

is knowledge "in part." We are no longer bondservants, but children in our Father's house; yet children still. We shall grow up some day, and "know even as also we have been known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). Meantime we do well to remind ourselves, and proclaim to the world, that our advance from fear to love is based on a fact of which our intellects can take knowledge; for although the Father, "dwelling in light unapproachable," still eludes the grasp of man's intellect, yet our knowledge that He is our Father rests on an ascertainable fact in the world's history. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

NEWPORT J. D. WHITE.

THE POTTER'S FIELD.

SIR W. RAMSAY, whose studies on the Acts of the Apostles and vindication of the trustworthiness of St. Luke are so admirable, remarks, that St. Luke had means of knowing the later events of his history with an accuracy wanting as regards the earlier, where he was dependent upon others. This is obvious. But if St. Luke has established a right in one part of the Acts to be regarded as trustworthy and painstaking, having a clear grasp of principles, and of the relative value of events, so as to select his materials with judgment, we must give him credit for something of these qualities in the earlier part of his work, and this the more because, as Sir W. Ramsay admits, the entire plan of the narrative, concentrating attention on the successive critical steps, is "thoroughly Lukan." We may, in fact, apply to the early part

of the Acts what Sir W. Ramsay says of St Luke's work in general :¹ "Since in every case where St. Luke's use of his written authorities can be tested, he is found to employ them carefully, and report them accurately, surely it would be quite justifiable to generalize the principle, that in other cases where we do not know the original words that Luke had before him, and worked up in his history, he presents an accurate report of their meaning."

Nevertheless Sir Wiliam's treatment of the early chapters of the Acts violates his own principle, for, without assigning any reason except that in his opinion the account of the death of Judas by St. Matthew conflicts with that given in the Acts, he speaks of St. Luke's² "admission of second-rate incidents that have done his reputation injury." As an example of this he takes the speech of St. Peter as reported in Acts i.

This I propose to examine briefly. In the Revised Version the account of the death of Judas, as given in this speech, is placed within brackets, and reads as if it might be an explanation inserted by St. Luke himself ; but when we refer to the Greek it is evidently part of St. Peter's speech. Is there, then, any reason to think that the report of this speech is not trustworthy ? I see none. The moment was critical. The event was one to rivet attention. It was when St. Peter took the leading part which he held throughout the first half of St. Luke's history. The action, too, to which his speech led was of the first importance : the election of a successor to the traitor Judas. If St. Luke found many records available for use when he began to write his Gospel, it would be extraordinary if no record had been made of the first action of the disciples after the Ascension, and that one of such importance.

¹ Paper read before the Victoria Institute, April 22, 1907.

² *St. Paul the Traveller*, p. 367.

We may, then, take it for granted that the speech of St. Peter is authentic and given with tolerable accuracy. Was he mistaken, then, as to the facts? That is scarcely possible. There is nothing in his account that was not easily within his knowledge, that Judas had purchased a field with his ill-gotten gains, his miserable death, and the name given to the scene of the tragedy by the dwellers at Jerusalem. If it be necessary, as Sir W. Ramsay thinks, to choose between the story in the Acts and that given by St. Matthew, I should certainly give the preference to the former, which was told by one on the spot, and within six or seven weeks of the event.

But are we reduced to the necessity of rejecting either of the accounts? I think not. Most of the difficulty about them has arisen from misinterpretations, and not from inaccuracies in the stories. For example, it has been taken for granted that St. Peter says that Judas bought the field with the thirty pieces of silver. But he says no such thing, nor was the thing possible. In the first place, Judas never had the money in his hands for more than a few hours; he never parted with it till in a sudden fit of remorse he threw it at the High Priest's feet. In the next place, there was not time between his receipt of the money and his suicide to carry out the purchase, even if the bargain had been struck already. In fact, that any one, even Judas himself, in all the agitation and excitement of those few hours, could have done what he is supposed to have done is incredible. We may on this point accept with absolute confidence the account of St. Matthew, that Judas as soon as he saw that Jesus was condemned repented. The purchase of the field could not by any possibility have taken place then, it must have been made before. And is there any reason why it should not have been before? The only ground for thinking otherwise is that Judas is said to have bought

it with the "reward of iniquity," which is supposed to mean the price of the betrayal.

But St. Peter does not call it "the price of blood," and says nothing as to its amount. Moreover, as Judas was the purse bearer and a thief, he did not need to wait for the paltry price of blood to make the purchase, and the money that he stole from the Master and his brother disciples was aptly enough called by St. Peter "the wages of iniquity." Thus St. Peter's account obliges us to conclude that Judas had bought the field before the betrayal. In that case we have a light thrown upon the betrayal. The purchase of the field shows that Judas had definitely made up his mind to desert Christ. Whether it was that he was afraid that his thefts from the common purse were in danger of being found out, or that, with sharper insight than the other apostles, he rightly apprehended our Lord's plainly expressed anticipations of approaching disaster, he began to feather his nest in preparation for the worst. Hence his unconcealed disgust at the waste of ointment worth 300 pence, which might have come into his money-bag. Hence his grasping at the paltry thirty pieces of silver which were all the authorities would give. A man like Judas would be quick to read the signs of the times where his own interests were concerned. If he had ever been an enthusiast and sincere, his enthusiasm had expired. The signs of the times could be read by any one of ordinary observation. The open hostility of the rulers, the agitation and foreboding of Christ Himself, showed that all was up so far as any prospect of worldly success was concerned, and Judas determined to lose no time in leaving the sinking ship.

But though St. Peter knew that Judas owned the field, and also knew of his suicide which had already given it the name of evil omen, he could not at that time have known that the priests would buy it, or what price they would give.

It is St. Matthew who tells of their purchase, and that they employed the "price of blood" for the purpose. He says they "took counsel," which implies some little delay. The price, "thirty pieces of silver," was extraordinarily small for a plot of even waste ground close to the city; but that is accounted for by the ill name it had got from the tragical suicide committed there. After the purchase the evil name adhered still to the spot, though naturally enough it became associated with the fact of the purchase money being blood money. That St. Matthew wrote some time after the event is evident from the expression, "Wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day." It was indeed doubly "the field of blood" then, first as the scene of the traitor's death, and next as having been bought by the "price of blood." St. Peter's silence as to the purchase by the priests as a burial ground is accounted for by the fact that he spoke some time before that transaction; indeed, he does not seem to have known then the sum for which Judas had made the betrayal.

With regard to the death of Judas, the difference between St. Matthew and the Acts is of no real importance, nor does it seem as if they must necessarily conflict. Any one who considers how frequently would-be suicides have blundered in their attempt, through nervous agitation and the agony of a disordered mind, can scarcely wonder that Judas should have miscalculated in his attempt and so fallen headlong and perished, as St. Peter describes. In any case, both accounts agree that his treachery was speedily followed by his miserable death.

In estimating the value of St. Luke's sources, both for his Gospel and for that part of the Acts in which the scene is laid in Palestine, "we must take into account that he had travelled in Palestine as early as A.D. 57, and had met the leaders of the Church in Jerusalem, that he was two

years in Caesarea in close relations with the Church there,"¹ so that he had every opportunity of obtaining the most accurate information; and the probability is that the Gospel and the early part of the Acts were, so to speak, written on the spot.

W. SHERLOCK.

THE HELVIDIAN VERSUS THE EPIPHANIAN HYPOTHESIS.

IN my former article, which appeared in the July Number, I considered this question in the light of what may be gathered from Scripture. In my edition of St. James I had summed up the results of my earlier investigation of the subject in the words (p. xxxvi.): "Even if the language of the Gospels had been entirely neutral in this matter, it would surely have been a piece of high presumption on our part to assume that God's providence must always follow the lines suggested by our notions of what is seemly; but when every conceivable barrier has been placed in the way of this interpretation . . . can we characterize it otherwise than as a contumacious setting up of an artificial tradition above the written word, if we insist upon it that brother must mean not brother, but either cousin or one who is no blood-relation at all, that first-born does not imply other children subsequently-born, that the limit fixed to separation does not imply subsequent union?" My critic in the *Church Quarterly* (vol. lxvi, p. 81) meets this statement with the *argumentum ad verecundiam*: "When such a sweeping condemnation includes names pre-eminent for the furtherance of our Biblical knowledge, such as Lightfoot, Westcott, and Hort, the present Bishop of Birmingham, and Canon Liddon, the charge becomes little short of ludicrous." It is hardly necessary for me

¹ Sir W. Ramsay, paper read before the Victoria Institute.