Disraeli's principle: "I prefer," said Lord Beaconsfield, "men's company to that of women in general; but a first-rate woman I prefer to a first-rate man any day."

4. One such first-rate woman had early appeared to claim Gibbon's hand. But Gibbon's heartless selfishness preferred his library of six or seven thousand volumes, which he called his seraglio (E). Yet he was always in the toils; and to the last he seemed to regret the loss of married life. With his first love, who became the wife of the celebrated M. Necker, he still corresponded with affectionate familiarity. Few more thoroughly understood or praised with more discernment his learned genius; and from few (not excepting Porson himself) did his reflections on Christianity receive more unsparing rebuke. "Pourquoi," she asks, "l'homme de génie, qui fait son dieu de la gloire et qui croit vivre éternellement dans son sein, veut-il ôter la même espérance à ceux qui mettent leur vertue à la place de cette gloire?" (*Misc. Wks.*, ii., 179).

But of that immortal history, and of that not less immortal attack upon the Christian revelation, it was not ours here to have spoken. We hope to assume that grateful task at a later opportunity.

Was St. Paul Right in taking his Last Journey to Jerusalem?

By the Rev. Canon KELK, M.A.

WE are so accustomed to look upon St. Paul as being almost always infallible, that this question seems almost an impertinence. And at the least it might be looked upon as dragging him down from the high pedestal on which, by general consent of Christians, he has been placed. But we have to remember that the only really infallible One is the Lord Jesus Christ, and that it was certainly within the bounds of possibility that St. Paul should mistake his own earnest desire and determination for the guidance of the Holy Ghost. We

know how easy it is for us to persuade ourselves that what we most ardently wish is put into our minds by the Holy Spirit, and that we are following God's own leading, when we are in reality only permitted to work out that which we have made up our minds that we will do, and we only find out our error when our self-will has brought us into trouble or landed us in some difficulty. And though we believe St. Paul to be one who, perhaps more than any other man, subordinated his will to that of God, yet we must acknowledge that it was possible for him to be so set upon a particular line of action that he was fully persuaded that he was really working out the will of God in following that. This consideration does not affect the question of the inspiration of St. Paul's writings, because this is a matter of personal interest for which he would suffer in his own person, and it might be overruled for good; but the writings are for the guidance and blessing of the Church in all ages, and therefore a mistake would be of vital importance. We must believe that, while the Holy Spirit guides every believer, yet it is possible that self-will may work in such and to some extent frustrate the purposes of God; but when it comes to a revelation or direction for the whole Church, that self-will is not allowed to work because of the consequences. For while we may not speak of inspiration as making the inspired lose his own personality as to style of writing and choice of words, yet we must believe that the guidance is such as to keep the writer to the truth, though it may not always be stated in the clearest manner. The truth must be there even if it require great care on the part of the reader to discover the exact meaning; otherwise we can have no authoritative declaration of the mind of the Spirit. A mistake in a man's own life is of great importance, and must affect his character and his growth, and in many cases his usefulness, and will be the cause of some "loving correction" which will be given to put him right; but a mistake in the writings which are for all believers in all ages may lead many persons wrong, and has therefore been carefully guarded against, so that we may confidently trust in the correctness of the Holy Scriptures.

The answer to the question that is asked at the head of this paper depends to a very great extent upon the meaning assigned to certain expressions in the portions of the Acts of the Apostles which lead up to the arrival in Jerusalem. The first of these is Acts xix. 21, where we are told that "after these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Now, we are perfectly well aware that St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians about this very journey, and of his being "minded to come unto them," adds, "When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?" Certainly St. Paul did not consciously go against the will of God, but may he not have been mistaken? For in the passage just quoted, while we have "Paul purposed in the spirit," we have even stronger expressions on the other side. And in this passage it is to be noted that in both the Authorized and Revised Versions we have "spirit" spelt with a small *s*, showing that the Greek, ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, may refer to St. Paul's own spirit, and not to the Holy Spirit, while in the other passages that I shall refer to the capital *S* is used. It would, therefore, appear that the purpose of St. Paul was not, necessarily from the words used, inspired by the Holy Spirit, but that he had made up his own mind that he would go on this occasion to Jerusalem.

There seems to have been some delay in making the start on this journey, for he was turned back through Macedonia by "the lying in wait of the Jews as he was about to sail into Syria." Might not this, as on some other occasions, have made St. Paul think that the Holy Spirit was blocking his way, so as to turn him from his purpose? But the first notice of opposition comes from St. Paul himself in his address to the elders of Ephesus, where he says (Acts xx. 22): "And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit" (again a small *s*) "unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the

Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." Then follows that which, supposing him to be really under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, is the noble resolve of a noble mind, but which, if he is following his own will, is simply a determination, still noble, not to be turned aside from his purpose by any personal dangers or sufferings.

But we pass on to chap. xxi. 4, where we are told that the disciples at Tyre "said to Paul through the Spirit" (now capital *S*) "that he should not go up to Jerusalem." It would seem here that the expression διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος cannot mean anything else but the Holy Spirit, and we have therefore a direct prohibition of his going to Jerusalem from the Holy Ghost Himself. It is not now a warning of pains and sufferings which should prepare him for what would happen and so help him to bear it, but it is a distinct forbidding of the journey. Now, the Holy Ghost cannot contradict Himself, and therefore we must conclude that hitherto St. Paul has been led, unconsciously, by his own wishes, and by the thought that his presence in Jerusalem was of great importance.

One more effort is made to turn him aside from the carrying out of his purpose, for we read in ver. 11 that Agabus "took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Again St. Paul declares his willingness, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus. And so the opposition ceases, and St. Paul goes on to his great trouble and long season of captivity.

Now, is this view of St. Paul following his own will, in unintentional opposition to the will of God, borne out by subsequent events? It appears to be so. For what do we expect to find in holy men who in some way or other are led to follow self-will, however strongly they may be persuaded that it is God's will?

We shall usually find some deviation from high principle in some of their actions; that they are, to some extent, left to

themselves in matters which it is difficult, if not impossible, to decide by their own reason. And it seems that this is just what St. Paul was led into as soon as he came to Jerusalem, when he accepted the proposal of the elders to take the four men that had a vow upon them and be at charges with them.

It is certainly open to question whether or not it was right for St. Paul to observe these ceremonies after the great Sacrifice had been offered; but, whether right or wrong, it seems clear that he did not enter upon the work with a right motive. He did not take it up because he himself had a vow, or because it was a duty that he owed to God, but simply because it was expedient that the people should see him keeping the law. Supposing that the thing itself was right, which is very doubtful, it was not right to do it for such a purpose. And it was this that led him into all his trouble, and laid aside the most active preacher of the Gospel for four whole years.

Nor does it seem that his deviation from the highest Christian principle ends with this. For when he is brought before the council it does not look well that he should have to apologise for calling God's high-priest "a whited wall," though he did, at any rate, show his desire to do the right by his being so readily willing to apologise, and on the right grounds. But it is immediately after this that he seems to have acted upon policy rather than principle. For, perceiving that the council was formed of the two great divisions of the Jews—Pharisees and Sadducees—"he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." Now, we cannot say that this was absolutely untrue, because the question of the resurrection was undoubtedly underlying the whole; yet it is equally certain that this was not the direct matter for which he was brought before the council on that day. It was no doubt a politic movement on his part thus to ensure one half of the council being on his side, but it can hardly be said to be such a cry as our Lord would have raised. It seems rather that, having followed his own will in coming up to Jerusalem, he was

left to the working of his own reason to try to extricate himself from his position, and that, because of his self-will, the Saviour's promise of the Holy Spirit's guidance was not claimed by him, and so such an assertion was not dictated by the Holy Ghost. Moreover, though it availed for the moment, it did not extricate him from his difficulty, but left him just as much at the mercy of his enemies.

No doubt after this St. Paul would be much cast down, and in all probability, as a true servant of the Lord, he would review the events of the past few days, and consider whether he had been led by the Holy Spirit into these troubles, or whether he had followed his own desires and so landed himself in the difficulty. It would seem that such a review made him realize something of his self-will, and he feared that now all his purposes for the future would be stopped, and he would have his great desire of preaching the Gospel at Rome left unfulfilled. And so he was in great trouble and depression. But he is not forsaken by God, and so "the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." Though apparently left to his own devices for the moment, he was not cast aside as if he were altogether unprofitable, but is now to be cheered by the assurance that his great desire to preach the Gospel at Rome is to be granted to him. There is no word of reproach in this appearance of the Lord, as none was needed, but he required to be lifted up from his depression and to be assured of God's continued favour. It is not the Holy Spirit's way when He has brought home a sense of the fault to continue to keep the wound open, but to pour in the balm and oil of comfort, and to send a true servant on his way rejoicing.

We perhaps have no right to speculate as to what might have been the result of St. Paul's continued activity in spreading the Gospel those four whole years during which he was in confinement, but we have to thank God that, at any rate, by His grace, those years were not lost. There was the powerful

preaching of the Gospel in Rome, and almost in Cæsar's household, by the "ambassador in bonds," which was perhaps more effectual than any other way would have been. And there were written some of those Epistles which are the glorious heritage of the Church, and, not improbably, that marvellous Epistle to the Hebrews, which has done so much to make more clear the work which the Lord Jesus came to accomplish. Thus God overruled the self-will and mistakes of His Apostle, and turned them to His own glory and the enlightenment of the whole Christian Church. But there is a great difference between God ruling, and God overruling; and it seems to have been the latter, and not the former, in this case. And how often have we to be thankful in our own lives and work for God's overruling providence!

If the supposition that St. Paul in this going up to Jerusalem was following his own will, and was not actually guided to it by the Holy Spirit, be correct, we have opened out to us the question, How is a believer certainly to know the guidance of the Holy Ghost?

Now, if we look at some of the phraseology of the present day, we have an indication of danger in the matter which ought to be examined. We often hear such expressions as, "It was borne in upon me," "The Lord laid it upon me," "The Lord told me to do this," etc.

How may we be sure that it is truly the Lord's leading, or direction, and not merely the urging on of our own will or inclination?

The first point is that we must know clearly that it is in accordance with the written Word. We shall not find the exact direction, of course, in all the events that happen; nor should we open our Bibles as a kind of charm, and try to find our guidance from the words that our eyes may first rest upon. But we must be guided according to the principles of God's Word. But here, too, it is easy to deceive ourselves when our minds or wills are set on some particular course of action. For two ways may be open to us, both of which are right in

themselves, but only one right in the particular case for the accomplishment of the special work.

We need, then, in the second place, to pray that we may set aside our own will, and may be guided to do the right thing. And we must endeavour to do that for which we pray, and perhaps to be suspicious of that to which our own inclination leads us until it is made clear which is right. Our own inclination is not necessarily wrong, but it is such an easy matter to deceive ourselves that it needs to be carefully scrutinized and faithfully prayed over, lest through self-will we should miss the true guidance. And so the difficulty may still remain, How shall we know the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

This brings us to a third point—the use of our reason under the Holy Spirit's influence. Here is the legitimate sphere of the Spirit's work, and He will certainly guide us aright if we put ourselves into His hands, laying aside our own wills, looking to the Word for principles, praying for guidance, and using our reason—all under His direction.

Our reason must be used for marking the tendency of events that are happening, which will often show that of two or more lines of action only one can be carried out, because of something standing in the way of the others, so that we are driven to adopt the one.

We may find an illustration of this in some earlier experiences of St. Paul. Thus Acts xvi. 6, 7, 8: "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia, came down to Troas"—where St. Paul had the vision which led him into Europe. The word κωλυθέντες used in the sixth verse is rather a word of "hindering," "impeding," than of actual forbidding; and it seems to point to this—that the difficulties placed in the way were such that they concluded they were to go in another direction, and so, turning aside from the impediments, they really followed the Spirit's guidance.

Now, had St. Paul acted on the same principles in this case, he would not have gone up to Jerusalem. For in the first starting he was hindered from going the way proposed; then he had warnings of bonds and imprisonment from those who were clearly speaking under the Holy Spirit's influence; then he was told by disciples, "through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem." So that we are bound to conclude that he failed in two of the principles laid down. He had not laid aside his own will, and he had not used his reason properly. Had he done so he must have concluded that, as the Holy Spirit said "he should not go up," he must have been mistaken in thinking that he was under the Spirit's guidance in going. For the Holy Spirit cannot contradict Himself. Either He had not spoken to St. Paul or He had not spoken by the disciples.

If, then, these things be so, we have a warning in St. Paul; but we have clear indications of how surely the Holy Spirit will guide us if we will truly place ourselves in His hands.

Pre-Mosaic Literature and the Bible.—II.

By the Rev. W. T. PILTER.

Babylonia.

OUR third source of pre-Mosaic literature is Babylonia (including Assyria and Elam). There are many thousands of monuments, clay tablets for the most part, and either originals or copies of originals of the ante-Mosaic period now in the museums of Europe (including Constantinople) and the United States. Very many of these are as yet unpublished and even unread, though the character of the tablets, the name of the King regnant which they bear, or other evidence shows their approximate dates.

Among these monuments there are some thousands belonging to what is known by Assyriologists as the First Babylonian Dynasty, the most famous King of which was the sixth,