

ing sin bare, such as chap. v. ; nor, on the other hand, those which comfort and invite, such as chap. iv. Indeed few books of the Bible offer such variety of devotional help as Isaiah. In it speaks the Evangelist, the spiritual guide, the spiritual comforter, in almost every tone of the language of the spiritual life.

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NOTE ON ACTS IX. 19 ff.

A CAREFUL study of these verses brings to light an interesting point in the spiritual experience of St. Paul during the period that immediately followed his conversion ; and also shows that St. Luke's account of what then occurred is quite consistent with what Paul tells us in the Epistle to the Galatians (i. 15-18) : the extreme accuracy of the information possessed by the writer of the Acts is also clearly shown.

Let us first consider what would be the probable effect on such a man as Paul of the special revelation of Jesus granted to him.

His mind was an intensely logical one, deeply imbued with the methods he had learned in the Jerusalem Schools, and of their accuracy he was profoundly convinced : indeed some of our greatest difficulties in grasping his arguments arise from the fact that he continued to employ those methods in his exposition of Christianity.

Now such a man must have had very definite opinions as to what the Messiah would be, and say, and do, when He came ; these opinions would, of course, be founded on a careful and extensive consideration of the Law and the Prophets, conducted in accordance with the methods learned at the feet of Gamaliel, and he would not admit the possibility of a doubt as to their correctness.

The premisses being certain and the methods of logical argument undoubtedly correct, the conclusion reached would naturally be irrefutable.

What Jesus was, and said, and did, was utterly at variance with what Saul conceived that the Messiah ought to be, and say, and do : Jesus was, therefore, regarded by Saul as an impostor ; it followed that His disciples must be put down by every possible means.

But at the scene before Damascus' Gate an entirely new element was introduced into Saul's calculations.

He believed his knowledge of the God of the Jews, derived from the sacred Scriptures to be complete : but here was a Being who spoke direct to his spirit in a manner quite without a parallel in his previous experience. His premisses were shattered ; the conclusion founded on them was overthrown.

The evidence of personal experience could not be gainsaid ; but it is contrary to all we know of human nature to imagine that he was able in a short space of time to ascertain what truth there was in his old opinions, and to bring it into line with the new revelation. What was likely to happen ? Reason and logical arguments would for the moment be thrust into the background, only personal experience would count ; he would do just what Luke says he did, " Proclaim Jesus that He is the Son of God." The historical question would be left in abeyance.

In verse 20 the *Textus Receptus* has " He preached Christ " ; but the overwhelming evidence of MSS. and versions shows " Jesus " to be the right reading. The change is an important one ; Saul had not yet had time to consider fully the question whether the man Jesus was, or was not, the Christ of the Jews ; he only knew that Jesus was a divine Being.¹ But in verse 22 Luke tells us

¹ H. J. Holtzmann, in the *Hand-Commentar*, says, " Durch Speisegenuss erstarkt, predigte er sofort die Messianität Jesu : Sohn Gottes im Sinne von xiii.

that Saul confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ. Can we account for this development in the Apostle's preaching? In Galatians i. 15 ff. Paul says, "When it was the good pleasure of God . . . to reveal His Son in me . . . immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them who were Apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and again I returned unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas." Paul clearly implies that his sojourn in Arabia fell between a short and a long stay at Damascus.

With this Luke's account is quite consistent, for he has two notes of time with reference to Saul's visits at Damascus. In verse 19 we read, "And he was *certain* days with the disciples which were at Damascus"; in verse 23, "And when *many* days were fulfilled."

Any one familiar with the Lucan use of the word *ικανός* will admit that the phrase *ἡμέραι ἱκαναὶ* probably refers to a fairly long period of time.¹

If we suppose that the sojourn in Arabia fell between the visit of "*certain* days" and that of "*many* days," we can readily believe that Luke was not ignorant of this most important episode in the life of his beloved friend, although it was not part of his purpose to record what merely concerned Saul personally. During his quiet retirement in Arabia Saul must have gone carefully over all his previous investigations into the meaning of the Jewish Scriptures. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit he must have care-

33, sonst nicht in Act." But the use of the expression "The Son of God" points rather to the special character of St. Paul's preaching at that period.

¹ See Lightfoot's *Galatians*, p. 89, note 3: 'Ἡμέραι ἱκαναὶ is an indefinite period in St. Luke, which may vary according to circumstances: Acts ix. 43, xviii. 18, xxvii. 7. Certainly the idea connected with *ικανός* in his language is that of largeness rather than smallness; comp. Luke vii. 12, Acts xx. 37 (*ικανός κλαυθμός*).

fully distinguished between those old ideas of his which were indeed founded on God's message to His chosen people through Law-givers, Prophets, and Psalmists, and those other ideas with regard to which he had merely been wise in his own conceits. Then he returned to Damascus, ready to employ in the service of his new Master that minute scriptural learning which, before he had received the guidance of the Holy Spirit, had so utterly misled him.

He now confounded the Jews, proving that this is the Christ. The word translated "proving" (*συμβιβάζων*) is nearly always used of adducing evidence from Scripture: it would only be after long consideration that Paul could thus see and set before others the essential unity between his old and his new beliefs.

The fact that Luke's narrative enables us to trace clearly these two stages in Paul's spiritual experience at this great crisis of his life shows what a thorough insight he had into the spiritual history of his friend.

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