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A CHRISTLESS BIBLE.*

WHAT IS THE BIBLE WITHOUT CHRIST?

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The thing that I want to try to do this morning will seem very strange to you; I want to take Christ out of the Bible. Of course, that is impossible. You cannot take Christ out of the Bible without destroying it, any more than you can take the mortar out of a building without having it fall down. But there are a great many men in the world who think that they can do the impossible; and there are some men in the world who think that they have done this very thing. They think that they have taken the divine Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer, out of the Bible, and yet left us a book which is worth reading and studying. I want to let these men speak out clearly and distinctly, with no prejudice. I want you to understand what it means to take the divine Christ out of the Bible. I want you to get some idea of what the Bible and religion would be worth to us without Him; what inspiration, hope, instruction, or comfort we could get from this book without Christ.

Let us begin with the Old Testament. Go back to that picture of human origins which is given in the book of Genesis. It is a picture of human sin and suffering, divine wrath and retribution, which corresponds to what we know about human nature and life from other sources.

Was there a fall? I believe that there was. Unruly appetite, lustful passion, envy, discord, guilt, and terror, are written in every history of the human tribes as well as in the book of Genesis. Towards such a race, a pure, wise, and holy God must feel righteous anger and repulsion. They spoil His world. They mock the divine image just as a loathsome ape in his cage seems

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mighty song broke forth, "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory, and from Thee the crown." Far out on the ice they knelt down and raised their voices in thanksgiving to Christ who had elected them to die for His honor and glory. The centurion caused a great fire to be built on the shore and dismissed the guard, while he, their well-beloved friend, strode up and down, keeping guard, in the hope that they might repent them of this strange faith which he did not understand, but which made them loyal, and true, and gentle, and good beyond their comrades. By and by he saw one dark form separating itself from the rest and come stumbling, creeping up the bank, intent on saving its life by the sacrifice of its soul, but as the traitor fell down before the image of the emperor, the hemlet and shield of the centurion clanged upon the ground, and he strode forth and joined himself unto them. Once again the cry went up, "Forty wrestlers, wrestling for Thee, O Christ, claim for Thee the victory, and from Thee the crown."

SOME OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS IN BRIEF.

BY REV. A. F. SCHAUFFLER, D. D., NEW YORK.

GENESIS—THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS.*

The book of Genesis. This is in some respects one of the most important books of the Bible, because it deals with BEGINNINGS. All beginnings are interesting, and this book, which deals with most important beginnings, is one of deep fascination. There are some who say, "In the beginning, matter;" others, "In the beginning, force;" others, "In the beginning, the unknowable." This book says, "In the beginning, *God*;" and that satisfies the longing of the human heart, and puts us on a foundation of living rock. "In the beginning God created."

There is no book in the Bible that goes farther back than the book of Genesis, excepting the Gospel of John. Genesis begins, "In the beginning God *created*;" but John begins, "In the beginning God *was*." That antedates creation; but the book with the farthest backward reach, as regards the visible creation, is this book of Genesis.

Now, while Genesis is the book of all manner of beginnings, it is the book which *closes* nothing; for endings we must look further on in the Word of God. Here we have germs; what is enfolded in Genesis is unfolded in the rest of the Bible; what is begun in Genesis is concluded in Revelation. It is a long journey from Genesis to Revelation, but it is one that we must take if we would find the conclusion, the fruitage of all. In Genesis,

*Sunday morning, June 27, 1897.

for example, we have the beginning of matter; the beginning of the vegetable world; of the animal world; and the beginning of man. I wish, on some accounts, it might have stopped there, but the very next step is the beginning of sin. That is the sad beginning; the breaking-down of what went before, by reason of man's moral obliquity. Of course it does not stop there, for immediately after the beginning of sin comes the beginning of salvation. Genesis iii. 15 is the beginning of the gospel whose culmination we find in John iii. 16. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," is in Genesis, and John iii. 16 is the fullness of that promise.

Another interesting beginning in Genesis is the beginning of the chosen people, whose continuation we have to-day in all parts of the world. The Jews are the chosen people whom God picked out, whom God developed, and through whom God gave unto us the oracles.

Now, I want to call your attention in Genesis to three things only that are typical: First, the family tent; second, the family altar; third, the family high priest.

The family tent: Abraham, who, together with Isaac and Jacob, occupies a large part of Genesis, dwelt in tents, thus signifying that he was a pilgrim, and a stranger, and a sojourner. This was not his home; his dwelling was temporary. It was erected; it was taken down; it was moved on at God's command. He looked for something more abiding than the tent. Moreover, wherever Abraham went he built an altar, and that altar runs through the whole of Genesis, and is the germ of that which developed later on into world-wide significance. At that altar Abraham ministered as family priest. He and the patriarchs were all family priests.

Genesis is the germ which you will only understand aright if you see, in some little measure, how it develops. The family tent develops later on into the national encampment, which is something more perfect, more complete, and more complex. The family altar develops in the book of Exodus into the national altar, around which the nation gathered to offer sacrifice. And the family high priest develops into the national high priest, Aaron, and his descendants. It is a long step from this early germ of religion to that more fully organized and completely systematized worship, which God revealed to Moses, and by means of which God built up His people in holy living and in sanctified service.

I think I can see a still further development after the nation got into their land. The national encampment disappears and you have the abiding city. Jerusalem was the city of God. It is a step in advance from the encampment in the wilderness to a fortified city in the Land of Promise. We find there the altar and the movable tabernacle developed into the splendid, abiding

temple of the living God; while the high priest continues his service as typical of One who is to come.

But there is still further development, for which you must look in the book of Revelation. There the earthly Jerusalem has become the New Jerusalem; that city "that hath foundations," "whose builder and maker is God." The sacrifices and the temporary national high priest have passed away, but sacrifice and high priest are now embodied in Him of whom Aaron was the type and of whom the sacrifices were the types. Christ is there the one great High Priest, "who ever liveth to make intercession for us;" and Christ is the One of whom the seer had a vision, when he looked and "beheld, as it were, a Lamb that was slain." In Genesis are the beginnings of these things. Those were the days of ignorance, and of the childhood of mankind in matters spiritual, but the development goes on steadfastly, until its culmination, when John on Patmos has his vision clarified, and sees the realities of which these things were the forerunners, the type, the shadow, the figure.

The book of Genesis begins, "In the beginning God created;" and the book of Genesis ends, "They laid him in a coffin in Egypt." That was the end of the grandest man living in his day, whom they embalmed and laid in the coffin in Egypt. One is rather disappointed to find that a book which begins so grandly, telling of man's creation, ends so sadly, telling of the burial of the best man of the age. But remember that the end of Genesis is but the end of the beginning. The beginning has an Exodus; an outgoing, an enlargement, a more complete fulfillment in the end; and if we want to see the ending of anything whose beginnings are in Genesis, we must look to the last book of the Bible, and in that book we will find God's complete plan for the redeemed soul, and particularly in the last two chapters. There we will find no story of death and defeat, but only the story of victory and of life. There may be coffins in Genesis; there are no coffins in Revelation.

NEHEMIAH—THE WORKER'S HANDBOOK.*

The book of Nehemiah may be called, "The Christian Worker's Handbook." It is an autobiography of a man who had a work to do, and who did it. In this book he tells us how he felt, what he thought, what he planned, what he accomplished.

We will study this man's story as set forth in this book along three lines, namely: Praying for work; planning the work; pushing the work.

The first chapter sets forth a man *praying for work*. Nehemiah was a Jewish captive in a king's palace, in a relatively easy office. He was in the trusted position of king's cupbearer, where

*Wednesday evening, June 30, 1897.

his work was light, his surroundings agreeable, and his worries few. Yet all this time Nehemiah had on his heart the welfare of Jerusalem and of God's people. No one ever came from Jerusalem to the land of his captivity but that he asked them first of all, "How are they getting along up there?" Nehemiah did not pray for *the* work so much as pray for *work*, and there is a difference between the two. Lots of Christians pray for *the* work, where one Christian prays for work. Now, Nehemiah *prayed for work*, knowing perfectly well that the answer to that prayer would bring to him burdens to bear, sufferings to endure, expenses to pay, opposition to overcome. He prayed not for ease, but for hardship; he prayed not for his own comfort, but for things that would bring him great discomfort. Very few Christians, I think, pray that way. They are perfectly willing that some one else should bear the burden, and some one else do the work; and what is more, that some one else should pay for it. But when it comes down to praying, "O God, give me work and give me hard work," how many church members pray along that line? Yet Nehemiah prays all through this first chapter, four months steadily, one prayer: "O God, give me hard work." There is a splendid example for Christian believers everywhere. And yet all during those months Nehemiah got no answer. The heavens were as brass above him, and there was no sign of any response to his request. His one prayer was that God would give him favor in the sight of the king, so that the king might grant him permission to get out of his easy nest and go up to Jerusalem, where there were burdens to be borne. Now, the answer to this prayer came like lightning. In the second chapter we are told that one day at the king's table, while he was bearing the king's cup, Nehemiah's countenance was sad, as it had never been before. It was not court etiquette to be sad; for the royal smile was supposed to rejoice every heart in the king's presence. But this time Nehemiah's face was sad, and the king said to him: "Wherefore is thy countenance sad? this is nothing but sorrow of heart." Nehemiah saw in a minute that now was his chance, and here let me call your attention to the fact that great events often hinge on very small things. If his countenance had not been sad that day, or if the king had not noticed that his countenance was sad, the whole thing might have passed over, and Nehemiah might not have had his chance. A sad face and an observing king gave him his chance, and Nehemiah was filled with a kind of fear lest the opportunity having come he should make some fatal mistake, and the king reply to his request for permission to go to Jerusalem, "Nonsense! It cannot be." So he shoots a prayer up to heaven there at the dinner table. "I cried unto the God of heaven." That is ejaculatory prayer. Ejaculatory prayer is mighty, if there is a heart behind it. It is

not your long prayer, but your strong prayer, that does the work. He prays swiftly with his eyes open, and like a flash God gives him an answer of peace. It is a good thing to cry to God often as we go to our work, just as Nehemiah did. He presents his request to the king, and like a flash the king says: "Go along." So much, then, for Nehemiah's praying for work.

The second point that is dealt with in the book is, Nehemiah *planning the work*. When he gets up to Jerusalem, as we read in the second chapter, he tells no man what is in his heart. He first investigates the need—where the wall is worst broken down, where the gates are burned with fire. He puts himself in possession of the facts, and lays his plan for remedying the misery. That is a fine thing for every worker to do. There are plenty of workers who run to and fro in a general kind of way, without any definite plan as to what they are going to do, and how they are going to do it. That is one reason why they waste so much time—plenty of activity, but no results. Let us follow Nehemiah's method, and plan our work down to the last detail, so that we shall know the needs of the work, and know the workers, and put the right worker in the right place. The third chapter may be rather dull to us, but it was not dull to them. It simply tells us where every man and his family worked. For example, in the twelfth verse: "And next unto him repaired Shallum, the son of Halohesh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and *his daughters*." Either he had no boys, or else the boys were no good. These young women undertook to help build the wall, hard rough work. They were princesses, remember, and whether they brought the mortar, or fetched lunches, our point is, the girls got to work. And there is an example for all womankind, all the world over. The first thing you need to find out in your work is the deficiencies. What is the matter with the Sunday school? It is limping. What is the matter with the Y. P. S. C. E.? It is half dead. Find out your troubles first, apply your remedies second, and the result will be the same that Nehemiah achieved.

The third step is, *pushing the work*. Nehemiah had a splendid nerve. I like a man who is full of nerve; who can get up early in the morning, and keep going late at night. If any man wants to do good work, he has got to be able to work along three lines: first, he must be able to work *fast*; second, he must be able to work *well*; third, he must be able to work *long*. Otherwise he will soon be a back number and sit on the bank while the procession goes by. The trouble with so many men is that they work short and badly and slowly, and they get left, of course. Nehemiah began to push his work, while he prayed all the time, and successfully met all obstacles. He believed in work, in faith, and in prayer. It reminds me of a story of a little girl, whose brothers were setting bird-traps. She did not like it that the

birds should be caught, so she went to her mother, and said, "Mother, my brothers are setting bird-traps, and I have prayed God to stop them." Her mother said, "Did you do anything else?" "Yes, I prayed God to keep the birds from getting into the traps." "Did you do anything else?" "Then I went and kicked the traps all to pieces." That is good. I presume that girl kicked those traps all to pieces because she prayed along that line and the Lord suggested, "You give a kick," and so away went the trap. Pray along a certain line earnestly, and you will work along that certain line with all the more fervor.

Nehemiah was satisfied with nothing short of complete success, he was daunted by no obstacles whatsoever. Notice the way in which these obstacles arose. When Sanballat and Tobiah, and all the rest of them found the Jews were going to build the wall, they burst out into a roar of scornful laughter. However, Nehemiah pushed ahead, and when they found that the walls were actually going up and would not be stopped, they ceased laughing, and began to get mad. Then they conspired against the workers and planned to go and fight them, and so stop the building. Whenever the world gets mad with the church, you may make up your mind that the church is doing some business. When the world does not care, you may make up your mind that the church is asleep. But our friend went straight ahead, whether Sanballat and Tobiah laughed or raged, and the work went on. Finally these men conspired to fight against the Jews, and wanted to get them into a conference, a "palaver." The Sultan of Turkey is splendid at palavering. He keeps on massacring the Armenian, and putting down the Greek, and the great powers allow him to palaver with them. That is what these men wanted Nehemiah to do, only talk, talk, talk, and the walls won't go up. "No," says Nehemiah, "I have got better business than to talk." And all the time they were persuading, up the walls were going, until in fifty-two days the whole city was joined round about, and the gates were up, and the thing was finished. That is the way the man went to work; first, by prayer that he might bear burdens; second, by planning to carry out the work, and third, by pushing the work with all his power.

AMOS—THE FARMER PROPHET.*

I fancy that oftentimes the prophets are somewhat dry reading to us, because we fail to grasp the circumstances under which they uttered their prophecies. A good many people probably have the idea that Isaiah sat down and wrote out his prophecy, or that Amos wrote his, as a minister writes out his sermon. Possibly some hardly realize that these prophecies were for the most part spoken first and written afterwards.

*Sunday afternoon, July 4, 1897.

Jeremiah, while he was in prison, had to write, but he was one of the few who was deprived of his liberty. I suppose that the prophets spoke at various times, so that what is given us in the nine chapters of Amos may be the condensed substance, the very heart, of very many addresses.

Amos was remarkable among the prophets for one thing. He was neither a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, for he was a cowherd, and a gatherer of wild figs. He was an uneducated man; and we are much surprised when we see how cleverly that man gave his message. The burden of Amos's message to the northern kingdom was simply a *warning*.

Look for a moment at the condition of the northern kingdom. Jeroboam II. was on the throne—a worthy successor of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. The first Jeroboam had put up a golden calf at Bethel and another golden calf in Dan, and from that day on the northern kingdom had been officially idolatrous.

Amos was from the southern kingdom, and the northern kingdom was as jealous of the southern kingdom as Chicago is jealous of New York. If a New Yorker goes to Chicago, to reprove Chicago for its sins, he has got to be a most wise man or his exit will be more rapid than his entrance. This prophet from the southern kingdom goes over to the northern kingdom to rebuke and warn them for their sins. Of a truth he has got to be clever not to be turned out before his addresses are done. Notice, therefore, the exceedingly clever way in which Amos goes to work. He was commissioned to prophecy against various heathen nations round about, as well as against God's own people. He might have begun with the prophecies against Israel in the north, but he was far too clever for that; and in the series of addresses that he made he approached skillfully and by progressive stages to the last point, which was the personal one touching his northern brethren. I apprehend that these addresses were delivered on a series of days and that only the pith is given here. I imagine him in Bethel, which was the centre of the idolatry in the southern part of the kingdom. I see him there in the courtyard of the temple, coming to deliver his message. He begins (Amos i. 3): "This saith Jehovah, for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." As the northern tribes hear the burden of the denunciation they say: "Good. Damascus has been our enemy from times immemorial. A good prophet that is! He is coming down on Damascus. Now that is the kind of preaching we like." As he finished that sermon against Damascus the people went their way, and every man said to his neighbor: "Did you ever hear anything like that—the way he rubbed it in? He is going to preach to-morrow. You would better come and hear him." So the next day they turn out, and hear his word again (verse 6):

"Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Gaza, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof." Gaza! That was Philistia in the south. That suited them. The Philistines had been their enemies for a long time, and they thought: "Well, he had rapped them handsomely on the north, and now he is giving it to them on the south. That is what we like." They were inclined well towards the man for the way he put the denunciations God had given him to deliver. At the next address, I dare say, there were more hearers, and they were rather charmed when he said (verse 9): "Thus saith the Lord, for three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof." Tyre was their maritime enemy and they thought: "That is fine.. We have not heard a talk like that for a long time. Elijah didn't talk that way. Elisha didn't talk that way. Great man, this fellow! He has foresight as well as hindsight." I want to say to you, young workers, there is a great deal in the way you put truth at the start. If you antagonize men at the start, you lose them. If you win them at the start, you may get them for good and for all. And there is a great deal in putting truth so it will stick. If you can make a man's mind sticky, you fire truth at him and it tells. One of our city missionaries used to be very clever in putting truth in a very sticky way. One time he was going to preach down in Paradise Park. Before he began to preach, he heard a man in the crowd say, "Damn the Bible, anyhow." He got up on a barrel and said: "My text to-day is, 'Damn the Bible, anyhow.'" That made every man eager to see what he was going to say next. Everyone opened his mouth, and his ears to listen. Then he told them why the devil wanted the Bible damned—because it closed up all the liquor stores, and the brothels, etc. A clever man makes the mind sticky before he gets to work. Amos had that faculty.

So the next day there was a larger crowd, and he began again (i. 11): "Thus saith Jehovah: for three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." Then they thought: "Well, there is another of our enemies, that dwells in the clefts of the rocks, proud and mighty and powerful, that has cut us down on the lower side of the Jordan. Glad tidings are these that Edom has got to come down." So day after day this thing went on, and the next day the prophet said (i. 13): "Thus saith the Lord: for three transgressions of the children of Ammon and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." The crowds grew, the enthusiasm increased, and the next day Amos says once more (ii. 1): "Thus saith the Lord: for three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." That pleased them still more, so that a more popular prophet they had not heard for many a long day.

Then there came another day, with another sermon, that must have suited them better than all the rest—for they hated Judah in the south with a terrible hatred. Amos said (ii. 4): "Thus saith the Lord: for three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." That was his own tribe. By that time Israel says: "Well, there is a brave man. He smashes down on Damascus; he cracks in on Gaza; he gives a stroke to those in Tyre and Sidon; Edom he sets back; Moab he pushes away, and even Judah he does not spare." If you look at these addresses in this way, you can realize the excitement there was. It was not a kind of reeling off of something learned by rote; it was red-hot, and I dare say that when his next sermon was preached, Amos had a larger crowd than ever. Then it was that he said (ii. 6): "Thus saith the Lord: for three transgressions of ISRAEL, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." *Now, it has come home!* "He will not turn away *your* punishment." Then they didn't like it. People don't like truth brought home to themselves very much. They are very much like a New England congregation that I heard of. A new preacher came to preach, and on the evening before he was to preach a committee waited on him. The men hemmed, and hawed, and said that they hoped he would not say anything on the liquor question, because one of their leading men was a brewer. "Well, no," he said; "I hadn't thought of preaching on the liquor question." Later in the evening a couple of deacons came to him, and said they hoped he would not talk on the woman question, as there were some people in the congregation who had advanced ideas on this subject. He said, "I hadn't thought of preaching on the woman question." Next morning, before service, some one came along and said he hoped he would be excused if he made a suggestion, but that he hoped he would not make mention of slavery, because they had a few sympathizers with the South. The preacher, somewhat irritated, said: "I hadn't thought of talking about slavery, but will you tell me what to talk about?" The man answered: "You might give it to the Jews. They have no friends around here." Most of us like to have it "given to the Jews." These fellows liked it given to Damascus, and Gaza, and Tyrus, and Edom, and Ammon, and Moab, and Judah; but when it came home to them, then the push of the prophet's denunciation was a little too sharp.

See what the result was. Very soon it came to the ears of their chief priest, and he says: "O thou seer, go flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. Prophecy not again any more at Bethel." That was the result after all; he came telling them a fiery story of God's wrath, which might be prevented by their repentance. And their reply was, "The land isn't able to bear your words; off with you."

This may be enough to give you a little idea of the vividness of these encounters between prophets and priests, and between God's followers and followers of Baal; between those who stood for the truth, and those who stood for falsehood. So long as men in New York talked very softly about generics in the corruption of the City Government, Tammany Hall did nothing; but when Parkhurst came out and talked specifics, the tiger fairly howled, and would have brought that man down if that man had not brought it down. When we come to strike against evil, we need to strike divinely and strongly, yet we never need be surprised if evil raises its head with all its power to strike us down.

It is by such use of the imagination that we get a living picture of Elijah, Moses, Isaiah, and all these Old Testament prophets. We understand they were flashes of lightning, peals of thunder, and that they stood and dared to stand for righteousness. A grander set of men than these Old Testament prophets never lived.

JONAH—THE MISSIONARY PROPHET.*

The book of Jonah is the most artistically written book in the Old Testament. There is more of a definite literary plan in this book than in any other in the Old Testament.

Again the book of Jonah tells us of the only direct foreign missionary in Old Testament times. There were prophets in Israel and in Judah. There were prophets in captivity, like Daniel and Ezekiel, sent there, not to preach the gospel to the heathen, but because the national destiny surrounded them, and pushed them on with others. But Jonah was a divinely appointed foreign missionary, and he is the only one in the Old Testament.

The book of Jonah is remarkable, also, because the only two miracles in the book are definitely endorsed by the Lord Jesus Christ. That of Jonah, three days in the belly of the fish, and the repentance of the men of Nineveh, to which our Saviour refers when He compares Himself with Jonah, as greater than the Hebrew prophet.

It was entirely alien to the Israelite mind to think that there was mercy for the heathen. God was Israel's God, and the heathen were outsiders; it never dawned on them that any Israelite was to go and preach mercy and peace to the heathen world. This is what made Jonah so angry. He was an angry missionary. God took him by the nape of the neck, so to speak, and forced him on to his mission. If he had had his choice he would have gone far away from Nineveh. Israel's idea and

*Sunday morning, July 4, 1897.

Judah's idea was simply the national idea—a national God, for us, and for no one else. They failed to grasp the promise to Abraham, that “in thee and in thy seed shall *all the nations of the earth* be blessed.”

Notice the outline of this book, which sets forth catholic, universal truth as no other book in the Old Testament does. It sets forth God's relationship to God's creatures everywhere, and at all times. The artistic construction of the book is marked by the fact that it is in four strophes, which correspond with the four chapters—excepting that verse seventeen of chapter one ought to be verse one of chapter two.

The first strophe, chapter one: *Heathen sailors in great distress call upon Jehovah and are delivered.* A marvelous truth to break in on Israel—that heathen men can call upon Israel's God, and, without becoming part of the covenant people, can receive mercy! So that chapter closes, “Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish,” and the sea ceased from her raging. Then the men feared Jehovah exceedingly, and they offered a sacrifice. There is a catholic truth. Jonah would not believe that God was large enough to have mercy on the heathen, and God shows it to him in the first chapter.

Strophe second: *A Hebrew prophet in great distress calls upon Jehovah and is delivered.* God's mercy is not for the heathen only, but for the Hebrew as well. God's mercy is not for the Hebrew exclusively, but for the heathen as well, when they call on His name.

Third strophe: *Heathen Nineveh in great distress calls upon Jehovah and is delivered.* Notice how artistically this runs; see how catholic is its spirit; see how Jonah, in spite of himself, is obliged to set forth this universal fatherhood of God to all that call upon Him in repentance and in faith.

Fourth strophe: Dialogue between Jehovah and Jonah, setting forth distinctly *God's universal pity.* Jonah is very angry and God sets forth this truth to him under the figure of that gourd, which grew up over Jonah and for which he was sorry when it withered away. God says, “If you, a fallible man, are sorry for a perishing little life in the vegetable world, shall I not have pity on this great world of mine?” God instructs Jonah, and through Jonah all His people everywhere, concerning His universal pity for His creatures and His universal desire to help them.

Thus we see the unique character of the book of Jonah in its artistic preparation; in its universal love; in its catholic spirit; in its position as standing alone among the books of the Old Testament as a foretaste of that larger revelation in Jesus Christ, when there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free; all one, and one Father, to whom all may turn, and from whom all may receive a blessing.

PIVOTAL EVENTS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.*

The book of Acts describes THE POWER AND PROGRESS OF THE EARLY CHURCH. The apostles had before them the work of conquering the world for their Master. There lay the Jewish world, full of narrowness and bigotry, having forsaken the God of its fathers, and having given itself over to mere legalism. There lay the Roman world, full of idolatry and sin, with all the power of the state on the side of its hoary system of worship. The apostles were poor and ignorant men; they had neither position, nor power, nor wealth, nor learning. How could they accomplish the gigantic task of overturning the idolatrous systems of the world? Humanly speaking, it was impossible. Yet in this book we read of how they began and of how much they accomplished in about twenty-eight years.

See, first, *the church without its Lord*. After the resurrection Jesus was with His people for forty days. Then came the ascension, which left that small body of believers without its leader. One would have supposed that this would plunge them into the deepest gloom. But it did not, for the apostles returned from the Mount of Olives with *joy*. The reason was that Jesus had explained to them the meaning of His death, and resurrection, and ascension. They saw that all these things were a part of the great plan of God and so they were satisfied.

Now for the next ten days we see *the church waiting*. They were in Jerusalem, and continued in prayer, waiting for that power which Jesus had promised. During this time they did nothing but elect an apostle to take the place of Judas.†

I. There are SIX GREAT EVENTS narrated in this book, around which may be grouped the whole history. The first is found in *the outpouring of the Holy Ghost* on the day of Pentecost. Then was fulfilled the promise of Jesus that they should be filled with *power*. This was just what they needed in order that they might do as He told them and preach the gospel to all nations. This power was so great that Peter gained many more disciples for his Master in one day than Jesus Himself had gained in three years. Then was fulfilled Jesus' prediction, "Greater works than these shall ye do." Then, too, was partly fulfilled the Master's promise to Peter about having the "keys" and opening the doors of the kingdom of heaven.

This power showed itself in many ways. They had power in *deed* as well as in word. Peter and John, and others as well, could work miracles, and did so. Of course these things made them very popular, and gained them many attentive listeners.

*Saturday evening, June 26, 1897.

†In this I think that they made a mistake, for Jesus never told them to take any such action, but to "wait." We never hear of Matthias again, and when the Master's own time came, He put in Paul as the twelfth apostle, and paid no attention to the one whom the disciples had elected.—A. F. S.

They had also great power to purify the church, as was shown in the cases of Ananias and Sapphira, so that "great fear" fell upon all, and many who otherwise would have joined the church from base motives were restrained.

But, as we might have expected, their popularity soon brought them persecution. At first the ecclesiastical party thought the thing would soon die out. But when they found that it grew from day to day, they raised their hands to strike. They arrested Peter and John and imprisoned them. They then threatened them and let them go. But instead of being intimidated, as the rulers hoped that they would be, the apostles merely prayed for more boldness and power, and they had their prayer answered literally. As a result the work grew apace. This so multiplied the work of the apostles that they could not catch up with it, and so they took steps accordingly.

They organized the work of the church and so gained more power, and were able to use to better advantage the power that they already possessed. Other steps toward fuller organization came in due time, as they were needed, in all of which these men were guided by the same Holy Ghost who had given them the wisdom to begin this great work.

II. All this happened in the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had told them to begin. But there was danger that they would stay there too long, and perhaps get spiritually lazy or proud. So God used persecution to send them out of their nest into the wide world. This led to the second great event—the *dispersion of the disciples*, when ten thousand believers in Jerusalem became ten thousand preachers in the country round about. The disciples went proclaiming the Word, and wherever they did this the power of the Holy Spirit was with them.

III. All this time Saul was raging against the company of believers and persecuting them even unto strange cities. He was bound to put an end to the new and hated religion. But God put a stop to his plans by the third great event, namely, *the conversion of Saul of Tarsus*, which transformed a violent persecutor into an ardent defender and propagator of Christianity. When he ceased his persecution "then had the churches rest, throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and were multiplied." This conversion of Saul the persecutor into Paul the preacher is one of the most important of all the miracles of the Bible. Moses, in the Old Testament, Paul, in the New, are the two greatest men of all Bible times.

IV. So far the disciples had preached the Word to Jews only, and if any Gentiles had received it, they had been obliged to join the church by going through certain rites and ceremonies peculiar to Judaism. It had not yet occurred to the apostles that Gentiles could become followers of Jesus without such ceremonialism. They had not realized that Jesus was "a light to lighten the

Gentiles." But the time had come when the "middle wall of partition" between Judaism and Christianity was to be broken down by the fourth great event—when, by the double miracle of the vision to Cornelius and the vision to Peter, God showed Peter that the door was open to Gentiles, and *Cornelius, the centurion, was converted*. By a vision God taught Peter, the scrupulous Hebrew, that what *He* had cleansed Peter was not to call common or unclean. Peter obeyed the divine behest, and going to Cesarea, he did what, under ordinary circumstances, he never would have done—he went into the house of a Gentile, and to the company there assembled preached the Word, and then actually baptized them on the spot. Such a thing had never been done, and it marked a great advance in the understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. Now the door was open to ALL who believe, and not alone to such as were willing to become Jews. Here was further fulfilled the commission of Jesus to Peter, when He gave to him the "power of the keys." He had first opened the door of the church to Jews on the day of Pentecost, but now to the Gentiles also. Henceforth Christianity was to be not a national religion, but a world-wide religion, for all nations, and tongues, and peoples.

The church in Judea was so much surprised at the action of Peter that they asked him to explain his conduct, but when he declared that God had sent His Holy Spirit on these Gentile believers just as He had on the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost, they were satisfied, and praised God. This showed how willing the early church was to be led by the Holy Spirit rather than by human traditions.

But though the church had had rest now for some little time, it was not to last long. For the enemy was not dead, but only waiting for the best time to strike. Herod arrested James and put him to death. He also arrested Peter and imprisoned him, and would doubtless have beheaded him also, had not God given him an especial deliverance. But whatever happened, whether it was James who was beheaded, or Peter who was delivered, "the Word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts xii. 24). In the long run, no weapon that was forged them against could prosper.

V. The fifth great event took place in the church at Antioch. That church was powerful, and the thought came to them, suggested by the Holy Ghost, that they ought to be a missionary church. So we have the *first organized missionary work* that had ever been done by the church as a body. Now mark what direction the Holy Ghost gave in this matter. They had in Antioch two grand good men, the best workers among them, Paul and Barnabas. We might have supposed that the Spirit would have said: "These are your two best preachers, and you had better keep them at home. Send out some second-class men, for they will be good enough for missionaries." But the

Spirit worked in no such way. He said, "Send these very two men, for I have called them to this work." This shows what the Spirit of God thought about missionary work. The best were none too good to send. If the church had acted on this principle since then, it would have been better for her and for the world. We have acted too much on the principle that we should keep the best at home and send the second-best abroad.

These two missionaries had strange experiences. At Lystra they came near being worshiped by the heathen at one time, and soon after that they were nearly killed by the same throng. But neither did the one experience elate them nor the other depress them. They simply went on and preached Jesus as the Saviour of mankind, Jew and Gentile. They visited Seleucia, Cyprus, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and came back to their starting-place, where they gave in their report to the church which had sent them out.

Now arose once more, and for the last time, so far as the Acts tell us, the trouble about the permitting of Gentiles to unite with the church without first becoming Jews. This led to the calling of the council at which the whole matter was discussed in detail. As a result they laid down as a principle that Gentiles should not be required to keep the Mosaic law, but should be accepted on the basis of faith in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

VI. Paul soon after started on his second missionary tour. He wanted to visit those who had accepted the truth from his lips on their first tour, and further build them up in the faith. This he did. But so far, in Asia Minor only. Up to this time the gospel had not been preached in Europe. The sixth great event was *the invasion of Europe* with the gospel in answer to a vision that Paul had in Troas, in which he saw a man from Macedonia calling for him to come over and help them. There were only four men in this "army of invasion," Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke. But it was the most important army that ever crossed from one continent to another. They had neither sword nor spear, but they had that which was much more powerful, the Spirit of God with them. Vast armies had crossed at this point in days gone by. Xerxes had crossed with a million of men, and later Alexander of Macedon had crossed and had overrun Asia. But neither of these brought any real blessing with him. In later years the Mohammedans have crossed, but they, too, have wrought more harm than good. But when this little army crossed, there came to Europe and thus to America, a greater blessing than could have come in any other way. Yet, strange to say, in a few days, *half of this army was in prison in Phillipi*. Yet, nothing daunted, as soon as they got out they were at it again. It is a marked fact that the first one in Europe who accepted the new religion was a woman, thus foreshadowing the great good that Christianity was to accomplish for

womankind. It is a fact that nowhere in all the world has woman had her rights, excepting where the religion of Jesus Christ has prevailed. Men may prate about the religions of India, but the result of what they have there has been "a deified cow and a degraded woman." Mohammedanism always degrades woman, and the same sad fact is true of all false religions.

In this tour, Paul went through many of the cities of Greece and proclaimed the gospel. Some mocked, some persecuted, some believed. But, in spite of all, he laid the foundations of the church at Philippi, at Corinth, at Thessalonica. He did his duty, and this was all that God required of him. On his return journey he had that wonderful experience at Ephesus, where they had the great religious bonfire, in which they burned their books of incantations to prove that they abandoned such evil practices. Here, too, they had the great riot in favor of the idol Diana of Ephesus. All this only certified to the growing power of that gospel which these men preached.

In Jerusalem, to which Paul returned after a third missionary tour, he was arrested by his enemies and sent down to Cesarea, where he was detained for over two years. Then, in compliance with his own request, he was sent to Rome to be judged by Cæsar. We have a graphic account of the storm, of the apostle and his companions, and of their safe arrival in the Eternal City. Here he was kept in guard for two years and more, but whether in prison or out, he always and everywhere preached, so that many were converted by his labors. The only way in which Paul could be silenced was to kill him. The Acts do not tell us of his death, but as a matter of fact he was at last beheaded in Rome, and so sealed his testimony with his blood.

THE TWELFTH WORLD'S STUDENT CONFERENCE.

Six continents and twenty-seven countries and nations were represented at the Student Conference this year. Among the six hundred young men present were the foreign delegates to the first World's Student Federation Conference ever held. These delegates, numbering about sixty, came together from Africa, Armenia, Australia, Bulgaria, South America, China, Great Britain and Ireland, France and Germany, Holland, India and Ceylon, Japan and Korea, Mexico, Norway, Persia, Russia, Switzerland, and Java. The "Round Top" meetings of this conference will ever be memorable for the addresses and appeals by these representatives from all over the world. Those who were permitted to be present will not soon forget the visit to Mount Hermon, when prayer was offered to God in twenty-