

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE OLIVE TREES. Rom xi.

(Continued.)

Paul's evident design in writing to his beloved brethren in Rome, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles, was to unite both harmoniously in Christ. He was anxious to visit them and preach among them the Gospel of Christ—which was the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. He addresses the Jews first, showing how far the Gentile world had wandered from God and how deeply they had sunk in carnality and crime. He next shows how the Jews had abused their superior privileges so far as to cause the name of God to be blasphemed among the Gentiles, and that God had concluded all in unbelief that He might have mercy on all. He makes it plain, that even a son of Abraham could only be justified before God by faith in Christ, and as the stream can rise no higher than its head he could not be justified by his fleshly relation to Abraham, who, like other sinners, was justified by faith. Having no merited righteousness himself it was impossible for him to communicate it to his children. The children of Abraham being sinners could be justified by faith in the Son of God, who died for all sinners, and in the same way could Gentile sinners be justified,—though not of the fleshly seed of Abraham. He exhorts his Jewish brethren to receive Gentile believers in the same loving spirit in which Jesus receives all believers without any previous merit, which none possess.

While thus showing that both Jews and Gentiles were guilty before God, he is careful to maintain the distinction between Jews and other nations and asks and answers the following: "What advantage then hath the Jew? and what profit is there in circumcision? MUCH EVERY WAY, CHIEFLY BECAUSE UNTO THEM WERE COMMITTED THE ORACLES OF GOD. Chap. iii. 1-2 This answer forms a complete wall around Jewish privileges. Their advantage was much every way but not enough to save them from sin. Their chief advantage was they had in keeping the oracles of God. God did not give His word or ordinances to the Gentiles, sent no prophets among them, but suffered all nations to walk in their own ways, though He did good and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, etc. Acts xiv. 16. In the Old Testament the distinction between the Jews and Gentiles is most emphatic, one called the people, the other the heathen. When Jesus came into the world He came unto His own (people), but His own received Him not. While on earth He sent the twelve and the seventy to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Even after His own had crucified Him, and when ascending to His Father and sending His Gospel to be preached unto all nations, He charged His Apostles to begin at Jerusalem, and the Jews had the Gospel preached to them eight or ten years before it was preached unto the Gentiles. God still favored the Jews after they had crucified His Son, and not until they had personally put the Gospel from them and judged themselves unworthy of eternal life were they broken off from their exalted privileges. Acts xiii. 46.

In the ninth chapter Paul expresses his deep anguish of heart at the cutting off of his brethren after enjoying so many advantages. To them pertained "the adoption and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever." The Jews enjoyed

the above named privileges to enable them to rise still higher, and when Christ, their brother according to the flesh, came to them to give them the power to become sons of God they received Him not, and the mass of the nation were broken off from those privileges, and others who did receive Him enjoyed them. The Jews who received Jesus held their former privileges and also became sons of God, and the Gentiles who received Him came in among them and with them became the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

In the tenth chapter Paul declares that it was his heart's desire and prayer to God that Israel might be saved. They were not an uncultivated or irreligious people but had a zeal of God. Their grand mistake was in rejecting Christ, God's righteousness, and in going about to establish their own, and were in consequence provoked to jealousy by them that were not a people, etc. (Verse 19)

As he was laboring to unite believing Jews and Gentiles in Christ, he showed the Jew how God had saved the less favored Gentile by the death of His dear Son and cut off the Jew who despised His goodness and long suffering and forbearance, and exhorted him to humility and entire reliance on Christ who had died for both Jew and Greek and pardoned each on the same terms. He knew that when this was understood by the saved Jew his hostile feelings to the Gentile would be destroyed, and he would receive him as a beloved brother even as Christ had received both of them to the Glory of God. Having therefore addressed the Jew the Apostle turns, before concluding the argument in the eleventh chapter, and addresses his Gentile brother, warning him against high mindedness and the vain conceit that God had cut off the Jew that he might be grafted in. To rebuke a feeling so natural to all he informs him that all Israel was not cut off; also, that there was a promise that Israel would yet be saved, and shows him that it was Christ-like to rejoice over the salvation of others rather than over the fall of any, giving him many reasons for thinking favorably of the Jew and being humble when thinking of the Gentile.

This brings us to the olive trees, which seem very clearly to represent THE TWO STATES; one the favored and cultivated state of the Jew, the other the neglected, uncultivated state of the Gentile. By this we understand that the trunk of the good olive tree does not stand for the church nor for Abraham, but for the state of favor in which God placed the Jews. And the trunk of the wild olive tree to represent the state of the heathen world. The Jews were God's favored people till they rejected Christ. They were then broken off as branches, lost their privileges and God's favor. The remaining Jews who received Christ remained as branches in the divine favor and enjoyed the enlarged blessings of the Gospel of Christ. The Gentiles, who were branches of the wild olive tree, when they heard the Gospel of their salvation and believed and obeyed the Son of God, were grafted in among the believing Jews and with them were made partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. This grafting was contrary to nature by the Holy Spirit through the Gospel, so that those who were by nature the children of wrath became the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

In the last editorial we recommended the reader to carefully study Paul's argument, beginning in the first chapter and closing in the eleventh. In this we do the same. He begins by showing the uncultivated and wild state of the heathen world and the highly favored, though by them abused, state of the Jews. He keeps these two states before the reader throughout the entire argument and closes it with the two olive trees. The word *holy* in the Scriptures describes one of two qualities. 1st. Moral purity. 2nd. Consecration or setting apart for Divine use. It is in the latter sense we understand it used in the sixteenth verse. We

take the *root* to mean Abraham, the *trunk* to mean the favor shown to his children, and the Jews to be the *branches* of the good olive tree. Each and all of these were consecrated for divine use. It was a purpose in the mind of God to bless the world by the gift of His Son, and the olive tree was set apart for the accomplishment of that purpose. Abraham was set apart from the rest of mankind to be the head of a nation and the progenitor of the Messiah, and that nation was separated from all other nations that through it Christ should come. The favor shown to the nation was not alone for its own benefit but was a consecrated channel through which God, in the fulness of time, would send forth streams of salvation from the cross to all the families of the earth.

But space admonishes us to close, feeling that these remarks are but suggestive and only touch a theme which drew from the Apostle the exclamation: "O, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God!" etc., etc. From Verse 33 to 36. Wonder if it will not be one of the sweet intellectual feasts of eternity to talk with Paul over his letter to the beloved of God in Rome!

Original Contributions.

MISSIONARY.

I have read with interest the articles that have appeared in THE CHRISTIAN for the last few months, and feel confident that enough has been said to convince anyone that it is beyond question the duty of every Christian to contribute of their means, as the Lord has prospered them, to aid in spreading the Gospel before the people. This no one will deny. But our convictions will only add to our condemnation unless they prompt us to deeds in harmony therewith. I am persuaded that it is, not *knowledge of duty* the brethren need so much as to be inspired to *do our duty* as we are able. It is admitted by every one professing to be a child of God that it is our duty to give of our means to help support the work of the Lord. I have never yet heard this questioned. I have heard many objections raised against giving for certain purposes; but the principle of giving for the support of the work of the Lord is not in dispute.

This being true, why is it that so little is being done in our general mission work? As already stated, it is not for want of knowledge. Nor is it for lack of ability; for, go where you may, over these provinces, you will find the circumstances of the brethren improving. While you will not see the signs of wealth, you will see comfort on every hand. Why, then, is there not more being done towards spreading the Gospel and building up the kingdom of Christ, both at home and abroad? The only way I can account for this is by the cold indifference of so many of the professed children of God. The brethren are not alive to the importance of this work, and will not stand guiltless before God unless we arouse from our lethargy and come up to the help of the Lord in this, the grandest of all works—the salvation of precious souls.

That the scriptures to which my brethren have referred us, in the articles written from time to time, make it plain that it is our duty to give, is evident to every careful reader. To this it may be added that the success of the work, both at home and abroad, depends largely upon the brethren doing their duty in this particular. Look, for instance, at the word of God, as written in Malachi iii. 8-12: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee?" The answer is: "In tithes and offerings." Now, let us not take the force all out of this scripture by spiritualizing it, and make the tithes and offerings mean our fine little speeches in meeting