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ART. I.—ST. PAUL IN SYRIA AND PHŒNICIA.
THOUGHTS AT BEYROUT.

THOSE who travel in the regions to the north of Palestine with their minds on the alert to receive definite Biblical impressions, and who pause (as they are sure to pause) amid the beauty of Beyrout, in the presence of Lebanon and the Sea, to classify and deepen those impressions, find their thoughts at this place very easily taken to four distinct movements of St. Paul's life—each of these movements being expressive of great principles for all time and for all men.

Instinctively they turn in the first instance to Damascus, the connection of which with this city of Beyrout is now so constant and so direct,¹ and to the Apostle's Conversion, which, next after the Resurrection of our Lord, is to be placed in the first rank of the evidential facts of Christianity. This momentous change in his life was the essential condition of all that followed; and the outward and inward circumstances that attended it are brought before us in Scripture on three separate occasions.² We may justly be thankful that the southern part of that wall of Damascus, with its courses of Roman masonry, is still bare to view, and that from any height that we may choose within or without the city we can survey the plain and the mountains as they always were, and thus in both ways help ourselves better to realize this great transaction in the History of Religion.³

¹ The French road connecting Beyrout with Damascus, which was made after the massacre of 1860, and which is admirably maintained, is a prophecy of the inevitable progress of Western civilization in the East.

² Acts ix., xxii. and xxvi.

³ The length of Damascus lies east and west, the "Straight Street" being still very well defined. On the north side, the old wall is built round and hid by modern houses. On the south, which was the side both of St. Paul's arrival from Jerusalem and of his return thither, the ground outside the wall is quite open.

But the city on the coast, where we now are, was likewise a station on the great Roman road, which connected Antioch on the north with Gaza and Egypt, as well as with Jerusalem,¹ on the south; and at two separate times, which are most carefully recorded, the Apostle Paul, on sacred errands, travelled this way. Once he came here in that early period of his Apostolic life, which was not long subsequent to his conversion. It was revealed at Antioch that a famine was impending: and it was decided that relief should be sent to the poor Christians in Judæa; and this relief was sent by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. And again their return is recorded: "Barnabas and Saul came back from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled their ministration."² This implies a journey taken by St. Paul in each direction along this coast. And so it is on the second occasion, soon after the First Missionary Journey was over. Certain persons came from Judæa and disturbed the minds of the Christians at Antioch by teaching, apparently with some authority, that salvation would be impossible except on the condition of adopting the ceremonies of the Jews: and it was determined that Paul and Barnabas, with others, should go to Jerusalem to help in settling this question. This they did; and St. Luke, with his usual accuracy, informs us of their return, with the official letter which was a charter of liberty for the Church in all coming time.³ Thus again we have an expedition undertaken by this Apostle in each direction along this shore. Of course, we cannot say with absolute certainty that no part of these journeys were accomplished by sea. But on the occasion of this second expedition, it is stated expressly that, on their way to Jerusalem, "they passed through *Phœnicia and Samaria*, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles."⁴ Thus we trace distinctly St. Paul's path and St. Paul's voice, through three towns with which those who know this coast are familiar—Sidon and Tyre, and also Acre, which then bore the name of Ptolemais⁵—and so onward, beyond the great plain, with Carmel on the right, and along the well-travelled road through Samaria. Nor are these the only cases where the same coast was touched by this Apostle when he journeyed in the cause of philanthropy, or

¹ Such an extract as the following from the Itinerary of Antoninus, coupled with the finding of Roman milestones, is a really valuable commentary on the Bible:—"Beryto, M.P. xxiii.; Sidona, M.P. xxx.; Tyro, M.P. xxiii.; Ptolemaidam, M.P. xxxii.; Sycamina, M.P. xxiii.; Cæsarea, M.P. xx.; Betaro, M.P. xviii.; Diospoli, M.P. xxii.; Jamiua, M.P. xii.; Ascalona, M.P. xx.; Gaza, M.P. xvi."—See Wesseling's *Itineraries*, pp. 149-151. Sycamina is Chaifa, Diospolis is Lydda.

² Acts xi. 30; xii. 25.

³ Acts xv. 2, 30.

⁴ Acts xv. 3.

⁵ See the extract given above from the Itinerary of Antoninus. This place retained through the Roman period the name which was a record of the Macedonian period, and resumed in mediæval times, as St. Jean d'Acre, its ancient name which it bore in Old Testament times.

to uphold religious truth and religious conduct. At the close of his Third Missionary Journey, scenes of his varied experience, most pathetic, most instructive, are associated with two of these same famous Phœnician cities. He landed at Tyre, and spent seven days there; and when these days were ended, it is said by the historian with exquisite simplicity and tenderness—"We departed and went on our journey; and they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way, till we were out of the city; and, kneeling down on the shore, we prayed and bade each other farewell; and we went on board the ship, and they returned home again."¹ The sail from Tyre to Acre (or Ptolemais) is not a long one. There another affecting scene took place. Intimation had been given to St. Paul, on the most unquestionable authority, that troubles and sufferings awaited him at Jerusalem; and at Acre he was earnestly entreated not to proceed. This deeply moved him. But, strong in his convictions of duty, he determined to execute his errand, which partly was the taking of a collection of money, most diligently gathered for the poor Christians of Judæa, and partly had reference to the promotion of union between two sections of the Church, which tended violently to discord and separation. "What mean ye," he said, "weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;" and it is added, "when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done!"² We ought, surely, not to dissociate such passages of an Apostolic life from the places with which they are so carefully, we might say so jealously, identified. And, with our present purpose in view, we have to note that these points of contact with the Phœnician shore group themselves, so to speak, under two heads, indicating two distinct movements of St. Paul's life, one having reference to philanthropy, the other to the maintenance of general principles of religious truth and practice.

But the associations of this Apostle with the Phœnician coast have not been exhausted in the preceding enumeration. When at length it was decided that he was to go to Rome, under circumstances very different from those which he expected, and the departure from Cæsarea had taken place, the "next day" the ship touched at Sidon, and the centurion who had charge of the prisoners "treated Paul kindly, and gave him leave to go unto his friends"—those Christian friends who were well known to him through previous visits—and then, "going to sea from Sidon, they sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary."³ Thenceforward the Gospel moved decisively to the West, with St. Paul as its chief messenger.

¹ Acts xxi. 5, 6.² Acts xxi. 13, 14.³ Acts xxvii. 3, 4.

Does it not seem as if each of the old maritime cities of the Old Testament on this coast were intended to be brought into mention again, in connection with this new Gospel? As to the island of Cyprus—which, as recent events have reminded us, is very near to the spot where we are supposed now to be engaged in thought—it is remarkable that immediately on the dispersion that took place on account of the death of Stephen, the good news is specially said to have travelled to “Phœnicia and Cyprus;” again, men of Cyprus are particularly named as becoming evangelists on the mainland; this island, too, supplied to the Christian cause, in Barnabas, one of the earliest and best of missionaries; and to this island he and Paul first came when officially sent forth from Antioch.² Thus we certainly do well if, in true harmony with the old Phœnician spirit of commerce, adventure and discovery, we think on this shore, and with Cyprus close at hand, of St. Paul on these waters as the glorious representative of missionary enterprise.

Now, briefly resuming these four topics again for our own spiritual benefit, I think it is worth while that we should note with what remarkable force and emphasis that word “Damascus” is impressed on the Scriptures of the New Testament. With the exception of Jerusalem, there is no other case of precisely the same kind. If the geographical framework of Bible-history is a certain and a divine fact, we see this principle strongly exemplified here. In the direct narrative of the conversion, which is by no means long, the word occurs five times.³ It occurs four times in the account which St. Paul himself gave of it many years afterwards to the infuriated Hebrew mob.⁴ This shows how deeply the recollections of the place were impressed on the Apostle’s mind. But there are other proofs of this. In the Epistle to the Galatians, when he is giving a summary of his

¹ This resumption, so to speak, in the New Testament of the old Biblical interest of this Phœnician shore is by no means exhausted in what is written above. To make the subject approach completeness, we must add three particulars. First, from the banks of the Sea of Tiberias our thought is carried by our Lord’s words in the most remarkable manner to Tyre and Sidon (Matt. xi. 21). Secondly, His own visit to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, beyond its immediate teaching through the faith of the Syro-Phœnician woman, may justly be viewed as prophetic of the ultimate spread of the Gospel (Matt. xv. 21); and thirdly, the mercantile relations of Phœnicia and Palestine in the time of Herod Agrippa I. (Acts xii. 20) had a connection as close with the history of religion in the New Testament as the same relations had with the history of religion in the times of Solomon and Ezra. See also Mark iii. 8; Luke iv. 26.

² See Acts iv. 36; xi. 19, 20; xiii. 4. It is worthy of note that Cyprus is mentioned eight times in the Acts of the Apostles, and each time in such a way as to suggest some useful and encouraging thought in connection with missionary work.

³ Acts ix. 3, 8, 10, 19, 22.

⁴ Acts xxii. 5, 6, 10, 11.

early Christian experience, he says suddenly, though he has not named the place before, "Immediately I went not up to Jerusalem; but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned to Damascus.¹ What help we seem to have derived for the understanding of the word "Arabia" in this place, when we have marked with what abruptness the arid desert surrounds the green environment of Damascus!² But this is not the only illustration of the same kind. Writing his Second Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, in a manner equally unexpected and sudden, but in a totally different context: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes, in order to take me: and, let down by the wall, I escaped."³ We often trace in a man's letters the deep impressions of his memory: and so it is here.⁴

And every man, who has experienced a true *conversion*, remembers well the circumstances of that conversion. I speak, of course, generally. There are cases where the spiritual progress moves and brightens onward from the time of Baptism, so that no conspicuous turning-point in the life can be traced: but such instances are few; and I believe they are frequently marked by an early departure to the heavenly home. All difficult questions connected with St. Paul's Conversion I leave on one side—the nature of his vision—the words that were spoken to him—his relation, at this moment, to his companions—and the like. The question I urge that we should put to ourselves, with Damascus in our thoughts, is this. If we have been by God's grace converted, what acknowledgment have we made of so great a blessing—what living fruit of love is there which corresponds with it—what active and useful work in the world? Conversion is a turning-round from the past: but such a turning-point is likewise the beginning of a new road; and in the very use of the word "road" are involved the

¹ Gal. i. 17.

² The question touched here has reference to the meaning of the word "Arabia" in this passage. It is quite allowable to understand it as restricted to the immediate neighbourhood of Damascus. The desert hems in very closely the verdure of this beautiful city. It is as if the wilderness of Sinai touched the very trees of the Abana and Pharpar. It must be admitted, however, as most probable that St. Paul really went to the region made famous before by the presence of Moses and Elijah.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33.

⁴ It must be remembered, too, that these two Epistles were written about the same time, and that St. Paul, while writing them both, was deeply moved by remembrances of the past. A reference may here be allowed to *The Speaker's Commentary*, and to the Appendix in the edition of Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

thoughts of directness of aim, of steadiness of purpose, and of perpetual advance.

A second great movement of St. Paul's life is expressed by the word *philanthropy*. It surprises us to observe how much and how earnestly his mind was occupied with the relief of temporal suffering and want. We might have supposed, if we had followed our poor human guesses, that he would have been engrossed with the great doctrinal truths of the Gospel and the propagation of the Christian faith through the world. And indeed with these things he was engrossed; but he knew how closely philanthropy and evangelization are connected. Thus in Galatia, in Achaia and Macedonia, three distinct provinces, covering a wide area, he occupied himself diligently with the second of the two collections for the suffering Christians of Palestine.¹ Notice has been already taken of his deep feeling on this subject; and we find additional proof of this in the Epistle to the Romans, written not long before that voyage which brought him to Tyre and to Ptolemais. This was not an ordinary passage in his life, as can be shown by abundant evidence. What he says there is this: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judæa, and that the ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable, that I may come to you at Rome with joy."²

And in harmony with this were the interest and trouble taken regarding that earlier contribution of charity towards Judæa. In the relation, too, which we have of it, there is a circumstance which does not always receive the attention it deserves. Here first comes into view that institution of Presbyters, which thenceforward we find part of the settled organization of the Church. The relief was "sent to the Elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."³ Whatever else may be added from St. Paul's Epistles or the Acts as part of the business of Presbyters—and whatever else some may think it right to add thereto from sources not found in Holy Scripture at all—no attempt is made to enter into such questions here—it is, at all events, instructive to observe that this institution of Presbyters, when we first see it, has its root and beginning in the midst of philanthropy. We remember, too, how remarkably this was the case in the institution of the Deacons.⁴ And I venture here to throw out another subject of thought. What if the Widows named on that occasion, and also in the account of the death of Tabitha,⁵ were

¹ See Rom. xv. 25, 26; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. viii.

² Rom. xv. 30.

³ Acts xi. 30.

⁴ Acts vi. 1.

⁵ Acts ix. 36.

not recipients of bounty, but administrators of bounty, precursors, in fact, of the Deaconesses of earlier and later days?¹ At all events, there are "differences of administrations" under the One Spirit,² and the traveller cannot be blamed if at Beyrout his thought lingers long to thank God for the charitable and religious work done by women now, in divers places and in divers ways, through Phœnicia and Syria. Rather he would be justly blamed if such thanksgiving here were omitted.³

Of that other great movement of St. Paul's life, which had reference to *true doctrine and correct practice*, only one single word can be said. That maintenance was firm and uncompromising; but it was attended with the utmost conciliation and prudence. We see this in the whole tone of the discussion at Jerusalem, and of the letter which was conveyed from thence to Antioch. The necessity of Jewish ceremonial was absolutely denied: but a considerate regard was observed towards old custom and old prejudice. And on his last visit to Jerusalem St. Paul took part in some such ceremonial, not as a necessity, but in charitable concession, lest the Church should be divided for the sake of things that were merely external.⁴ Herein he was true to his own principles, as deliberately expressed in his writings. If he says that "circumcision is nothing," he says with equal precision that "uncircumcision is nothing."⁵ If a Pharisaism of ceremonial is possible—as I fear we must admit to be the case—it is equally possible that there might be a Pharisaism which prides itself in the absence of ceremonial.

There remains that greatest movement of St. Paul's life, the movement of *missionary enterprise*, which was, we may truly say, symbolized by his contact with this coast. Here Christianity seemed to gather its elasticity and strength for its

¹ See in the Revised Version Rom. xvi. 1 and 1 Tim. iii. 11. It may fairly be said that on the theory here suggested we obtain a more dignified view of the "widows" of Acts vi., than if we regard them as the first instance of complaining almswomen; while in Acts ix. the phrase "the saints and widows," seems to imply that the latter had some position distinguished from that of the Church at large.

² 1 Cor. xii. 5.

³ The reference is primarily to the admirable Deaconess-House at Beyrout, in its two branches, the Hospital and the School. But mention must be made in the same sentence of the large schools founded in the same city by Mrs. Thompson, after the massacre of 1860, and now conducted under her sister, with branches at Damascus, Sidon and elsewhere. If an account were to be given of similar work by women in Palestine proper, as at Jerusalem and Nazareth, we should be taken beyond the region with which we are at present concerned.

⁴ Acts xxi. 18-26; see xviii. 18.

⁵ Three times is this repeated by St. Paul. See 1 Cor. vii. 19; Gal. v. 6; vi. 15.

flight to the Far West. And is it not most fitting that it should have been so? Of all those who in succession have held the Empire of the Sea—

First of the throng, with enterprising brow,
The keen Phœnician steered his shadowy prow.¹

The mariners of this coast showed the way to Columbus. The ship that took St. Paul from Sidon contained the hopes of the world. The Christians of America know what they have received from the East; and I suppose we should rightly interpret their beneficial action here, if we were to say that the light they have been rekindling on these shores is partly an expression of their earnest gratitude.²

The reality of a conversion of the heart—the diligent exercise of useful philanthropy—the firm maintenance of religious truth in the spirit of conciliation—the possession of an ardent missionary enthusiasm—these are four components of Christian character. And they ought to exist in combination, each helping and strengthening the others. Let us remember that we have been taking a glance at the biography, not of four men, each illustrating a separate point of character, but of one man, in whom they were united—whom, therefore, we must imitate at all points, if we are to be “followers of him even as he also was of Christ.”³

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ART. II.—THE CLAIMS OF THE CONVOCATIONS OF THE CLERGY AS TO THE PRAYER BOOK.

(Continued from page 305.)

THE circumstances attending and following the King's reference to the Convocations, in 1661, will show that no constitutional precedent was then made or intended.

Before the King's Restoration, he made a Declaration from Breda, on the 14th of April, 1660, which was read in both the

¹ Poem on “The Empire of the Sea,” which obtained the Chancellor's Medal at Cambridge, in 1835, by T. Whytehead.

² The American College at Beyrout, with its branch-work in the Lebanon, is an institution of the highest importance, providing varied education, and opening out useful careers, to a very large number of students.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 1.