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aspects of the high endowments of the human mind. But the science of God in redemption is greater. Nothing is in the end to be feared, but much to be hoped for, from research into the secrets of the material world. The day of the just ascendancy of the truth of God, in the clear understanding and application of it, will witness the harmony of all knowledge. The firmament that showeth God's handiwork will be a brighter mirror reflecting his glory when God himself shall be better known. History and art and philosophy will join in the same song of praise, when the submissive will rejoice in God's law, and the delighted mind reverentially adores his presence. All God's works will praise him; but man, sanctified by the truth, will lead in the anthem, and all creatures, animate and inanimate, will swell the chorus.

ARTICLE V.

BETHESDA AND ITS MIRACLE.¹

BY REV. JAMES M. MACDONALD, D.D., PRINCETON, N. J.

THERE is no better example of the great value of the "Researches in Palestine," of the late Dr. Robinson, than in those made by him in connection with the Pool of Siloam. It was the first object that attracted his attention on arriving at Jerusalem.

Leaving the high level part of Zion, not included within the walls of the modern city, where the Christian cemeteries are located, he proceeded eastward along the southern wall of the city, and, passing by the Zion gate, descended along the slope towards the valley of the Tyropœon, or Cheesemakers. Entering a path which soon left the wall, he descended obliquely down the slope southeast, in the direction of Siloam. In this part the Tyropœon forms a deep

¹ John v. 1-16.

ravine with banks almost precipitous. At its lower end it opens into the vale of Kidron. Here, still within the Tyropœon, is the Pool of Siloam, a small, deep reservoir in the form of a parallelogram, into which the water flows from under the rocks out of a smaller basin, hewn in the solid rock, a few feet further up. This is wholly an artificial work; and the water comes to it through a subterraneous channel from the fountain of the Virgin, or the fountain of Mary, so called, situated at a point above in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The ridge or hill Ophel lies here, between the Tyropœon and the valley of Jehoshaphat, and ends just over the Pool of Siloam in a steep point of rock forty or fifty feet high. Along the base of this the water is conducted from the pool in a small channel hewn in the rocky bottom, and is then led off to irrigate gardens of fig and other fruit-trees and plants lying in terraces quite down to the bottom of the valley of Jehoshaphat; a descent still of some forty or fifty feet.¹

He now passed up the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is here narrow, and the sides high and steep. On the right, clinging to the rocky sides of the Mount of Offence, are the hovels of the straggling village of Siloam, many of which are built before caves, or rather excavated sepulchres; in many cases the sepulchres themselves being used as dwellings. A little further up the valley, under the opposite or western hill, is the Fountain of the Virgin, a deep excavation in the solid rock, evidently artificial, into which one descends by two successive flights of steps. The water is apparently brought hither by some unknown and perhaps artificial channel, and flows off through a subterraneous passage under the hill Ophel to the Pool of Siloam. Above this fountain the valley becomes very narrow. It is everywhere only a watercourse between high hills; and the brook Kidron now never flows, and probably never flowed, along its bottom, except after heavy rains. From the fountain a path ascends obliquely, but steeply, to the southeast corner of the area of the great

¹ Biblical Researches, i. p. 231.

mosque, which at the same time forms the extreme south-east corner of the city wall, standing directly on the brow of the almost precipitous side of the valley, here about one hundred and fifty feet deep.¹ The cavity of this fountain is deep, running in under the western wall of the valley, and is wholly excavated in the solid rock. To enter it, one first descends sixteen steps; then comes a level place of twelve feet, and then ten steps more to the water. The steps are, on an average, each about ten inches high; and the whole depth, therefore, is about twenty-five feet, or some ten or fifteen feet below the actual bottom of the valley. The basin itself is perhaps fifteen feet long, by five and six wide; the height is not more than six or eight feet. The bottom is strewed with small stones; and the water flows off by a small passage at the interior extremity, leading under the hill Ophel to Siloam; the reservoir of which is fifty-three feet long, eighteen feet broad, and nineteen feet deep. There is now no other outlet from the fountain of the Virgin than that which connects it with Siloam, and, apparently, a different one never existed.

This subterranean passage is first mentioned by Quaresmius, writing about A.D. 1625. He refers to an unsuccessful attempt of his friend Vinhoven to explore it, and says that a pater Julius had passed through it a few years before. But he gives no definite information respecting the canal, and is unable to say whether the waters of Siloam came from the Fountain of the Virgin. Notwithstanding this tolerably full notice, the canal seems again to have been forgotten, or, at least, overlooked, for another century. Le Brun, Maundrell, and other careful observers, are wholly silent as to its existence; although they describe both the fountains. Slight and imperfect notices of it appear in the eighteenth century, and more in the nineteenth. All these, however, are so confused and unsatisfactory, that one of the latest and most successful investigators² of the topography of

¹ Biblical Researches, i. p. 232.

² Crome, in Ersch und Gruber's Encyc., art. "Jerusalem."

Jerusalem declares, in A.D. 1839, that the question is yet undecided, whether the water flows from the Fountain of the Virgin to Siloam, or *vice versa*.

Dr. Robinson found it to be the current belief at Jerusalem, both among natives and foreigners, that a passage existed quite through between the two fountains; but no one had himself explored it, or could give any definite information respecting it. He therefore determined to make an attempt himself to explore it. Of this attempt, which proved successful, he gives a highly interesting account:

Repairing, one afternoon (April 27th, 1838), to Siloam, in order to measure the reservoir, he found no person there; and, the water in the basin being low, he embraced this opportunity for accomplishing his purpose. Stripping off his shoes and stockings, and rolling his garments above his knees, he entered with his light and measuring-tape in hand. The water was low, nowhere more than a foot in depth, and for the most part not more than three or four inches, with hardly a perceptible current. He found the bottom everywhere covered with sand brought in by the waters. The passage is cut wholly through the solid rock, everywhere about two feet wide; somewhat winding, but in a general course north-northeast. For the first hundred feet it is from fifteen to twenty feet high; for another hundred feet or more, from six to ten feet; and afterwards, not more than four feet high; thus gradually becoming lower and lower as he advanced. At the end of eight hundred feet, it became so low that he could advance no further, without crawling on all fours, and bringing his body close to the water. As he was not prepared for this, he thought it better to retreat, and try again another day from the other end. Tracing, therefore, upon the roof, with the smoke of his candle, the initials of his name and those of his attendant and the figures 800, as a mark of their progress, they returned, with their clothes somewhat wet and soiled.

It was not till three days afterwards that he was able to

complete his examination and measurement of the passage. He went now to the Fountain of the Virgin, and, having measured the external distance (twelve hundred feet) down to the point east of Siloam, concluded that, as he had already entered eight hundred feet from the lower end, there could now remain not over four or five hundred feet to be explored. He found the end of the passage at the upper fountain rudely built up with small, loose stones, in order to retain the water at a greater depth in the excavated basin. Having caused these stones to be cleared away, and having clothed (or rather unclothed) himself simply in a pair of wide Arab drawers, he entered and crawled on, hoping soon to arrive at the point which he had reached from the other fountain. The passage here is in general much lower than at the other end. Most of the way Dr. Robinson could advance on his hands and knees; yet in several places he could only get forward by lying at full length, and dragging himself along on the elbows.

The sand at the bottom has probably a considerable depth, thus filling up the canal in part; for otherwise it is inconceivable how the passage could ever have been thus cut through the solid rock. At any rate, only a single person could have wrought in it at a time, and it must have been the labor of many years. There are here many turns and zigzags. In several places the workmen had cut straight forward for some distance, and then, leaving this, had begun further back at a different angle; so that there is, at first, the appearance of a passage branching off. He examined all these false cuts very minutely, in the hope of finding some such lateral passage, by which water might come in from another quarter. He found, however, nothing of the kind. The way seemed interminably long; and he was for a time suspicious that he had fallen upon a passage different from that which he had before entered. But at length, after having measured nine hundred and fifty feet, he arrived at his former mark of 800 feet, traced with smoke, upon the ceiling. This makes the whole length of the passage

to be seventeen hundred and fifty feet—a result scarcely conceivable, although the passage is very winding. The difference between the internal and external measurements is so great that Dr. Robinson, on subsequently recurring to this subject, was compelled to suppose some error in the former; made, as it was, under circumstances of inconvenience and difficulty.¹ Instead of retracing his course to the Fountain of the Virgin, he kept on, and came out at the Pool of Siloam.

In constructing this passage, he remarks, that it is obvious the workmen commenced at both ends, designing to meet somewhere in the middle. At the upper end, or at the Fountain of the Virgin, the work was carried along on the level of the upper basin, and there was a tendency to go too far to the right, or towards the west under the mountain; for all the false cuts above mentioned were in that direction. At the lower end, the excavation would seem to have been begun on a higher level than at present; and when, on meeting the shaft from the other end, this level was found to be too high, the bottom was dug down until the water flowed through it; thus leaving the southern end of the passage, towards Siloam, much loftier than the other part. The bottom has very little descent; so that the two basins are nearly on the same level; the upper one (the Virgin) ten feet or more below the valley of Jehoshaphat, and the other some forty feet above the same valley. The water flows through gently, and with little current.

The purpose for which this difficult work was undertaken, it is not easy to discern. The upper basin must obviously have been excavated at an earlier period than the lower, and there must have been something to be gained by thus carrying its waters through the solid rock into the valley of the Tyropæon. If the object had been merely to irrigate the gardens which lay in that quarter, this might have been accomplished with far less difficulty and expense, by conducting the water around upon the outside of the hill. But

¹ Biblical Researches, 1852, iii. p. 189.

the whole looks as if the advantage of a fortified city had been consulted, and as if it had been important to carry this water from one point to the other in such a way that it could not be cut off by a besieging army. Now, as this purpose would have been futile had either of these points lain without the ancient fortifications, this circumstance, as Dr. Robinson remarks, furnishes an argument to show that the ancient wall probably ran along the valley of Jehoshaphat, or, at least, descended to it, and included Siloam, as well as this upper fountain. The water in both these fountains, then, is the same, notwithstanding travellers have pronounced that of Siloam to be bad, and that of the upper fountain to be good. Dr. Robinson says that he drank of it often in both places. It has a peculiar taste, sweetish and very slightly brackish, but not at all disagreeable. When the water is low, it is said to become more brackish and unpleasant. It is the common water used by the people of the village of Siloam.¹ The name Siloah, or Siloam, is found only three times in the scriptures as applied to waters; once in the prophet Isaiah, who speaks of it as running water; again, as a pool, in Nehemiah; and lastly, also as a pool, in the account of our Lord's miracle of healing the man who had been born blind.² None of these passages afford any clew as to the situation of Siloam. But Josephus makes frequent mention of Siloam as a fountain, and says expressly it was situated in the mouth of the Tyropœon, or the valley of the Cheesemakers, on the southeast part of the city, as it is found at the present day.³ Its waters, he says, were sweet and in great plenty. There can be no room for question that the Siloam of Josephus is identical with that of the scriptures.

Jerome, near the close of the fourth century, says that Siloam is a fountain at the foot of Mount Zion. Again, he remarks that the idol Baal was set up near Jerusalem, at

¹ Biblical Researches, 1858, i. pp. 337-341

² Isa. viii. 6; Neh. ii. 15; John ix. 7-11.

³ Bel. Jud. v. 4, 1.

the foot of Mount Moriah, where Siloam flows.¹ Moriah must here be taken as including the ridge which runs from it towards the south; and the mention of the idol Baal limits the position of Siloam to the gardens at the mouth of the Tyropæon and valley of Hinnom. Siloam is mentioned, both as a fountain and pool, by Antoninus Martyr, early in the seventh century; and as a pool by the monk Bernhard in the ninth. Then come the historians of the Crusades, who also place Siloam as a fountain in its present site, near the fork of two valleys. Sir John Maundeville mentions it as a "welle" at the foot of Mount Zion, towards the valley of Jehoshaphat.

All the historical notices thus far refer only to the present Siloam, in the mouth of the valley of the Tyropæon, which still exhibits both a fountain and a reservoir; and there is no reference in any of them to the Fountain of the Virgin, further up the valley of Jehoshaphat, with which, as we have seen, the waters of Siloam stand in connection. The mention of gardens around Siloam, and of its waters as flowing down into the valley of the Kidron, is decisive on this point; for neither of these circumstances could ever have been applicable to the other fountain. Indeed, singular as the fact must certainly be accounted, there seems to be nothing which can be regarded as an allusion to the Fountain of the Virgin during the long series of ages from the time of Josephus down to the latter part of the fifteenth century. The two fountains of Siloam and the Virgin began at that time to be distinctly mentioned; but their connection by a sub-montane passage seems to have been first brought to notice by Quaresmius, in the beginning of the seventeenth century.²

In Jerome, we have the first mention of an irregular flow of the waters of Siloam.³ William of Tyre also mentions this irregular flow,⁴ as does also Marinus Sanutus.⁵ This

¹ Comm. in Esa. viii. 6; in Matt. x. 28.

² Biblical Researches, 1838, i. pp. 333-335.

³ Comm. in Esa. viii. 6. ⁴ Will. Tyr. viii. 4. ⁵ De Sec. fd. Cruc. iii. 14, 9.

irregular flow of the water, mentioned by writers of the earlier and middle ages as characteristic of Siloam, must of course have belonged equally to both fountains; except as the rush of water towards Siloam might have been impeded and diminished by the dam of loose stones, if it then existed, as now-a-days, at the upper end of the passage. Ever since the fourth century this remarkable circumstance seems to have been almost, if not entirely, overlooked by travellers. Dr. Robinson says that he had searched in vain through all the more important writers, from Sir John Maundeville down to the present day, without finding any distinct notice respecting it, derived from personal observation. All the writers on Biblical Geography, from Adrichomichus and Reland onward to the present time, are wholly silent, except so far as they refer to the testimony of Jerome. Yet the popular belief in this phenomenon was still firm among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Our friends had often heard of it; but, having themselves never seen the irregular flow, they regarded the story as one of the many popular legends of the country. "We were more fortunate in this respect," says Dr. Robinson, "having been very unexpectedly witnesses of the phenomenon in question; and we are thus enabled to rescue another ancient historical fact from the long oblivion, or, rather, discredit, into which it had fallen for so many centuries.

"As we were preparing to measure the basin," he proceeds, "of the upper fountain (in the afternoon of April 30th), and explore the passage leading from it, my companion was standing on the lower step, near the water, with one foot on the step and the other on a loose stone lying in the basin. All at once he perceived the water coming into his shoe, and, supposing the stone had rolled, he withdrew his foot to the step, which, however, was now also covered with water. This instantly excited our curiosity; and we now perceived the water rapidly bubbling up from under the lower step. In less than five minutes it had risen in the basin nearly or quite a foot; and we could hear it

gurgling off through the interior passage. In ten minutes more it had ceased to flow, and the water in the basin was reduced to its former level. Thrusting my staff in under the lower step, whence the water appeared to come, I found," says Dr. Robinson, "that there was here a large hollow space; but a further examination could not be made without removing the steps." Meanwhile, a woman came to wash at the fountain. She was accustomed to frequent the place every day; and from her he learned that the flowing of the water occurs at irregular intervals; sometimes two or three times a day, and sometimes in summer once in two or three days. She said she had seen the fountain dry, and men and flocks, dependent on the water, gathered around, and suffering from thirst, when, all at once, the water would begin to boil up from under the steps, and (as she said) from the bottom in the interior part, and flow off in a copious stream.

An Arab who was there, whom Dr. Robinson had seen at the bath in the city, told him that the water came down from a fountain beneath the great mosque which occupies the site of the temple on Moriah. But how, or why? This is a mystery which former ages have not solved, and which must be left to the researches of future travellers under more favorable auspices fully to unfold. At the bath above named, situated in a covered passage-way leading to one of the western entrances of the mosque, he was conducted through several apartments and passages to the parallel street leading to the southern entrance of the mosque, and then up a flight of steps to a platform eighteen or twenty feet above the level of the street. Here, in a low arched room, he found two men drawing water in leathern buckets suspended over a pulley from a narrow well sixty-five feet below the surface of the ground. The water stood in it three and a half feet deep. One of the men told him that the water came to the well through a passage of mason-work four or five feet high from under the grand mosque, where the water boiled up from the bottom of the fountain. He expressed

a willingness to accompany Dr. Robinson to the bottom of the well, where he had often been; but the Doctor failed to obtain the necessary permission from the authorities. He drank of the water, and found it had the same peculiar taste which he had remarked in the waters of Siloam and the Fountain of the Virgin in the valley below. There seemed, he thought, no reason for doubt as to the main fact, viz. that there is in the heart of the rock, at the depth of some eighty feet under the mosque, a fountain, the water of which has the same essential characteristics as that flowing out at the artificial excavations in the valley below. He thinks it not improbable that there may be some hidden channel, by which the waters in the fountain beneath the mosque find outlet through these excavations. But from what quarter they are first brought into this fountain remains an unsolved question, as well as whether the irregular flow of the fountains in the valley is to be explained by some connection with these waters in the fountain from above.¹

The words of Moses to the children of Israel respecting the promised land: "A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills,"² are literally true. Travellers tell us that there is no land where they are so numerous and so beautiful, and that many of these fountains have peculiar characteristics; some are tepid, and not a few remittent or wholly intermittent. Josephus gives an account of a stream which he calls the Sabbatic River. He says that while Titus Caesar was exhibiting magnificent shows in the cities of Syria, he came to a river as he journeyed, "of such a nature as deserves to be recorded in history. It runs in the middle between Arca belonging to Agrippa's kingdom and Raphenea. It hath somewhat very peculiar in it; for when it runs its current is strong and has plenty of water. After which its springs fail for six days together, and leave its channel dry, as any one may see; after which days it runs on the seventh

¹ Biblical Researches, i. pp. 341, 342.

² Deut. viii. 7.

day as it did before, and as though it had undergone no change at all. It hath also been observed to keep this order perpetually and exactly. Whence it is that they call it the Sabbatic river; that name being taken from the sacred seventh day among the Jews.”¹ Pliny has been supposed to refer to the same river; but he makes it run six days, and rest every seventh: “In Judaea rivus, Sabbatis omnibus siccatur.”² The translator and editor of Josephus makes light of what Josephus says, by adding in a note that, as this river is vanished, he shall say no more about it. The learned Reland and the celebrated Danish traveller Niebuhr treat it as a fable.

But the author of that excellent work, “The Land and the Book,” Dr. W. M. Thomson, for more than twenty-five years a missionary in Syria and Palestine, claims that he discovered this river and its source in 1840. Examining the passage from Josephus, he says: “From Beirût, Titus marched north to Zeugma on the Euphrates. On his march he saw this river running between Arca in the kingdom of Agrippa and Raphanea. The mention of Agrippa’s kingdom probably induced most travellers to look for the Sabbatic river somewhere in the south of Palestine, where it is not to be found; although there are traces of ancient cities in that region, with names similar to those of Arca and Raphanea. But the kingdom of Agrippa did actually extend at one time as far north, I believe, as the River Eleutherus, and therefore included Arca. At any rate, the account requires that we search for the Sabbatic river between Arca and Raphanea; and there I found it. Arca, the capital of the Arkites, lies about half-a-day’s ride to the northeast of Tripoli, and between it and Hamath, on the east of Jebel Akkar, is the site of Raphanea. In the wady below the great Convent of Mar Jirius is a fountain called Nebâ el-Fûârr, which throws out at stated intervals an immense volume of water, quite sufficient to entitle it in this country to the dignified name of river. This site answers to the description of Josephus in

¹ Bel. Jud. vii. 5, 1.

² Nat. Hist. xxxi. 11.

all respects; but there are some discrepancies between the actual phenomena of this fountain and his Sabbathic river."¹

Instead of flowing one day in seven according to Josephus, or six days and resting on the seventh according to Pliny, this Nebâ el-Fûârr is quiescent two days, and active on a part of the third. The cave out of which the river flows is at the base of a hill of limestone, "entangled in a vast formation of trap-rock." Dr. Thomson supposes the Sabbathic river was always nearly what we find the stream below Mar Jirius now to be. The vagueness of general rumor, the love of the ancients for the marvellous, and the desire to conform this natural phenomenon to the Jewish division of time, will sufficiently account for the inaccuracies of these historians.

It is well known, says Dr. Thomson, that these intermitting fountains are merely the draining of subterranean reservoirs on the principle of the siphon. The condition necessary to make the stream intermit is that the capacity of the siphon be greater than the supply. If the supply were greater than this capacity, or exactly equal to it, the pool would be always full, and there could be no intermission. The periods of intermission and the size of the stream depend upon the size of the pool, the supply, and the calibre of the siphon. Dr. Thomson says that the main source of the Litany at 'Anjur is a remitting fountain of a peculiar kind. A constant stream issues from the pool; but there are frequent and vast augmentations in the volume of water, occurring at irregular periods, sometimes not more than twice in a day, while at others these augmentations take place every few hours. In Lebanon there are likewise fountains which entirely intermit at stated periods, or are subject to partial remissions. "Such, too," he says, "is the Fountain of the Virgin, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. All such instances can be explained by supposing either that the entire stream is subject to this siphonic action, as at the Sabbathic river, or that the constant, regular stream is at

¹ The Land and the Book, Vol. i. pp. 407, 408.

times augmented by tributary intermitting fountains, as at 'Anjur and Siloam.'" ¹

But the great interest which attaches to the results of these investigations lies in their bearing on the locality of one of the most interesting miracles of our Lord — his healing of the impotent man at the Pool of Bethesda, and on the right interpretation of the inspired record in connection with that miracle. Dr. Robinson suggests, as the Sheep [gate], near which Bethesda was situated, seems to have been not far from the temple, and the wall of the ancient city probably ran along this valley, whether that gate may not have been somewhere in this part, and this Fountain of the Virgin have been Bethesda — the same with the "King's Pool" of Nehemiah, and the "Solomon's Pool" of Josephus.² The monks and many travellers have chosen to find the Pool of Bethesda in the deep reservoir or trench on the north side of the area of the great mosque; and in the two long vaults at its southwest corner they profess to find two of the five ancient porches. There is not the slightest evidence that can identify it with the Bethesda of the New Testament. The name has doubtless been assigned to the reservoir in question comparatively in modern times, from its proximity to St. Stephen's Gate, which was erroneously held to be the ancient Sheep Gate.³ Dr. Robinson thinks that the deep reservoir now commonly known as the Pool of Bethesda was a trench which protected the fortress Antonia on the north. His supposition is that this fortress occupied the whole breadth of the western part of the present enclosure around the great mosque, between the ancient northern wall and the present Bethesda. The peculiar character and great depth of the Pool of Bethesda, so called, have been a stone of stumbling to many travellers; but by thus bringing it into connection with the fortress its peculiarities are at once accounted for. This reservoir lies along the outside

¹ The Land and the Book, Vol. i. pp. 408—411.

² Biblical Researches, 1838, Vol. i. p. 343.

³ Ibid. Vol. i. p. 330, 331.

of the present enclosure, of which wall its southern side may be said to form a part. Its eastern end is near the wall of the city; so near, indeed, that only a narrow way passes between them, leading from St. Stephen's Gate to the great mosque. The pool measures three hundred and sixty English feet in length, one hundred and thirty feet in breadth, and seventy-five feet in depth to the bottom, besides the rubbish which has been accumulating in it for ages. It was once evidently used as a reservoir; and it would seem as if it once extended to the westward, in which direction lofty arched vaults have been built up in and over it, to support the buildings above.¹ Dr. Robinson's theory that this deep cut was part of the system of defences around the temple has everything to support it. It could not have been the Bethesda of scripture. His suggestion that the Fountain of the Virgin was this Bethesda seems to be altogether probable. Dr. Thomson evidently agreed with Dr. Robinson in the opinion that the trench or fosse now known as Bethesda could not have been the ancient pool known by that name in scripture. He says: "I looked in upon the vast chasm or fosse on the north side of the temple area, which I hear called Birket Israfil, and see on the maps written Bethesda."² He elsewhere remarks that he has discovered nothing new to be added to the discoveries of Dr. Robinson respecting the Fountains of the Virgin and Siloam, and confesses that he had not zeal enough to follow him through the passage connecting the two. We accept, therefore, Dr. Robinson's suggestion, that the Fountain of the Virgin is the true site of the ancient Bethesda, and that the water of this fountain probably has its source in a living spring beneath the site of the ancient Temple.

Dean Stanley says: "All accounts combine in asserting that the water of the two pools of Siloam, as well as that of the many fountains of the Mosque of Omar, proceeds from a living spring beneath the Temple vaults. There was no

¹ Biblical Researches, 1838, Vol. i. p. 293.

² The Land and the Book, Vol. ii. p. 524.

period of its history when such a provision would not have been important to the Temple, for the ablutions of the Jewish, no less than the Mussulman worship; or to the city, which else was dry even to a proverb. It was the treasure of Jerusalem, its support through its numerous sieges; the "fons perennis aquae" of Tacitus;¹ the source of Milton's

"Brook that flowed
Hard by the oracle of God."

But more than this, it was the image that entered into the very heart of the prophetic idea of Jerusalem. "There is a river ["Nahar," perennial river] the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."² In Ezekiel's vision³ the thought is expanded into a vast cataract flowing out from the Temple rock eastward into the Kidron, till it swells into a mighty river, fertilizing the desert of the Dead Sea."⁴

But Dr. Robinson makes another suggestion, which bears on the proper exegesis of the passage containing the account of the miracle at Bethesda. In that account we are told that "an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water," and then, whosoever first stepped in was made whole.⁵ He asks: "Does not this 'troubling' of the water look like the irregular flow of the fountain first described?"⁷

The healing of the impotent man at Bethesda occurred on a visit of our Lord to Jerusalem at the second passover after he entered on his public ministry, at the beginning of its third year. In order to consider the question which Dr. Robinson proposes, it will be necessary to have the passage which records the miracle before us: "After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the Sheep Market [Marg. Gate] a pool which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent

¹ Tac. Hist. v. p. 12.

² Ps. xlv. 4.

³ Ezek. xlvii.

⁴ Sinai and Palestine (London), p. 180.

⁵ John v. 4.

⁷ Biblical Researches, Vol. i. p. 343.

folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water. Whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time *in that case*, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked; and on the same day was the Sabbath.”¹

The feast spoken of, as already intimated, was the Passover, and this is one of the passages which prove that the ministry of Christ continued three and a half years. The word “market,” in the second verse, is not in the original. The marginal reading, “gate,” is to be preferred, as we know there was a gate of this name (Neh. iii. 1, 32; xii. 39); but there is no mention of such a market. Near this gate was a pool, the Hebrew name of which was Bethesda, House of Mercy. It had five porches, or places roofed over, where the diseased who came hoping to receive benefit from the water were deposited, while waiting for the moving or rising of the water. We are thus brought to that portion of the passage the consideration of which involves the answer to the question suggested by Dr. Robinson. The best critics of the original text, and some of the ablest modern expositors, regard this portion, or the closing words of the third verse, “waiting for the moving of the water,” to the end of the fourth verse, as spurious, — in the Greek, from the word *ἐκδεχομένων* to the word *νοσήματι*. Tischendorf, in his edition of the Greek Testament, now in course of publication, omits the entire passage. Tregelles, who stands next in authority on questions of this nature, does the same in

¹ John v. 1-9.

his edition. To the authority of the Vatican MS., which belongs to the middle of the fourth century, and the Codex Regius in the imperial library at Paris, written in Egypt in the fifth century, and that of Beza in the University of Cambridge, belonging to the sixth century, and of the old Latin and others enumerated by Tregelles for the omission of verse fourth, Tischendorf adds that of the Sinaitic, belonging to the early part of the fourth century; and which he thinks it not impossible may have formed one of the fifty copies of the Bible which in the year 331 Constantine ordered to be executed under the direction of Eusebius, and that it was sent by the Emperor Justinian, the founder of the Sinaitic monastery, to the monks at Sinai, where he discovered it. Thus we have the authority of the earliest MSS. known to be in existence for the omission of the fourth verse; and we have that of the two oldest of these MSS., the Sinaitic and the Vatican, for the omission of the last clause of the third. The entire passage is also omitted by the Curetonian Syriac, the Memphitic MSS., and the Thebaic version. Of the Armenian, many leave out the fourth verse, and among the few which have it some mark it as doubtful. Augustine is cited as omitting the verse. Tertullian and Chrysostom have the passage.¹ Bishop Marsh says: "We have proof that the [fourth] verse was originally nothing more than a marginal scholium, and of course spurious." Greisbach and Mill reject it. Copyists had no motive for omitting these passages, if they had them before them; for there was no wish to avoid anything which spoke of miraculous interference. On the contrary, if they found in the water, like Tertullian and Chrysostom, a symbol of the baptismal water, they would have found a motive in their dogmatic interest for the retention rather than the exclusion of the passage. On the other hand, scholiasts had strong reasons for explaining, according to the notions of the times, why the multitudes lay in the porches, and to what the moving of the water referred.

¹See Tregelles's Account of the printed Text, pp. 243-246.

Neither Lücke nor Tholuck regard the disputed clause as genuine, although they do not take the trouble to give it a very minute examination. Tholuck thinks that when regard is had to the numerous variations in those who retain the clause, and to the fact that no reason can be given for the omission, it must be rejected. He refers to Bretschneider, Baur, and De Wette, as disposed to decide for the genuineness of the clause, in order to help out the position that the the Gospel of John is spurious. Olshausen says of it: "Here is an addition to the account (from *ἐκδεχομένων* to *νοσήματι*) which, according to the evidence derived from criticism, is to be regarded as spurious." "It is in the highest degree probable that it was introduced into the text from MSS. in the margin of which their owners had made this note from personal observation. Doubtless, therefore, it was a fact that the water from time to time fitfully bubbled, and in such seasons the greatest efficacy was ascribed to it. Now, since the sick man refers to this fact (ver. 7), it was evidently very natural to annex the above information by way of explaining his words." Trench, in his work on Miracles, treats the passage as spurious.

But, apart from the conclusion to which criticism seems inevitably to lead, there are certain grounds of argument affecting the question which seem also to favor the omission of the passage. In addition to what has already been repeated in regard to there being no motive for its omission, while every motive existed for its retention if already in the text, it may be said that the descent of an angel at certain seasons to trouble the water and impart to it healing efficacy would have been a continuous or repeating miracle, and it is surprising there is no mention of this elsewhere in the entire scriptures. And for what end was it wrought, that is, what divine messenger or message was it designed to attest? It is also surprising that Josephus, the Jewish historian, who describes everything about Jerusalem with so much particularity, should have passed over in utter silence, as he does, a permanent miracle of this nature. He could have

feared no such contempt for the marvellous in his pagan readers as would lead him to suppress it. Rather, we may conclude, he would have seized upon it with avidity, had there been any foundation for an account beyond that of a popular impression among the ignorant, and for the truth of which he could have referred to their own procurators and travellers. It is necessary, in order to account for the great number of diseased persons waiting at Bethesda, to suppose that they believed some healing virtue was imparted to the water by its periodical rising or commotion; and it is probable that there was a popular belief among the more credulous and superstitious, that an angel came down to agitate the water and impart to it healing efficiency. But it has been made sufficiently evident that it is no part of the inspired evangelist's testimony that there was any such perpetual or recurring miracle by angelic agency.

If we omit the disputed clause, the narrative flows on, without the appearance of break or hiatus, and evidently intact, as it came from the hand of John: "In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered. And a certain man was there which had an infirmity thirty and eight years." Or if, according to some of the authorities, we retain the closing words of the third verse, and omit the fourth, there will be nothing to interrupt the historic flow, or to destroy the consistency of the parts. The multitude waiting for the moving of the water, in the third verse, answers perfectly to the impotent man's having no one to put him into the pool when it was troubled, in the seventh. In that excellent and valuable work, "Commentary on the Gospel of John," by the late Dr. John J. Owen, of New York, he quotes a remark of Steir with approbation, that "verse 7 absolutely requires the whole addition; for taken alone, without the explanation furnished by the fourth verse, it is wholly unintelligible." Neither Steir nor Dr. Owen appears to have had his attention directed to the facts which identify the waters of Siloam with those of ancient Bethesda, and the periodical perturbation and rising of these waters.

If they had, they never could have affirmed that the omission of the fourth verse, or of the entire disputed passage, served to render the account in John unintelligible. Dr. Owen defends the retention of the whole warmly, and remarks: "We are bound to receive this as a plain matter of revelation, and as furnishing another proof that benevolent spirits are employed as the instruments of good to men, in like manner as wicked spirits are busily employed in the infliction of evil." And yet he strangely adds: "It is unnecessary to suppose that the Jewish people at this time were acquainted with the cause of the healing properties of this pool, or of the wondrous phenomena attending it. This has been made known to us by the revealed word of God. They knew only this — a fact which in the outset may have been stumbled on by the merest accident — that at a certain apparent commotion of the waters, whoever first succeeded in bathing himself in the pool was immediately cured of his disease. They learned to avail themselves of this wondrous virtue of the water, ignorant, however, of what has been revealed to us by John, that it was caused by angelic agency." So this permanent recurring miracle becomes an unapparent one, or one in which those who are benefited and cured, as well as those who are witnesses of the cures, are wholly ignorant that there is any supernatural agency excited at the fountain. They looked upon it in the same light as upon other remitting or intermitting fountains found in their country; or, if as more than this, simply as deriving certain sanitive properties from some mineral with which it became impregnated, by the water being perturbed from the bottom by some natural cause; while it was really caused by an angel descending from heaven. This is too difficult to believe.

It seems difficult to make the note of the Rev. Mr. Barnes on this passage consistent with itself. He says: "This fountain, it seems, had strong medicinal properties. Like many other waters, it had the property of healing many diseases that were incurable by any other means. Thus the waters of Bath, of Saratoga, etc., are found to be highly

medicinal, and to heal diseases that are otherwise incurable. In the case of the waters of Bethesda, there does not appear to have been anything miraculous; but the waters seem to have been endued with strong medicinal properties, especially after a periodical agitation. All that is peculiar about them in the record [as if there were nothing in what is said to have happened supernatural, or even remarkable] is that this was produced by the ministry of an angel. This was in accordance with the common sentiment of the Jews, the common doctrine of the Bible, and the belief of the sacred writers. Nor can it be shown to be absurd or improbable that such blessings should be imparted to man by the ministry of an angel. There is no more absurdity in the belief that a pure spirit or holy angel should aid man than that a physician or parent should, and no more absurdity in supposing that the healing properties of such a fountain should be produced by his aid than that any other blessing should be. It is not implied that this was done [the healing of the sick] instantaneously, or by a miracle. The water had such properties that he was healed, though probably gradually. It is not less the gift of God to suppose that this fountain restored gradually, and in accordance with what commonly occurs, than to suppose, what is not affirmed in this text, that it was done at once, and in a miraculous manner."

It is difficult to decide which view Dean Alford intends to favor — whether to accept or reject the passage. He says it "labors under strong suspicion of spuriousness"; and he marks it, by enclosing it in brackets and lines, either as spurious or highly doubtful; and adds that "in this short space there are no less than seven words either used here only, or here only in this sense." And yet he argues and quotes in favor of the genuineness of the passage, and the miraculous view of the whole.

Dr. Jacobus defends the genuineness of the passage, and says: "We see no reason for evading the plain sense of the terms, which would surely convey the idea of a supernatural

power exerted at intervals for the cure of *one*, and limited to the one who first stepped in; whereas, if the healing lay in the virtue of the water, how could it have been so restricted?" He says that to leave out the clause would destroy the connection of the passage; and he asks, in the words of Alford: "Why should the sick be lying there, and why should the man have been so long waiting anxiously to be put in, unless some known effect followed on the troubling of the water at these intervals, when he wished to be put in, and could not be?" In answer to which, all that needs to be said is, that the remittent character of the fountain being established and well known, there is no want of connection in the passage in consequence of omitting the disputed clause; and that the healing properties, which were undoubtedly attributed to the water, whether with reason or not, would be sufficient to prompt the diseased to wish to be brought there, and patiently to wait for an opportunity to step in, or to be put in.

Bloomfield seems not to have been well acquainted with the best results of criticism, as they bear on the question whether this disputed passage should be cancelled or retained; and criticism has probably made great advances since he wrote. He says that "there is only the authority of two MSS., two very inferior versions, and Nonnus" for the omission. "Besides, the MSS. are such as abound with all sorts of liberties taken with the text." He concludes, therefore, that the words must be retained, and that they utterly exclude the notion of anything short of miraculous agency.

Doddridge, who, as the late Moses Stuart says, "was by no means an ordinary adept in a critical knowledge of the the sacred languages," in his note on the words "an angel descended into the pool and stirred the water" (as he translates), says that this "is the greatest of difficulties in the history of the evangelists, . . . which few commentators enter into." He imagines that the pool might have been remarkable for some mineral virtue attending the water;

and that some time before the Passover an extraordinary commotion was probably observed in the water; and Providence so ordered it that the next person who accidentally bathed there, being under some great disorder, found an immediate and unexpected cure. The like phenomenon, in some other desperate case, was probably observed on a second commotion. And these commotions and cures might happen periodically for some weeks or months. This the Jews would naturally ascribe to some angelic power, as they did afterwards the voice from heaven (John xii. 29), though no angel appeared. And they and St. John had reason to do it, as it was the scripture scheme that these benevolent spirits had been, and frequently are, the invisible instruments of good to the children of men."

Such is the hypothesis of the excellent Doddridge. There can be no doubt that had he lived to see the results of Tischendorf's and Tregelles's studies and criticism of the text, he would have been convinced that what he felt to be the greatest of all difficulties in the evangelists, the angel at the Pool of Bethesda, belongs not to the evangelists at all, but is the work of mere scholiasts and copyists.

On the authority and use to be made of the ancient MSS. of the scriptures, Tischendorf, in the Introduction of his Tauchnitz edition of the English version of the New Testament, recently published, well says that "it would be either unwarrantable arrogance or blameworthy indolence to treat these primeval documents with neglect; it would be a misunderstanding of the dispensations of Providence, which have preserved these documents for fourteen or fifteen centuries, amid all the vicissitudes of time, and given them into our hands, if we were not ready most thankfully to give heed to them, as instruments worthy of the highest respect for the recovery of the truth."

As to the tendency or effect of suggesting readings at variance with the received and authorized version, he asks: "Is our undertaking, by any possibility, adverse to religion? May that which by long use for several centuries in churches

and schools and houses has won respect and affection, be called in question as uncertain, and distrusted as inexact? He who should recognize irreligion in our testing, and even calling into doubt, that text of the Bible, respect for which simply results from common use, would greatly err. It seems to us much rather the greatest act of piety to regard confidently as the word of God nothing which is not accredited and established as such by the most ancient, and also most trustworthy, evidences which the Lord has placed in our hands. From this point of view, and with this conviction, the writer of this Introduction has for thirty years past explored the libraries of Europe, as well as the recesses of monasteries in the Asiatic and African east, in search of the most ancient copies of the holy scriptures; and he has devoted his whole energy to collect all the most weighty documents of the kind, and to labor upon them, to publish them for the benefit of posterity, and to restore on the basis of scientific research the very original text of the apostles."

The way is now prepared, in order to carry out the purpose for which the foregoing discussion has been undertaken, — for a brief consideration of the real miracle at Bethesda. Christ came to this place, where he saw a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, lying, or sitting, beneath the covered arches, waiting for the moving of the water. In him resided that miraculous power to heal which this wretched crowd attributed to the water. This belief, which scholiasts had indicated on the margin of certain copies, and which the transcribers of them have made a part of the text, hinders us from perceiving the beauty and force of the contrast between him and the so-accredited miraculous fountain. The removal of the interpolation at once reveals that contrast in striking relief. He singles out one of the sufferers, a poor impotent man, who for nearly forty years had been in that condition, as the object of his healing mercy. No reason is given for the selection of this man from the crowd of sufferers, or for not extending the power of healing to others. It may have been because he was the most help-

less and pitiable of all. He had none to help him make trial of the virtue of the water. We are not to suppose that he had been waiting at the pool for thirty-eight years; but this expresses the period he had been suffering from his malady. The question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" to a man in his condition, waiting there for an opportunity to be put into the pool, was not unmeaning or superfluous. It had its purpose. He had probably "waited so long, and so long waited in vain, that hope was dead, or well-nigh dead, in his bosom; and the question is asked to awaken in him anew a yearning after the benefit which the Saviour, compassionating his hopeless case, was about to impart. His heart may have been withered through his long sufferings and the long neglects of his fellow-men; it was something to persuade him that this stranger pitied, was interested in his case, would help him if he could. So, persuading him to believe in his kindness, he prepared him also to believe in his ability to do him good. Our Lord was now giving the faith which presently he was to demand of him."¹ He seems to interpret Christ's question as an imputation of carelessness or neglect to avail himself of the healing virtue of the water, and replies, as one who would most gladly be healed: "Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool." The language implies that the swelling or moving of the water was only at irregular intervals, which answers precisely to the phenomena at the waters of Siloam to this day. The place appears to have been narrow, by no means answering to the extensive excavation which now passes under the name of Bethesda at Jerusalem; and those less helpless than himself, while he was trying to reach the pool, would step down before him.

But his long season of disappointed hope and helplessness draws to an end: "Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The cure was instantaneous. He rises, and carries the bed on which he had been borne, as an evidence of the completeness of his cure. He was expecting

¹ Trench, "Notes on the Miracles," p. 205.

to be healed by the water, and appears to have had no knowledge of Christ until now. His impotency of nearly forty years standing, as far as human means were concerned, was altogether hopeless; but his cure, at the word of Christ, was immediate and perfect. This was a genuine and most wonderful miracle, wrought at a pool in the midst of a large company of the diseased, where an angel, if we are to accept the incorporated scholion as expressing a popular belief, was expected to descend and impart miraculous virtue to the water.

It was the Jewish Sabbath when the miracle was wrought. The healed man was seen conveying his bed. "The Jews," that is to say, the party among the Jews who were particularly hostile to Jesus, the leaders or spiritual heads of the nation, rebuked the man for carrying his bed. He told them he was acting in accordance with the direction of him who had healed him; but he could not tell them who it was; he did not know so much as his name. Soon after, Jesus found the man in the Temple, and instructed him, and warned him to sin no more. The man, no doubt, in the simplicity of his heart, thinking it would contribute to the honor of one to whom he owed so much, went and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him whole. But the miracle was nothing, in their estimation; and they sought to varnish over their enmity to Christ with a professed zeal for the Sabbath. "Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!"

As to the significance or moral teaching of this miracle, as now explained, it seems, in the main, to be simply this — it seems fitted to exhibit the contrast between the baseless delusions and vain hopes of multitudes, when they discover their sad spiritual condition, and are prompted to seek deliverance, with the sure help which is to be found only in the great Saviour of the world. Many in the wastes of heathenism, under a deep sense of the evil and condemnation of sin, having no light, wander sadly from shrine to shrine, and from one sacred stream to another, seeking in vain to

wash away the pollution and guilt of sin. And too often those who have the light of Christianity, seem to prefer to seek some fountain which may be discovered to them in their philosophy, in their humanitarianism, or in their works, in which they may wash and be healed, rather than come to Christ and the fountain opened in him. They are like the crowd of blind, halt, and withered, waiting in the portico of ancient Bethesda for the legendary angel to descend and trouble its waters. They know not that he whom all angels worship, and to whom all diseases render prompt and willing obedience, is among them. This miracle seems designed to present—but we discover it not, till we separate the false from the genuine in the text—the Saviour of the world in striking contrast with all those false deities, supports, and helps which sinful men are fain to search out in seeking after peace of conscience and hope towards God.

ARTICLE VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLES.

BY S. R. ASBURY, RESIDENT LICENCIATE AT ANDOVER.

[Continued.]

THE DISCOURSE OF STEPHEN.

Introduction.

STEPHEN may be recognized in his single speech as the immediate predecessor of Paul. We meet here with all those ideas which distinguish the doctrine of Paul from those already considered. It might be expected that the teaching of Jesus as to the profound antithesis between Law and Gospel would be apprehended and further developed by some believers prior to the conversion of Paul; and hence there is no reason to doubt the historical character of this discourse. A token of its genuineness has also been discovered in the circumstance that the expression "Son of