

v. 17 and 20; 2 Cor. ix. 8, etc.). We may believe that this oft-recurring idea of victorious abundance is an echo of Christ's saying in the Gospel of John (ix. 10), 'that they might have life, and have it more abundantly.' In all these texts, the Greek root is the same: *Περισσεύω*, to be over and above, to be enormous, to have a surplus, to run over the edges all round. The exact image here seems to be that of an ever-advancing tide, of which each wave outruns and buries the preceding: overflow surpassing outflow, and surrounding all previous rounds. Grace superabounding—abounding over what? The right answer seems to be, over sin, over our needs, over our widest conceptions, even over its past self; grace outracing itself in the hearts and lives of men. Language halts far beneath the conception, and the conception lies far beneath the reality. For what can you say of the infinite but that it is infinite? The very word implies that it is without *fines* or bounds, and that you cannot therefore *define* or measure it. Michael Angelo's criticism of works of art was *Amplius*: he ever wished something greater than the greatest he saw. *Amplius* is the apostle's idea as he reviews his utmost efforts to display the generosity of grace.

Even reason teaches us to expect immense magnificence of conception in a revelation from God. The doctrine of grace fully satisfies that just expectation.

When both sides of 'sovereign grace' are fairly presented, it is found that the doctrine of grace practically unites all evangelical Christians. Some of them have keenly opposed Calvinism because it seemed that many controversial Calvinists failed to do justice to the fulness and freeness of God's grace. Devout Arminians, when relieved from their honourable anxiety on that score—when persuaded that Calvinists erect a palisade around the fold, but not a barricade across the door—are usually ready to admit the truth contained in the phrase, 'the sovereignty of God.' They certainly admit it in their prayers and hymns, and in all their noblest moods. A Calvinist preaching on the mysteries of election, God's decrees, and the perseverance of the saints, could not do better than close with Charles Wesley's hymn—

He wills that I should holy be:
Who can withstand His will?
The counsel of His grace in me
He surely shall fulfil.

Stoicheiolatry.

GALATIANS IV. 1-10.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM KEAN, B.D., ST. PETERSBURG.

'THAT the *στοιχεῖα* have no reference to Gentile idolatry is quite clear, for ver. 10 describes unmistakably the Jewish economy to which the Galatians had turned back.' So Olshausen. But he is put to great straits in his endeavours to expound the *τοῦ κόσμου* of ver. 3; and he makes no attempt to expound on the Judaizing theory, the 'serving of those who in their nature are not gods' of ver. 8.

The Fathers mostly took *στοιχεῖα* as meaning the elements of nature, in which sense it occurs in Heb. v. 12, and as therefore referring to Gentile idolatry, the worship of nature and its elements. But this view taken as exclusive, forces us to do as most modern commentators have done, to regard the apostle as turning to, and addressing, according as his argument leads him, each of the

three classes separately into which the members of the Galatian churches were divided: Israelites, Gentile proselytes, and Gentiles converted directly from heathenism.

But in a passage which has no distinctive forms of address, one would prefer to think that the apostle was addressing his readers *en bloc*. From this point of view let us try to realise the state of things against which the apostle contended, and the nature of his argument.

Among the members of the Galatian churches there were no doubt pure Israelites. There were no doubt Gentiles also, some of them Jewish proselytes, and some of them converts direct from heathenism. The Gentiles most probably far outnumbered the true Israelites, and the latter

class of Gentiles may quite possibly have been as numerous as the former. The Judaisers came among these Christian communities, opponents of the apostleship of Paul, misrepresenting him, and introducing into Christianity Jewish rites and ceremonies. Their first endeavours would be made, and their first successes realised, among their brethren in race; and the movement would next spread among those of the Gentiles who had passed through a phase of Judaism before coming to Christ. And what would be the effect of this movement on those who had come straight from heathenism to Christianity? Its natural effect would be to make them reason thus: 'If the rites and ceremonies of the Jews can be taken over into Christianity, why should not the rites and ceremonies of our heathenism be similarly taken over?' It would only be in accordance with human nature that this kind of reasoning should be adopted, that the introduction into Christianity of rites that belonged to the pre-Christian practice of one part of the community would be made the occasion of similar conduct on the part of the remaining section of the community. And this latter movement, beginning among the Gentiles who had come direct from heathenism to Christianity would naturally extend to those Gentiles who had become Jewish proselytes.

The general result would be that the Galatian churches were departing from the purity of Christianity, and that by the introduction into it of elements from their pre-Christian beliefs and practices, whether Jewish or heathen, the heathenising of Christianity finding occasion in the Judaising of it.

Now, in the first three chapters of the Epistle St. Paul defends himself against misrepresentations, —the weapons used by the Judaisers to hurt his work,—and then he states generally the relation of the Mosaic dispensation to Christianity, the matter which, as interpreted by the Judaisers, was the cause of the whole of the bad business in Galatia. In chap. iv. he proceeds to speak to the question of the actual state of things in the Galatian churches. The word he uses as descriptive of the thing against which he has to contend is *στοιχείον*. We were once subject to the *στοιχεία*, he says, let us not make ourselves subject to them again. What then are they? To get an answer, we ask not the philosopher, nor the physicist, nor the Jew, but the heathen. And most probably we may hold

that the modern use of the word is illustrative of its popular acceptance in ancient times.

In the popular belief of the modern Greeks a *Stoicheion* is everywhere. The mountain top has its *Stoicheion*, and the grove and the fountain. The tree has its *Stoicheion*; and the woodcutter, when the tree is about to fall, lies flat on the ground praying silently, for the wrath of the *Stoicheion* is great at being evicted from its dwelling-place, and the man must not by any noise attract the attention of the *Stoicheion* as it issues from the tree at the moment of falling. Every parcel of ground has its *Stoicheion*, and if a house is to be built upon it safely, so as to stand and so that human life be not endangered, the *Stoicheion* must be pacified by the killing of a lamb upon the site of the house with a priest presiding at the sacrifice and making prayers to God. And I have seen in the cities of Egypt, at the building of a house for a Greek, the Arab masons smearing their hands and faces with the blood of the victim, for they, too, believe in the *Stoicheia*, and think that by the blood they preserve themselves from the vengeance which the *Stoicheion* that they are daily disturbing may seek to obtain.

In accordance with these illustrations we may form our conception of the meaning of *Stoicheion*. Those of the Galatians who had been idolaters, all of them, except the comparatively few genuine Jews, would understand it. It referred to the rites and the ceremonies of the nature-worship to which they had been addicted. And the apostle, in his argument on this subject, puts Judaism on the same level as idolatry, and includes both under the same condemnation. To those that know God, or rather are known of God, there is to be no re-adoption of the rites and ceremonies of pre-Christian practice, whether Jewish or heathen.

When we were infants we were in subjection to the *στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου*. That is, we all, whether Jews or Gentiles, were in subjection to the processes, practices, rites, having their seat and their manifestation in this sinful world, which were made to have a religious significance. The same description is applied both to Judaism and to heathenism. To the apostle, at his standpoint in Christ, circumcision, purification, new moons, etc., are just on the same level as the worship of the spirits of trees and fountains. But both Jewish and heathenish elements had in their own time their place and function, they both contributed to

the realisation of the fulness of time. In their time it could only be that we would be subject to them. But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born subject to law, that is, subject to the law of the race to which He belonged, subject to Judaism, that He might redeem those that were subject to law, that is, both Jews and Gentiles, the one subject to Judaism, the other to heathenism, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons (by God's making), God sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, and so you recognise your sonship, for that spirit in you cries 'Father.' Thus, then, any one of you to whom God has done this, is no longer a slave in subjection, but a son, free; and if a son, an heir also of God through Christ. Well, then, when ye did not know God, ye were in subjection to things that were not in their nature divine, whether nature-deities on the one hand, or, on the other, the religious observance of circumcision, feast days, etc.; but now when ye know God, or rather, when ye have been acknowledged by God, how turn ye again to the weak and poverty-stricken *στοιχεία*, whether of Judaism or heathenism, eager to put yourselves again into subjection to them? How do you observe days and months and seasons and years?—the feast times, either of Judaism or heathenism.

Stoicheiolatry consists in taking things which belong to the *κόσμος*, to the world which by nature knows not God, and in giving them a place in religious faith and practice. This is evident in the case of heathenism—the finding of a deity in

trees places and men, is stoicheiolatry plain and palpable. It is not so evident at the first blush in the case of Judaism; but still it is not difficult to see that the introduction into Christianity of Jewish rites, and the making of them to be matters of Christian faith and practice, might well be stigmatised as stoicheiolatry. The apostle uttered no weightier condemnation of Judaism, as Judaism must be now that Christ has come, than in this Epistle to Galatians, in which he finds that to the Christian Judaism is stoicheiolatry, just as heathenism is.

To discuss the question of stoicheiolatry in modern Christianity would take us beyond the scope of the present article, which is only meant to be expository of the passage quoted from the Epistle to the Galatians. But the subject is of living interest. The illustrations given above show that stoicheiolatry has not yet departed from the Greek Church; the carnival, as equivalent to the Saturnalia of the Romans, might be taken as a striking example of it in the Church of Rome; and as to Protestantism, what shall we say? For instance, is it stoicheiolatry to observe the 'Christian year?' to observe the Lord's day as if it were the Jewish Sabbath? Is a Church given to stoicheiolatry when it strives to attain worldly ends, or when it adopts worldly methods for the furtherance of spiritual ends? Is it stoicheiolatry that a Church should be a business concern? In short, are we not in many ways still subject to the *στοιχεία τοῦ κόσμου*, which we have taken from the *κόσμος*, and introduced everywhere into our Christian faith and practice.

At the Literary Table.

THE BOOKS OF THE MONTH.

THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF NONCONFORMITY.

By EDWARD CAREY PIKE, B.A. (*Bible Christian Bookroom*. Crown 8vo, pp. 135.)

To see ourselves as others see us is good. It is also good to see others as they see themselves. Here is an earnest Nonconformist's opinion of himself and his. It were good if Conformists would read it carefully. What *has* he to say about himself and his. This is a central paragraph:

'It is no question of the correctness of Nonconformist opinions. Men who have separated from the Church may have no more immunity from error than the Church from which they separated. In some instances the mistakes, the extravagances, the illusions seem plain enough to thoughtful observers. That is not the point. *The separatists are responsible individually to God for their actions.*'