hope of those who were worshippers of God (Acts xxiv. 14, 15); David hoped for it (Ps. xvi. 9-11 [1]; xlix. 14, 15); so did Daniel (Dan. xii. 1-3).

The Lord plainly spoke of the former as " the resurrection of the just " (Luke xiv. 14), and as " the resurrection of life " (John v. 29). " By the word of the Lord " was revealed a further hope, or rather, an expression of the hope, in John xi. 25, 26. There was not only the hope for those who should have part in the " first resurrection," but for those who should be " alive and remain " when that event should take place. The " word of the Lord " first mentioned it, and the Holy Spirit by Paul expands it in 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

[1] Though the Psalm refers to Messiah (Acts ii. 27-31; xiii. 35), we may not exclude David himself, though his expectation is " not yet " (see Ps. xlix. 15)

It concerns the Lord, not only as to His being "the Resurrection," but as to His being "the Life" also. He says:

c| I am the resurrection
d | and the life.
c| He that believeth in Me, though he die, he shall live (again). [To him] I will be "the resurrection"
d | and every one who [is] alive, and believing in Me shall in nowise die, for ever. [To him] I will be "the life."

This was (and still is) the hope for all who are "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb. iii. 1). Many of these were to be found when Messiah came. They were those

who "waited for the consolation of Israel" (Luke ii. 25),
who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke ii. 38),
who "trusted that the Lord was He who should have redeemed Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21),
who "waited for the kingdom of God" (Mark xv. 43; Luke xxiii. 51),
who were "as many as received Him" (John i. 12),
who "gladly received Peter's or Paul's word" on the Day of Pentecost and after (Acts ii. 41; viii. 14; xi. 1; xvii. 11),
who "received the word in much affliction" (1 Thess. i. 6), and
who, "when they received the word, accepted it not as man's word, but even as it is truly, God's word which worketh effectually in you that believe" (1 Thess. ii. 13),
who "received not what was promised" (Heb. xi. 39), but who believed and embraced it by faith.

Which of us has not been in difficulties as to those we speak of as "the Old Testament saints"? Well, here

they are seen all through the Old Testament as being "the church (or assembly) of God," "partakers of a heavenly calling," possessing a heavenly hope, and looking for a heavenly sphere of blessing.

3. This brings us to another sphere of blessing, the highest in glory. It had been kept secret "from ages and from generations." It is the eternal "purpose" of God, made "*before* the foundation of the world," and was now "made manifest" by being committed to prophetic writings (Rom. xvi. 26). It was a secret not relating to Israel on the earth, nor to the "partakers of a heavenly calling," but to Christ and the elect members of His body.

Even in the ministry of Christ it was among the things He could not then reveal even to the twelve apostles in the privacy of the upper room after the Last Supper. Not only could He not say these things then, but the apostles themselves would not have been able to bear them if He had.

And if the Lord did not mention these things in the Gospels then, certainly the apostles could not have "confirmed" them in the Acts of the Apostles afterward. They were "the things of Christ," *i.e.*, those things which stand in a special relation to Him, the things that relate to the *whole* of the truth, "the truth" which would not be complete without them. They were of necessity reserved for "the Spirit of truth" to reveal. "HE will guide you into the *whole* of the truth." These precious "riches of grace," and of glory—these were the *doctrines* which had for their foundation the facts of Christ's mission, which had not at that time taken place; though they were all then near at hand.

Those events in Christ's life on earth were the foundation of the doctrines built upon them; and without them the doctrines could not have been known. Until He had suffered, died, risen, and ascended, how could the doctrines of Eph. ii. 5, 6 based on them be revealed and taught?

But this special coming, ministry, and guidance of "the Spirit of truth" must be held over for our next section: for we must of necessity include that last phase of what "Jehovah hath spoken" before we commence our consideration of the Prison Epistles: for therein, and only therein, do we find the "riches" of grace and glory into which the Holy Spirit was to guide them, the good news of which was destined to fill the long era of Israel's blindness and the nation's dark (spiritual) night (Isa. lx. 1-3).

The Prison Epistles, following immediately after the proclamation of Israel's judicial blindness and hardening (recorded in Acts xxviii. 25, 26), have for their one great subject the revelation of the final sphere of blessing and glory which stands in special relation to "Christ and His Church."

This sphere is not *on* the earth.
It is not *over* the earth.
It is in the highest heavens.

Hence it has nothing to do with earthly "signs and wonders" that would follow those who in happy obedience believe what is there written. Such surpassingly exalted language has never before or since been spoken of human believers. The very glory of that sphere is inconsistent with any *earthly* signs or manifestations however wonderful, or ordinances however once significant.[1] Those Epistles view the believer of them, not with "signs following," but they view him as "dead" to this world and all earthly associations and connections, and as having jointly suffered, jointly died, jointly risen, and being jointly seated with Christ in the highest heavens. Even the "affections" and "thoughts" are not to be concerned with the things on earth; they are to be centred on "the things above," where Christ is already seated at the right hand of God.

[1] It may even be that they are appropriate for the "partakers of a heavenly calling," although they may be unthinkable by those who realise their position as described in Col. i. 12-14; ii. 20.

Hence we do not read in those Epistles about the coming of Christ to the earth, but rather about our being removed to be with Him where He is; not about His *parousia*, or presence on earth, or " in the air," but about our presence and manifestation with Him in His own glory; not about *anastasis* or resurrection (which is the subject of the earlier Pauline Epistles), but about an " *ex-anastasis* " (Phil. iii. 11), and " the calling on high " (Phil. iii. 14) [1] which is the subject of the later Epistles; not about any personal happiness which *we* may have, but about Christ's personal glory, in which we have the wondrous privilege of sharing.

In this connection we would call attention to one word, which, in our judgment, is the real key-word of the Prison Epistles, and of the highest sphere. It is a remarkable word, found in *this form*, only here in the New Testament. It occurs *once* before in Rom. xiii. 9, but there it is in the present *passive* voice (*anakephalaioutai*), and means " is summed up." But in Eph. i. 10 it is the Aorist Infinitive of the *middle* voice (*anakephalaiōsasthai*). This difference is ignored both by the Authorised and the Revised Versions, which read the *Middle* voice of Eph. i. 10 as though it were the *Active.* This is an almost unpardonable oversight, in the interest of the ordinary Bible reader, who has an undoubted right to a correct grammatical rendering from such a quarter.

Translated correctly, the word and the entire passage emphasise the underlying fact that in all things there revealed, our Heavenly Father has, FOR HIMSELF, purposed what is here stated, viz., that

> **according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, in order to a dispensation of the fulness of the seasons,** TO-SUM-UP-

[1] It is quite incorrect to render the Greek *anō* high, as though it were an adjective qualifying the character of that " calling," because it is an adverb, denoting its *direction.*

FOR-HIMSELF, everything in Christ: things in heaven and things on earth, even in Him, in whom we were taken as an inheritance, being foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things according to the council of His own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who have before hoped in Christ.

This will be enough to show us that the *kosmos*, as shown in Col. i. 15, 16, is a larger, higher, and greater degree than that of *earthly glory*, or that of the glory reserved for those who are "partakers of a *heavenly* calling."

The Old Testament, the Acts, and the earlier Pauline Epistles deal with the lower sphere of glory, but the later Epistles reveal a sphere of headship and heirship *above* the earth or the heavens. 1 Cor. xv. 40 tells of "terrestrial" glory and of "celestial" glory, which differ the one from the other. But there is a sphere of *cosmical* glory (if we may use the word in this connection) high above all created beings, whether principalities, or powers, or might, or thrones, or dominions, which are mentioned (though not defined or explained) in Eph. i. 21; Col. i. 16 in relation to Christ, who shall be "Head over all." This includes the putting down of all enemies, and the final crushing of the head of "the old serpent" the devil.

This is why the enemy's great endeavour, now, is to blind the minds of men so that the light of this "good news (or gospel) of the glory of Christ" should be hidden from them (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4). And this is why we, who obey God by believing Him as to this, His greatest and most glorious revelation, should cherish it as our earnest hope and constant theme; and, not being "ignorant of Satan's devices," since we are thus told against what his assault

is being made, therefore know where our defence is to be directed.

In other words, we are to labour to make known " the riches of glory " which are connected with this third and highest sphere of blessing and glory and honour for " Christ and His Church."

(*Note by Editor.*—The passage quoted as in favour is Dan. vii. 27, where, it is alleged, " the people " refers to the seed which is to inherit the earthly kingdom, " the saints " to those of the " heavenly calling." But the words in the original seem to mean nothing more than " the holy people," a term so often used for Israel as a nation. The reader is begged to mark verses 18, 21, 22, 25 of the same chapter, designating " the people " as " the saints," and to Dan. viii. 24 and xii. 1, 7, comparing with the LXX and referring to Gesenius on the Chaldee term. See also Rom. ix. 5 and xi. 5, and 1 Cor. x. 5. It is true (p. 264) that not all carried out the laws given by Moses, but those who deliberately disbelieved, who disregarded the Law of Moses, had no earthly blessing even, no Kingdom in the Land ; for such there was only the cutting off (see Heb. x. 28). Section XXV. has, however, been left, in order that readers may follow Dr Bullinger's faithful advice to judge for themselves, especially as it is really a side-issue, and does not affect the main line of dispensational truth.)

(XXVI.) GOD SPEAKING BY THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH

"When He the Spirit of truth shall have come, He will guide you into all the truth."—(John xvi. 13.)

THE opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews tell us of the wondrous fact that God has spoken at sundry times and in divers manners. This refers to His speaking

"by the prophets,"
"by His Son,"
"by them that heard Him."

But we are now to consider when and how He spake for the last time, and where we are to look for His words.

It may be well for us to notice first to whom all this speaking of God had been addressed. We are left in no doubt, for in Heb. i. 1 we are distinctly told it was "to the fathers." That is, to Hebrews, from the time He first spoke to Abraham. To them God spake by the prophets: but they hearkened not. To the same Hebrew people God spake "by His Son." He came unto His own [possessions] but His own [people] received Him not.

To the same "men of Judæa" (Acts ii. 14), to "men of Israel" (verse 22), and to "all the house of Israel" (verse 36), He spake by "them that heard Him"—the Son of God (Heb. ii. 3). It is Peter by whom God speaks in Acts ii. Peter had heard what the Lord had spoken "at the first," and he continued what the Lord had begun to speak, and he spoke, saying, "Repent . . . for the promise is unto you and to your children, even to all that are afar off," *i.e.*, the Dispersed of Israel.

The whole of the Acts records the words of "them

that had heard " the Lord, and their words were addressed to Hebrews of the house of Israel; for the prophecy of Isa. vi. 9, 10 had not yet been fulfilled; the renewed proclamation of the kingdom made by Peter in Acts iii. 19-26 had not yet been rejected; it was still open.

When Isaiah first heard that solemn prophecy of national judicial blindness, his first question was, " Lord, how long? " The answer to Isaiah's question should be carefully studied: for the question refers to times and seasons. The same question naturally arises in the minds of all whom it concerns.

When the Lord had been explaining to the apostles (Acts i. 3) " the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," they at once asked, " Lord, wilt Thou AT THIS TIME restore again the kingdom to Israel? " (verse 6). He must have been speaking of this kingdom of Israel as being part of, and coming within, the wider and larger sphere of God's sovereignty called " the kingdom of God " (verse 3).

The Lord replied therefore, " It is not for you to get to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own authority; but ye shall receive power (*i.e.*, ' power from on high,' Luke xxiv. 49), after that the Holy Ghost is come unto you; and YE SHALL BE MY WITNESSES [1] both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth." For this witness the apostles required Divine power and might; and they received it.

In and by this power they who had heard Him confirmed the witness which " at the first began to be spoken by the Lord " (Heb. ii. 3) " unto us " [Hebrews], God bearing witness together with them by signs, both wonders and divers miracles and spiritual gifts (Heb. ii. 4).

The " salvation " which was so great was the same salvation which John the Baptist was specially raised up

[1] This is the reading of all the best manuscripts.

to proclaim. It was the theme of Zacharias his father, when, filled with *pneuma hagion* (or power from on high), he prophesied, saying :

" Blessed be the Lord God of Israel ;
For He hath visited and redeemed His people,
And hath raised up a horn of SALVATION for us in the house of His servant David " (Luke i. 68, 69).

Messiah was this " great Salvation," raised up as David's Seed—David's Son and Lord ; at once " the Root and the Offspring of David " (Rev. xxii. 16).

And of John the Baptist Zacharias said :

" And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest,
For thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
To give knowledge of SALVATION unto His people by the remission of their sins " (Luke i. 76, 77).

God had already spoken of it by the prophets of old, by John the Baptist, and by His Son. It was spoken of and announced to His people Israel. The question therefore is naturally asked, " How shall we [Hebrews] escape, if we neglect so great salvation," thus spoken of to us by God ? (Heb. ii. 3).

The question is repeated in Heb. x. 28, 29 : " He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith He was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace ? "

This solemn warning sounds quite appropriate and quite in keeping in this connection. It is exactly what Peter said to " all the house of Israel " (Acts ii. 36), for, " with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, ' Save yourselves from this untoward [1] generation ' "—

the generation that was guilty of shedding Messiah's blood, and thus despising His SALVATION.

Once again we note the warning in Heb. xii. 25: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For, if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."

We have dwelt thus at length on this point, so as to make it perfectly clear that the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles is not the present Dispensation of the Mystery, in which the Spirit of Truth Himself is guiding us through the Scripture of truth (see pp. 278, 279, and 281).

How many believers are torturing themselves with these passages just quoted from Heb. x. 28, 29; xii. 25, through not rightly dividing the time when they were spoken, and the persons to whom they were addressed? In this connection we ought to add Heb. vi. 1-8, where these Hebrews were exhorted to leave the beginning (*archē*) of Christ's word and to go on to perfection, not overthrowing the foundation which had been laid rightly and truly for the time then present, but leaving it behind in the place to which it belongs, and going forward, "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, pressing toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 13, 14).

That "foundation" laid at the beginning (for the word *archē* in Heb. ii. 3, "at the first," is the same as "beginning" in Heb. vi. 1) must not be *overthrown*, or we should not then see and understand the difference between what the Lord *could speak* during His ministry, and what He *could not speak* because the time had not yet come, when they could be told.

[1] Greek *skolios*. For the meaning of the word, see Deut. xxxii. 5; Phil. ii. 15.

Those things which pertained to the time of " perfection " could not be revealed until that which was in part had been done away ; nor until those spiritual gifts which properly belonged to that Dispensation had " ceased " and been " done away."

The question now remaining to be answered will be easily understood, when we see that the proclamation by Peter (Acts iii. 19-26) of the King ready to come and the kingdom ready to be established, had been rejected by Israel in the land, and finally refused by the Dispersion in Rome when brought to a crisis by Paul in Acts xxviii. 17-28.

Once and again Paul had turned from the Jews and gone with his testimony to the Gentiles who were being blessed with Israel according to God's original promise to Abraham (Gen. xii. 3) ; but this was purely local, and on occasions which were temporary ; for Paul was soon seen dealing with the Jews again.

But in Acts xxviii. it was formal and final. The great Dispensational prophecy of Isa. vi. was finally filled full, and then, but not till then, could it be said :

> " The salvation of God IS SENT unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it.
>
> And when Paul had said these words, the Jews departed and had great reasoning among themselves " [1] (Acts xxviii. 28, 29).

When the Dispensation of the Acts had ended, then the time had come for the promise of our Lord in John xvi. 13 to be fulfilled. And now the remaining question is, how has it been fulfilled by the Spirit of Truth ?

[1] Verse 29 is considered to be a marginal remark of a scribe, which got into the text of a few manuscripts, but is not found in the more ancient codices, in any of the Greek texts of either Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Westcott and Hort, or the R.V.

If the words are not inspired Scripture, they record a truth ; for they departed and remain in Dispersion to this day, and their reasoning has not yet ceased among themselves or with others.

We have seen that it is not being fulfilled to-day by His guidance of individuals into what they call "truth" for, if so, it is seen to be totally opposite in the case of different persons. No! He has guided us all, in this present Dispensation, in "the Scriptures of truth." He has caused all the truth to be put in writing, as the words which God spake by the prophets and by His Son, had been put in writing. The truth comes to us not orally or handed down by tradition, but in writing.[1] The mystery was made known by "prophetic writings"[2] (Rom. xvi. 26). The Spirit of Truth moved holy men of God to speak by "prophetic writings" (2 Pet. i. 20, where the words are the same as in Rom. xvi. 26).

These writings given by the Spirit of Truth are complete. Nothing is to be added to them. Anything then that comes before us professing to be a later additional revelation, we must instantly reject. We must give it no quarter. We must say "anathema" (Gal. i. 8), whether it be Joe Smith, Swedenborg, "The Flying Roll," or a professing Christian deceived by wicked spirits, using "planchette" or "*automatic writing*," to foist Satanic teachings on us. We must have nothing whatever to do with these. It is a deadly peril which besets those who are "weak in the faith" or in their mind; and our correspondence tells us there are many such.

No! we have ALL that "the Spirit of truth" has written for us in "the Scriptures of truth." And there we must look for this special truth, the things of Christ, the things which Christ could not speak on earth, but which are now revealed to us according to His promise.

[1] That is why Paul among his last words impressed on Timothy to bring "the parchments": "especially the parchments," he said (2 Tim. iv. 13).

[2] Greek = *graphōn prophētikōn*, rendered "Scriptures of the prophets," but the word is an adjective, not a noun.

(XXVII.) GOD SPEAKING BY PAUL THE PRISONER OF JESUS CHRIST

"*Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner.*"—(2 TIM. i. 8.)

THESE words bring us to the final questions as to how and where and when has the promise of Christ in John xvi. 12-15 been fulfilled.

We have seen that they have been written down for us by the Spirit of Truth, in the Scriptures of truth. We are not left to the thoughts or reasons of man, or to "the tradition of the fathers"; we are delivered from man altogether—ancient or modern. We have come into a spiritual sphere where man has no place, no standing, no authority; where his voice is not to be listened to, except as he is able to help us to understand better what God has spoken.

We have come into a new Dispensation, where the old things have passed away; where all things are become new; where all things are of God. That which is perfect has come. "Signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and spiritual gifts" have here no place. The gift of prophecy has failed, as foretold in 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

The gift of tongues has ceased.
Knowledge (*gnōsis*) of the mysteries has no place (1 Cor. xiii. 8; cp. verse 2 and xiv. 2).
That which was partial and incomplete has been done away.

All these things had their appointed place and service in that Dispensation to which they belonged. They were to be sought and used and controlled; but we are now

in a Dispensation where all is perfect. The word " perfect " means that we have come to the end, or the last Dispensation. The Greeks wrote this word *Telos* at the close of their books, the Latins wrote *Finis*, and we write *The End*. We turn over the next leaf, and there is nothing.

It is even so in this Dispensation, in which the Spirit of truth has revealed the things of Christ. This is why " that which is perfect has come." We cannot get beyond Christ. We have a perfect conscience because we have Him as a perfect sacrifice (Heb. x. 1, 2). We have come to the end of all objects for the heart, because we have Christ (Phil. iii. 10); and our one object now is to get to know Him.

Instead of striving to reach perfection, we know that we are already perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. i. 28), and can never have perfection in the flesh (Gal. iii. 3). Instead of striving to make ourselves meet for the presence of God, we are continually giving Him thanks because He hath Himself already done it, and made us meet in all His own perfect workmanship—in Christ—for our entrance into the inheritance in the light (Col. i. 12). We are not engaged in interminable controversy about ordinances, because we are " complete in Him " and know that nothing done by hands can add to what is complete (Col. ii. 10-20).

All these are the " things of Christ " which the Spirit of Truth was to " shew," John xvi. 15. These are the " things to come " that He was to reveal, for they had not come in the Dispensation of the Son of Man, nor in that of the Acts of the Apostles. But, thank God ! our lot is cast in a day when " that which is perfect " has come. But how has He shown them ? Where are we to see them ?

These questions are already answered, in part, in the Scriptures just quoted above. They are all from these Epistles, written from his prison in Rome by the apostle Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for us Gentiles, to whom

the good news of God's salvation has been sent, after being formally rejected by Israel (Acts xxviii. 17-28).

These Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and 2 Timothy) belong in a special manner to the present Dispensation, the Dispensation of the Mystery. These contain " all the truth " into which the " Spirit of truth " was to guide. There is nothing of these " things of Christ " to be found in the Four Gospels, or in the Acts of the Apostles. The Lord Himself declared that they could not be then spoken by Himself. Here, and here alone, are they shown to us.

They are revealed, not by the prophets of the Old Testament, not by his Son, not by those who heard Him and confirmed His words, but by the Spirit of Truth, and by the special instrument God has raised up to be used for this purpose, even the prisoner Paul, to whom, " by revelation," God made known the secret, and the Dispensation of the grace of God which was given him to us-ward (Eph. iii. 2, 3).

To him, and to the prophets of the New Testament (an order specially raised up for this purpose),[1] the Spirit of Truth revealed these " things of Christ " ; and by Him they were written down for our learning.

The apostle Paul may have known of this great secret before. He may even have mentioned it " in secret " (1 Cor. ii. 7, Gr. *en musteriō*) and as a secret still ; and among those who were initiated (for that is the meaning of the word " perfect " in 1 Cor. ii. 6) ; but he had not formally committed it to writing, made it known to all the Gentiles for the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 26 ; 1 Tim. iii. 16).

He passed this ministry on to Timothy, his own son in the faith. He intimates how that this ministry had brought him into great trouble with those who did not

[1] Eph. iv. 11—these were appointed after His Ascension (verse 8).

receive the secret he was commissioned to make known to them. Hence he warns Timothy not to be ashamed, not to have any "fear of man"[1] in this matter, for "I am not ashamed" he says (2 Tim. i. 12).

In this context Paul states categorically that he was appointed a herald, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles[2] (verse 11); and again plainly says that it was "for this cause I suffer these things also" (verse 11). But the most important part of this statement is in verse 8, where he puts his own testimony on the same level as the testimony of our Lord. He says, "Be not thou, therefore, ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,

NOR OF ME HIS PRISONER."

He could say this, because the same God Who spoke through His Son spoke by "the Spirit of truth" through Paul. Their testimony has the same Divine source and both come to us with the same Divine authority. Christ could say, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His That sent Me" (John vii. 16); and Paul could say exactly the same.

It is this fact that gives these Pauline Epistles their great importance. Some who refuse to acknowledge the Dispensation of the Mystery affect to make light of the Epistles. Indeed this is the very reason of the great enemy's hatred of this special truth. It lies at the foundation of the "gospel (or good news) of the glory of Christ." This enmity is shown in the recent movement of the modern religious world, which is striving to exalt what it calls "the teaching of Jesus" to the exclusion of all else. Not that they desire this teaching. They pick and choose what they can take out (without the context), and what they reject, for the same reason that the Jews sought to stone Him, and many of His disciples went back from Him.

[1] For this is the meaning of the word *deilia*, timidity, arising from the fear of man (2 Tim. i. 7).

[2] Some MSS. omit the words "of the Gentiles." Tischendorf, Westcott and Hort, and the R.V. do so.

No! it is Satan's device for belittling what they thus designate *the teaching of Paul*. They pretend to accept what God spake by His Son, while they deny that the same God spake by Paul. This verse, therefore (2 Tim. i. 8), is of the utmost importance in helping us to distinguish the Dispensations which differ.

It may be noted that these so-called " Pastoral Epistles " must be taken as covering part of both Dispensations. During that of the Acts, assemblies were gathered together in different places, and instruction was given as to the offices in them, and the ministers, both as to their character, qualifications, and duties. No one can say how all this would have developed had the testimony of them that heard the Lord been accepted, and the miraculous witness of the Holy Ghost been heeded. What we have to do is to note that just as the Jews rejected the witness of the Holy Ghost as to Peter's call, so Gentile believers rejected Paul's testimony as to the Mystery.

In the apostle's own life-time the most spiritual of all the assemblies (Ephesus) " turned away from " him (2 Tim. i. 15). Some used to tell us to go back to the first three centuries to find pure Christianity. In our day it has come to " the first six centuries," so steep is the gradient of the down grade! But our answer is that *we cannot go back to the first century* ; for the very assembly (Ephesus) which received his longest ministry (three years), " so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the words of the Lord Jesus " (Acts xix. 10), were the first to turn away from him and his teaching.

No wonder that he speaks in 2 Tim. i. of his suffering, and " the afflictions of the gospel," and of the grace which took away the fear of man, and made him not ashamed of his work as God's workman (2 Tim. ii. 15).

All this shows us the importance of rightly dividing the Word of truth. It is given by " the Spirit of truth," and unless we obey the precept we shall not see the truth

which He shows to us. We must not take the Epistles written during the Dispensation of the Acts of the Apostles (1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Corinthians; and Galatians and Romans), and read them into the present Dispensation; at any rate not as to their laws and ordinances, where Jews and Gentiles are regarded as distinct.

In the present Dispensation of the Mystery the wall of partition is broken down and removed, and both Jew and Gentile are one in Christ Jesus. True, the Epistle to the Romans was written just before the events in Acts xxviii. took place, at the end of that Dispensation; therefore in it we find the foundations of the doctrines of the Mystery well and truly laid, while the concluding verses introduce us straightway to the Epistles where the revelation is at length fully and plainly shown forth by " the Spirit of truth."

If we must not read the Epistles of the Acts Dispensation into the present Dispensation of the Mystery, neither may we read the Prison Epistles into that or any of the former Dispensations. At least we cannot do so without inextricable confusion. We shall be like those who are ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. We shall be a prey to any new wind of doctrine that may arise, or be carried away with any new device to draw us aside from the truth. We shall be in perpetual controversy about churches or ordinances or men and their different or opposing teachings.

On the other hand, if we are clear as to the great foundations of Dispensational truth and teaching, our feet will be on a rock, and we shall be safe and secure, and unmoved by all the changes taking place around us. True, we shall suffer, as Paul did; we shall know something of the afflictions of the gospel; but like him we shall not be ashamed, for we shall know Him Whom we have believed, and be sure that He will keep secure the blessed " deposit " which He has committed to our faith.

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