

and Delitzsch (the Fourth Edition, 2 vols., 21s.). They are published in The Foreign Theological Library, and the Publishers (T. & T. Clark, 38 George Street, Edinburgh) are willing to send a copy of Delitzsch for 12s., or of Orelli for 6s., post free to any *Member of the Expository Times Guild* who writes for it. Both books work on the Hebrew, but Orelli so sparingly that an English reader may use it with little discomfort.

A survey of recent literature on St. John's Gospel may be found in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for July 1890 (vol. ii. p. 229). Bishop Westcott's edition of St. John in the *Speaker* has been published separately (Murray, 10s. 6d.). It still holds

the first place, though Dr. Reynolds, in the *Pulpit* (Kegan Paul, 2 vols.), might have borne hard upon its pre-eminence had he not been buried beneath loads of weak homiletics. Then there are three small books, and they are all executed with scholarship and care: (1) Dr. Reith's edition in the "Handbooks for Bible Classes" series (T. & T. Clark, 2 vols., 2s. each); (2) Dr. Plummer's in the *Cambridge Bible* (Cambridge Press, 4s. 6d.); and (3) Prebendary Sadler's edition (Bell & Sons, 7s. 6d.). Last of all, for the student of the Greek, Dr. Plummer's edition in the *Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools* (Cambridge Press, 6s.) may be heartily recommended.

## The International Lessons.

### I.

Acts viii. 5-25.

#### PHILIP PREACHING AT SAMARIA.

1. "Simon . . . used sorcery" (ver. 9). The word in the Greek is "was a Magian." So he is known as Simon the Magus or Simon Magus. There were no doubt honest Magians like those who came to Christ's cradle. But the most it seems were more or less charlatans.

2. "He continued with Philip." Literally, "he clung close to Philip,"—no doubt, mainly to find out Philip's *secret*.

3. "The thought of thine heart" (ver. 22). The word translated *thought* is very strong. It signifies a deep laid scheme.

4. "The gall of bitterness" and "the bond of iniquity" (ver. 23) are Hebrew expressions. Compare "a root that beareth gall and wormwood" (Deut. xxix. 18), spoken of false gods; and, "to loose the bonds of wickedness" (Isa. lviii. 6). The meaning is plain; but it is not easy to turn it into modern English.

THE subject of this lesson is conversion—true and spurious.

Philip, who has already been named as one of the deacons, had come to Samaria. The Samaritans had heard the gospel before. Some of them had even seen the Lord in the flesh. For one day a woman of the town of Sychar had gone to Jacob's Well and had returned with the strange invitation: "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did!" And many of the people of Sychar believed; and it may have been to this very city of Sychar that Philip now came.

For we notice that when Philip went to Samaria,

the people there acted exactly as the people of Sychar had done. First, they gave heed to the things which Philip spake, because they heard and saw the *miracles* which he did. So we are told the men of Sychar believed, first, because of the saying of the woman who testified, "He told me all things that ever I did." It was the outward wonder that moved them first of all.

Now this kind of belief may be genuine or it may be spurious. In the case of the people of Samaria, as in the case of the men of Sychar, this was but the first step in a true and lasting faith. For we are told of the former, that they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, and afterwards they received the gift of the Holy Spirit. So with the men of Sychar: "Now we believe," they said to the woman, "not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world."

But there was one man in Samaria whose belief was mere amazement at the miracles which Philip wrought, and he was not truly converted at all. Simon had been a clever impostor himself, but he does not seem to have looked upon Philip as also an impostor, only cleverer. He seems to have recognised a real power in him. That was the extent of his *belief*. So he clung close to Philip, not to help him in his work, but to learn, if possible, the secret of the miraculous power which he possessed.

By and by Peter and John came down, and laid their hands on the believing Samaritans, who thereupon received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then the spuriousness of Simon's faith appeared. The "gift" showed itself outwardly, perhaps as on the day of Pentecost. It was another wonder to Simon, and it was nothing more. He longed more than ever to possess this new power, the power of imparting the gift of the Spirit on whomsoever he laid his hands. It would be worth money to him, incalculable sums of money, he foresaw. So he fatally betrayed himself by offering money for it.

The secret of Simon's failure was that he never knew or acknowledged that he was a sinner. He believed in Philip's power to work miracles, but not in Jesus Christ, the *Saviour* of the world. He wanted the power to confer the Holy Ghost on others; he never asked that gift for himself.

ILLUSTRATIONS.—"And there was great joy in that city" (ver. 8). There is something clear and peculiar in this joy of a whole city over the new faith. We can all feel it when a thought or an emotion which has lingered in a few minds starts up and takes possession of a whole community. It is as when a quiver of flame, which has lurked about one bit of wood, at last gets real possession of the mass of fuel, and the whole fireplace is in a blaze.—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

Simon Magus disappears here from inspired history, but not from Christian literature. His name for centuries became the centre of legends which grew as legends grow. From the witness of his countryman, Justin, who was born little over half a century from this event, we may conclude that the man who had come so near to Christ and been self-repelled from Him grew afterwards into a more daring and more wicked impostor than ever. He founded a sect which lingered long in Samaria. He travelled as far as Rome in the pursuit of his profession. Everywhere he opposed the gospel. He appears as the bitter foe of Peter in particular. He added lust to covetousness, calling the paramour whom he had taken from the stew of Tyre a divine emanation like himself. If he does not deserve to be termed, as the Church fathers term him, the parent and type of all heresy, he seems at least from that memorable day to have gone ever further off from the pure faith which once he had professed, and from that blessed hope which in His mercy God once brought near him.—J. O. DYKES.

## II.

### Acts viii. 26-40.

#### PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN.

1. "The place of the Scripture which he read" (ver. 32). The verses quoted are those of Isaiah liii. 7, 8. And the difference between this and the words in the Book of Isaiah itself, is due to the fact that they are here quoted from the Greek (Septuagint) translation of Isaiah, which is no doubt what the Ethiopian was reading. That translation was made in Egypt according to tradition, and therefore just for such persons as this Eunuch, whose country was Upper Egypt.

2. And Philip said, "If thou believest . . ." (ver. 37). This verse is not found in our oldest MSS., and most editors believed that it had been written on the margin of some MS.

by some scribe who considered that a fuller statement of the Ethiopian's faith was advisable: and that then it got copied into the text itself.

OF the "Acts" of Philip the deacon, only two are told—the Conversion of Samaria and the Conversion of the Eunuch. We had the former last week; the latter is our lesson to-day. The two "acts" are worth comparing. Both the stories are of the successful proclamation of the gospel, but the one was in a populous city, the other in "a way that is desert." The one was a work carried on amid the inspiration of an enthusiastic crowd of people, the other was the quiet personal dealing with a single human soul. Yet they have one most beautiful characteristic in common. Of the city of Samaria it is said: "And there was great joy in that city;" of the Eunuch it is said: "And he went on his way rejoicing." It is a gospel, *good news*, always.

Of the two cases of conversion we might say, humanly speaking, that the Eunuch's was easier than that of the Samaritans. For they were debased by an abominable superstition, while he was simply ignorant. They had first to unlearn a great deal before they could begin to learn the truth of God, he was waiting to have it opened to him. So it required no length of time. Here was the hunger of the heart, that drew him to the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah above all other Scripture, that chapter which told of a Sufferer who suffered the penalty of the sins of others. He could understand that *Some One* had suffered, the just for the unjust; he must have felt his own mysterious share in the griefs and sorrows which he bore. Now he only had to know who this Sufferer was, that he might believe in Him and love Him. So Philip preached unto him Jesus.

ILLUSTRATIONS.—"The way . . . which is desert" (ver. 26). Think of it, children: a man *here* wanting a blessing, and a man *there* who could give it him; and between the two there lies "the way which is desert." How could these ever be brought together, if the one wasn't willing, in simple faith, to cross over? And it is just the same with the stiff tasks, and the weary days, and the times of sickness, the times of trouble and the like, they are all bits of the way which is desert. But if we go on bravely, trusting Jesus, we shall find in the end that it is a good errand the Lord has sent us upon; somebody is going to be helped by us, and we are going to be made glad, because we have made Christ glad. So lay your account for "the way which is desert," and go bravely on it when it comes.—J. REID HOWATT.

When General Gordon, on the steps of the palace at Khartoum, was looking wistfully down the river for the help which never came, did he remember, I have often wondered, —to him it would have been an intensely interesting reminiscence,—that in the region where he stood there are Bible echoes? A hundred miles north of Khartoum, fifty

miles south of Berber, and only ten miles west of Metammeh, the point where our troops struck the Nile after the battle of Abou Klea Wells, lie the ruins of the capital of the kingdom of Ethiopia, of which the eunuch was treasurer. This ancient kingdom extended over large portions of Nubia and Abyssinia, and included all the places just mentioned, besides others which during the Soudan War were familiar in our mouths as household words. For generations it was ruled by a female dynasty, the successive members of which bore the name of Candace, as in the neighbouring kingdom of Egypt the successive sovereigns were known by the name of Pharaoh.—JAMES STALKER.

### III.

1 Cor. xi. 23-34.

#### THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1. "For I have received" (ver. 23). The *I* is emphatic in the Greek.

2. "This cup is the new testament" (ver. 25). Or rather, "the new covenant." The old covenant was made at Sinai over the blood of the victim which Moses offered for all the people (Ex. xxiv. 8).

3. "Unworthily" (ver. 27), as the Corinthians did, not remembering its connexion with the Lord at all. No communicant is "worthy"; his worthiness is in Christ; but he may partake of the Supper in a worthy or an unworthy manner.

4. "Damnation" (ver. 29). Judgment is the Greek. But what judgment? The apostle does not say. But he says enough to show that He does not mean eternal condemnation.

5. "Many sleep" (ver. 30). That is, they have died. It is the usual expression for a believer's death. The apostle means that God had to snatch them away, because they were not glorifying Him here. They were "earth-bound," and had to be transplanted.

THE children have seen the Lord's people partaking of the Lord's Supper. We may appeal at once to what they know. Their impression is vivid; their curiosity is keen. What does it mean?

It means two things. First, it is a *Remembrance*. It is a remembrance of Jesus Christ. Not of His birth, His life, or even of His death alone, but of Himself. "This do in remembrance of *Me*." But He is to be remembered for what He did, for thereby we know what He is. He is to be remembered, above all, for His death on Calvary. The bread broken, the wine poured out, are the tokens of His broken body and His shed blood.

And why is His death thus remembered? Because it was for us. "This is for *you* . . . this do in remembrance of *Me*."

Secondly, it is a *Communion*. That is to say (using the word in its first and best sense), a union with Christ Jesus Himself. No doubt the Supper is a communion with one another; but only if it is a communion with Him. The essential thing in the name "Communion" is the union between the believer and his Saviour.

Thus in the Supper the Lord is both absent and present. We do it in remembrance of Him; we do it in communion with Him. And it is a mistake to think that only for the latter is faith required. Faith is essential for a true remembrance of Jesus Christ. For it is faith that makes Him a subject of remembrance to us. Without faith His death is nothing, and He Himself is nothing to us. But we cannot even conceive a communion with Christ apart from faith. It is by faith we know He lives; it is faith that opens the heart to His presence; faith holds communion with Him.

So the Supper has this double aspect, this double blessing. It remembers a dying Lord, remembers Him "until He come." And it realises a living and present Lord, who is with us always, even unto the end of the world.

ILLUSTRATIONS.—"This do in remembrance of *Me*" (ver. 24). There is a touch of infinite pathos about these words. Jesus Christ could not bear the thought of being forgotten by His people. God and man long to be remembered. This is one point of fellow-feeling at which the Divine heart touches the human. One of the greatest calamities in the sight of God which can befall the wicked is that "his memory shall be cut off." I know of nothing within the covers of this book more touching than the way in which the prophets represent God as bringing the charge of forgetfulness against His people. "My people have forgotten *Me* days without number" (Jer. ii. 32)—it is a broken sigh which has an undertone of desolation in it.—D. DAVIES.

"Drinketh damnation (punishment) to himself" (ver. 29). The meaning is, because these Christians did not distinguish between the symbols of the body and blood of Christ and their daily food, that they were therefore not only guilty of profanation, but they were also under condemnation, were actually punished for their sin. Not a few of the members of the church were weak and sickly, and some had even died through their irregularities. Hence they were eating and drinking condemnation to themselves in the sense of punishment, because they did not discriminate between the Lord's body and their common food.—A. F. BARFIELD.