

THE APOSTLE PHILIP.

THERE is reason to believe that all the apostles, so far as their special characters are set before us in Scripture, were intended to be representative of different classes of minds which should, from age to age, be found within the Church. This is very obvious with respect to some of them. Peter is at once felt to be typical of the ardent and the zealous, John of the loving and contemplative, Thomas of the distrustful and the hesitating, and Nathanael (or Bartholomew) of the simple, the guileless, the sincere. And seeing that each of these immediate followers of Christ appears so plainly to stand, as it were, at the head of a vast multitude of others who have since his day arisen in the Church, it may not be fanciful, but the reverse, to discover, in the few hints which we find respecting some of the rest of the apostles, indications that they too are to be regarded as representative of special types of character, which should, from time to time, be manifested by the followers of Christ.

What type of character, then, we may ask, is Philip to be taken as representing? In answer to this question we seem warranted in saying that that Apostle comes before us in Scripture as the representative of those who may be variously, yet harmoniously, described as the *inquiring* and the *speculative*: as persons who are eager and zealous in following out what they have already ascertained to be truth; and who may sometimes, by pushing this spirit of investigation too far, miss that repose of mind which they might otherwise have enjoyed.

We shall refer by-and-by to a remarkable illustration of this type of character which has been furnished in a celebrated writer and thinker of recent times. But let us first of all see whether the accounts which we possess of the Apostle Philip are such as to fit in with and substantiate that idea of his mental tendencies and habits which has been suggested.

The passage which throws the clearest light upon Philip's character is found in Chapter xiv. of St. John's Gospel. We there read (*Verses 8, 9*) that, as Jesus was speaking to his disciples, "Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" It is evident that the Apostle is here manifesting an unduly inquisitive spirit. He shews himself ardently desirous of obtaining a full acquaintance with the most momentous of all subjects; but he is at the same time betrayed by his blinding eagerness into overlooking those advantages which were in fact within his reach, and which, if properly improved, would have led to the satisfaction which he desired. We cannot but think that Philip had long been pondering the request which he now so earnestly addresses to his Master. To reach a full and satisfying knowledge of the Father, to behold in some sensible and striking form the glory of the invisible God, was the great desire which for a time had been slumbering in his heart. And now he finds an opportunity, which he at once and eagerly embraces, of giving utterance to this long-cherished

wish. Christ has been speaking of the many mansions in his Father's house ; and after declaring that the object of his temporary departure was to prepare a place among these for his disciples, has said unto them, "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Upon this Thomas, with characteristic distrust and caution, exclaims, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how can we know the way?" His implied doubts and questionings are set at rest by the impressive and comprehensive words of Jesus: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me ;" and then the Saviour adds: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also ; and from henceforth ye do know him, and have seen him." But now has come the opportunity which Philip desired. The words of Christ touch upon that very point which has attracted his own earnest attention, and roused his deepest curiosity. He has hitherto kept silent respecting it, fearing perhaps lest there might be something improper, or even impious, in giving utterance to the thoughts and wishes which have been excited within him. But now that very language which *he* hesitated to employ has been made use of by Christ Himself. The Saviour has spoken of "seeing" the Father ; and his disciple, feeling that he might now venture to express those feelings which had hitherto found no vent in language, but had on that very account burned all the more hotly in his bosom, exclaims with almost breathless impetuosity, "Lord, *shew* us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

The impression thus made upon our minds as to

the special character of Philip is confirmed by all else that we learn regarding him. Only in three other passages is he brought prominently before us in the Gospels, and each of these sustains the belief that he was of a peculiarly inquiring spirit—a spirit so far good and commendable, but which, unless watched and checked, might easily pass into the phase of mere curious inquiry or unprofitable speculation. The first time he is presented to us is when, after himself being called by Christ, we are told (John i. 45): “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom *Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write*, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” These words indicate that Philip was led to acknowledge the Messiahship of Jesus, only as the result of studious investigation. He had carefully examined the statements of Moses and the prophets, and it was not till he had found that they had their exact fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth, that he enrolled himself among the Saviour’s disciples. The same tendency to inquiry is suggested by the manner in which he replies to the prejudices of him whom he addressed. “Nathanael,” we are told, “said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” and Philip, dealing with this objection in the only way which, had it occurred to himself, he would have felt satisfactory, urges Nathanael to a personal examination of the point at issue, and replies, “Come and *see*.” In perfect harmony with all this are the two other occasions on which he is presented to us in the Gospels. At John vi. 5-7, we read: “When Jesus lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company

come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." The special appeal which Christ made at this time to Philip has greatly perplexed the commentators. Alford remarks: "Why to *Philip* does not appear: perhaps some reason lay in the *πειράζων αὐτὸν*, which is now lost to us. . . . I would take the circumstance as simple matter of fact, implying perhaps that Philip was nearest to our Lord at the moment." Even Bengel seems here at fault. He can only say by way of explanation: "Boni doctoris est ex grege discipulorum unum aliquem, cui opus est, interdum provocare. Fortasse Philippus etiam rem alimentariam curabat inter discipulos." But with the clue we have already found to Philip's special character, the particular appeal now made by Christ to him seems full of meaning. The hint contained in the *πειράζων αὐτὸν* of the Evangelist is not, in the language of Alford, "lost to us." On the contrary, the object of Christ is clear. He knew the peculiar character of Philip. Long ere Jesus spake, that disciple, in accordance with his constitutional tendency, had been questioning with himself *how* that great multitude could possibly be fed. He had even calculated the exact sum which would be required to buy bread for them, so that every one might "take a little." The instantaneous answer which he gives to his Master's question shews that his mind had been busily en-

gaged with the problem to be solved ; and thus we see how much point there was in the question which Christ now asked being addressed to him rather than to any other of the apostles.

Again we read (John xii. 20-22): "And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast : the same came therefore to Philip, who was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew : and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus." Here, likewise, the commentators are puzzled. "For what reason," says Alford, "*Philip* was selected, it is impossible to say." And if this were the only passage in which that Apostle was mentioned, we should at once admit the truth of the remark. There is certainly nothing in the passage taken by itself to give any indication of Philip's character, or to enable us in any way to understand why the Greeks applied to him. But if the idiosyncrasy of the Apostle was really such as we have already appeared to find it, there does not seem any impossibility, or even any great difficulty, in accounting for the fact in question. Lange vaguely suggests the explanation when he says, "Perhaps their turning first to him depended upon a law of kindly attraction."¹ He does not say in what this attraction consisted, but, after the light which we have found other passages shedding on the special character of the Apostle, there does not seem much difficulty in discovering it. The Greeks referred to had, doubtless, inquired beforehand respecting those most in the confidence of Jesus. They would wish to ascer-

¹ "Life of Christ," iv. 53.

tain which one of his immediate followers was likely to shew most sympathy with the request they were to make. And may we not say that Philip would soon be selected as the man? He, if any one, would feel with, and assist, those labouring under the influence of an inquiring spirit. Without refining unduly on the subject, we may be allowed to observe that the passage under consideration fits in admirably with all we have already ascertained respecting Philip. There seems an obvious congruity in the fact that that disciple who had formerly invited Nathanael to "come and *see*" the Saviour, and whose own great wish, the wish which at last he ventured to carry to his Master, was, "Lord, I would *see* the Father," should now be the one appealed to for sympathy and aid by these eager supplicants, when the request which they had to prefer was expressed in the words, "Sir, *we* would *see* Jesus."

Such, then, is the kind of character of which the Apostle Philip is the type: and it may now be worth while to let our minds dwell for a little both on the excellences which it exhibits and on the dangers to which it is exposed.

An inquiring spirit—properly so called—is of the utmost importance in every department of human activity and achievement. It is those who have been in the habit of asking questions of Nature, and pressing for answers to them, that have been chiefly instrumental in extending the boundaries of knowledge. Others have been satisfied with what was already ascertained. They have been content to be hemmed in by that circle of darkness which sur-

rounded them, and have made no attempt to explore its mysteries, or to widen the circumference within which the light of science is enjoyed. But inquisitive and reflecting minds, by the unceasing questions which they put, have laboured to add something to the amount of man's knowledge, and have thus, at times, been led by the simplest incidents to a discovery of some of the most dominant and comprehensive laws of the universe. It is those who follow up Science to her most advanced outpost, and who, while standing there, inquire if it be not possible to take yet a further step, and to bring something more of earth and heaven within the domain of human cognizance, that are the real contributors to the advancement and elevation of our race. Others may conserve, but they, as it were, create. Others may be silent and receptive, but they are inquiring and communicative. And although many of their inquiries may not be answered by themselves, or in their own day, yet, by instituting them, they have given an impulse and direction to the human mind, which will, in all probability, hereafter lead to the desired success. Again and again has this proved to be the case. All those marvellous discoveries and equally marvellous applications of science, as also all those social improvements, those deliverances from long-prevalent errors and superstitions, which our own day has so largely witnessed, have flowed from the efforts of men who were bold enough to put some question which others had never asked, or to follow out to their proper results inquiries which had been suggested by their predecessors.

Now this spirit of reflection and inquiry, so valuable in other departments, is also of great importance within the province of religion. It is melancholy to think of the multitudes who hold what faith they have in the gospel simply as a matter of tradition. They have shewn none of the spirit of Philip in examining into the grounds on which their belief rests; and hence they have not attained an intelligent and established faith. The evil consequence is twofold. On the one hand, many of the class referred to cling to their traditional beliefs with an obstinacy which takes no account of reason, and which is fatal to all progressive spiritual enlightenment. On the other hand, numbers who have taken no pains to be able to "give a reason of the hope that is in them," are apt to be carried away by any wind of doctrine which happens, for the time, to prevail—by any sort of heresy or scepticism which enjoys a temporary power and popularity. Nothing, then, is more important than to cherish a spirit of earnest and sustained inquiry with respect to all that falls within the domain of religion. There should be a sincere desire for "light," and for "more light." We cannot but feel that it is a noble, even though misdirected, wish to which Philip gave utterance when he exclaims, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." This language is enough to prove that his thoughts were habitually fixed on things spiritual and eternal. Only a man living far above the passions and pursuits of the world would have been prompted to make such a request. His ambition was of the loftiest and purest character. It did not limit itself to the honours, the pleasures, or the riches of earth,

but it vaulted upwards to a vision of God Himself. We behold more than an eagle's flight in the aspiration of Philip. We see the grand uprising of an immortal spirit to its native heaven—the sublime outburst of a soul which has awakened to its own vast capacities and wants, and which is persuaded that its necessities can be met only in communion with the Infinite and the Eternal.

But we must now notice the dangers which beset those who are possessed of a disposition like Philip, and the errors into which they are apt to be betrayed. A strongly *inquisitive* spirit is ever apt to become an unduly *speculative* one, and thus to waste itself in efforts which lead to no practical results. Thus had it been, to some extent, with Philip. He had allowed his mind to dwell on the great subject which specially attracted him, to the neglect of that source of instruction and satisfaction which was graciously placed within his reach. Only too many examples might be cited of men who, in the domain of earthly science, have, as it were, walked in his steps. They have been earnestly inquisitive, and so far well; but they have also become unduly speculative, and then have fallen into error. But let us restrict ourselves to the spiritual province, and find our illustration in John Foster, the eminent writer and thinker referred to in the beginning of this paper. A man of profound reflectiveness and earnest faith, he has made some contributions to the literature of our country which will probably live as long as the language itself. He has also left a number of expositions and illustrations of Scripture which are almost unequalled for the energy and originality they display. But he

was unfortunately too prone to indulge in vain and unprofitable speculation. Like Philip, he was always wishing to *see* what mortal eye has never seen; and thus he missed, to some extent, that tranquillity of spirit which he might otherwise have possessed. This tendency manifested itself in several ways, but was especially shewn in his speculations as to the state into which the soul is ushered after death. Again and again does he recur to this mysterious subject, and it is sometimes almost painful to mark the impatience which he exhibits in regard to it. "How strange," he says, "that revelation itself has kept it completely veiled." And while concluding that this concealment must be part of the "punitive economy" under which, on account of our sins, we are at present placed, he still allows himself, in a somewhat daring and unyielding spirit, to exclaim, "But that mysterious hereafter! We must submit to feel that we *are* in the dark. . . . Still, a contemplative spirit hovers with insuppressible inquisitiveness about the dark frontier, beyond which it *knows* that wonderful realities are existing, realities of greater importance to it than the whole world on this side of that limit. We watch for some glimmer through any part of the solemn shade, but still are left to the faint dubious resources of analogy, imagination, and conjecture." And in this spirit of unrest he proceeds to harass himself with a long list of questions respecting the unseen world, which, all the time, he felt could not possibly be answered.¹ Now this is an illustration of the way in which proper and profitable inquiry may pass into useless and injurious specula-

¹ Foster's "Life and Correspondence," ii. 197.

tion. Such vain questionings tend to turn away the mind from that truth which *has* been graciously revealed to us, and from Him who is the living Truth, the Centre of all revelation, and the sole Author of peace and satisfaction to the soul. While Philip vexed himself with wishes for an apocalypse of the invisible Jehovah, he forgot that he was in the immediate presence of One who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Hence the Saviour kindly but decisively rebuked the spirit which his disciple had displayed. In answer to Philip's eager cry, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us;" Jesus, we are told, said unto him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"

Precious words for all human generations! It is extremely difficult, or rather impossible, for us to form any idea of a pure impalpable Spirit. We may strive to think of such a Being, but the mind labours to no purpose in every such attempt. We feel that in spite of ourselves we are attributing an outward form to the object of our conception, or that, if we resolutely struggle against this, it is only to substitute for some corporeal representation entire and absolute vacuity. But here the statement of Christ comes to our aid, "He that hath seen *me* hath seen the *Father*." We are thus warranted, when we think of God, in conceiving of Him as revealed through Jesus-Christ. And this furnishes something which the mind can grasp—a tangible outward reality which can be felt in thinking of the Almighty. Nature

always seems to hold a screen between us and her Author. No living form appears among the works of God to impart warmth and reality to the homage which we offer Him. We look at the towering mountain, and are awed by its majesty; we contemplate the starry heavens, and are impressed with their grandeur; but still there is a veil between us and the great Being who called them into existence. They speak in no audible voice to give us a feeling of companionship; they exhibit no living presence to draw forth our love and adoration. Except on some rare occasions, and these probably altogether unknown in the lives of multitudes, it is only a cold and distant and unsatisfying worship which is paid to the God of Nature, if thought of apart from the God of Revelation. But how different is the feeling when the Christ of Scripture rises up before us as a visible embodiment of the Divine perfections! We see Him a living presence by our side. We hear Him speaking words for our encouragement and guidance. His love breathes upon us in the many promises of the gospel; his hand seems to touch us in the manifold miracles of mercy which He performs; and we cling to Him with that importunate and lively faith which will not let Him go except He bless us. Yes; "He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father." The heathen may still bow before the altar of an "unknown God;" the philosopher may still perplex himself with endeavours to form some conception of the Great Supreme, whom, after all, he confesses to be incomprehensible: but the Christian bows with a deep sense of reality and satisfaction before the

footstool of the Eternal, knowing that though "no man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

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TITUS AND CRETE.

(An Introduction to a brief Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to Titus.)

ST. PAUL conferred upon a few of his friends and fellow-workers an immortality of remembrance by simply referring to them in one or more of his Epistles. Some of these, like Apollos, Timothy, Trophimus, Silas, Crispus, Aquila, and Priscilla, are also mentioned in the Acts. On the other hand, all that we know of Titus is gathered from the Letters of St. Paul. It is impossible to explain the silence of St. Luke with reference to an energetic fellow-labourer so fully trusted and so highly commended by the Apostle, and one to whom a Letter of so much interest was subsequently addressed. Conjectures on this subject have not been wanting, but they have scarcely the support of ingenious plausibility. The supposition that he was the *Titus*, or *Titius Justus*, of some Manuscripts¹ of the Acts (xviii. 7), is, it genuine, scarcely compatible with the fact that Titus accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the visit to Jerusalem described in Acts xv., a circumstance vouched for by Paul in Galatians ii. 1. The attempt to identify him with either Luke or Timothy or Silvanus (Silas) fails when we remember that Paul speaks

¹ \aleph , E, D, and sundry cursives constitute this authority. Tischendorf (eighth edition) introduces the word *Titius*, not *Titus*, into his text. Tregelles brings it into his margin.