

communication from God, a new revelation, and God gave it through Paul, His servant.

So with all the epistles. Each has a particular object. None is a treatise on theology, putting forth all that is necessary to know for all ages and all men. There is not one written for that purpose.

The first epistles of Paul I and 2 Thessalonians, 52 and 53 A. D., express the joy and satisfaction of the Apostle on account of the manner in which the people of Thessalonica had received the Gospel. He cautions them against the sins prevalent in that great city, and comforts those who mourned over the loss of dear relatives. The "dead in the Lord" will be resurrected at the coming of the Lord, and this event is more fully explained, in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel concerning the "little horn." (Dan. viii.)

The next epistle, that to the Galatians, A. D. 53 or 57, is a warning to the churches in that district not to mix up the rites of the Mosaic law with the ordinances of the Gospel, as the two were so different from each other as Ishmael and Isaac, Sinai and Zion. And to give this admonition force, the writer proves that his knowledge of Christian truth was derived not from human teaching, but from God through immediate revelation, wherefore the Apostles of the Lord had recognized him as their equal. (ch. i. 2.)

The epistles to the Corinthians were written (A. D. 57) in reply to a letter received by Paul from the branch in Corinth, requesting his advice on certain points (ch. vii. 1): also to correct some errors of which he had heard by report (i. 11: v. 1: xi. 18). The state of the branch was, however, such that the Apostle deemed it necessary to send Timothy there also, thus imparting both by letter and by verbal preaching communications from God. Mark how special emergencies require special revelations!

The epistle to the Romans (A. D. 58) is the most systematic of all the writings of Paul, and the one that by Protestants is considered the basis of Gospel theology. The scope of the epistle is to reconcile the Jews and the Gentiles in the Church of Christ, by placing all on one level in the sight of God. "All have sinned:" "All must be saved by the same means." This is the whole epistle in one sentence. Now, it is instructive to notice how the Apostle in this important letter to the Romans illustrates the question under consideration. In the very first chapter he says he is constantly praying that God may give him an opportunity of visiting Rome, not indeed as a tourist and sightseer, but "that I might impart unto you some spiritual gift." (ch. i. 11.) What "spiritual gifts" are we learn in 1 Cor. 12: "word of wisdom," of "knowledge," "faith," "healing," "miracles," "prophecy," etc. So that it was not enough, according to Paul, for the Christians in Rome to have all the sacred Scriptures, including this letter, but they needed something more. They needed

"spiritual gifts" continued among them. It has been reserved for later "Christians" to discover that Paul was wrong, and that "spiritual gifts" were of no account as long as the Scriptures were to be had at a cheap price.

To have the Spirit of God is, further, put forth as the necessary condition of a "child" of God. "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." (chap. 8.) Such is the importance given to the possession of the Spirit of God. But we have already seen that the very office of the Spirit was to "lead into all truth, and to reveal things to come." He who has the Spirit has, therefore, the spirit of revelation, and the Apostle contends that man without this spirit of revelation is a stranger and an enemy to God (chap. 8: 5-9). The Apostle further states that at the time when the fullness of the Gentiles has been gathered in, direct communication from God will still continue. "For there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer and turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (chap. 11: 26). How could this be possible if all communication with God had ceased with the close of the New Testament? But they have not ceased, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (chap. 11: 29).

This may suffice to show that the great Apostle of the Gentiles never meant his letter to the Romans nor any other letter to close the channels of revelation.

Let us remind ourselves of one more fact. The writers of the New Testament themselves state that they had not written all that was necessary for instruction. In writing to the Corinthians about the partaking of the Lord's Supper they give some general directions, but conclude by saying: "The rest will I set in order when I come" (1 Cor. 11: 34). Now, what instructions or arrangements are here left out? We do not know. But we see that the written word was not meant to convey all that was necessary to know. The same expression we find in the second letter of John. "Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face." (2 John 12.) See also (3 John, 13.) Who can then say that we in books of the Bible have all that written which God ever intended to convey to mankind, and that revelation has ceased? The idea is a direct contrast to the word of the Apostles.

It is instructive to notice how theologians have been compelled to turn their own reasons upside down, and to stretch the various passages of Scripture on their learned racks in order to make them fit for all occasions. Luther's explanation of our Lord's prayer is a notorious instance. "Daily bread" means, according to that noted reformer, not only what you eat and drink, but "bread" means also a house and a

wife, obedient children, good neighbors and "other such things." If in "daily bread" was included also the beer-keg that Luther received among his wedding presents, the reformer does not state, but in the "other such things" is room for a considerable quantity of "bread." Of course, that kind of exegesis fills everything into the Bible. By it anything can be got of anything or of nothing, but God never put it there. Man did it, and by so doing, proved himself to be on the wrong track, to say the least.

In order to gain a sound understanding of the Word of God, the various books must be read as Mr. Locke says the Epistles ought to be read. He requires you to read through one epistle at a sitting and observe its drift and aim. "If," says he, "the first reading gave some light, the second gave me more; and so I persisted on reading constantly the whole epistle over at once, till I came to have a general view of the writer's purpose, the chief branches of his discourse, the arguments he used, and the disposition of the whole. This, I confess, is not to be obtained by one or two hasty readings; it must be repeated again and again, with a close attention to the tenor of the discourse, and a perfect neglect of the divisions into chapters and verses." If this plan be adopted, and the books of the Bible be read with a humble, prayerful heart, a heart in unison with the authors that wrote, the true meaning of the word will be grasped. And the closer this true meaning becomes, the more will it appear that nothing short of continued communication with God can satisfy the heart. For it is the very purpose of the written Word of God to lead man to seek this communication with God, to guide, in other words, the straying child to its loving Father.

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[To be continued.]

ONE of the most attractive features of the Jamaica exhibition in 1891 will be the industrial village, where a number of peasantry in model huts will be engaged in their usual occupations, making baskets, wicker-work, cassava, native pottery, nets, sugar, etc., while the coolies will show their methods of weaving.

A REMARKABLE occurrence is reported by a native Japanese newspaper. Scientists assign its cause to vacuum due to atmospheric changes, while the villagers think it to be the work of devils. A man suddenly falls down while walking in the open air or in a house, when a slit in the flesh from one inch to one inch and a half in length and about an inch in depth is found, the place principally attacked being the legs. At the time not much pain is felt, but half an hour afterward the pain increases as the blood begins to flow. The wounds are said to be very difficult to cure.