



OF THE

### HOLY GHOST.

BY

J. E. B.

#### LONDON:

ROBERT L. ALLAN, 15 PATERNOSTER ROW;

AND 73 SAUCHIEHALL STREET, GLASGOW.

DUBLIN: TRACT DEPOT, 13 WESTLAND ROW.

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#### ACTINGS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

THE presence and operation of the Spirit occupy the foreground, whenever God comes forth to manifest His wisdom and power to those around Him.

In creation "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep;" and over this mighty chaos "the Spirit of God moved," yea brooded "upon the face of the waters," to bring forth the heavens and the earth in their original beauty and glory. God pronounced all to be very good and suited to Himself, and the Adam who was with Him in His own image. The primitive and unfallen creation, where God and the man and the woman once were together, has been broken up by sin and the fall—and in the history of creation and its worlds, we only know that world as the world before the flood. The world that now is, becomes remarkable to us by the Incarnation, or the great mystery of godliness—"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Previous to the introduction of the Saviour, which is Christ the Lord, into the city of David, we are taught that the Holy Ghost moved again over this moral chaos and ruin; as Luke describes the vast scene, which was then without form and void before God. The Spirit of God that originally "moved upon the face of the waters" here moves and takes possession of chosen vessels from amongst men and women, to carry out the new creative power and wisdom of God in redemption. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," when the foundations were laid, and the corner stones fastened of the material creation. Now that God's nobler purposes in connection with the Second Man are coming forth, the angel of His presence is sent down to Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth, respecting their child who was to be born. John was filled with the Holy Ghost, from his mother's womb to be qualified as the forerunner of the Lord. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to another chosen vessel, announcing to Mary, that "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

John, the greatest of those who are born of women, the prophet of the Highest—and Jesus, the Son of the Highest, to whom is given the throne of David, and the kingdom for ever—take their places in the midst of a world when it was going up to be taxed, under the decree of Cesar Augustus. "The glory of the Lord" brings in this little babe, this son of the virgin, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and delivers Him forth as heaven's

choicest gift to the earth, accompanied by the angel's song. The Holy Ghost too, as the Spirit of prophecy, proclaims by the loosened tongue of Zacharias, the prospects of the people of Jehovah's covenant, through the ministry of the forerunner and his Lord, in the midst of Israel.

Further, the Holy Ghost moves the hearts of Mary and Elisabeth to celebrate the praises of God in the respective outbursts of their joy. Simeon, too, in the temple of Jerusalem, with the child in his arms (the Incarnate One), is inspired to shew forth His praises—for "it was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ."

It is precious to witness these chosen vessels from amongst men and women below, indwelt or acted on by the Holy Ghost, and thus brought into perfect harmony with the mind and thoughts of God. The earth and the heavens are for a moment united by the Incarnate One, through these activities of the Spirit moving across the confusion and desolation which enveloped the inhabited world. The gospel of Luke shows us, after these broodings and movings of the Holy Ghost, which the opening chapters detail, that finally the Spirit settled Himself, in a bodily shape, like a dove upon Jesus, and there abode. The beginning of the gospel narrative is bright with the birth of Christ, and with the annunciation to sinners, that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The close of each gospel is darkened by the narrative of Christ's rejection and final crucifixion and sepulchre. The love of God which gave forth the Son from His bosom, has been answered, alas! by the enmity of mankind, which refused this unspeakable gift, and cast him out of the vineyard and slew Him, and seized upon the inheritance.

Another and a deeper chaos has been thus produced at the Cross by the wickedness of the devil and the sons of men, against this display of God, in His goodness and love. We have now to learn another lesson in the Acts, "That where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," and see how this mighty confederation between the hosts of hell and of this world, against God and His anointed, has been met and turned round for the glory of God, and of His Christ and the redeemed.

The Holy Ghost's presence on earth consequent upon the rejection of Christ by the world, must truly be in righteousness as the Convicter and Reprover; but acting beyond this, in sovereign power and grace, as the Quickener of those who are thus dead in trespasses and sins. It is in this divine power of life He is come down from above, sent forth again from the Father and the Son at Pentecost, to act in the midst of a lost and condemned world. Redemption by the precious blood of Christ on the cross—the resurrection of Christ from the dead by the glory of the Father—His exaltation to the throne in the heavens, as Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body—and the Holy Ghost

sent down to quicken and baptize the members of Christ into one Body—are the new foundations which God has laid, and the eternal corner stones which He has now fastened, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. These facts necessarily connect the Acts with the four gospels, and with the four Evangelists who have been moved by the Holy Ghost to open out to us the various glories of the Person of the Messiah to Israel—the Son of man in the world, the servant of God in the midst of men, and the eternal Son or the Word that was in the beginning with God, and who was God. Like the river of Eden that went out to water the garden of God, and from thence was parted, and became into four heads, flowing and revealing in its depths the gold and the bdellium, and the onyx stones—so Matthew and Mark, Luke and John, present to us the fourfold relations of the Word made flesh. The heavens gave the Incarnate One to the earth, in the beginning of the mystery of God-but in its fulfilments the earth has given back the risen Son of man, as a new centre for the heavens.

It is from the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that the counsels and purposes which were foreordained in Christ, from before the foundation of the world, can now take their rise and flow forth in wide-spread blessing. That eternal life which was with the Father, has been manifested to us, and the waters of life from the fulness of Christ, are supplied by the Holy Ghost since Pentecost, in the Acts, to vessels chosen

of God to receive this living water, that it may be in them a well of water springing up into life everlasting.

It is in this enclosure—this present garden of God, that the woman, the mystic Eve, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is being formed for the second Adam, while he is hidden with God in the heavens. In the record of the book of the Acts, we shall also see plants and trees of God's right-hand planting, whose leaves will finally be for the healing of the nations. We shall also see men and women brought by quickening power into union with the risen and glorified man in life and righteousness, the beginning and head of the new creation of God.

The Holy Ghost as the glorifier of Christ in the Acts, connects, as we have said, the four gospels, as well as the earlier prophecies and types, with the Jesus-Emmanuel, to whom He bears witness. On the other hand, all the Epistles that follow are but the accomplishment to us of the Lord's promise, that when the Spirit of truth was come, He should guide us into all truth, for He shall take of mine and shew it unto you. The Father, who has been thus glorified by the Son, has also crowned Him with glory, and set Him over all the works of His hands. Moreover, God, who once commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath now shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. With this light in the heart from on high, and under

the unction of the Holy Ghost which we have received, and which abideth with us—let us now open the book of Acts.

Most are aware, that it is necessary to connect the end of the Gospel of Luke with the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, in order to see what the full circle of blessing is into which we are brought, consequent on Christ's rising up out of the place of judgment; and being carried into the heavens, to sit on the right hand of God. Moreover, as to this earth, Jesus had shown Himself alive after His passion, and was seen of the disciples forty days, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," while He continued with them. By His work for God when on the cross, and over Satan in the grave, He laid the new foundations of another creation, upon the sure basis of redemption; and as the risen Lord upon it, took possession of the world as it is, in the righteous title of resurrection, previous to His ascension into the heavens, as the rejected One-though the appointed heir of all things.

At a yet future day, when He comes in His glory, and the glory of His Father, and the glory of His holy angels, He will assert this title by resurrection power; and deliver a groaning creation "from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory, of the children of God." In the meanwhile the Bethany upon earth is broken up, and that spot, which was once the brightest

to His heart, and contained the objects of His love, is turned into the house of mourning and sorrow. He only "drinks of the brook by the way," and anointed there by Mary, "for the day of His burying," passes onward into death, that He may found their new associations with Himself, in life and resurrection, on the other side of sin and death, and the entire judgment of God upon the flesh, and the world, and Satan.

Bethany, therefore, becomes the point of His departure—and He leads His own out to it, to connect them with Himself as taken up out of their sight, for all that lay beyond: in the home of His own heart with the Father, and in the Father's house. "It came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." All that is left them upon earth is now the upper room, in the city of Jerusalem, which had cast Him out. What was that upper-room and all that it contained to HIM? Christ the first fruits, gone up to God, even the Father; and they "a kind of first fruits of His creatures" below, standing in grace; and waiting for the promise of the Father which, saith He, ye have heard of Me-"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence."

The day in which He was taken up, and the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down and took possession of the house where the elect of God were assembled, and sat upon each of them—mark the changes, and reveal the hidden sources of life and bless-

ing about to be opened out, between the heavens and the earth. The Holy Ghost, in the dispensational ways of God, fills up the interval between the rejection of Christ and the second coming of the Lord. The objects of His mission are, to glorify the Father and the Son, as the indwelling Spirit, in those who are Christ's: and as the Spirit of adoption, and the Comforter, to witness to us of the relations in which we are set with the Father, through the Son of His love; so that our hearts should be, during Christ's absence, without a trouble or He also operates in us, that we may be brought into unclouded communion with the Father and the Son, in the consciousness of a peace which passeth all understanding, and a joy which the world can neither give nor take away. The Holy Ghost on earth is likewise the evidence or witness against the world; and of the sin of those who dwell in it, who cast out Christ and killed Him.

It is these actings of the Holy Ghost below, in correspondence with the new revelation of the counsels of God, with the risen and the exalted Son of man on high, that bring out Satan, in fresh opposition and enmity, upon this scene of the Holy Ghost's presence and power. This was manifested in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in the gathered assembly, whose hearts Satan filled to lie unto the Holy Ghost; and afterwards, in the relentless persecution which pursued the Apostles to prisons and to martyrdom. He repeats what He did when he headed the world's rebellion

against God, while Christ was upon the earth. It is important to see, that if Satan was still more active in corrupting the human heart, God more fully maintained His own holiness, though by judgment.

This began at His own house (how different to Eden), and the man and the woman who had committed this new sin of "lying to the Holy Ghost," were carried out dead. Likewise where faithfulness in testimony to God, and to the risen Christ and Lord, led to the inner prison and the stocks, the Holy Ghost could and did put the souls of the suffering witnesses into such correspondence with the heart of Christ, for sympathy and succour, and with the glorified Lord, in the place where He was, as to bring forth nothing but praises at midnight unto God. Or if stoned as Stephen, the Holy Ghost so filled and took possession of the vessel, as to make the joy of departure to be with the Lord the one governing power; and if there were a second, it was to spend the last thought upon His murderers, "Lay not this sin to their charge."

It will also be seen, that though Jerusalem was the starting point of the Holy Ghost's actings, in full recognition that "the city of the great King" is the proper and unchanging centre of God's carthly order (and recognized as such by James and others for a while), yet centralization, in connection with the church of the living God, must be transferred to the heavens; in association with the ascended and glorified Lord, the first-begotten from the dead, and Head of the Church,

which is His body, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." Consequent on such a change, the Holy Ghost gathers the members of Christ into this oneness, out of the nation of Israel, first by Peter—so that three thousand gave up the hopes of a Jew upon earth, for a standing with the risen Man in glory above; and were consequently baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. This three thousand likewise received the gift of the Holy Ghost, "saved themselves out of that untoward generation;" and were added to the new company, who "continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

In Acts iii. the Holy Ghost by Peter still presents to the men of Israel their prophetic hope, but connecting it with the repentance of the nation as such—"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you." The difference between the three thousand gathered to the rejected Lord, in His absence from Jerusalem; and the untoward generation, addressed by the hope of the presence of the Lord (sent back again), and the times of restitution for Israel, shew these two standings. first is the church position; and the last the kingdom hope. Peter had the keys of the latter, but was a living stone in the former. Beside these, Peter was commissioned to open the door to Cornelius, when the time was come for God to add the Gentiles of Cæsarea to the believing Jews in Judea; and this forms the third part of Peter's apostleship, as instructed by the sheet "let down from heaven." The varied character of this testimony is full of interest, if we would understand the ways of God on earth at Pentecost.

Next to Peter comes Stephen, who makes his appeal to the nation upon a different ground, and with another object. Peter was occupied with the Holy Ghost's presence, and witness to the risen Christ and Lord, as a converting testimony—whereas Stephen appeals to their conscience, and opens out their history from the point where "the God of glory appeared to Abraham," to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, as the proof that they always resisted God-"as your fathers did, so do ye." Stephen's was a convicting testimony—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears." Their fathers had received the law by the disposition of angels, and had not kept it; they had killed the prophets who shewed before of the coming of the Just One—and these had been the betrayers and murderers of Christ Himself, and now resisted the Holy Ghost. When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. Jehovah had been rejected "that He should not be their king," in the days of Samuel. The Messiah had been refused in the person of Jesus at incarnation, and crucified at the cross. Denied afresh, when presented by the Holy Ghost through Peter as Lord and Christ in

heaven, or, as to bring in the times of refreshing, by His second coming on the nation's repentance. There yet remained the resistance of the Holy Ghost, as their crowning sin, in the martyrdom of Stephen, which they now commit by stoning him.

The land of Judea and the city of Jerusalem have done their worst, and closed up their hopes in darkness. The veil is judicially cast upon the heart of this people till they shall turn to the Lord. Other fields are ripening to harvest, as the Lord of the harvest had said to His disciples when talking with the woman of Moreover, the despised mountain and its people were remembered when the Lord said at parting, "Ye shall be witnesses to me, not only in Judea but in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth." Philip is the vessel chosen for this ministry, and he went down and preached Christ unto them-" And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did," and there was great joy in that city. Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, "laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Thus the power and grace from the risen and glorified Lord was introduced for "the casting out the unclean spirits from those who were possessed by them "-and for the bestowal of the Holy Ghost upon those who believed in Christ, and

Philip is were thus associated with Him in blessing. thence directed by the Spirit of the Lord to Gaza, which was desert, to bring in one from "the uttermost parts of the earth "-an Ethiopian, under Candace, the queen of that country. Philip joined himself to the chariot, and found him reading the prophet Esaias; and beginning at the same scripture, preached unto him "Jesus." This is an important fact, as bringing forward an evidence from the ends of the earth, of the sufficiency of the Old Testament prophecies, to lead a person to identify Jesus and the Messiah, as the Lamb of Godin condemnation of the untoward generation, who boasted in the possession of these scriptures, but only to fulfil them in rejecting Him. It will be remembered that Jesus said to the nation in His ministry, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it;" also, the queen of the south—"for she came from the uttermost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon." But now an Ethiopian closes up their condemnation, in this wonderful scripture of Isaiah liii., by his simple confession of a greater than Jonas, and a greater than Solomon. Upon this the eunuch and Philip went down both into the water, and he baptized him-an acceptance of the judgment of God as closing up in death all that man is below; and the rising up out of the judgment, to what the Son of man is at the right hand of God, in righteousness and glory. they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the

Lord caught away Philip. Wisdom has been again justified of her children, "for he was cut off, out of the land of the living."

Instructive as the testimonies and work of Peter and Stephen and Philip have been in clearing the way for the introduction "of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," there yet remain some important facts which form the new ground of testimony, which is to Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost upon earth, "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Upon this, the people cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city and stoned him." The Lord in heaven, Son of man in glory, whom Stephen saw, identified Himself with His suffering witness; and said to the man breathing out threatenings and slaughter, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

Responsibility is closed up, by such acts as these, between Jehovah and the nation of Israel; and wrath must come upon them to the uttermost. Paul does not say as Peter did, "Repent, that the times of refreshing may come, and He will send Jesus," etc., but takes his place in the synagogue at Antioch, and after the reading of the law and the prophets, "stood up and, beckoning with his hand, said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience." He then gives an outline of the exaltation of the people, when God

brought them out of Egypt, with a high hand—suffering their manners in the wilderness—giving them judges, by the space of four hundred and fifty years then superseding judges, for the Prophet Samuel-and setting aside the prophet for a king, whom God gave to them (in His anger, and took him away in His wrath). When He had removed him, He raised up David, to whom also He gave testimony, and said, "I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart; he shall fulfil all my will." Of this man's seed hath God raised unto Israel a Saviour-Jesus-and we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same in the Christ whom they had slain, but whom God had raised again from the dead. The nation has lost Him, though the promises and the sure mercies of David are given out afresh to them; not now in an incarnate Messiah-but made sure for another day, in a risen Christ and glorified Lord. Meanwhile, all that believe in Him are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses; and form part, like Paul, of the remnant of Israel, "according to the election of grace;" and are one (not in Messiah hopes, but) with the Son of man in glory, at the right hand of God, to whom Stephen went. The Lord appears to Paul in a light above the brightness of the sun, and makes him a pattern-man of the grace which had come down to save and to make him a witness of the glory of Christ on high, with whom the

God of all grace had associated him. Christianity, we may say, began when Christ was upon earth, as the rejected One; and the church, when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven at Pentecost; while the distinctions between Jew and Greek still existed, as Peter's ministry in Jerusalem and Cæsarea have shewn.

The old governmental relations between heaven and earth were about to be broken up or suspended, by the refusal by Jerusalem of what God gave to distinguish the nation. Christ was rejected, and Jehovah in Him, at the cross; and now God and Christ are refused afresh, in the person of the Holy Ghost, in Stephen.

The people of Israel have nothing further to sin against, though they will consummate this iniquity in owning the Antichrist—that "other," of whom their Messiah spoke, who should come in his own name, and whom they will receive, in the last days.

Dispensational distinctions below are at an end, and the differences between man and man are gone with them. This Jesus, made both Lord and Christ, takes His new place in addition, as "Son of man in glory, at the right hand of God," where there is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." It is to this new place of the Son of God, as man, that Paul is the alone witness—and correspondingly, the Lord gives him a commission for himself; not even associating him with the twelve, who received their instructions and authority from Christ, before He took this new place in heaven. These vary-

ing commissions are of interest, before we pass on. That which Jesus quoted for Himself from Isaiah (in Luke iv.), when He began to preach, and found the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," contains these words, "recovering of sight to the blind," etc. This ministry recognized the relation in which the people of Israel then stood to Jehovah, and their state at that time. "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed," etc. Consistently with this condition, their Messiah had come "to recover sight to the blind," etc. This could not be said of a Gentile, for he never saw according to God—and indeed when the risen Messiah, Lord, and Son of man in glory, gave forth a new commission to Paul (outside all prophecy), He says of the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in me." Perhaps this is one characteristic of what Paul calls "my gospel." though it is by no means the only one, nor the chief.

But to return. Consequent upon these changes, governmentally and dispensationally, below; and the new place in which the glorified Lord, Son of man, stood in heaven; and the new commission to Paul when Jesus appeared to him "to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee"—the

Holy Ghost becomes migratory in His work, and takes Antioch as a new starting point. Now, there were in the church which was at Antioch, certain prophets and teachers; and as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." We have seen Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria travelled over by the apostles, and some from the uttermost parts of the earth gathered in-for the time was come for Israel to be broken out of the olive tree, and the Gentiles to be graffed in. "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia, and from thence they sailed to Cyprus." Finally, the capital of the Holy Land, as such, is abandoned by Jehovah, and given over "to be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," when, prophetically, "the Redeemer shall come again to Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob, and so all Israel shall be saved."

Instead of Jerusalem, the city of Rome—that great capital of the Cæsars, and of Gentile power—is brought into view (Acts xxiii. 11), and takes its place as identified with Christianity, and with the Holy Ghost's ministry. The Son of man in glory, at the right hand of God, and the accomplished work of Christ on the cross, are the two new centres of God's action: by this, He gathers sinners out of the standing where they were, to Himself; and by that, He gathers the redeemed into the standing of life and righteousness and glory, where the Second Man is—with God on high. New

positions like these, in heaven and earth, constitute the beginning of another creation. God has provided a ground of action for Himself, in the Son of His own love; and, accepting no other rule, reveals Himself in the light of that work of Christ, which has glorified Him. Paul is separated unto this gospel of God, and sent out to proclaim the glad tidings from heaven, concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, raised from the dead, and declared to be the Son of God with power, for "obedience of faith among all the nations, in behalf of His name." Such are the glad tidings announced in the great capital of the Roman Empire, and to Gentiles.

Whilst tracing the migratory character of the Holy Ghost's pathway from Jerusalem to Antioch, and the varying nature of the work whereunto He calls Barnabas and Saul; it is necessary to observe the connection between Antioch and Jerusalem, and between Paul, and Peter, and James, as the apostles of the Lord. Acts xv. gives us the account of the introduction of that early and deadly leaven, which tainted pure Christianity at the first, and has since corrupted it.

Certain men came down from Judea, and taught the brethren "the manner of Moses," as necessary to their salvation—and produced no small dissension and disputation in that day. The questions of "the flesh," and "the law," and "Moses," or "ye cannot be saved," are as rampant as ever: only, that Aaron and sacraments (necessary in the form of confirmation and sanctity) are superadded in Christendom. Paul and

Barnabas, with certain others, went up to Jerusalem to consider the matter, but "the sect of the Pharisecs which believed," insisted it was needful to circumcise (these Gentiles), and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

Those who plead for apostolic authority would do well to bow to James and others upon the matters in dispute, "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God; but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols," etc.—to which they had been addicted. No doubt, even the flesh can pollute itselfbut could Moses and Aaron, and ritualism, perpetuate "the purifying of the flesh," in order to be saved; after God had condemned sin in the flesh at the cross of Christ, and brought out Paul as a witness to the new place the risen Son of man had ascended to, in the glory, on the other side of sin and death, and the judgment of God? Moses of old time, and man in the flesh, and Judaism are on one side; and God, and Christ, and Christianity on the other. The issue is, that certain things are still needful for man to do to be saved; or else man is saved by what another (the Lord Jesus Christ) has done—and God free to glorify the believer, according to the only standing man is in with Himself in the glory, at His own right hand! Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company with Paul and Barnabas; but fraternization between Jews

and Gentiles upon their differences and disputations, whether then or now, must not be confounded with "the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace." The cross of Christ shews man lost, and man saved; and further, that the middle-wall of partition which created the enmity and strife is broken down, so making peace: the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us and contrary to us, is blotted out—all is taken out of the way in Christ, "nailing it to His cross."

How little, in these respects, is the cross of Christ understood in our day; or else, how much denied. The annunciation of this liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, was part of Paul's ministry; and was introduced to Jews and Gentiles at Ephesus, Colosse, and Corinth, and made characteristic of that unity into which we are all baptized by the Holy Ghost.

"There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Satan follows on, wherever this work extends, and—as the old enemy of God and man; and now the renewed enemy of the glorified Christ, and Lord on high; and of the Holy Ghost here below—seeks to corrupt from the simplicity that is in Christ. His first attack was upon Ananias and Sapphira, as we have noticed in Jerusalem—by whose sin he brought God into the place of judging His house. Another effort was at Samaria, where Simon Magus coveted the power given to the apostles,

and offered them money, saying, "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands he may receive the Holy Ghost." But Satan—successful in one case, through the man and the woman, who kept back part of the price of the land; and unsuccessful, when Peter said to Simon Magus, "Thy money perish with thee, I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity"—now brings in another of his wiles to try Paul. This new attempt was at Paphos, where the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, desired to hear the Word of God. But a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-Jesus, withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from "the faith." But Paul, filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, "Oh! full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, will thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord; and now, behold the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind, not seeing the sun for a season." Thwarted in his effort to turn away from the faith, he next endeavours to accredit the testimony at Thyatira, by a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination, who brought her masters much gain through soothsaying. She followed Paul and others, saying, These be the servants of the most High God, who shew unto us the way of salvation. Paul, being grieved, turned, and commanded the evil spirit, in the name of Jesus Christ, to come out of her, and he came out the same hour.

Foiled in this effort, the only thing remaining for Satan is to discredit the testimony. This he seeks to do by certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, who took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." And the evil spirit said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was, leaped on them, so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. God, who opened the prisondoors and loosened the feet of them that were fast bound with fetters—His witnesses suffering under the power of this world (when delegated by Him to the high priests, magistrates, and kings of the earth), takes care likewise of this new testimony, maintained by the Holy Ghost, so that the name of the Lord Jesus was magni-Satan, following God in His actings, has no alternative but, in the end, to outwit himself. This he did at the cross, and sepulchre of Christ; and this he repeats, in his opposition to the testimony brought out to the Son of man in glory, and the wrath of man is made to praise God.

Before leaving this chapter xix, it is well to see this over-ruling power of God in relation to the devil, and all human wickedness and rage; for many of the Jews and Greeks who believed, came and confessed, and shewed their deeds, and burnt their books. Nor should this be overlooked on another account, for these actings of the Holy Ghost, and the migratory character of His

work, have carried us outside Judaism and religious men into Gentilism, with its ancient philosophy and idolatry. The old distinction remains to this day; "the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Paul visits Athens—its Areopagus, crowded by the Stoics and Epicureans, philosophers of that day —and appeals to them from the altar in their midst, "to the unknown God." Alas! the highest philosophy only leads the human mind back into what is speculative, and lands it in the region of the unknown. Ephesus, too, with her great goddess Diana, and her worshippers, raises a tumult against Paul; who throughout Asia had turned away much people, saying, "That they be no gods which are made with hands." Diana must not be despised, her temple forsaken, nor her magnificence (whom all Asia and the world worshippeth), to make room for this glorified Son of man in heaven, whom God hath raised from out of the dead! The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. Many accepting this new test between God and man, and only knowing Christ as "the wisdom" of God, or "righteousness" for man, brought their books (both Jews and Greeks) together, and burned them before all men, and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. A new testimony this to the supremacy of the known God, and the excellency of the risen Christ and Lord, through whom He is made known!

Thus we have been led to look at all existing classes of

men under the heaven, in the light of the grace of God, which calls Jews and Gentiles to Himself through this Christ. The wise and the unwise, those who were nigh and those who were afar off, idolaters or Pharisees, are free, by faith in the crucified and exalted One, to enter into the new fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Holy Ghost has come down to testify of life and redemption by the blood of Christ, to every man that believeth; and of resurrection, into the image of the heavenly man, when the Lord comes a second time without sin unto salvation.

It is against this wonderful revelation of God in Christ, which has broken in upon the darkness of this present world, from the Son of man in glory at the right hand of God, that the devil's enmity is set. His artifices against the testimony have been exposed, and his persecuting rage against the witnesses. But it is well to observe further, that if he has a prison for an apostle, he has also a house of bondage (for the bewitched Galatians of this day, a generation, with its beggarly elements, which has never passed away), and a great one, in which he keeps securely those who yet cling to the worship and law of Moses, and the priestly patterns of Aaron, and a wordly sanctuary. The Lord give His beloved to see and own the blessed liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, that they may be able to rejoice in the Lord, and not be entangled henceforth in the yoke of bondage!

The philosophy of an ancient or a modern Athens

still maintains its place over the cultivated nations of Gentilism. The idolatry, whether of Diana or of the Virgin Mary, spreads itself over Europe and Asia; and an attenuated Judaism, added to a corrupted Christianity, form what is called the Evangelicalism of the rest of the world, which concentrates itself in Christendom; and is maintained by its Eastern and Western national establishments. Wheat and tares grow together till the harvest, but in the time of harvest Jesus said, "I will say to the reapers (angels), Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn." The enemy that sowed these tares is the devil.

But we will follow Satan and his work no further. He was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Let us turn again to the actings of the Holy Ghost, and follow Paul, who not only closes up the historical narrative, but also by revelation completes the Word of God. The mystery which had been hidden from ages and from generations has now been made manifest to His saints, to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Precious deposit given to a servant of God on earth, a witness to what and where the Son of man had been raised in glory—and to make known the grace that unites us to Him in all that He is; the apostle labouring also to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

If Satan and his emissaries were active in opposition, God is, in the Holy Ghost power, calling out from the Gentiles a people for Himself, and connecting men with His work, "labourers together with God," in God's husbandry and in God's building—partakers of the grace which gathers into the glory. What a new place for man in this world, both as to testimony and service; and so Paul understood it, when he sent to Ephesus, and called around him the elders of the assembly of God; a sample of the other assemblies from amongst the nations—and charged them as the Holy Ghost's bishops.

Samuel in his day followed the pattern of Moses and Joshua, when he said to all Israel, "Behold, here I am. Witness against me before the Lord, and before His Anointed-whose ox have I taken, or whose ass, or whom have I defrauded, whom have I oppressed, or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith, and I will restore it to you." For the course of things flowed chiefly in a moral channel in earlier days, and very, very refreshing it is in a time of moral deterioration to drink the pure waters at such a spring-head as this! But Paul's witness must of necessity go far beyond Samuel's; and so he says to this new company, one with Christ, the rejected One of this earth, "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel: yea, you yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that

so labouring, ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." Streams in the desert, we may well say, as our apostle discloses to us that the secret of his Nazarite strength lies in the secret of the person of his Lord, and in the spirit and life of the words He spoke.

But Paul was more than a man in their midst. He takes these elders as his witnesses on behalf of God, whose servant he was, and said, "Ye know from the first day that I came into Asia after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations-and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you—testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Beyond this do we consider as we ought the testimony of the Holy Ghost to this servant of Christ, of a still further opportunity of conformity to his Lord? "And now behold I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem (for the city had again become a harlot), not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." Once more, and upon

another matter, he takes these elders "to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men (another faithful and sure witness below, as there is in his prototype above), for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Paul has opened up to these elders how his own heart was identified with what was so dear to God, and to the heart of Christ, and now seeks to connect theirs and others with "the things that are Jesus Christ's." "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with the blood of His own; and now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified." Having brought them to the sufficiency of the gathering power, for what that power gathers to itself; he finally casts them thus upon the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, where he himself was-the unfailing springs, upper and nether, for the whole assembly of God.

In faithful love, he adds another and a different word as to the power of the flesh, when allowed to produce declension and division; and speaks of these last times, and their character, in which our lot is cast—for he then saw the lion, and the thief, and the hireling, waiting and watching for the prey (though outside the sheep and the flock). "For I know this, that after my

departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all, and they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him." This statement at Ephesus of the apostle's doctrine, and of his ministry and his manner amongst them, as well as of their identification and joy in the glorified Lord, and Head of the Body, His Bride, is necessary as showing what Paul did, wherever he went, as a builder or a steward of the mysteries of God; one who had nothing, and yet possessed all things; who was truly poor, yet making many rich: "and they accompanied him to the ship."

This is, perhaps, the brightest part of Paul's history. Certain it is, that the close of Acts xx. is like a fruitful field in the midst of this wilderness; or as a garden of spices which sends forth its fragrance across a dry and thirsty world. We may think that even in the following chapter he does not accredit himself as a faithful witness in the midst of Jerusalem, with James and the elders of that city, in the same way as he had done at Ephesus and its elders.

It is with the facts we have to do; but the Lord knoweth the hearts, and the facts are these. James, and Jerusalem, and the many thousands of Jews which believed, and were zealous for the law, must needs come together; for, as James said to Paul, "They will hear that thou art come."

Fraternization, or perhaps a fusion of Jews and Greeks, was the object at Jerusalem, and of James, as we noticed in chapter xv.; and now see again, in this chapter xxi., "Do therefore this that we say to thee. We have found four men which have a vow upon them, them take and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads, and all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing."

Years before this there was no small disputation and discussion on this matter, on account of which Paul went up to Jerusalem to enquire of them which were apostles before him; but now he has no question with James, nor James with him, and accepts the counsel given by those who dwelt there. He goes into the temple, but only to fill it with tumult—is drawn out of it, and the doors were shut, but Jerusalem becomes the door to Rome. So when the tumult and conspiracy were at their height, the night following "the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." He defends himself, and appeals to Casar. On his way, he is heard and examined by Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; and finally, sent a prisoner to Rome. These opportunities for testimony are accepted by Paul, as the Lord had spoken to

Ananias, "Go thy way, for He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel."

This opens out to us the other side of Paul's gospel to the nations—not what it gathered to, but who they were that were gathered. Here it is important to notice the difference between a Jew, who made his boast of God, and rested in the law, and knew His will, etc.; and a Gentile, who had not the law, and walked in the vanity of his mind, having the understanding darkened, and who, being past feeling, gave himself over unto lasciviousness—to work all uncleanness with greediness. He is brought into the presence of two such, a man and a woman—and these in place and power among the Gentiles.

Felix, a profligate ruler, and Drusilla, an abandoned and an apostate Jewess, his wife, sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. The gospel committed to Paul enables him to be before these "sinners of the Gentiles," as a pattern of the longsuffering of God to the chief of sinners. He does not require "the sheet" like Peter, to authorize him to go to one of another nation; and that one, like Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feared God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews. Reasoning at once (as indeed he does in the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Romans) of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, the conscience of the profligate is reached by God, "and Felix trembled," but said, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a con-

venient season I will call for thee." This is the first type of a class amongst the Gentiles, and indeed of a generation sunk in their sins; and though convicted, going back again like a sow to the mire.

The second type of mind and heart is outside profligacy, and develops itself in Porcius Festus, a mere rationalist or sceptic, who, as to the faith of Christ, says of himself, "There was a certain man left in bonds by Felix, against whom, when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive; and because I doubted of such manner of questions, I commanded him to be kept, until I might send him to Cæsar."

The third type in the midst of Gentilism is supplied by King Agrippa, and his Queen Bernice, who had a certain knowledge of the Scriptures, and reverenced them, and bowed to inspiration. As Paul had said to Felix and Drusilla, "After the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, and have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust;" so he affirms to Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible among you that God should raise the dead?"

This (so called) heresy, that through "the faith of Christ" a man is justified from all things from which he could not be justified by the law of Moses, is maintained; and that through this man is preached

unto you the forgiveness of sins, and that whosoever believes is turned from Satan unto God. This is now the breadth and length and depth and height of the gospel from the glory, and by it whoever believes is turned from darkness to light, from Satan to God, and receives an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Me. A mere religionist like Agrippa, who believed in the authority of the prophets, may be touched (as many are) by the Christian faith, and not be sanctified and cleansed.

Another great subject introduced here, is that "the Christ that should suffer should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light to the people, and to the Gentiles." Death had closed up every hope to Jew or Gentile in the flesh, and resurrection into life forms a new hope "through the faith of Christ," to the inheritance where the last Adam that is risen from among the dead is gone, and has carried those that are His. And as he thus spake, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad." Then King Agrippa said unto Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

And here is the issue. Paul, in the judgment of Festus the rationalist, must be mad, because he is outside the ranges of reason; or else, if Paul is guided by a new revelation of what is founded by God in righteousness, on the value of the death of Christ, and the glory of His resurrection, Agrippa must be (almost) a Christian, and Festus a sceptic.

Here lie the three great classes of an apostate Christendom. The trembling profligate Felix convicted, but not converted to God, by the faith of Christ, which he heard Paul preach; the rationalist Festus, who wonders, but clings to his reason and learning, and calls Paul the mad man; and the religious professor, Agrippa, who believes the prophets and the Scriptures, and is almost persuaded, but never is, a Christian.

The new testimony of real Christianity concerning the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, is thus brought forward "for the obedience of faith among all the nations." If it be still true, "That not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," as it was at the beginning, when Paul preached; yet the apostle comforted himself, "that God (the God of all grace) made manifest the savour of his knowledge by him in every place." For his own part, he adds, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish; to the one we are the savour of death unto death, and to the other the savour of life unto life, and who is sufficient for these things?"

In conclusion, wonders had been wrought by Paul, and for him by God through the Holy Ghost, in testimony to the Lord who appeared to him when on the way to Damascus. He had been led about in one continual triumph by God, whose servant he was. More than conqueror on the land, we last of all follow him, to find him victorious on the tempestuous sea.

He has the key of the position for the heavens above, and for the earth, and for the sea, and is equally at home in each. "There stood by me this night the angel of God, saying, Fear not, Paul, thou must be brought before Cæsar, and lo! God hath given thee all them that sail with thee," etc. Only one triumph further remains, for the Lord had said, "They shall take up serpents:" so when they were escaped the sea, and had landed, the barbarous people shewed them no little kindness, for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, there came a viper out of the fire, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast, they said, He is a murderer. But he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm; so they changed their minds, and said he was a god. Finally, when Paul was come to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

Everything—under the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost—was turned to profit for Paul, and he gets nothing but bread out of the eater, and honey out of the strong. Up into the the third heavens he is caught (far exceeding the glory of the mount, and the forty days of Moses) to receive the abundance of the revelations from the Lord who is there; and down into the

depths and retirement of the prison at Rome he descends, to write out and communicate to the churches what he had received. The two extremes meet—the chiefest of the apostles and the prisoner of the Lord; and they serve to make the man, and the very man whom the Lord required for a witness to the glory.

Do we not value and admire the servant, and are not our hearts reached by the preciousness of a love which seeks a suited vessel for to-day, in which to deposit "the riches of the glory of this mystery?" Hear this apostle's prayer.

For this cause we also, since the day we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, do not cease "to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience, and longsuffering with joyfulness."

May He give the grace and the self-judgment on our part necessary to respond to these desires, and make us perfect in *our* measure, that we may get into our proper places on earth, till He comes to make us one with Himself, in the glory above.—J. E. B.

ROBERT L. ALLAN, 15 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, AND 73 SAUCHIEHALL STREET, GLASGOW.