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OCCASIONAL ESSAYS.

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SAMUEL SMITH.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE essays published in this volume are, for the most part, reprints of papers written at different times during the past fifteen years. The reader will no doubt perceive that one or two of them are somewhat early productions and need a little indulgence. The contrast between the two papers on America, is explained by the fact that the first reflected the dark hues that tinged the political firmament before the outbreak of the civil war, whereas the second caught the glow of patriotism which prevailed in the Northern States for some time after the conclusion of that contest. Looking from our present stand-point, we should say that the first took too dark, the second too bright a view of American institutions; politics have indeed relapsed into a state of corruption which appears to be chronic in that country, but the forces for good which abide in the social and religious life of the people, will neutralise in great measure the evils that cling to its political system.

The last Essay of this series has already appeared as part of a larger volume.

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE COMPARATIVE VITALITY OF ANCIENT AND MODERN CIVILIZATION, .	1
AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS, . . . . .	38
BRITISH RULE IN INDIA (1864), . . . . .	77
"WAR IN RELATION TO MODERN CIVILIZATION," . . . . .	107,
REFLECTIONS SUGGESTED BY A SECOND VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, . . . . .	125
THE BASIS OF POLITICAL RIGHT, . . . . .	156
REFLECTIONS ON THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR, . . . . .	185
RATIONALISM AND THE BIBLE, . . . . .	215
RATIONALISM AND MIRACLES, . . . . .	250
APPENDIX, . . . . .	275

## A P P E N D I X.

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It has been thought desirable to subjoin some extracts from the Apocryphal Gospels and Epistles, in order to show the amazing contrast they present in their puerile fables and conceits to the dignity and simplicity of the inspired volume.

The selections are made from the writings of most repute in primitive times, and which were believed to come nearest in point of antiquity to the contents of our New Testament.

Were the inspiration of Scripture made to rest on internal evidence alone, a powerful argument might be drawn from the startling inferiority of these writings. No unprejudiced reader can fail to see how different is the utterance of men filled with the Holy Ghost, from the childish fancies of the monkish authors of these legends.

*(From the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, ch. iv.)*

### THE DEDICATION OF THE VIRGIN MARY.

AND when three years were expired, and the time of her weaning complete, they brought the Virgin to the temple of the Lord with offerings. And there was about the temple, according to the fifteen Psalms of degrees, fifteen stairs to ascend. For the temple being built in a mountain, the altar of burnt-offering, which was without, could not be come near but by stairs; the parents of the blessed Virgin and infant Mary put her upon one of these stairs; but while they were putting off their clothes, in which they had travelled, and according to

custom putting on some that were more neat and clean, in the meantime the Virgin of the Lord, in such a manner, went up all the stairs one after another, without the help of any to lead her or lift her, that any one would have judged from hence, that she was of perfect age. Thus the Lord did, in the infancy of his Virgin, work this extraordinary work, and evidence by this miracle how great she was like to be hereafter. But the parents having offered up their sacrifice, according to the custom of the law, and perfected their vow, left the Virgin with other virgins in the apartments of the temple, who were to be brought up there, and they returned home.

*(From the Protevangelium, ch. xvi.)*

HEROD DESTROYS THE BABES IN BETHLEHEM, AND MURDERS

ZACHARIAS.

THEN Herod, perceiving that he was mocked by the wise men, and being very angry, commanded certain men to go and to kill all the children that were in Bethlehem, from two years old and under. But Mary hearing that the children were to be killed, being under much fear, took the child, and wrapped him up in swaddling clothes, and laid him in an ox-manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Elizabeth also, hearing that her son John was about to be searched for, took him and went up into the mountains, and looked around for a place to hide him; and there was no secret place to be found. Then she groaned within herself, and said, O mountain of the Lord, receive the mother with the child. For Elizabeth could not climb up. And instantly the mountain was divided and received them. And there appeared to them an angel of the Lord to preserve them.

But Herod made search after John, and sent servants to Zacharias, when he was (ministering) at the altar, and said unto him, Where hast thou hid thy son? He replied to them, I am a minister of God, and a servant at the altar: how should I know where my son is? So the servants went back, and told Herod the whole; at which he was incensed, and said, Is not this son of his like to be king in Israel? He sent therefore again his servants to Zacharias, saying, Tell us the truth, where is thy son, for you know that your life is in my hand. So the servants went and told him all this: but Zacharias replied to them, I am a martyr for God, and if ye shed my blood, the Lord will receive my soul. Besides know that ye shed innocent blood. However, Zacharias was murdered in the entrance of the temple and altar, and about the partition; But the children of Israel knew not when he was killed.



Then at the hour of salutation the priests went into the temple, but Zacharias did not according to custom meet them and bless them ; Yet they still continued waiting for him to salute them ; and when they found he did not in a long time come, one of them ventured into the holy place where the altar was, and he saw blood lying upon the ground congealed ; when, behold a voice from heaven said, Zacharias is murdered, and his blood shall not be wiped away, until the revenger of his blood come. But when he heard this, he was afraid, and went forth and told the priests what he had seen and heard ; and they all went in, and saw the fact. Then the roofs of the temple howled, and were rent from the top to the bottom : and they could not find the body, but only blood made hard like stone. And they went away, and told the people, that Zacharias was murdered, and all the tribes of Israel heard thereof, and mourned for him, and lamented three days. Then the priests took counsel together concerning a person to succeed him. And Simeon and the other priests cast lots, and the lot fell upon Simeon. For he had been assured by the Holy Spirit, that he should not die, till he had seen Christ come in the flesh.

*(From the first Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, ch. iv.)*

THE INFANT JESUS TAKEN DOWN TO EGYPT BY JOSEPH  
AND MARY.

Now Herod perceiving that the wise men did delay, and not return to him, called together the priests and wise men and said, Tell me in what place the Christ should be born ? And when they replied, in Bethlehem, a city of Judæa, he began to contrive in his own mind the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. But an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in his sleep, and said, Arise, take the child and his mother, and go into Egypt as soon as the cock grows. So he arose, and went.

And as he was considering with himself about his journey, the morning came upon him. In the length of the journey the girth of the saddle broke. And now he drew near to a great city, in which there was an idol, to which the other idols and gods of Egypt brought their offerings and vows. And there was by this idol a priest ministering to it, who, as often as Satan spoke out of that idol, related the things he said to the inhabitants of Egypt, and those countries. This priest had a son three years old, who was possessed with a great multitude of devils, who uttered many strange things, and when the devils seized him, walked about naked with his clothes torn throwing stones at those whom he saw. Near to that idol was

the inn of the city, into which when Joseph and St Mary were come and had turned into that inn, all the inhabitants of the city were astonished. And all the magistrates and priests of the idols assembled before that idol, and made inquiry there, saying, What mean all this consternation, and dread, which has fallen upon all our country? The idol answered them, The unknown God is come hither, who is truly God; nor is there any one besides him, who is worthy of divine worship; for he is truly the Son of God. At the fame of him this country trembled, and at his coming it is under the present commotion and consternation, and we ourselves are affrighted by the greatness of his power. At the same instant this idol fell down, and at his fall all the inhabitants of Egypt, besides others, ran together.

But the son of the priest, when his usual disorder came upon him, going into the inn, found there Joseph and St Mary, whom all the rest had left behind and forsook. And when the Lady St Mary, had washed the swaddling clothes of the Lord Christ, and hanged them out to dry upon a post, the boy possessed with the devil took down one of them, and put it upon his head. And presently the devils began to come out of his mouth, and fly away in the shape of crows and serpents. From that time the boy was healed by the power of the Lord Christ, and he began to sing praises, and give thanks to Lord who had healed him. When his father saw him restored to his former state of health, he said, My son, what has happened to thee, and by what means wert thou cured? The son answered, When the devil seized me, I went into the inn, and there found a very handsome woman with a boy, whose swaddling clothes she had just before washed, and hanged out upon a post. One of these I took, and put it upon my head, and immediately the devils left me, and fled away. At this the father exceedingly rejoiced, and said, My son, perhaps this boy is the son of the living God, who made the heavens and the earth. For as soon as he came amongst us, the idol was broken, and all the gods fell down and were destroyed by a greater power. Then was fulfilled the prophecy, which said, Out of Egypt I have called my son.

*(From the first Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ, ch. xv.)*

THE BOY JESUS MAKES CLAY ANIMALS TO WALK, &c.

AND when the Lord Jesus was seven years of age, he was on a certain day with other boys his companions about the same age. Who when they were at play, made clay into several shapes, namely asses, oxen, birds, and other figures. Each boasting of his work, and endeavouring to exceed the rest. Then the Lord Jesus said to the boys, I will command these figures which I have made to walk.

And immediately they moved, and when he commanded them to return they returned. He had also made the figures of birds and sparrows, which, when he commanded to fly, did fly, and when he commanded to stand still, did stand still; and if he gave them meat and drink, they did eat and drink. When at length the boys went away, and related these things to their parents, their fathers said to them, Take heed, children, for the future of his company, for he is a sorcerer; shun and avoid him, and from henceforth never play with him.

On a certain day also, when the Lord Jesus was playing with the boys, and running about, he passed by a dyer's shop, whose name was Salem. And there were in his shop many pieces of cloth belonging to the people of that city, which they designed to dye of several colours. Then the Lord Jesus going into the dyer's shop, took all the cloths and threw them into the furnace. When Salem came home, and saw the cloths spoiled, he began to make a great noise, and to chide the Lord Jesus, saying, What hast thou done to me, O thou son of Mary? Thou hast injured both me and my neighbours; they all desired their cloths of a proper colour; but thou hast come and spoiled them all. The Lord Jesus replied, I will change the colour of every cloth to what colour thou desirest; And then he presently began to take the cloths out of the furnace, and they were all dyed of those same colours which the dyer desired. And when the Jews saw this surprising miracle, they praised God.

*(From the Gospel of Nicodemus, ch. xiii. to xvi. inclusive.)*

THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HELL.

O LORD Jesus and Father, who art God, also the resurrection and life of the dead, give us leave to declare thy mysteries, which we saw after death, belonging to thy cross; for we are sworn by thy name. For thou hast forbid thy servants to declare the secret things, which were wrought by thy divine power in hell.

When we were placed with our fathers in the depth of hell, in the blackness of darkness, on a sudden there appeared the colour of the sun like gold, and a substantial purple-coloured light enlightening the place. Presently upon this, Adam, the father of all mankind, with all the patriarchs and prophets, rejoiced and said, That light is the author of everlasting light, who hath promised to translate us to everlasting light. Then Isaiah the prophet cried out and said, This is the light of the Father, and the Son of God, according to my prophecy, when I was alive upon earth. The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim beyond Jordan, a people who walked in darkness, saw a great light; and to them who dwelled in the region

of the shadow of death light is arisen. And now he is come, and enlightened us who sat in death. And while we were all rejoicing in the light which shone upon us our father Simeon came among us and congratulating all the company, said, Glorify the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God. Whom I took up in my arms when an infant in the temple, and being moved by the Holy Ghost, said to him, and acknowledged, That now mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people ; a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. All the saints who were in the depth of hell, hearing this, rejoiced the more. Afterwards there came forth one like a little hermit, and was asked by every one, Who art thou ? To which he replied, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, John the Baptist, and the prophet of the Most High, who went before his coming to prepare his way, to give the knowledge of salvation to his people for the forgiveness of sins. And I John, when I saw Jesus coming to me, being moved by the Holy Ghost, I said, Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. And I baptized him in the river Jordan, and saw the Holy Ghost descending upon him in the form of a dove, and heard a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And now while I was going before him, I came down hither to acquaint you, that the Son of God will next visit us, and, as the day-spring from on high, will come to us, who are in darkness and the shadow of death.

But when the first man our father Adam heard these things, that Jesus was baptized in Jordan, he called out to his son Seth, and said, Declare to yoursons, the patriarchs and prophets, all those things, which thou didst hear from Michael, the archangel, when I sent thee to the gates of Paradise, to entreat God that he would anoint my head when I was sick. Then Seth, coming near to the patriarchs and prophets, said, I Seth, when I was praying to God at the gates of Paradise, beheld the angel of the Lord, Michael, appear unto me saying, I am sent unto thee from the Lord ; I am appointed to preside over human bodies. I tell thee Seth, do not pray to God in tears, and entreat him for the oil of the tree of mercy wherewith to anoint thy father Adam for his head-ache ; Because thou canst not by any means obtain it till the last day and times, namely, till five thousand five hundred years be past. Then will Christ, the most merciful Son of God, come on earth to raise again the human body of Adam, and at the same time to raise the bodies of the dead, and when he cometh he will be baptized in Jordan ; then with the oil of his mercy he will anoint all those who believe on him ; and the oil of his mercy will continue to future generations, for those who shall be born of the water and the

Holy Ghost unto eternal life. And when at that time the most merciful Son of God, Christ Jesus, shall come down on earth, he will introduce our father Adam into Paradise, to the tree of mercy. When all the patriarchs and prophets heard all these things from Seth, they rejoiced more.

While all the saints were rejoicing, behold Satan, the prince and captain of death, said to the prince of hell, Prepare to receive Jesus of Nazareth himself, who boasted that he was the Son of God, and yet was a man afraid of death, and said, My soul is sorrowful even to death. Besides he did many injuries to me and to many others ; for those whom I made blind and lame and those also whom I tormented with several devils, he cured by his word ; yea, and those whom I brought dead to thee he by force takes away from thee. To this the prince of hell replied to Satan, Who is that so powerful prince, and yet a man who is afraid of death ? For all the potentates of the earth are subject to my power, whom thou broughtest to subjection by thy power. But if he be so powerful in his human nature, I affirm to thee for truth, that he is almighty in his divine nature, and no man can resist his power. When therefore he said he was afraid of death, he designed to ensnare thee, and unhappy it will be to thee for everlasting ages. Then Satan replying, said to the prince of hell, Why didst thou express a doubt, and wast afraid to receive that Jesus of Nazareth, both thy adversary and mine ? As for me, I tempted him and stirred up my old people the Jews with zeal and anger against him ; I sharpened the spear for his suffering ; I mixed the gall and vinegar, and commanded that he should drink it ; I prepared the cross to crucify him, and the nails to pierce through his hands and feet ; and now his death is near at hand, I will bring him hither, subject both to thee and me. Then the prince of hell answering, said, Thou saidst to me just now, that he took away the dead from me by force. They who have been kept here till they should live again upon earth, were taken away hence, not by their own power, but by prayers made to God, and their almighty God took them from me. Who then is that Jesus of Nazareth that by his word hath taken away the dead from me without prayer to God ? Perhaps it is the same who took away from me Lazarus, after he had been four days dead, and did both stink and was rotten, and of whom I had possession as a dead person, yet he brought him to life again by his power. Satan answering, replied to the prince of hell, It is the very same person, Jesus of Nazareth. Which when the prince of hell heard, he said to him, I adjure thee by the powers which belong to thee and me, that thou bring him not to me. For when I heard of the power of his word, I trembled for fear, and all my impious company were at the same disturbed ; and we were

not able to detain Lazarus, but he gave himself a shake, and with all the signs of malice, he immediately went away from us ; and the very earth in which the dead body of Lazarus was lodged presently turned him out alive. And I know now that he is Almighty God who could perform such things, who is mighty in his dominion, and mighty in his human nature, who is the Saviour of mankind. Bring not therefore this person hither, for he will set at liberty all those whom I hold in prison under unbelief, and bound with the fetters of their sins, and will conduct them to everlasting life.

And while Satan and the prince of hell were discoursing thus to each other, on a sudden there was a voice as of thunder and the rushing of winds, saying, Lift up your gates, O ye princes ; and be ye lift up, O everlasting gates, and the King of Glory shall come in. When the prince of hell heard this, he said to Satan, Depart from me, and be gone out of my habitations ; if thou art a powerful warrior, fight with the King of Glory. But what hast thou to do with him ? And he cast him forth from his habitations. And the prince said to his impious officers, Shut the brass gates of cruelty, and make them fast with iron bars, and fight courageously, lest we be taken captives. But when all the company of the saints heard this they spake with a loud voice of anger to the prince of hell, Open thy gates, that the King of Glory may come in. And the divine prophet David, cried out, saying, Did not I when on earth, truly prophesy and say, O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. He hath taken them because of their iniquity, and because of their unrighteousness they are afflicted. After this, another prophet, namely, holy Isaiah, spake in like manner to all the saints, Did not I rightly prophesy to you when I was alive on earth ? The dead men shall live, and they shall rise again who are in their graves, and they shall rejoice who are in earth ; for the dew which is from the Lord, shall bring deliverance to them. And I said in another place, O death, where is thy victory ? O death, where is thy sting ? When all the saints heard these things spoken by Isaiah, they said to the prince of hell, Open now thy gates, and take away thine iron bars ; for thou wilt now be bound, and have no power. Then was there a great voice, as of the sound of thunder, saying, Lift up your gates, O princes ; and be ye lifted up, ye gates of hell, and the King of Glory will enter in. The prince of hell perceiving the same voice repeated, cried out, as though he had been ignorant, Who is that King of Glory ? David replied to the prince of hell, and said, I understand the words of that voice, because I spake them by his spirit. And now, as I have above said, I say

unto thee, the Lord strong and powerful, the Lord mighty in battle: he is the King of Glory, and he is the Lord in heaven and in earth; he hath looked down to hear the groans of the prisoners, and to set loose those that are appointed to death. And now, thou filthy and stinking prince of hell, open thy gates, that the King of Glory may come in; for he is the Lord of heaven and earth. While David was saying this, the mighty Lord appeared in the form of a man, and enlightened those places which had ever before been in darkness. And broke asunder the fetters which before could not be broken; and with his invincible power visited those who sate in the deep darkness by iniquity, and the shadow of death by sin.

(*From the first Epistle of Christ, ch. xii.*)

THE RESURRECTION PROVED FROM THE PHENIX.

LET us consider that wonderful type of the resurrection which is seen in the eastern countries: that is to say, in Arabia. There is a certain bird called a Phœnix; of this there is never but one at a time: and that lives five hundred years. And when the time of its dissolution draws near, that it must die, it makes itself a nest of frankincense, and myrrh, and other spices, into which, when its time is fulfilled, it enters and dies. But its flesh putrifying, breeds a certain worm, which, being nourished with the juice of the dead bird, brings forth feathers; and when it is grown to a perfect state, it takes up the nest in which the bones of its parent lie, and carries it from Arabia into Egypt, to a city called Heliopolis: and flying in open day in the sight of all men, lays it upon the altar of the sun, and so returns from whence it came. The priests then search into the records of the time; and find that it returned precisely at the end of five hundred years. And shall we then think it to be any very great and strange thing for the Lord of all to raise up those that religiously serve him in the assurance of a good faith, when even by a bird he shows us the greatness of his power to fulfil his promise? For he says in a certain place, Thou shalt raise me up and I shall confess unto thee. And again, I laid me down and slept, and awaked, because thou art with me. And again, Job says, Thou shalt raise up this flesh of mine, that has suffered all these things. Having therefore this hope, let us hold fast to him who is faithful in all his promises, and righteous in all his judgments; who has commanded us not to lie, how much more will he not himself lie? For nothing is impossible with God but to lie. Let his faith then be stirred up again in us; and let us consider that all things are nigh unto him. By the word of his power he made all things; and by the same word he is able (whenever he will) to destroy them.

Who shall say unto him, What dost thou? or who shall resist the power of his strength? When, and as he pleased, he will do all things; and nothing shall pass away of all that has been determined by him. All things are open before him; nor can anything be hid from his counsel. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.

(*From the Epistle of Barnabas, ch. v.*)

BAPTISM AND THE CROSS OF CHRIST FORETOLD IN FIGURES  
UNDER THE LAW.

LET US now inquire whether the Lord took care to manifest anything beforehand concerning water and the cross. Now for the former of these, it is written to the people of Israel how they shall not receive that baptism which brings to forgiveness of sins; but shall institute another to themselves that cannot. For thus saith the prophet: Be astonished, O Heaven! and let the earth tremble at it, because this people have done two great and wicked things: they have left me, the fountain of living water, and have digged for themselves broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Is my holy mountain a Zion, a desolate wilderness?—For ye shall be as a young bird when its nest is taken away. And again the prophet saith, I will go before thee, and will make plain the mountains, and will break the gates of brass, and will snap in sunder the bars of iron; and will give thee dark, and hidden, and invisible treasures, that they may know that I am the Lord God. And again, he shall dwell in the high den of the strong rock. And then, what follows in the same prophet? His water is faithful; ye shall see the king with glory, and your soul shall learn the fear of the Lord. And again he saith in another prophet, He that does these things shall be like a tree planted by the currents of water, which shall give its fruit in its season. Its leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth it shall prosper. As for the wicked, it is not so with them; but they are as the dust which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, neither the sinners in the council of the righteous; for the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous, and the way of the ungodly shall perish. Consider how he has joined both the cross and the water together. For this he saith: Blessed are they who put their trust in the cross, descend into the water; for they shall have their reward in due time: then, saith he, will I give it them. But as concerning the present time, he saith, their leaves shall not



fall : meaning thereby, that every word that shall go out of your mouth shall through faith and charity be to the conversion and hope of many. In like manner doth another prophet speak : And the land of Jacob was the praise of all the earth ; magnifying thereby the vessel of his spirit. And what follows ?—And there was a river running on the right hand, and beautiful trees grew up by it ; and he that shall eat of them shall live for ever : the signification of which is this : that we go down into the water full of sins and pollutions ; but come up again, bringing forth fruit ; having in our hearts the fear and hope which is in Jesus, by the spirit ; and whosoever shall eat of them shall live for ever. That is, whosoever shall hearken to those who call them, and shall believe, shall live for ever.

(From the first Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians, ch. ii.)

THE BENEFIT OF SUBJECTION TO THE BISHOP, &c.

FOR if I in this little time have had such a familiarity with your bishop (I mean not a carnal, but spiritual acquaintance with him) ; how much more must I think you happy who are so joined to him, as the Church is to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ to the Father ; that so all things may agree in the same unity ? Let no man deceive himself ; if a man be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two be of such force, as we are told ; how much more powerful shall that of the bishop and the whole church be ? He therefore that does not come together in the same place with it is proud, and has already condemned himself. For it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us take heed therefore that we do not set ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God. The more any one sees his bishop silent, the more let him revere him. For whomsoever the master of the house sends to be over his own household, we ought in like manner to receive him, as we would do him that sent him. It is therefore evident that we ought to look upon the bishop, even as we would do upon the Lord himself. And indeed Onesimus himself does greatly commend your good order in God : that you all live according to the truth, and that no heresy dwells among you. For neither do ye hearken to any one more than to Jesus Christ, speaking to you in truth. For some there are who carry about the name of Christ in deceitfulness, but do things unworthy of God ; whom ye must flee, as ye would do so many wild beasts. For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly : against whom ye must guard yourselves, as men hardly to be cured. There is one Physician, both fleshly and spiritual ; made and not made ; God incarnate ; true life in death ; both of Mary and of God ; first passible, then

impassible ; even Jesus Christ our Lord. Wherefore let no man deceive you ; as indeed neither are ye deceived, being wholly the servants of God. For inasmuch as there is no contention or strife among you, to trouble you, ye must needs live according to God's will. My soul be for yours ; and I myself the expiatory offering for your church of Ephesus, so famous throughout the world. They that are of the flesh cannot do the works of the spirit : neither they that are of the spirit the works of the flesh. As he that has faith cannot be an infidel ; nor he that is an infidel have faith. But even those things which ye do according to the flesh are spiritual, forasmuch as ye do all things in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I have heard of some who have passed by you, having perverse doctrine ; whom ye did not suffer to sow among you, but stopped your ears, that ye might not receive those things that were sown by them : as being the stones of the temple of the Father, prepared for his building, and drawn up on high by the cross of Christ, as by an engine. Using the Holy Ghost as the rope : your faith being your support, and your charity the way that leads unto God. Ye are therefore, with all your companions in the same journey, full of God : his spiritual temples, full of Christ, full of holiness : adorned in all things with the commands of Christ. In whom also I rejoice that I have been thought worthy by this present epistle to converse, and joy together with you ; that with respect to the other life, ye love nothing but God only.