

As the ancient creeds of the Church are silent upon a point which, if it were indeed an object of faith, would have a claim to a very prominent place in our belief, so also is Holy Scripture silent as to any atoning or sacrificial work of Christ, past or present, in the most holy place.¹

We have been too long in our approaches to the teaching of the ceremonial law in its bearing on the death of Christ.

What we have to say touching more directly on that which is the proper subject of this paper must now be reserved for the next number.

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ART. V.—ST. PAUL'S ADDRESS TO THE ELDERS OF
EPHESUS, COMPARED WITH HIS PASTORAL
EPISTLES; UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES.

THE address of St. Paul to the elders of Ephesus is full of earnestness, solemnity and affection. The Apostle, speaking thus to the ministers of the Churches of Proconsular Asia—whom he had appointed—stands naturally at the head of all chief pastors making such charges.

In the address have we the very words of St. Paul? Or have we a speech made for him by his companion and fellow-traveller, St. Luke? In common histories the authors usually made the speeches of their heroes. The historian Sallust makes the speech of Julius Cæsar on Catiline's conspiracy, and also the great speech of Cato. Fine, well-balanced periods, but

¹ The *ἰλάσκεσθαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας* of Heb. ii. 17 is an unusual expression. Compare Luke xviii. 13—*Ὁ Θεὸς ἰλάσθητί μοι τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν*. We have, however, *ἐξιλάσασθαι ἀδικίας* in Dan. ix. 24. Compare 1 Sam. iii. 14 and Ecclus. xxxi. 19. *Ἐξιλάσκομαι* is the usual word in LXX., and seems to be used not only of *making atonement*, but also of *application* of atonement. See, e.g., Levit. xvi. 16, 18, 19, 33; Exod. xxx. 10 (cf. xxix. 36, 37, and Isa. vi. 7). Compare Heb. ix. 23, 24, xiii. 12, and Ezek. xliii. 23, 25, 26.

ἰλάσκεσθαι must be understood in this applicatory sense in Heb. ii. 17, if it is to be there understood of any sacerdotal work in the true Holy of Holies.

In a corresponding sense Christ is said to be the *ἰλαστήριον* in 1 John ii. 2. See Edwards, "Doct. of Atonement," pp. 102-104 (where "atonement" is to be understood not of the *act*, but of the *efficacy* of atonement).

In this sense it implies sacrificial propitiation already made. So we have in Heb. i. 3, *ὃς ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ καθαρῶς ποιησάμενος τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν, ἡμῶν ἐκάθισεν κ. τ. λ.*

Professor Westcott says: "The one (eternal) act of Christ (c. x. 12-14) is here regarded as its continuous present application to men" (comp. c. v. 1, 2) (on Heb., p. 57)..

He quotes Chrysostom: *ἵνα προσενέγκῃ θυσίαν δυναμένην ἡμᾶς καθαρῶσαι, διὰ τοῦτο γέγονεν ἀνθρώπος.*

really the thoughts and the words of the historian, are put into the mouth of these great men. In the address to the elders of Ephesus, I believe we have the very words of the Apostle.

Unable to visit Ephesus, but availing himself of the opportunity of the ship putting in at Miletus, hardly thirty miles distant, he invites them to meet him. Their ready and affectionate compliance with St. Paul's request (say A.D. 58) reminds us of the brethren from Rome coming to meet him, a few years after, as far as Appii Forum and the three Taverns, a distance of thirty or forty miles.

I. He addresses them most solemnly as overseers or Bishops: "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers." Seven years after (say A.D. 65) he says to Titus in his pastoral Epistle: "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain elders (presbyters) in every city . . . for a bishop (overseer) must be blameless." The words are convertible, as everyone allows, but it is quite wrong to reason from this that the two offices, presbyter and bishop, are the same. For we have as office-bearers in the Church: first, the Apostles; secondly, those whom St. Paul in his address and in his pastoral Epistles calls elders or overseers; and, thirdly, the deacons, about whom we have his directions to Timothy and Titus.

Approaching the dark period of Church history four years after the death of St. Paul (say A.D. 70), we enter a tunnel, as has been well said, from which we emerge into the daylight about, say, A.D. 120. Getting into the light, we find Bishops in Ephesus, in the surrounding province of Proconsular Asia, in the populous island of Crete, with its hundred cities, in every one of which Titus was to ordain elders, and in other places. Taking a view of the historical landscape, we see at once the correctness of the words in the preface to the Ordination Service with regard to the different orders of ministers in the Church of Christ from the earliest times.¹

II. The solemn words of St. Paul to the elders, "The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," remind them that in their appointment they had got a gift from God, the very thing he teaches Timothy in his pastoral Epistle to him seven or eight years after, urging him to stir up the gift (*charisma*) that is in thee by the laying on of my hands and of the hands of the presbytery. The lesson is the same to both, that the gift at ordination is not physical, but ethical or spiritual, not operating like a cast of magic, but its edifying power depending on the

¹ "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading the Holy Scriptures and ancient authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of ministers in Christ's Church: Bishops, Priests and Deacons."—The Preface to the Ordination Service.

use made of it. The elders of Ephesus are roused by the strong loving voice of their chief pastor—as is Timothy, by the written word—to stir up the gift that was in them. There is nothing in either place of a gift taking effect, *ex opere operato*; but still it leaves a disposition, a character, a nature, which is in every way to be turned to account. In the address called “watchmen,” “overseers,” in the pastoral Epistles named “athletes,” “soldiers,” “evangelists,” “preachers,” both were to labour in every way to make their gifts edifying and useful to their flocks.

III. Great was the need of the stirring up of the heavenly gift, for the Apostle, with sad foreboding, told the elders: “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” In the pastoral Epistles the warning is even more solemn, if such it can be: “Some shall depart from the faith . . . having their conscience seared with a hot iron.” Danger was in the near, as well as in the distant future. The seven years from the time he addressed them at Ephesus till he wrote his pastoral Epistles brought forth many ready to rend the Christian body, like fierce beasts of prey tearing a flock. The Sadducee and the atheist were at work, for there were such as Hymenæus and Philetus, saying that “the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

The witty worldling says: “I cannot afford to keep a conscience!” In deep, sober sadness the Apostle stated in his address, that there would be in many places an utter want of conscience: “Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.” The experience of every observer of men and manners is, that if people put out “the spirit of man,” “the candle of the Lord,” there must be great moral and spiritual darkness around them. In the midst of this, the Apostle wrote, in his pastoral Epistle to Timothy, that he expected much of him, according to the prophecies which went before on him. He knew that his son in the faith would be holding faith and a good conscience, unlike those who had made shipwreck of that great guide, “Of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.” Such corrupters of the stream of spiritual life were to be met with among the rude mountaineers of Crete. Their old character, “The Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies,” was reappearing. Therefore, in the pastoral Epistle addressed to him, Titus was exhorted to “rebuke them sharply,” putting forward the plain ethical truth, “Unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”¹ Here in the address, and in the pastoral Epistles;

¹ Tit. i. 15.

in what is said of the darkening of the conscience, we have the key to many dark acts blackening the page of the history of the Church and of the world.

“Put out the light, and then,—Put out the light.”

The dark-skinned Othello blows out the candle before he murders the fair Desdemona. The perverting of conscience led then, as it does now, to bad living, and to all wrongdoing.¹

IV. Who wonders at the extreme earnestness of the Apostle in the writings we are comparing? The Church they were to feed was “the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.”² The earnest man, writing to Timothy, teaches him in every way that he may know “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God.” In the long controversy of great scholars, whether in the address we are to read the Church of *God* or of the *Lord*, one may point to the same expression in the pastoral Epistle as of some weight in favour of the reading of the Authorised Version, adopted also by the Revised Version.

The like expression in both writings puts a thread into our hands, joining us to the Apostolic times; for we still look to our Church as the Church of God, in which He has made us unworthy ministers. When St. Paul spoke at Ephesus, and when he afterwards wrote the pastoral Epistles, the grain of mustard seed only appeared; now in all lands it is seen to be the work of God, we doing our best that God's marks may ever be seen upon it.

V. The Apostle tells the elders of Ephesus that his Apostleship is “the ministry received of the Lord Jesus.”³ In the opening of each of the three pastoral Epistles he speaks of himself as “an Apostle of Jesus Christ.” In the first pastoral Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle states this in the most solemn manner possible.⁴ In our Ordination Service, the first most solemn question addressed to the candidate for the office of deacon is entirely warranted by the Apostle's way of looking at the ministry.⁵ Finding the solemnities of such a view alike in the Apostle's address and in his pastoral Epistles, one cannot but very earnestly pray that such views of his office may influence every parish minister over our whole land, and that our country

¹ “It should be observed,” says Conybeare, “that these early heretics united moral depravity with erroneous teaching; their works bore witness against their doctrine.” Quoted by Alford on Tit. iii. 10.

² Acts xx. 28.

³ Acts xx. 24.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 11 13.

⁵ “Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministrations, to serve God for the promotion of His glory, and the edifying of His people?”

may be led more and more towards the blessed result, "righteousness exalteth a nation."

VI. In carrying out his ministry, the Apostle looked forward very earnestly, amidst many discouragements, to finishing his course—as he says, "so that I might finish my course with joy." Generally he had before his mind the thought of coming earthly sorrows and dangers. After a very solemn Divine Service on the Lord's Day at Troas, the Apostle did not at once embark on the ship that was waiting for them, as did his fellow-travellers. He wished to be alone, and so he travelled on foot the twenty miles or so from Troas to Assos, where it was arranged "to take in Paul." In that land journey, with his face towards the south, the slopes of Mount Ida on his left and the Hellespont on his right, Paris and Helen had often gone before, as had Hector and Achilles, Agamemnon and Ulysses. The Apostle had time for thought, and doubtless many gloomy pictures rose to his mind. This may have given a deep colouring to his address, spoken a day or two after at Miletus. Any ordinary man would have been greatly moved by what took place at Cæsarea, in the house of Philip the evangelist, when the prophet took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, showing by sign, according to Eastern fashion, what was to be done to the Apostle.¹ Yet, however dark his earthly prospects, he looked on to, and laboured for, the glorious end.

Eight years after, when in sight of the martyr's grave, he writes in his last pastoral Epistle to his son in the faith: "I have finished my course." The words in the address must have found a stirring echo in the heart of the elders of Ephesus and its neighbourhood, and the same words in the Epistle, stating an accomplished fact, have given fresh courage to many a weary minister of the Gospel to labour on to the end, in the strength of Christ, for the immortal crown, and to be able to say, as was the Apostle, "I have finished my course." Placing the words side by side, we catch the ring of the great Apostle in each, and we say of both, "These are the very words of St. Paul."

VII. The Apostle had ever been world-wide in his teaching. As a missionary, his steps were first turned in every city to the synagogue, and so had it been in Ephesus. From the synagogue he drew his first converts, and then his usage was to turn to the Gentiles. In the address he says: "I have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."² In the pastoral Epistles I find him warning as steadily against Jewish errors as against heathen sins.

¹ Acts xxi. 11-13.

² Acts xx. 21.

Does he not caution Timothy not to give heed to fables and endless genealogies,¹ and to refuse profane and old wives' fables"?² Is not Titus put on his guard against the same errors, and almost in the same words?

The Jews abounded in Crete, and the chief pastor would constantly meet with their wrong teaching. As Paul had been to Jew and Greek no mere speculative teacher, but one ever carrying the Gospel into holiness of life, so to Titus the exhortation is: "For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."³ The word of warning to his own son in the faith was: "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace."⁴ Timothy, surrounded by the culture of Ephesus, and Titus, among the wild people of Crete, were to be, as Paul had been, to Jew and Greek, and as every faithful minister of the Gospel ought to be, "testifying repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

Thus the thoughts and words in the address, and in the pastoral Epistles, are alike in many ways. We feel that Paul speaks himself to the elders at Ephesus, and that we are not reading a speech put into his mouth, as the writers of common histories often do with their heroes. Luke was present at the address. He had joined the Apostle at Troas, being present at the Divine Services there on the Lord's Day previous. As we have seen, Paul was not on board while the ship made its tedious journey round the promontory of Lectum from Troas to Assos. Here the Apostle joined the voyagers and, after touching at several places, "we came to Miletus." The writer of the Acts of the Apostles was, therefore, in the company. The elders of Ephesus, invited to meet the Apostle at Miletus, willingly made the journey of thirty miles.

The elders of the Churches at Ephesus were quite overcome by their feelings of respect and regard for the Apostle.⁵ Our esteem is not the less for the historian of the Acts of the Apostles when we find him present with the Apostle at the time of danger, when he was writing the second pastoral Epistle to Timothy. Speaking of several having forsaken him, the Apostle adds: "Only Luke is with me." His faithful fellow-traveller knew the heart and mind of the Apostle as no other man did. Therefore we wonder not, for God works by means, at the many coincidences, plainly undesigned, to be met with in St. Luke's record of the Apostle's address at Miletus, and St. Paul's pastoral Epistles. Faithful to the Apostle in life and

¹ 1 Tim. i. 4.

² Tit. ii. 11, 12.

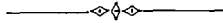
³ 1 Tim. iv. 7.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 22.

⁵ Acts xx. 36-38.

in death, faithful to the Church, whose historian he was, Luke has given us the very words of St. Paul for the guidance of all ages and of all people.

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ART. VI.—THE TITHE QUESTION IN ENGLAND AND IN WALES.

THE Tithe Question is always with us; and it is scarcely to be wondered at if the mere triflers in politics have come to execrate the very phrase. To them it represents a troublesome and obscure business, which they don't understand, but of whose existence they have too many proofs. As a matter of fact there are two Tithe Questions, and they have practically only the remotest connection. The Tithe Question in England is one thing, the Tithe Question in Wales is another and very different thing.

The existence of a Tithe Question in England, or rather in certain districts of England, is the outcome of severe agricultural depression. No one who knows anything of the facts will be disposed to minimize the losses of landowners and tenants in the eastern, southern, and midland counties during the past few years. It is hardly possible, if it be possible at all, to grow grain to a profit in England under present conditions; and certain lands are, unfortunately, able to raise nothing but grain. In these parts the farmer has been growing poorer and poorer, and the landlord has been compelled to accept less and less rent; but while the law of averages has at the same time been reducing the parson's tithe, so that it stands to-day at 20 per cent. below what it did only six years ago, it is contended that the parson is proportionately the best off of the three, and it is even asserted that in many cases the rent-charge is the only rent the land pays at all.

It cannot be surprising, therefore, that agriculturists in their extremity cry out and ask for revaluation. They may be told, and told truly, that the Church as a whole has lost £2,000,000 per annum since the Commutation Act. They will reply that the gain has not been theirs, but that of the owners of urban and suburban property. They may be told again, and equally truly, that the Church suffered a permanent loss owing to the temporary conditions which obtained at the passing of the Act being made the basis for fixing the average value; they may argue that it is little comfort to them to be reminded in their difficulty of the sharp practice of their grandfathers, the fruits of which have long since been dissipated.