

A DISCOURSE OF THE RECONCILIATION OF
ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD,

(NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THEIR DIFFERENCES AND ENMITIES)

DESIGNED AND EFFECTED BY CHRIST'S DEATH.

RECONCILIATION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD BY CHRIST'S DEATH.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.—EPH. ii. 14–16.

You have heard the story of the enmity* between the Jew and the Gentile, how great and lasting it had been. You have also seen what Christ in his own person did work for the staying of it, both meritoriously and representatively on the cross, in the sacrifice of himself, and what force and efficacy that must needs have in the issue, to bring about their actual reconciliation, and to smother all enmity.

I come now to the actual accord, that the virtue of Christ's death did effect between those Jews and Gentiles in those primitive times, in the view of the apostles and Christians of that age, and which the apostle Paul himself saw brought to a great perfection when he writ this epistle.

And it is requisite we have our hearts and eyes intent upon it, as a token and sign, great and marvellous; these two works, the conversion of the Gentiles, and the mutual coalition of Jew and Gentile into one new man, being of all other the greatest miracle wrought under the New Testament, the most glorious fruit of Christ's death, and among the strongest evidences of the truth of Christian religion.

And that the greatness, together with the reality and truth thereof, may appear, it is necessary that I first shew, out of the records of the Acts of the Apostles, the enmity or distance that continued and remained in the new Christian Jews towards the poor Gentiles; for in the Jew, principally and originally, was the 'root of bitterness,' and most deeply seated; together with the sore mischiefs which might have further arisen from them, even to the danger of a perpetual hindrance of the Gentiles' conversion.

It may seem strange to hear, that the godly Jews, after they had received Christ, the promised Desire of all nations, as well as of themselves, yea,

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and the Holy Ghost likewise sent down from heaven by Christ, should yet retain so great a degree of distance, *et similtas*, towards the Gentiles, as we read and find was in them. It is a wonder, that their being filled with the Holy Ghost as with new wine, should not have sweetened their spirits, but that yet so great a must of the old vessel should yet remain unwrought out in them. But God himself takes time to work out long retained principles; and men may thence well learn so to do towards their brethren.

And the dangerous effects and consequents of the Jews' grudge against the Gentiles do make it yet more strange, and aggravate the evil of it. For,

1. It would have been (if it had not been removed) an eternal bar and obstacle unto the very calling and conversion of the Gentiles to the Christian faith, and the propagation of the gospel to them who were fellow-heirs of it, together with themselves; than which, what can be supposed of more mischief! But,

2. After that bar was taken out of the way, and the Gentiles were called and converted, there still continued such degrees and relics of this old tincture, as occasioned such actual violent and high division in the church between the then become Gentile Christian and the believing Jew, that all the apostles then living, with all their skill and powerful applications, could hardly cure and remove; which yet in the end was allayed, and both made one in the issue.

It is requisite for me, before I enter upon these heads, especially the first, to set forth, as in a brief map, those several degrees of spiritual latitudes and distance which these Gentiles lay in as to the apprehensions and calculations of the Jews. The Scriptures, in general, had termed them 'afar off,' both in the Old and New Testaments, which is spoken of them in respect of their incapacity and remoteness from Christ and the covenant of grace; whereas of the Jews, it is oppositely said, 'They that were nigh;' of both which more afterwards. Now though all the Gentiles are said to be afar off, yet some were in further degrees of latitude than other; and the Jews accordingly in their spirits were less or more remote in converse with them.

I distinguish them into these four ranks or climates.

1. The first were Samaritans, who were indeed in place neighbours, but by their original extraction Gentiles, as you read in the book of Kings, who became inhabitants of the land of Canaan, and succeeded the ten tribes therein, after that the most of the ten tribes were carried captive. These also were circumcised, owned Moses's law, professed of themselves to seek the true God, and to sacrifice to him, as did the Jews, Ezra iv. 3; but were so corrupt in their observation thereof, and with such a mixture, that Christ says there was no salvation to be expected in their profession. Though they were nearer in place to the Jews, living in part of the holy land, yet from these the Jews were most alienated in their affections, and abhorred them, of all other Gentiles, as being nearer in the profession of the same religion, and yet so dissenting in the observation of it.

2. There were Gentiles who were become proselytes to the Jewish religion, that had joined themselves to the Lord, Isa. lvi. 6, had submitted to the whole ceremonial law, and to that end had received the seal of circumcision, having been first washed, or baptized; and these, though Gentiles, were yet to the native Jews as any other of their own nation. Now, as to such, there was no scruple in any Jew to converse with them; for they were accounted clean, and came as freely into the temple as themselves, and were called *proseltyti federis*, proselytes of the covenant, Isa.

lvi. 6, where they are termed the 'strangers that join themselves to the Lord,' and 'take hold of the covenant.'

3. A third set were such Gentiles, who, though truly converted to the acknowledgment, fear, and worship of the true God, wrought righteousness according to the moral law, yet entertained not their circumcision, nor the observation of the rites of the law ceremonial, such as Cornelius, Acts x., and others, who under the term of devout men and women, as those Greeks, Acts xvii. 4, are distinguished from the Jews, Acts xiii. 16, 43. The like was Naaman, the Assyrian of old; and even those, not circumcised, nor obliging themselves to Moses's law, the Jews did reckon unclean.

4. A fourth set were such as remained in their Gentilism, the idolaters of this world, as Paul calls them, which were the generality of all nations, which therefore the Jews did much more reckon unclean than the third sort.

This map or division of the Gentiles it is necessary to have in our eye, for the following discourse hath often reference to each of these sorts (as occasion shall be given to make mention of them), and by understanding this difference we the better shall discern the approaches God made by degrees into this great work of the Gentiles' conversion. Which difference of the Gentiles is by this commended to our regard and observation, that the Holy Ghost thought it a subject worthy to spend much of the book of the Acts upon.

These things premised, I am to present you with the history of the conversion of these Gentiles, even those whom the Jews esteemed more unclean; and that by these Jews themselves; and of the difficulties and bars that lay in the way thereof in the Jewish spirits, even after their own conversion to the faith of Christ, and how this wall of division mouldered, and by degrees was dissolved and levelled to the ground. The narrative of which is of great use to us in our dissension and distances (far less than these), to assure us that they may and will be, though by degrees, abolished.

The case between the converted Jews and the rest of the elect Gentiles to be converted, stood thus. The time was now come, which had been foretold, that the Gentiles should become the spouse of Christ; yea, and the ordination of God was, that the word, or means to convert them, was to go forth out of Zion to all the earth, and those of the Jewish nation (being such themselves converted) were to be instruments of their greater call, or the prophecies had not been fulfilled; and yet the nine first chapters of the Acts give us such a character of the patent constitution of the new converted Jews, yea, of the apostles themselves, as renders them not only far and backward, but wholly averted; yea, in conscience, kept off from the least endeavour after such a work. They stand bound up in their spirits, not so much as to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, though the Gentiles themselves should have sent to them, and have earnestly desired it of them, and like men confined to a circle, they dare not stir one foot that way. Peter, and the rest of the apostles, that with zeal and boldness dared the utmost of persecution to convert their own countrymen the Jews, or circumcised *ἑμοσθητα* of the Gentiles, were yet under such an awe and bondage of Jewish scruple, that in conscience they durst not converse with an uncircumcised Gentile, though it were to save his soul eternally.

And that which increaseth the wonder is, that though our Saviour at his ascension had given in commission, and in charge, and in express terms, to preach the gospel to all nations, and every creature under heaven, yet they were averse to any converser with the Gentiles: so

deeply had the tradition and enmity received from their forefathers prepossessed their spirits.

And I dare not affirm the reason of this to be, that the calling of the Gentiles was wholly an *arcanum*, hidden to them. For besides that even the Jews at this day understand and acknowledge this to have been prophesied of (as Beza, Acts ii. 39), to fall out in the days of the Messiah; and what the envious and hardened Jews acknowledge now, cannot be supposed hid from them then, especially from the apostles; our Lord also expressly foretold it, Mat. ix. 11, 12; John xii. 32, and giveth it clearly in his last commission; yea, it seems clear that Peter understood it (at least in the confused notion), by his interpretation of that promise, Joel ii., Acts ii. 17, 20, 21, 'I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and it shall come to pass, whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' Which promise, ver. 39, he declares to belong to them afar off, who, in their known language, were the Gentiles (to encourage the Jews the more to embrace it); and that by them afar off to be called the Gentiles are to be understood, the Old and New Testament gave in evidence both when they speak of their calling, as Peter there; so Isaiah in the Old, and not to go far from my text, the immediate foregoing 13th and following 17th verses of this chapter, 'You Gentiles, who were afar off, are made nigh:' and, ver. 15, 'He came and preached the word to them that were afar off' (you Gentiles), 'and you that are nigh;' but how that this should be effected in the end, as yet neither he nor any of his fellow-apostles knew the time when, nor yet had their consciences received any particular discharge or *quietus est* from those fore-mentioned Jewish principles, but lay still bound up thereby from so much as conversing familiarly with the Gentiles; and therefore were much more restrained from any industrious setting themselves to convert them, by preaching the gospel to them; much less baptizing them, or giving them the Holy Ghost, so as if they did understand so much, or that themselves were the men designed to this work; yet how these commands and laws of not converting the Gentiles, that lay upon them (as they yet thought from God), should be annulled, they were ignorant of. For this is certain, that the story of the Acts puts this averseness of theirs upon the remainder of that old enmity and principles of their Jewish religion, taken in by tradition from their fathers, which appears evidently in the instance of Peter, and other Jews, as also the practice of the rest of the disciples that were the most zealous of winning others to the knowledge of Christ. First, for Peter: The story in Acts x. informs us what chains they were he stood fettered with, which held him fast from giving consent to Cornelius, a Roman gentile (who yet was, in his religion, come half way to him, being a proselyte, a worshipper of the true God, only was not circumcised, nor had submitted himself to Moses's rites), until God himself released Peter, and knocked off those fetters, with saying from heaven, ver. 20, 'Arise, go, nothing doubting;' and if you will know what the scruple that made him doubtful was, himself expressing it, ver. 28, 'You know' (speaking afore his Jews), 'how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or to come unto one of another nation,' that was uncircumcised, as Cornelius was; for we read the quarrel was, Acts xi. 3, against Peter for this fault of his, that 'he went into men uncircumcised;' for else those proselytes of other nations that were circumcised, and submitted to the law, were accounted as native Jews, and called *proseltyti faderis*. 'But God immediately shewed me' (saith Peter thereupon), 'that I should not account any man common or unclean.' Those words, 'nothing doubting,'

evidently import inward scruples and argumentations in their mind, contrary, by reason of these fore-mentioned principles, and he took more notice on this as the eminent, if not sole cause of that obstruction; inasmuch as he again repeats these very words in his apology, made Acts xi. 12, 'The Spirit bade me go, nothing doubting.' And in the 29th verse of that chapter, he saith, 'I thereupon' (God having struck off all contrary apprehensions) 'came without gainsaying.' So then he had hitherto stuck in the mud of this principle, and could not stir a step forth of it, to the saving of any Gentiles by converse with them. And,

2. As Peter, so all the rest of the Christian Jews that continued at Jerusalem, were of the same mind and spirit. For upon his return to Jerusalem, after this so happy handsel of the first Gentile uncircumcised who believed on Christ Jesus, they all there quarrelled with him for this which he had done: Acts xi. 2, 'When Peter was come to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them;' and so they quarrelled him much more for having preached to him, and having baptized him. Peter's apology argues their speech to have been most bent against that; for in the conclusion there, ver. 15, he thus speaks, 'As I began to preach, the Holy Ghost fell on them; and I remembered the words of the Lord,' about baptism, &c. 'But forasmuch as God gave them the like gift, what was I, that I could withstand God?' namely, in this baptizing them; thereby also shewing his former averseness and unsatisfaction to such an act, to have been such as theirs now was. Yea,

3. This was commonly received and taken for granted principles amongst all professors of Christ that were Jews in those first times. You know, saith Peter to those Jews, ver. 10, how it is unlawful, appealing to the common maxim that had obtained amongst them to that very hour. And,

4. Hereupon you read of a shyness in the first Christian Jews to preach the gospel to any but such as were of their own nation, or proselytes circumcised and submitted to Moses's law, who were all one, in their esteem, as Jews; as appears by the practice of those of the first at Jerusalem, who had been scattered from Jerusalem, ver. 8, who though they carried such a fire of zeal in their bosoms, to seek to convert others to the faith of Christ, yet carrying withal along with them these common principles of their nation and religion, they were damped and restrained in their spirits thereunto; for as they travelled through heathen countries, it is with a certainty recorded, that they preached the word to none but to Jews only, so Acts xi. 29; that is, either Jews by birth or race, who were then and long afore dispersed over all nations, as Acts ii. 5 shews, or such proselytes which were to them as Jews, as was said. They perhaps, as some conjecture, understand Christ's commission to preach the gospel to all nations, to have been still intended of the Jewish nation, or proselytes, as were in those times dispersed throughout all nations, as in Acts ii. appears; and so still compliant and consistent with those Jewish principles, not conversing with any other nations, whom they accounted unclean.

Now this being the condition wherein things stood in that first church of Christians, and these their apprehensions, either their judgments must be cleared of these obstructions, or the gospel would not have run and flowed forth through these channels unto any of the Gentiles; and yet the prophecies in the Old Testament, and God's ordinations, were fixed and peremptory, that the gospel was to go forth from Zion; and these very Christian Jews were to be the very instruments of propagating of it. What, shall these all be

frustrate, and Christ lose his spouse through these men's scruples? No, verily. This other part thereof of this story, namely, how this first wall of partition the text speaks of, mouldered by degrees, and in the end was laid flat, and an highway paved through the hearts of these Jews from Jerusalem to Assyria; this was a great work, and it is to be marvellous in our eyes. And the observation of it may support our faith (which is the end of my relating it) under the like slow-paced, gradual, yet sure proceedings of our God, towards the effecting of that union among the saints in our times.

The first step (though but a small one to what after followed) was the conversion of the Samaritans (the first sort of those Gentiles I in that short scheme made mention of), a mongrel between Jews and Gentiles, yet inhabitants of the holy land, circumcised, and owning the law of Moses, so as they were Jews in profession. Concerning those, it was a while a matter of difficulty unto me (as it hath been to other writers) how it came to pass that these Samaritans, being hated above all nations by the Jews—as the speech of that woman to Christ shews, ‘How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me that am a Samaritan? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans—how, I say, it should come to pass, that these Christian Jews, Peter, and the rest, should without any hesitation or scruple, or new extraordinary revelation about them, so freely converse with, preach to, and baptize these Samaritans; as in Acts viii. we read. Philip broke in first, then Peter also (who yet himself did still scruple) doing the like; and John laid on hands, and they received the Holy Ghost. The difference, upon search, I found to lie partly in a more special warrant and command, given them by our Lord himself concerning these Samaritans, which the apostles had more easily understood him in, than in that concerning other Gentiles, having also his own practice to confirm them in it.

(1.) This command. He had at his ascension said, Acts i. 8, ‘You shall be witnesses to me both in Jerusalem and all Judea, and in Samaria, and the utmost parts of the earth;’ which latter part of their commission was perhaps more ambiguous to them, for they might still have understood it of Jews only, that were then spread in all nations; but Samaria was expressly named. And further, this was the recalling of a prohibition given by Christ, Mat. x. 5.

(2.) They might also perhaps consider and understand from his own practice and peculiar prediction in his life, a special design to Samaria, to be a harvest ripe for them to thrust their sickles into, after that Judea should be converted. For his practice. Himself had converted a Samaritan woman, yea, and her fellow-citizens also, and abode two days with them, John iv., where, whilst he was upon the place, he measured out and quartered forth that country, and the inhabitants thereof, for his own harvest. And by having had in those first fruits, he thereby had consecrated the rest of the same standing to be reaped into his garner with the fruits of other upon his ascension; concerning which, he therefore then renewed his commission a second time.

(3.) But that which did further facilitate the apostles' preaching to the Samaritans, and gave them liberty to have compassion on these, with difference from other Gentiles, was indeed the different condition of their persons from other pure Gentiles; for the Samaritans were, though the most of them in their original Gentiles, yet circumcised all, receiving and acknowledging the five books of Moses, expecting the Messiah, John iv. Yea many of the seed of Abraham remained mingled among them, without known distinction by genealogies, that is, of the ten tribes, it being their country, and were all now alike

inhabitants of the same promised land; and in all these respects as immediately capable of the preaching of the apostles as were the inhabitants of Galilee, where Christ himself spent the most of his ministry. For the inhabitants of Galilee and Capernaum were the posterity of those Gentiles brought in by Salmanassar, mingled with some remainders of the old inhabitants of the seed of Abraham, even as well as those of Samaria were; and in these respects they were distinguished from other common Gentiles at large by Christ himself, in that caution (as I may call it, rather than a prohibition) given in his lifetime, and but *pro tempore*, for that time, namely Mat. x. 5, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter not, but go rather to the lost sheep of Israel;' where he distinguishes Samaritans from Gentiles, and prohibits them only with the *rather*, the reason of that prohibition or caution having been, that the gospel was first in order to be thoroughly preached unto the pure Jews. And seeing that for that small space, until his ascension, they had enough to do to go over and preach it in the region of Judea, so as if they then should have stepped into the cities of Samaria, they should not have accomplished that work designed; therefore *rather*, says he, confine yourselves for the present to Judea. In that new enlarged commission, Acts i. 8, wherein he more particularly sets forth the course of the gospel's progress, he mentions Samaria still next after Judea, but with a manifest distinction from all other Gentiles afar off, when he calls the rest the ends of the earth. Yea, and this difference was manifestly acknowledged by the rigidest Jew, then turned Christian. For though they contended with Peter for going in to Cornelius, yet they murmur not, no not so much as mention his going in to the Samaritans, nor doth he give any account of it to them. Nay, it was warranted by his fellow-apostle before he went, Acts viii. 14; so then this of preaching the gospel, and conversing with Samaritans, was an exception grounded upon a special reason, from the difference between them and Gentiles, universally acknowledged by the Christian Jews.

And as for that enmity and estrangement of the common Jew from the Samaritan before mentioned, it lay rather in malice in their wills, not in any express prohibition that their law gave them; which distance from these Samaritans, a zeal for the conversion of souls soon struck off in these new converted Christian Jews. Well but for all this, that so open a door was set open into Samaria and the regions thereof, yet still they durst not go a step further, to baptize, or similarly converse with any supposed pure Gentile, though proselytes to the true God, if they were not circumcised, and subscribed not themselves to the ceremonial law; for notwithstanding this successful inroad into Samaria, which is recorded chap. viii. of the Acts, we find Peter and all his fellows with him still at a stand, chap. x., to go in unto Cornelius (though he was such a proselyte as was just, holy, and feared God), merely because uncircumcised; and that is the true account why, notwithstanding the conversion of Samaria, which was in order before that of Cornelius, that that is made the first instance of the Gentiles' conversion to the faith of Christ by two apostles, Peter and James, Acts xv. Says James, ver. 14, 15, 'Simon hath declared,' *καθώς πρώτος*, 'how first' (so the words are) 'God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.' Now how or what manner of declaration had Peter made, which James refers us to, you had in the verses foregoing. 'Brethren, you know how,' *ἀφ' ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων*, 'from the first days' or early days, namely, of the preaching of the gospel, 'God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe, God bearing

them witness, by giving them the Holy Ghost.' These Gentiles he insists on as the first converted, were manifestly Cornelius and those with him, and not the Samaritans, who had first believed through Philip's preaching, and first* by Peter's; and Peter appealing to the cognisance of many now present at that meeting, says, 'Brethren, you know how;' and refers both to those that were eye and ear witnesses, and present at Cornelius's house, and Peter's sermon there made, as likewise to whom he had faithfully given the narration, and who had rested thereon satisfied, chap. xi., at both of which some were present.

I come therefore (where this hath brought to) to a second branch of this story; and that is, to shew how this wall of distance and separation from all the nations was removed out of the way; by what means this great sluice of enmity was pulled up, that stopped the current and overflow of the gospel to the rest of the world. And of this, that last instance of Cornelius's conversion gives a full and particular account; and you shall now behold all and every of the same persons that you have seen scrupled and bound up to this, brought now in and unbound, and abundantly satisfied therein, (which was a marvellous work of God), 1st Peter; 2dly, then his fellows; 3dly, those Jews that had been scattered, (chap. viii., 'and preached the gospel only to the Jews'); and, 4thly, the generality of the converted Jews.

1. I shall begin first with Peter, the great wheel and engine that brought all the others.

After Peter had finished his journey through Samaria and the villages thereof, and so returned, Acts viii. 25, unto Jerusalem, we find him to take indeed another progress into Palestina, to Lydda and Joppa, but so as to converse with Jews only, and visit in those cities those brethren of the Jewish nation that had believed. Thus Acts ix. 32. And we find him (or Christ's Spirit rather takes him) at one Simon's house, a Jew, as his name gives evidence, for at none other's durst he as yet lie or abide; and thereupon a vision befalls him. And the interpretation of it, with a command to go unto Cornelius, which gave him such ample satisfaction, as everlastingly silenced all scruple in him. And to this end, that now at once this door of faith might be set open wide enough, without any more distinction or qualification of persons, and difference of Gentile from Gentile, proselytes of this sort or the other, and make the way alike for the bringing in of all alike, whether they were legally pure or impure, clean or unclean, the grossest idolaters as well as any other; God therefore made the rule and commission large enough, and seals the warrant of it with a vision from heaven, the mystery of which held forth this great latitude, chap. x. A sheet from heaven is let down, having four corners fastened to the several quarters of heaven, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things, serpents, and fowls of the air, whereof many were pronounced unclean; yea, by the law of commandments given the Jews, many of them were abhorrent even to nature, as toads, and were now declared purified: ver. 15, 'What God hath cleansed, call not that common.' And these beasts of all sorts signified men of all sorts, even Gentiles of all nations, professions whatever, though never so venomous. Thus Peter applies it, ver. 28, 'God hath shewed me' (it was God's own interpretation of it) 'that I should not call any man common or unclean;' that is, in respect of that outward ceremonial impurity, such as by that law had been in fine both in meats and in beasts, and parallelly in men. For now God had taken that away; and by that sheet, in which all, both

* Qu. 'not first'?—Ed.

clean and unclean, were met, was signified the universal catholic church of the New Testament, which was let down from heaven, Gal. iv. 26, and to be taken into heaven, as that sheet in the vision was, in which are all sorts gathered, all things in earth, Eph. i. 10, Jews and Gentiles; and yet from all the four corners of heaven, to which this sheet was knit, importing their gathering to be from East, West, North, and South, to sit down with Abraham and his children. Upon this vision, and the circumstances that accompanied it (which often confirm the mind of God unto us), as that messengers should be knocking at the door the while to bring news of another vision made to Cornelius to send for him, Peter hereupon professeth the greatest conviction: chap. x. 34, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.' He speaks as a man, either whose judgment was now altered, or but now fully convinced and determined of that which he had but an inkling of before: *καταλαμβάνομαι*, *I have it, I apprehend it, and take it in.* Although he had taken in the inkling of it afore, yet as it falls out in a new degree of spiritual knowledge, especially in a matter wherein the mind was anything wavering, but is now confirmed therein, so Peter here professeth as but now to take in the apprehension of it, as the word *καταλαμβάνομαι*, *I apprehend it, or I take it in.* And that phrase, *ἀπὸ ἀληθείας*, 'of a truth,' notes not out only the infallibility and certainty of light now came in, causing him to apprehend it as a certain truth, but that now he had experimentally seen the truth of it. Indeed, that speech argues that the Jews, yea, Peter himself, had formerly been so rigid in their judgments about such kind of proselytes as submitted not to Moses's law, that they questioned whether they were such as God did save. The like argues that speech of those disciples, Acts xi. 18, 'Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.' And though they had repented, yet it would seem they doubted whether unto life or no. And so he goes on to enlarge upon this, and to give a further account of his satisfaction in it: 'I perceive now,' says he, 'that this was indeed the word' (or message, and so parts* the gospel itself) 'which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, Lord of all.' The Spirit of God was promised to bring all things seasonably to the memories and understandings of the apostles by Christ, but not understood, which had been by him spoken afore, which promise was eminently fulfilled in this passage of Peter's. For now he understood that embassy of peace on earth, good will to men, spoken of as the consequent of Christ coming into the world, to concern all nations. He remembered also the many speeches which Christ himself had uttered when preaching this: he spake of the calling of the Gentiles, Mat. viii. 11, 12 and John xii. 32, and how all were to be gathered into one and the same fold, John x., and so the enmity to be removed. And Peter annexeth this reason of confirmation to it, 'he is Lord of all,' that is, of Gentile as well as the Jew indifferently; and now I fully remember (thought he) how when Christ went to heaven he saith, 'All power is committed to me both in heaven and in earth;' and how, as an inference from it, he added, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,' the intent and evidence whereof he had now seen. And Peter further tells us, how a cloud of testimonies came into his mind from all the prophets, which afore he understood not so clearly, confirming to him this truth; it being God's manner to second extraordinary visions with testimonies of his word coincident therewith. Thus, ver. 43, 'To him give all the prophets wit-

* Qu. 'part of'?—ED.

ness,' as to be the Messiah promised to the Jews; so to the great proclamation concerning him, that 'whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.' By those words, πάντα τον πιστεύοντα, 'whoever believes,' he understood and intends the general pardon now proclaimed under the gospel to Gentiles as well as Jews. As it is the brief sum and substance of the prophet's predictions in this point, so it fell out to be that very promise which Peter out of Joel ii. 32 had been harping at in his first sermon to the Jews, Acts ii.; which he had interpreted to concern as well the Gentiles that were 'afar off' as the Jews and their children. But yet he then was himself 'afar off' from the clear and distinct apprehension of it, yet groped at it as in the dark; but now he hath a full, clear, distinct, overcoming light brought into his soul about it, as often on the sudden there useth to be unto us about things wherein we had but confused notions we minded or heeded not. A general notion he had of this thing then; but now all the prophets, that is, such that were of the Old Testament, come in distinctly to his mind, with their several verdicts and testimonies hereunto. He had a sudden view and thorough light, which ran through them all as to this great point; and such a view the Spirit often gives us in things we considered not afore.

And unto this general sum and substance of the gospel concerning the Gentiles' calling, drawn out of the prophets by Peter, did the like speeches and quotations of Paul fall in, and give their express suffrage and consent, Rom. x. 11, where, being upon the same argument Peter is upon here, he speaks in the very same language that Peter here doth. I need but read the words; 'For the Scripture says, Whosoever shall believe in him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Gentile; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him;' and then quotes the words of Joel, which to this purpose Peter also had done, 'Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.' And that I may bring all this same to my text, the very next words do hold a correspondence with, and explain those other passages of Peter's sermons as directed to this scope, and each give light to the other. Peter he says, 'This is the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.' In answer thereto, here Paul says of Christ, 'He came and preached peace to you.' What! did Christ ever preach to the Ephesians? No. Those words can have no better comment than the words of Peter, namely, that Christ, in many of his sermons, though delivered only to the children of Israel, yet proclaimed himself the universal peace between Jew and Gentile; and there what follows but an answer to, and confirmation of, that other passage rementioned in Peter's first sermon, to one and the same effect? He came and preached peace to them that were afar off, the Gentiles, and to them that were nigh, the Jews. Peter's words are, 'The promise to you (Jews) and to them afar off.' So then, you see Peter now fully gained and won to a reconciliation with the Gentiles.

Then 2. For the rest of the Jews with him, they came over to the same mind; for when, in the 44th verse, they saw the Holy Ghost fall on these uncircumcised Gentiles, as formerly he had done on the Jews, it is said, ver. 45, that 'they of the circumcision which believed were also nigh,' even as many of them as came with Peter, and were so far convinced themselves, that at Peter's command they baptized them, ver. 48, which they would never else have done. Therefore those other Jews, who, as you heard out of chap. xi., contended with Peter about this fact, they also, when they

had heard a narrative of all these things from Peter's mouth, confirmed by the testimony of them that were with him, even at the first they were so far won upon as they held their peace. Their mouths were stopped; but not only so, but there they glorified God, which argues not their judgments only, but their hearts, rejoicing that God had added the Gentiles to make one body to himself with them; and they set down this as a final conclusion and determination (as to their judgments) of this controversy for ever. 'Then hath God also granted unto the Gentiles repentance unto life,' which afore they doubted, as was observed.

3. For those other Jews that had been dispersed into several countries afore this fell out, and had, as they went along, scrupulously preached unto Jews only; they also were in the end fetched about to preach unto the Gentiles; yea, and the set scope of the ensuing part of that 11th chapter is to give a narration thereof, on purpose subjoining that story of theirs next this of Peter's concerning Cornelius and the Gentiles, as being both one continued woof of the same thread, namely, a continuation of the account how the gospel was propagated unto the Gentiles by other disciples as well as by Peter, the Holy Ghost industriously setting these things together in one view, because this work was the greatest thing done in the world since Christ's ascension, and of the highest concernment. And that these other Jews did preach freely to the Gentiles, the next words shew, ver. 19, 20, 21, 'Now they that were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned to the Lord.' There hath been a question among some interpreters, whether these Grecians to whom these Jews preached were of Grecian birth and race, or Jews by race, but living among the Gentiles, which, making use of the Greek translation in their synagogues, were called *Ἑλληρισται*, or Grecising Jews (the word there used), and which was commonly given to such Jews as live among the Greeks. But it is evident, as Beza long ago, and Capel, and others since, have observed from the contexture of the 19th and 20th verses, that they were Gentiles, Grecians by race, and not Jews (though perhaps proselytes, such as Cornelius was; as those Grecians, Acts xvii. 4, also were); for Luke here having immediately afore related how those of the dispersion had preached the word to none but Jews only (ver. 19), he doth then by way of exception hereunto add, ver. 20, *ἤσαν δὲ τινές*; but there were some of them, &c., namely, of that company of the dispersion, that preached it to Grecians that were Gentiles. The opposition clearly carries it; so accordingly in the manuscript copy sent by Cyril, that worthy patriarch of Constantinople, to king Charles I., they are expressly called (as it is here translated) *Ἑλλήνες*, Grecians by birth and extraction. And to set out this work the more, which the Holy Ghost's eye was so intent upon, he adds, 'And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord;' ver. 21, a great number, namely of that sort of Grecians whom they set themselves to preach unto.

And so that first part of the relation, how for a long time all of them generally had preached but to Jews only, comes in to make way, and give illustration to the latter part, namely, that yet at last some of them (that had been then narrow) were set at liberty, and altered their practice therein, and after Peter's example, did preach to the Gentiles also, as he had done;

and therefore it is that this relation of what became of those dispersed (whose dispersion is recorded, chap. viii., at the beginning) was deferred until now, and then subjoined presently after that of Peter and the Jews' fully ended, because it was a story of the same sort and to the same purpose with the other, a continuation of the conversion of the Gentiles; and how this Jewish narrow spirit, though it had for a while everywhere hindered, yet was still as fast removed in those places, as well as at Jerusalem; and he sews both together as pieces of the same cloth, yea, and doth it perhaps to insinuate, how that the noise of this faith of Peter's, together with the Jews' satisfaction about it, arriving at the ears of these Jews that were travelling abroad, was the occasion of this sudden and strange alteration of judgment and practice in them, which news overtook them not till they came to Antioch. For we read, Acts xv. 2, that in Phenice, which was one of the regions these had travelled through afore they came to Antioch, the conversion of the Gentiles was but news to them a good while after this, the reason whereof may be, that there was a quicker intercourse betwixt Jerusalem and Antioch, being two greater cities, than Phenice and Jerusalem; which appears from what follows in the next words, that the news of what was now done at Antioch went back again as fast to Jerusalem, before it came to these other places. 'Then tidings of these things coming to the ears of the church which was at Jerusalem, they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch,' to shew their approbation of, and zeal to prosecute this happy beginning among the Gentiles, whose success, also in this new work among these Gentiles the Holy Ghost records; for when he was come, ver. 23, 24, he both encouraged those already converted, and added now a full and open trade of gaining Gentiles' souls, that had been as contrabanded merchandise afore; and factors were sent on purpose from the Jews themselves about it; and this holy commerce was set open in the world, and so an union of Jew and Gentile into one new man hereby effected and procured.

I have insisted the longer hereon, because the only work of wonder set forth in these passages is, and hath been usually understood to have been, another than simply the story of the enlargement of the church, in conversion of new souls to Christ, and spreading the gospel in those first times; whereas the Holy Ghost's principal design was to shew how the Gentiles' conversion was laid and carried on, and so Jew and Gentile made one new man, which was the greatest (as it was the first) work Christ hath done since he went to heaven; which Paul having seen effected, had a special eye to it in the text, when he says, 'He hath broken down the partition wall, and created both into one man in himself.'

I have now mentioned one man (the great apostle Paul) whose part in this great scene hath hitherto wholly been omitted. But if you inquire how his spirit stood pointed upon his conversion to this conversing with, and converting Gentiles, and how and when wrought thereunto, the return thereto is wonderful. Christ's dealing with him in this particular was not as with the other apostles, whom he instructed by degrees; but he was, together with his own conversion, at the same instant converted hereunto. He took it in together with that milk or seed of the word that begat him unto life; yea, so earnest was Christ himself, who immediately converted him, and zealous in this point, that he feels his commission to teach the Gentiles with the first news of his own salvation. And truths that are impressed upon our souls, at or upon our first conversion, are of the greatest moment to us, and have the deepest stamp, and are never worn out;

and duties which are then set on, we ever after do or ought most to mind, as being conditions which God designed us to, and converted us.

Here Paul himself tells the story, Acts ix. 15, 'The Lord said to Ananias' (whom he employed first to bring the glad tidings of salvation unto Paul), 'Go thy way,' and tell him; 'he is a chosen vessel to me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.' The children of Israel (you see) do in Paul's commission come in in the rear, but the Gentiles are the first in his commission; and the very same did God speak as expressly to him by revelation, as Paul relates it, Gal. i. Yea, and if you observe the set and full scope of that relation of his conversion in that place, it is evident to be on purpose to clear this very thing (which he makes the argument in the first part of that epistle), namely, how the Gentiles were admitted into the fellowship of the gospel, without any subjection of theirs to the Jewish ceremonies; and that he accordingly had had a revelation from the first of his conversion, to go and preach the gospel upon such terms first to the Gentiles; and a great part of that chapter is taken up with the narration of the strange workings about of his spirit to this point of the compass, to which it had stood clean contrary afore, as much as any other Jew whatever; as that singular passage in the narrative of his first conversion shews. 'You have heard of my conversation in times past,' says he, 'in the Jewish religion, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers,' whereof this was one, and the most deeply rooted; 'but when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me;' for what work? 'that I might preach him among the heathen: and immediately' (for thus soon was he instructed in the main article of his commission), 'I conferred not with flesh and blood;' I went with so full a conviction of this new truth revealed to me, as that I would not so much as ask counsel of any man else; and then, whither did the Spirit carry him? Straight into Arabia, who were the world of heathens, Ishmael's seed and posterity, whose hands, as in Genesis, were 'against every man, and every man against them' (like the wild Irish), of all the most barbarous; and he fell first a-preaching unto them, without scruple or regard at all had to any Jewish tradition, or to any Jew; and as his first conversion had thus taught him this, so he accordingly bears this written in his style, and title, and glories in it, *'The apostle, doctor, and teacher of the Gentiles.'*

I have but one thing more to add, the universal joy and acclamations that were in the whole church of God, at the addition and first rearing of this new and greatest part of God's house, the Gentiles; and this both in Jews and others, which in all places they were generally filled withal, which the Holy Ghost in the end of every of these stories takes notice of, and is as the *Epiphonema*. There was never such joy on earth as then upon all occasions; never such joy in heaven as upon Christ's nativity, when the angels sang, 'Glory to,' &c. For, *first*, those Jews who had withstood Peter, chap. xi., they sing a *Glory to God on high* upon it, as the angels did upon Christ's nativity, chap. xi. 18, 'They glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.' Then *again*, when the Gentiles at Antioch were converted, the news came instantly to Jerusalem; and they out of an earnest desire to know the truth of it, and to forward the work, sent Barnabas, who, when he came and saw the grace of God, Oh, how glad was he! The Holy Ghost could not but relate it; 'He was glad, and exhorted them all,' says the text. Then Barnabas searches out Paul, and in the end meets him; and they were well met, being alike spirited to this work; and they are sent out, chap. xiii., to the con-

version of new regions of the Gentiles. And this is the joyful account of that whole journey ; chap. xiv. 27, ' They rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how God had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.' Then again, chap. xv. ver. 3, 4, going from thence to Jerusalem, and passing through Phœnicia and Samaria, what news was it they carried which their hearts were big with ? Even this, ' Declaring the conversion of the Gentiles ; and they caused great joy to all the brethren,' even those that were Jews.