

Original Contributions.

Religion.

NUMBER IV.

Proposition 4.—*A Re-union with God.*

Paul says, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Rom. viii. 35. If they could not be separated from the love of Christ, they were then united with him, and this was the same people to whom this same writer uses the following language: "God be thanked that (though) ye were the servants of sin." The Roman brethren then had been sinners, but now cannot be separated from the love of Christ. They were innocent in childhood, but afterward became sinners, and now are reunited to Christ so strongly that the great apostle says: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii. 38, 39. There was such a wide breach that it took "all power in heaven and earth" to span it, but now there is a union so strong that no created thing can break it. The ties that bind us to God are so close and strong that the Bible calls God "Our Father," and Christians children of God; yes, children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and being children then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Jesus says: "I will be with you alway even unto the end of the world." Though the way be rough and steep and the defiles on this side and on that be deep and wild, and the elements be clashing with fearful storms, still our Guide sounds along the line so loud that all can hear "I will never leave you nor forsake you." This way that "leadeth unto life" is called "the narrow way." It is, indeed, narrow, but wide enough for two to walk side by side—the *Savior* and the *saved*. Isaiah says of the way of holiness: "The unclean shall not pass over it, for he shall be with them." Is. xxxv. 8, marginal reading. Those then who are in the way of holiness or are reunited to God have the sure word of God that he will be with them and never forsake them. Through all time and in eternity he and his people shall remain together united as closely as the vine and the branch, with the life flowing ever

from the vine into the branch; so his life flows ever into those in union with him; and those who are separated from Christ, the vine, are withered and burned in the fire. This union which all the powers of the wicked one cannot break, enduring as eternity and steadfast as God's throne in the heavens must have a cause to produce it, and this brings us to our fifth proposition.

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The Church at Ephesus.

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NUMBER II.

I. In the three years that Paul was at Ephesus the Gospel spread through all the cities of Asia, effecting both Jews and Gentiles. The oppositions and persecutions noted in a former essay were, perhaps, only from Jews. The Greeks probably regarded it only as a common occurrence among Jews. From Acts xix. 21, we find that Paul had programmed a tour through Macedonia, Achaia, Jerusalem and Rome. He sent his companion on before, but he remained in Asia for a season. Doubtless the opposition from the Gentile population had already begun to manifest itself, as, by this time, the Gentile converts far exceeded those from Jews, and the fact that the craftsmen, headed by Demetrius, became alarmed on account of the few worshipers at the shrine of Diana, shows that there had been a general revolution in society, and, if allowed to go on, it must eventually dethrone the greatest image in Asia. This led those craftsmen to bestir themselves, and they succeeded in raising a general storm of indignation which effected the whole city. All the prejudice of Gentile against Jew, the baser passion and appetite of all the vagabonds, contribute to produce such a state of excitement as is, perhaps, never seen in these modern times. The leaders were conscious of the weakness of their cause. They had already too many examples of Paul's logic to attempt to make any other issue than such as savage brute force could use. They pounce upon two of Paul's companions and rush into the theatre; the leaders desired to create a reaction in the public sentiment. It would do no good to beat and kill a few men, they must carry the public sentiment on their side. Being aware of their design, Paul's friends, both in and out of the church, suffered him not to enter, knowing, that in the excite-

ment, reason and argument would not be heard, for while the leaders were making every effort to excite the people, their programme was so little understood that the masses scarcely knew the object of the meeting, nor was it to the interest of the leaders for them to know. So when the Jews put forth Alexander, and made him an object, while he was endeavoring to make a defence to the people, they could only prevent it by keeping up the cry for two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." I think this was done as an escape from the dilemma they had placed themselves in. It is the common lot of those who seek to stop the Gospel that they but open up the way for its spread; especially is this so when there is an attempt to organize the opposition, and make a direct attack upon the citadel of truth. Those leaders saw too late that they had all the people together, and now for Alexander to make a defence, and then, perhaps, Paul, they would see a majority of the assembly turn to the Lord, and thus realize that they had but added fuel to the flames they had desired to extinguish; therefore they must have been pretty well satisfied when the town clerk "dismissed the assembly."

II. After these things Paul had an interview with the disciples, and took his final departure from Ephesus. (a) It appears that Paul was in Ephesus about three months on his first visit mentioned in Acts xviii. 19. (b) That on his return, some time, perhaps three months, passed before he began the bold speaking in the synagogue, which continued three months, making six months after his return before they left the synagogue for the school-room of Tyrannus, where they spent two years; and he was detained, perhaps three months, by the actions of Demetrius and his craftsmen; this equals the three years mentioned in Acts xx. 31. In view of the gigantic work accomplished, not only in establishing the church in Ephesus, but throughout Asia, amidst such opposition, it is not strange to hear the apostle afterward say that he "warned them night and day," and that his struggles with the opposition was a "fight with beasts." See I Cor. xv. 32.

III. On leaving Ephesus the apostle made a rapid journey into Macedonia and Greece, and thence began another journey to the city of Jerusalem; and desiring to be

there on Pentecost he must sail by Ephesus. "He sent from Miletus to Ephesus and called the elders of the church." This was truly an affecting and also an affectionate meeting and parting, sorrowful because it is the last on earth and because of the trials before; but joyous because of the recollections of bygone days and the tender association and friendship thus formed are akin to those which angels bear to each other. The church is no longer to have the presence of the Great Apostle. They have before nestled under him as their leader in the race of a Christian life; they have heard his inspired counsel and seen the Lord's confirmations of his mission and message; they are the fruit of his labors—from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. They are thus translated by the words of truth, the Gospel of their salvation. Men were then, as now, made Christians by the Gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Like the Corinthians, they believed it, and, standing in it, they are to be saved by it, if they keep in memory the apostle's doctrine, &c. The apostle recounts the past to remind these elders of his own faithfulness among them; how perfectly he had taught them from house to house in word and deed; that he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God; therefore they are to take heed to themselves and the flock; to feed it—the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. The days of trials and persecutions were not over. There are other battles to fight and victories to win. There are enemies to guard against, not only without but they are to be within, even in the eldership itself, shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them; therefore, watch. This is truly a new trial, one they were a stranger to. The opposition of the hardened Jews and Demetrius and his craftsmen, are tame compared with the grievous wolves that are to enter in and rise up in the church. Opposition from without sharpens the zeal of a church and causes them to stand closer to God and to each other, but when it gets in among the members and officers it is a poison that tries the souls of the stoniest, taxing to the utmost the wisdom, faith and patience of the most faithful. But the apostle did not fail to remind them of his