

ent character for which he was always remarkable. When he took his degree of *Rab* he had a mind of his own, and by the time he received his diploma as a *Rabbi* he was a champion of orthodoxy; but so far from having imbibed the conciliatory spirit of Gamaliel, he allowed his mind to be warped by a bitter intolerance of any opinion contrary to his own. He became a bigoted sectarian, and allowed this unhappy temperament to gain complete ascendancy over him.

When first introduced to us, Saul was aiding and abetting the murder of Stephen, Acts 7:58; 23:20. This foul deed whetted his keen relish for persecution, yet we may be sure it left a sting behind. He could not have listened to the martyr's prayer without feeling qualms of conscience that would rankle in his bosom for many a day. The name *Saul*, that he received at his birth, meaning "desired," has given rise to the conjecture that he was the first-born of his parents. In Acts 13:9, he is for the first time called PAUL. From the way in which it is mentioned, it may almost be inferred that he had originally a double name, the one Hebrew and the other Latin, and it was natural that when he came to labour among the Gentiles he dropped the former and used the latter. In conformity with Jewish custom, Paul was taught a trade, that of a tentmaker, and many a spare hour he worked at it, that he might not be "chargeable" to any one for his means of living, 2 Cor. 11:9. When he was at Corinth, he took up his abode with a Jewish family, "of the same craft," and wrought with them at his trade, rather than sponge on their hospitality.

How long he remained in Jerusalem after completing his education is not known. Some aver that he was admitted to the Sanhedrim: if so, he must have been a married man, as none but the fathers of children were admitted to that dignity. Was Paul then a widower? It is difficult to come to that conclusion in the light of what he says in 1 Cor. 7:8, but he claimed for himself the *right* to marry, 1 Cor. 9:5, and as a rule, he considered it the correct thing for both ministers and deacons to marry, 1 Tim. 3:2, 12.

We need not dwell at any great length on the story of Saul's conversion, of which we have three distinct accounts in the

Acts, the first by Luke the historian, ch. 9:3-19: the others by Paul himself, in his addresses at Jerusalem, and before Agrippa at Cesarea, chs. 22:6-16; 26:12-20. The martyrdom of Stephen was the signal for lighting the fires of persecution all over the country, and for the Christians to flee from Jerusalem and seek an asylum elsewhere. Saul had been a chief instrument in inflicting torture and imprisonment on the avowed or suspected believers. He gloried in it, and when none were left in Jerusalem, his eagerness to complete their extinction led him to follow these heretics, as he accounted them, to their lurking places. Armed with a duly certified commission from the Sanhedrim, and "breathing out threatening and slaughter," he set out on a raid to the old city of Damascus, some 300 miles north of Jerusalem. While crossing the plain to the south of that city, about noon, his mad career was suddenly arrested by a power to which he had hitherto been a stranger. The sudden blaze of light; the mysterious voice from heaven; himself thrown on the ground and struck blind; his companions dumbfounded; the voice which Saul alone heard, and the glorious Person whom he alone saw, 1 Cor. 9:1, are cited to attest the reality of the manifestation, and as affording sufficient evidence that his conversion was not due to human instrumentality. It was a miraculous interposition and call to the work of the ministry. His three days suspense; then the coming of Ananias as the Lord's messenger; the restoration of his sight and senses; his baptism and his eagerness "to preach Christ," are further leading features in the narrative so graphically detailed by Luke. It had been said of his namesake, long before,— "Is Saul also among the prophets?" With equal amazement now the news spread in and around Damascus that the dreaded foe of Christianity was now its foremost champion!

The events which immediately followed Saul's conversion are not related in chronological order in the Acts. One might suppose that before leaving Damascus, an attempt was made on his life by the Jews, ch. 9:23, but if we turn to Gal. 1:17-18, we find that previous to that attack he went from Damascus "into Arabia," and at the end of three years, came to Jerusalem. Into what part of Arabia did he go? Possibly