

ART. V.—NEW TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT COMMEMORATED.—PHILIP THE EVANGELIST.

ALL that we know of Philip "the Evangelist" is gathered from the Acts of the Apostles. His name first occurs in the list of the "seven men of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," who were chosen by the Church in Jerusalem and appointed by the Apostles to superintend the daily ministrations of alms.¹ In that list he holds the second place, coming next to St. Stephen; and they are the only two of the seven who are mentioned again in the New Testament.

St. Stephen's noble work and martyr's death opened the way for Philip's labours as an Evangelist. The great persecution which arose about Stephen dispersed the Church in Jerusalem, and put an end (permanently so far as Philip was concerned, for we never hear of his returning to it) to the special work for which he had been ordained. "They were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the Apostles."² There were no widows to be ministered to, and no deacons to minister to them. But the Hand which shut one door behind His servant, opened another and a wider before him. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me," were the Master's parting words, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria."³ And now Samaria, with its fields still "white unto harvest,"⁴ lay open to the labourer's view. He "went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ."⁵

His work there accomplished, and crowned by the mission of Peter and John, and the bestowal of the Holy Ghost by their hands, Philip is called to exercise his ministry, still as an Evangelist, though now to an individual soul, as before to a populous city, in the conversion and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch.⁶ This done, he is not permitted to tarry longer, but is rapt away by the miraculous power of the Spirit, and placed where, among the heathen cities of the sea-board, yet another sphere of evangelistic labour awaits him. "Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached the Gospel to all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea."⁷

In Cæsarea he appears to have made his settled home, finding there, we may reasonably conclude, a fruitful sphere for continued evangelistic effort. There we meet with him again, after more than twenty years, living in his own house, a married man with "four daughters, virgins, which did

¹ Acts vi. 3, 5.

² *Ibid.* viii. 2.

³ *Ibid.* i. 8.

⁴ John iv. 35.

⁵ Acts viii. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.* viii. 26-38.

⁷ Verses 39, 40.

prophecy," the host for "many days" of Paul and his company, when he tarried at Cæsarea on occasion of his last memorable journey to Jerusalem.¹ And then he drops out of notice, to appear no more till that day when each faithful labourer "shall receive his own reward according to his own work," and when "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together."

From the history thus briefly sketched some important lessons may be gathered.

1. *Church Office*.—Does not the history of Philip throw some light on the true nature of this? As English Churchmen believe that he was chosen "into the order of deacons," and recognise in the office to which he was ordained the origin of "the like office and administration," as it still exists in the Church.² But if so, the diaconate is no mere office of "serving tables." In his case it not only outlived the immediate occasion, but went beyond and above the immediate work, which called it into being. Whether Philip ever again, after that first short ministry, presided over the daily distribution of alms is more than doubtful. The community of goods which led to it does not appear to have extended beyond Jerusalem, and was not, it would seem, a permanent institution even there. It is of course possible that he may have discharged some analogous function in connection with the alms of the Church at Cæsarea. But, at any rate, two things appear to be certain with reference to the office to which he had been ordained: he regarded it as involving a lifelong consecration to the service of God and of His Church; he did not regard it as binding him closely and exclusively to one particular kind of Church work. His orders were indelible; but his ministry was to be exercised (within certain limits, of which we shall speak presently) as the gifts of the Spirit, the needs of the Church, the indications of Providence might dictate. St. Luke's manner of mentioning him, on the last occasion of his appearance in the history, is significant in this respect. "Philip the Evangelist," he calls him, "who was one of the seven."³ The office to which he was originally ordained is not lost sight of in the long interval that has elapsed. He is "one of the seven" still. But his special work as an "Evangelist," in the discharge of that office, is also prominent. As an Evangelist he had no new office, but only a special gift of the Spirit to be used in whatever office the Church had placed him. For as Hooker tells us, when evangelists, pastors, and teachers are spoken of, we are not to "surmise incompatible offices, where nothing is meant but sundry

¹ Acts xxi. 8-14. ² Collect in the Service for *The Ordering of Deacons*.

³ Acts xxi. 8.

graces, gifts and abilities, which Christ bestowed."¹ The deacon now, as then, must "gladly and willingly do" all "that it appertaineth to the office of a deacon to do in the Church where he shall be appointed to serve."² And in this, if he be "full of the Spirit and of wisdom," he may fruitfully serve Christ. But he also takes authority not only "to read the Gospel in the Church of God," but "to preach the same if he be thereto licensed by the bishop himself."³ Like Philip, he may be called to be an evangelist. The solemn charge which the dying Apostle addresses to the chief minister of the Church at Ephesus may be addressed to him also: "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry."⁴ To him, too, may belong that highest honour of preaching "the unsearchable riches of Christ."⁵

2. *Church Order.*—But if the Church thus finds warrant in the history of Philip for extending the ministry of deacons (and by parity of reason of other ministers), "further than the circuit of their labour at the first was drawn,"⁶ she gathers from that history no less certain warrant for the due observance of order in the exercise of ministerial functions and the prosecution of evangelistic work. If Philip made full proof of the latitude of his office by being of the number of those who "betaking themselves to travel undertook the labour of evangelists, that is, they painfully preached Christ and delivered the Gospel to them who as yet had never heard the doctrine of faith,"⁷ he also clearly recognised and cheerfully acquiesced in the limits imposed upon that office in the order of the Church. So far as we know, he was unable to confer upon his converts the gift of the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands. That would appear to have been the peculiar prerogative of the Apostles. But who can doubt that, so far from slighting or undervaluing, or jealously tolerating the power which he lacked, he earnestly courted and gladly welcomed the advent of those, who in the exercise of that power could complete the work which he had begun? If, then, this history lends support to the order of the Church in restricting the imposition of hands in the rite of confirmation, "after the example of the holy Apostles," as here recorded, to her chief ministers, it no less clearly indicates the hearty recognition and willing use of that order in all missionary and evangelistic effort at home and abroad. Nor should we overlook the fact that the lesson of Church order is laid down for

¹ Eccles. Pol., Bk. V., lxxviii. 8.

² Service for *The Ordering of Deacons.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

⁵ Ephes. iii. 8.

⁶ Hooker.

⁷ *Ibid.*

us here in yet broader lines, and in a form that claims special attention at the present time. There is no warrant here—is there anywhere in the New Testament?—for what are called undenominational efforts. To convert souls and then leave them, without a church, without a ministry, without sacraments, was no part of the Apostolic plan. Every Christian, layman or minister, must be an evangelist when he comes in contact with the ignorant, the lost, the erring. But he must go forth from a Church and work up to a Church. When “they that were scattered abroad upon the tribulation that arose about Stephen” came to Antioch, “and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned unto the Lord; the report concerning them came to the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem, and they sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch.”¹ “When the Apostles which were in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received,” from Philip, the deacon, the “word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John.”² The shepherds must wander far and wide in search of the lost sheep, but they must bring them back to the fold. The skirmishers must range over all unconquered country, but they must sally forth from the camp, and to the camp return with their spoil.

3. *Church Fellowship*.—The last mention of Philip opens up an interesting train of thought in this direction.³ No Christian house in Cæsarea but would have gladly opened its doors to Paul and his companions, when they came there on their way to Jerusalem. Church fellowship had a reality, a freshness, a warmth in those early days, which though, thank God! they are not altogether lost in Christian England (as the brother welcomed with a brother’s welcome by strangers personally on his Master’s errand and for his Master’s sake not seldom proves), can only now be fully experienced when Christians meet in a strange land or in the solitary missionary station. But beside his position as an officer of the Church, possessing with his family singular gifts of the Holy Ghost, which may perhaps have entitled Philip to claim the privilege of receiving St. Paul beneath his roof, there was not wanting a special link of fellowship between the Apostle and his host. What a bond of sympathy there must have been between those two servants of Christ (had they met before, when “certain of them that were of the synagogue, called the

¹ Acts xi. 19-22.

² Acts viii. 14. The missions of St. Paul form no exception to the rule, because he, as an Apostle, founded churches and “ordained elders,” wherever he went, exercising supervision over them himself or by others, as Timothy and Titus.

³ Acts xxi. 8-14.

synagogue of them of Cilicia," disputed with Stephen; and not even Saul of Tarsus was "able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke"?¹ as they held high converse together during the "many days" that were spent in Philip's house. Philip, who in the infancy of the Church, and while only a deacon, had so far outstripped even Apostles in quick perception of the world-wide grace of the Gospel; who had been the first to preach Christ to the detested Samaritans; who had admitted into the Church the despised child of Ham; who had carried the good tidings of great joy into the alien cities of Philistia: Paul, whose whole soul exulted in the mystery revealed to him, that "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel;"² whose whole life was dedicated in willing sacrifice to "preaching unto the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;"³ who was even now on his way, as the prophecies which went before him in that very house testified, to become "the prisoner of the Lord in behalf of the Gentiles."⁴ Truly, within the sacred inclosure of Church fellowship, the communion of saints, there is an inner circle, in which heart meets heart in perfect sympathy and complete accord. There comfort and refreshment fall as the dew of heaven on the parched and weary spirit. There faith and constancy, hope and love, are quickened and increased. Thence the martyr goes forth to win his crown, and the soldier of Christ to deeds of high emprise. Who can doubt that that inner circle was found in Philip's house at Cæsarea?

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ART. VI.—THREE SISTERS.

PART II.—THEIR WORKS.

THE lives of the Brontës are incomplete from the point of view from which we have seen them. Each one had an outer life for the world; but it was a mere shell, covering feelings and passions which they dreaded intensely to reveal, even to each other. Their books furnish the key to the enigma.

From their earliest days the lonely children had sought refuge from their solitude in the pleasures of composition.

¹ Acts vi. 9, 10.

² Ephes. iii. 4-6.

³ Verse 8.

⁴ Verse 1, with Acts xxi. 10, 11.