

## REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES.

**PRESBYTERY OF GUELPH.**—The first business of the Presbytery at their meeting on Tuesday, after making up the roll and reading the minutes of previous meetings, was to examine the statistical returns of congregations in the bounds. In connection with this a valuable paper was read by Mr. McDonald, showing what each one had done in the way of contributions to the different schemes of the Church, and for the support of the Gospel within itself. Attention was also called to the case of those who had not contributed to any or all of the schemes, and the Clerk was instructed to write them on the subject. Mr. McDonald's papers were ordered to be printed, so that a copy might be placed in each family. Mr. Cameron reported from the Committee appointed to arrange for holding a S.S. Conference, recommending that it be held in Knox Church, Acton, on the second Tuesday of January, beginning in the evening, and gave a programme of proceedings, and a list of questions to be sent to Sabbath Schools for the purpose of collecting statistical information. The report was adopted. The Clerk brought up the state of the Synod Fund, and read over the names of congregations that had not paid in to it. A scheme of Missionary sermons and meetings was submitted and approved. The German Mission Committee gave in their report recommending the discontinuance of that mission after the middle of January next, and that congregations be requested to contribute for the discharge of the liabilities it has incurred. The special committee on the arrangements of difficulties existing in the German congregation at New Hamburg and on the times of service by the German and English congregations in Preston, was read and approved. Mr. Charles Davidson reported from the Committee appointed to look after certain church property in Puslinch, stating the steps taken since its last meeting for its security to the Church. Mr. Campbell called the attention of the Presbytery to the action of the Presbytery of Toronto, as reported in the "Globe" of the 7th November, in proceeding to organize a congregation at Ballinafad, and the Clerk was instructed to correspond with that Presbytery on the matter. A circular on Sabbath School work was referred to the Committee on Arrangements, for holding the usual annual Presbyterian Sabbath School Conference. A very long time was spent over petitions from the congregation of St. John's Church, Garafraxa, resulting in the appointment of a Presbyterian visitation of that congregation, to be held on the first Monday of December, beginning at two o'clock in the afternoon. An application was read from parties at Drayton, asking that a preaching station be opened there, and promising a certain sum towards payment of expenses. The Clerk was authorized to write to the Sessions of congregations likely to be affected by granting the application. The next regular meeting was appointed to be held in Knox Church, Acton, on the second Tuesday of January, at ten o'clock, forenoon.

GOD reveals himself in the Moral Law. It needed no voice from the rolling darkness, it needed no articulate thunder leaping among the fiery hills, to persuade mankind that "God spake these words and said." For that law was written on their hearts, their conscience also bearing them witness. The Jews believe that the souls of all Jews, for generations yet unborn, were summoned from their antenatal home to hear the deliverance of the Fiery Law; and when a Jew is charged with wrong by another, he says, "My soul too has been on Sinai." But it is not the souls of Jews only, but of all mankind who have been there. It is there that they learned that *autodikaion* which is unchangeable but by the Will of God. Nay, not there, but long before the volcanic forces upheaved from the bases of the world those granite crags, whenever first the dead clay began to flush and breathe with the unconsuming fire, then and there were learned these eternal distinctions of right and wrong. "In highest heaven they had their birth, neither did the mortal race of men beget them, nor shall oblivion ever put them to sleep; the power of God is mighty in them, and groweth not old." The great philosopher of Germany might well doubt of all things, till he had found that their certitude rested on the indestructible basis of duty. If all else were shattered under our feet, that would still remain. False miracles themselves could not rob us of it. As in that grand legend of the Talmud, the tree might at the words of the doubter be transplanted from its roots; the rivulet might flow backward to its source; the walls and pillars of the concave might crack; yea, a voice from heaven itself might preach another Law, yet neither rushing tree, nor backward flowing waters, nor bending roofs, nor miracles, nor mysterious voices should prevail against our solid and indestructible conviction, and the Eternal Himself should approve our constancy and exclaim from the mid glory of His throne, "My sons have triumphed."

## SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER.

## INTERNATIONAL LESSONS.

## LESSON I.

Dec. 16,  
1877.

PAUL AT ROME.

{ Acts xxviii.  
16-31.

**GOLDEN TEXT:**—"I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."—Rom. i. 15, 16.

## HOME STUDIES.

- M. Acts. xxviii. 11-13. The gospel in Rome.  
T. Phil. i. 11-14. The furtherance of the gospel.  
W. Philem. 1-25. Paul in old age.  
Th. Eph. vi. 10-24. An ambassador in bonds.  
F. Col. iv. 1-8. Sympathy in bonds.  
S. Phil. ii. 19-30. Lack of service supplied.  
S. Phil. iv. 10-23. All things through Christ.

## HELPS TO STUDY.

At the end of three months the early spring was come, (February), and the sea was smooth. The centurion hired a ship to take his whole company to the shores of Rome. The ship sailed with a fair wind to Italy, till it came to a fine harbor called Puteoli, more than one hundred miles from Rome. Here the kind Julius allowed Paul to spend seven days with his friends.

For here were found brethren. How much must the despised sect of Nazarenes have grown. The remarkable courtesy of the centurion to the apostle would seem to indicate that he must have become a Christian; for he disregards his own interests for the spiritual good of others.

They now set out on their overland journey by the famous Appian way, "the queen of roads," to great Rome. (Note 1.) On the way two delegations of brethren met him, one at Appii Forum, forty-three miles from Rome; and the other at The Three Taverns, thirty-three miles from Rome. They brought great comfort to the apostle, who thanked God and took courage. It was not that his hardships were over, but that he could more resolutely face them.

What power and blessing abide in real Christian friendship and sympathy.

On their arrival at Rome the prisoners were delivered up to the captain of the guard, that is the prefect of the pretorian guards. The letter of Festus and the report of the centurion were so favourable to the apostle that he was not kept, as was usual, in the prison adjoining the pretorian camp, but was allowed to dwell by himself in his own house, with only the soldier who guarded him and to whose arm he was chained. As the soldiers relieved each other, to how many would the gospel be preached. His "bonds became manifest in all the palace," Phil. i. 13. (Note 2.) And wherever these troops went they would carry with them the glad-tidings, which were perhaps brought in this way to Britain to which reinforcements were frequently sent. There were Christians even in Cæsar's household. Phil. iv. 22.

Three days were given to rest and to greeting the brethren. Then Paul could no longer delay. He is filled with ardour to enter upon his work. He called the chief of the Jews together and made to them

## I. HIS DEFENCE: Verses 17-22.

The very fact of his being a prisoner would raise suspicions against him. Besides misrepresentations might have been made against him from Jerusalem. Hence the plea he urges, First,—That he was innocent, had done nothing against the people of the Jews. He took the same ground before the Sanhedrim and the Roman governors. Secondly,—That he had been examined and acquitted, Acts xxiii. 29, xxiv. 23, xxv. 25, xxvi. 32. Thirdly,—That he had only appealed because he was constrained to do so. He says this because naturally there would be some feeling against him for refusing to be judged by his own people. His appeal was entirely defensive. He had no charge to make against his nation. Perhaps they feared that he would, for the position of the Jews at Rome was not very secure. Fourthly,—That it was for the hope of Israel that he was in chains, and that he had sent for them, because he believed that Messiah had come.

The reply of the Jews is courteous and cautious. They had received no letters. This may appear strange. They probably meant that no official letter had reached them. Before Paul's appeal there would be no occasion to write to Rome, and afterwards there would not be time. They had heard of the sect and of the ill-name it bore; but they expressed a desire to hear more from the apostle. A day was therefore appointed when they came to his lodging and

II. HE PREACHED (Verses 23-39) Jesus unto them. He followed his usual method with the Jews, (Acts xiii. 17-41, xvii. 3.) proving from the Old Testament that Jesus was the Christ. The results too are there which in every place follow the preaching of the gospel:—Some believed, and some believed not. From verse 25 it would appear that the believing and unbelieving Jews disputed among themselves. Just before they departed St. Paul addressed to them one word of solemn expostulation. He quotes Isaiah vi. 9, 10 from the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, a passage found six times in the New Testament. See Matt. xiii. 14; Mark iv. 12; Luke viii. 10; John xii. 40; Rom. xi. 8. The cause of unbelief is here traced to an evil heart. The heart of this people is waxed gross, stupid, sensual, corrupt, and the impenitence of the Jews is here foretold.

Therefore, because ye are hardened and unrepentable, the salvation of God, Luke ii. 30, is sent unto the Gentiles.

III. Verses 30, 31, give us a brief glimpse of the apostle's work. He dwelt two whole years in his own house,

although a prisoner, preaching and teaching; no man forbidding him. His bonds would be a protection to him against the hatred of the unbelieving Jews. While in prison he wrote four epistles, those to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon; from which we glean many interesting details concerning his life at this time.

These epistles written in prison, remind us of Luther translating the Bible in the Castle of Wartburg, and of Bunyan writing the Pilgrim's Progress in Bedford jail.

In all these epistles, Paul's chains mentioned, Eph. vi. 20 (also iii. 1, iv. 1); Phil. i. 7, 13, 14, 16; Col. iv. 3; Phil. x. especially Col. iv. 18, where he writes the concluding salutation with his own hand, and, having to lift up the heavy chain to do so, begs them to "remember his bonds."

In all, his prayers mentioned, Eph. i. 16; Phil. i. 4, 9; Col. i. 3, 9; Phil. iv. 6;—though he can't go to his friends, he can get at them by a nearer way, "round by the throne of God." Especially, see Eph. iii. 14—think of him "bowing his knees" before the Lord while fastened to the heathen soldier at his side!

In all, his messengers mentioned: though could not go himself, could send faithful helpers, Tychicus (Eph. vi. 21, 22; Col. iv. 7), Timothy (Phil. ii. 19), Epaphroditus (Phil. ii. 25).

He had troubles also in prison.

Surely, most annoying for an active traveller like Paul to be confined for two years—and that chain always painful. Then the anxiety about his approaching trial—what would come of it (Phil. ii. 23)—whether the cruel Nero would kill him.

Two particular troubles are mentioned. The ill-will of those who preached Christ out of envy and strife and sought thus to add affliction to his bonds, Phil. i. 14, 18. The illness of Epaphroditus, Phil. ii. 25, 27.

But he had comforts too.

For "the God of all comfort" was with him, 2 Cor. i.

3, 4.

He had comfort in the success of his labours, and even in the ill-wills of his opponents, because they preached Christ; and Epaphroditus was spared, besides he had faithful friends with him, see Col. iv. 10-14: Aristarchus, who had been with him in many dangers (Acts. xix. 29, xxvii. 2); Mark, who had once failed him (Acts xv. 37), but was now "profitable" (2 Tim. iv. 11); Luke "the beloved Physician"; etc.—these, says he, "a comfort to me," ver. 11.

Gifts from his old friends at Philippi, Phil. iv. 18. Poor as they were (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2), always generous (Phil. iv. 15, 16).

Goodness of other Churches, Eph. i. 15, 16; Col. i. 3, 4; ii. 5; Phil. iv. 5.

Let us thank God for all the encouragements and consultations He sends us, Ps. v. 11, xxxiii. 21. Nothing can justify unbelief, Phil. iv. 4; John iii. 18; viii. 12; xii. 48.

There are no circumstances where a Christian cannot work and testify for his Master.

Let us take Paul for an example, Phil. iii. 17. Never weary of well-doing, never miss an opportunity of doing good.

## SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

Paul's entrance into Rome—how met—how received—how kept—how detained—how employed—the Jews' reception of him—the result—his final word—their dismissal—his continued labors—where—of what kind—his perfect freedom—the condition of the city—importance—unity of his life and labors, and the lesson we may learn from the review of the history here closed.

## EXPLANATORY NOTES.

**ROME.**—Within a circuit of little more than twelve miles more than two millions of inhabitants were crowded. It is evident that this fact is only explicable by the narrowness of the streets, with that peculiarity of the houses which has been alluded to above. In this prodigious collection of human beings, there were of course all the contrasts which are seen in a modern city,—all the painful lines of separation between luxury and squalor, wealth and want. But in Rome all these differences were on an exaggerated scale, and the institution of slavery modified further all social relations. The free citizens were more than a million; of these, the senators were so few in number as to be hardly appreciable; the knights, who filled a great proportion of the public offices, were not more than 10,000; the troops quartered in the city may be reckoned 15,000; the rest were the *plebs urbana*. That a vast number of these would be poor is an obvious result of the most ordinary causes. But in ancient Rome the luxury of the wealthier classes did not produce a general diffusion of trade, as it does in a modern city. The handi-craft employments, and many of what we should call professions, were in the hands of slaves; and the consequence was that a vast proportion of the *plebs urbana* lived on public and private charity. Yet were these pauper citizens proud of their citizenship, though many of them had no better sleeping-place for the night than the public porticoes or the vestibules of temples. They cared for nothing beyond bread for the day, the games of the circus, and the savage delight of gladiatorial shows; manufactures and trade they regarded as the business of the slave and the foreigner. The number of slaves was perhaps about a million. The number of strangers or *peregrini* was much smaller; but it is impossible to describe their varieties. Every kind of nationality and religion found its representative in Rome.

2. It is believed by the best writers (though not without some difference of opinion) that an allusion in Phil. i. 13 reveals the place to which St. Paul was taken in Rome. "Palace" in that verse should be "Pretorium," and which is thought to mean the head-quarters of the Pretorian Guards, the picked troops in attendance on the emperor. This was attached to the imperial palace on the Palatine Mount. The "hired house" which St. Paul occupied (ver. 30) is supposed to have been within the precincts of the barracks—in fact to have been part of them, but affording exceptional privacy and comfort; for he was still a prisoner, always chained to a soldier.