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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
CHAPTERS I.-XII.

BY PRINCIPAL LINDSAY, D.D.

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THE
ACTS OF THE APOSTLES,
WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES, AND MAPS.

BY

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(CHAPTERS I.-XII.)

EDINBURGH
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P R E F A C E.

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THIS little Commentary makes no pretension to be anything else than an aid to teachers of Bible classes and to private students of the Bible. The historical framework of such a book as the Acts of the Apostles sheds a great deal of light on many obscure passages relating to the social condition of the times, and I have called attention in the Introduction to the economic and political aspects of the times. The two most important critical questions suggested by the Acts :—(1) The solution of the problem of the early Christian Church, how to reconcile the commandments of Moses with the new law of liberty taught by Jesus ; (2) and the result of the discussion of this problem in the two parties within the Christian Church ;—belong more to the second part of the book, and will be discussed in the Introduction to chapters xiii.—xxviii. I have only to add that I have received many valuable suggestions from the Rev. A. O. Johnston, of Westbourne Free Church, Glasgow.

THOMAS M. LINDSAY.

FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW,
September 1884.

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE ACTS.

IN the more important MSS. of the New Testament, the title is not "The Acts of the Apostles," but "Acts of Apostles," and in one very important MS., the *Sinaitic*, the book is called simply "Acts." These titles describe the book much better; it does not contain all the acts, nor even the principal acts of all the Apostles, but only a few selected deeds of some of the Apostles. It is a record of Apostolic Acts, not of the Acts of the Twelve Apostles. In this respect, the book may be fitly compared to the Gospels. They are not, nor do they pretend to be, a complete record of that Life of untiring activity which found "no leisure so much as to eat" (Mark vi. 31). They were written that the readers "might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God: and that believing they might have life through His name" (John xx. 30, 31); and they contain those details, in the life of Jesus, which best exhibit the divine purpose in it, and exclude all but a representative cycle of events. In the same way the Acts contains and records such a cycle of representative events as might suitably impress on the Church the obedience of the disciples to the last command of Jesus: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and the fulfilment of the promise of the Master:

"Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). Nothing could impress the minds of the first generation of Christians with the fact that both command and promise had been fulfilled so much as the gradual widening of the Church, and the most interesting and representative facts must have been those which told most distinctly the steps by which missionaries were successively raised up who were full of the catholicity of Christianity, and who strove to make the Church catholic. The labours of the Twelve were soon obscured in this respect by the work of Stephen and Philip; they, in turn, gave place to wandering missionaries who preached to Greeks in Antioch; until in the end the whole interest centred in the meteor-like missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul. The book of the Acts is not a history of the Christian Church of the first generation, but, like each of the Gospels, a record of the representative events which best exhibit the divine purpose in the Church of Christ.

In historical position it lies midway between the life of Jesus and the life of His Church in the world; it lies between the sermons of Jesus and the epistles of His Apostles; it bridges the gap between the facts and doctrines recorded in the Gospels, and those which are represented by the Epistles. It gives that unity to New Testament Revelation which the historical books of the Old Testament afford to the record of the manifestations of Jehovah to His Old Testament Church. In another aspect, however, it describes that basis of Christian life out of which sprang both Gospels and Epistles. We can almost see the Gospels making in the short sermons of the Apostles recorded in the Acts, and all throughout the book the facts of the gospel history are seen, well known, and accepted by the Christian Church. The relation of the Acts to the Epistles of the New Testament is still more noteworthy. These Epistles would be almost unintelligible without the information it gives. They contain few and meagre references to the events in our Lord's life, and there is a rude gap between them and the Gospels, between Jesus of Nazareth and the spiritual Christ of the Epistles,—a want of continuity most perplexing, which is filled up by the narrative in the

Acts. This book lets us see that those Epistles were written by men whose daily preaching was a description of the life, death, and rising again of Jesus the Christ, and makes it evident that the Christians to whom the Epistles were addressed had already so much information about Jesus that it was needless to give it over again in letters full of instruction on points of Christian life and doctrine.

WHAT IT WAS MEANT TO TELL.

The book of Acts describes the fulfilment of the promise of the Father to baptize the followers of Jesus with the Holy Spirit, and the results of this baptism. It begins with Pentecost, and ends with the first visit of Paul to Rome. It dwells at great length on the outpouring of the Spirit, and on all the events which led to a wider range in the preaching of the gospel. It has two marked characteristics ; it dwells on the continual presence of Jesus with His disciples, and on the preparations for, and beginnings of each new spread of the gospel. But the presence of Jesus was no longer a bodily presence, constrained in time and limited by space : it was a spiritual presence which knew no such confinements ; and the book which records the continued fellowship of the Master with His disciples, describes the fulfilment of the promise of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

(1) Canon Norris has described the first characteristic of the Acts so clearly that he may be left to state it. "The main purpose of this book is to trace all through the interval," between the Gospels and the Epistles, "the continued action of the risen Lord. We see on the one hand how carefully the author connects his narrative with that of the Third Gospel, taking up the thread at the very point where it had been laid down, with that commission on Mount Olivet and the return of the eleven to the upper chamber ; we see, on the other hand, how gradually but most designedly he is ever drawing our attention away from Jerusalem and the Apostles of Israel, fixing it more and more on the Apostle of that Western World which was to be the home of the maturer Church. Above all, we see how careful

he is, in tracing the Church's progress, to show that it was Christ, not His Apostles, who led the way ;—as in His sufferings, so now in His triumphs, ‘ Jesus going before them, and they amazed as they followed’ (Mark x. 32). It was no impulse of his own that made Philip accost the Ethiopian stranger (Acts viii. 26, 29), it was a shock and a scandal to Peter to find himself called to eat bread with a Roman soldier (Acts x. 14, xi. 3); it was with fear and alarm that the Apostles received Saul of Tarsus into their number (Acts ix. 26); it took them by surprise to hear that ‘the hand of the Lord’ was gathering together a Gentile Church in Antioch (Acts xi. 21, 22); it was not St. Paul’s free choice or determination, but the ‘Spirit of Jesus’ (Acts xvi. 7, Revised Version), overruling his plans that pushed him onward into Europe; it was the Lord Himself who made him stay in Corinth, saying, ‘Be not afraid, for I am with thee, and have much people in this city’ (Acts xviii. 9, 10). When he came to Jerusalem expecting only bonds and death (Acts xx. 23–25, xxi. 13), it was the same glorified Form that again stood beside him, saying, ‘Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome’ (Acts xxiii. 11).¹ The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was the first fulfilment of the promise, “Lo, I am with you alway unto the end of the world,” and in the Acts of the Apostles this first fulfilment is repeated over and over again in the acknowledgment of the continual presence of the living risen Saviour. The word “Lord,” meaning not God, but the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, occurs nearly one hundred times.

(2) This presence of the risen Lord was the presence of the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father, and if the Gospels record the mission of the Son, the book of Acts describes the mission of the Spirit. The book is the Gospel of the Holy Ghost. It was through the Holy Spirit that Jesus gave “commandment to the Apostles whom He had chosen” (i. 2). The warrant of their mission was to be baptism with the Holy Ghost (i. 5) and the possession of the power which they were to receive after the Holy Ghost had fallen upon them (i. 8). The possession of the Holy Ghost made them the basis of the

¹ Norris, *Key to the Acts*, pp. x.–xii.

New Testament Church, as the prophets, who had been inspired by the same Spirit (i. 16), were the foundation of the Church of the Old Covenant. Pentecost witnessed the fulfilment of their Lord's promise and of Old Testament prophecy, and the disciples filled with the Holy Ghost were then, and not till then, equipped for their work. Jesus had promised that there should be a double witness-bearing for Him : the witness of faithful loyal men who had been with Him from the beginning, and the witness of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, whom He was to send to His disciples (John xv. 26, 27), and this promised presence and witness-bearing of the Holy Spirit is everywhere made manifest in the Acts of the Apostles.

(a) All service in the Church is dependent on the gift of the Spirit. The seven men, the first office-bearers in the Christian community, "were full of the Holy Ghost" (vi. 3). When Stephen's work is mentioned, it is recorded that he was "full of the Holy Ghost" (vi. 5), and because he had this gift of the Spirit he was able not only to preach and bear witness but to see the Son of man standing at the right hand of God (vii. 55). Paul was fitted for his work when he received the Holy Ghost through the laying on of the hands of Ananias (ix. 17) : Barnabas was sent to Antioch because he was a man "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith" (xi. 24). It was the Holy Ghost Who "separated Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry" and sent them forth to the Gentiles (xiii. 2-4) ; Who sent Philip to accost the Ethiopian eunuch (viii. 29), Who impelled him to other scenes of missionary activity ; and Who made the elders of Ephesus overseers of the Church of God (xx. 28).

(b) All living fellowship in the gospel of Jesus Christ is recognised to be the result of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. The disciples of the Church of Jerusalem received a second baptism after prayer for increased zeal and power of work (iv. 31) ; Peter and John were sent down to Samaria that the converts there might receive the Holy Ghost (viii. 14, 15) ; the churches of Judea and Galilee and Samaria are described as "walking in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Ghost" (ix. 31) ; and the twelve disciples of Ephesus who had heard only of the baptism of John received the Holy Ghost

when Paul had made them know Jesus Christ and Him crucified (xix. 6).

(c) Every advance made by the Church towards catholicity was guided and witnessed to by the Holy Spirit. It was the Holy Ghost Who inspired the freer teaching of Stephen, and Who prompted the mission journeys of Philip. The gift of the Holy Ghost fell upon Cornelius and his friends while Peter was addressing them (x. 44-47), and Peter was at pains to vindicate his conduct by appealing to the witness of the Spirit (xi. 15-17, xv. 8). The Holy Spirit justified the men of Cyprus and Cyrene when they preached the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles (xi. 21); sent Paul and Barnabas to be Apostles to the Gentiles, and guided the decision of the brethren assembled in council at Jerusalem.

(d) The sins of false brethren were against the Holy Ghost, and were rebuked by Him. Ananias "lied unto the Holy Ghost" (v. 3), and he and his wife conspired "to tempt the Spirit of the Lord" (v. 9); while the sins of Simon the sorcerer (viii. 18-20), and of Elymas (xiii. 9), were rebuked in the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Everywhere the Spirit is seen working, guiding, and upholding the infant Church of Christ; and the book of Acts is a record of the beginnings of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost.

(3) The Acts, like Genesis, is a book of beginnings or origins. The analysis makes us see at a glance that Luke dwells upon the spread of the Church. He describes his Gospel as an account of what Jesus *began* to do and teach, and his book of the Acts may be similarly spoken of as a description of what Christ's Apostles *began* to do and to teach. He is at pains to note each beginning, and what leads to the beginning, and having done so he is content to be silent about the growth which must follow the beginnings. The first beginning was the Church of the Upper Chamber, with its memories of the bodily presence of Jesus and of the promise of His spiritual presence. Then came the Pentecostal fulfilment of the promise, which gave birth to the Jewish Church of Jerusalem. The story of Stephen and of the first persecution is told at length, for that led to the beginnings of the churches in Samaria, Cæsarea, Lydda, Joppa. The story of Cornelius

occupies space, for that justified the beginnings of the spread of the Church beyond Judaism. The conversion of Paul is told in detail, for out of that came the Gentile churches from Antioch to Rome. The book ends with Paul at Rome. The gospel had at length reached the centre of the Roman Empire, and could be left to spread to the circumference. The book fills up the gap between the Gospels and the Epistles, not in a detailed history of the churches of Jerusalem, Corinth, Galatia, Rome, etc., but by describing the beginnings in each place, and in such a fashion that the reader must insensibly be led to feel more the rapid spread of the kingdom of Christ than the special shape it took in any one place.

This description of the purport of the book of the Acts of the Apostles agrees in the main with the views of the larger number of more distinguished biblical students, although they have sometimes expressed themselves in somewhat different language, or confined themselves to aspects of the book which have impressed them most. To Chrysostom the Acts of the Apostles was a *demonstration of the resurrection*; Luther called it a commentary on the Epistles of St. Paul, written to enforce the doctrine of justification by faith; Eichhorn considered it a history of missions propagating Christianity; Lekebusch, a continuous fulfilment of the promise, "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (i. 8); Grotius, a biographical description of the work of the two chief Apostles, Peter and Paul; Baumgarten says that Luke has in the Acts of the Apostles the same theme which fills his Gospel—Jesus Christ the Saviour, who is not merely a teacher of doctrines but a doer of saving deeds, only in the Acts it is the Saviour *risen and ascended* Who is described; while with De Wette, Reuss, Thiersch, and others, the Acts of the Apostles is simply an unfinished history of the Church of Christ during the first century, and Mayerhoff and Bleek expand the idea by calling the book a description of the growth, external and internal, of the Church of Christ from its first foundation in Jerusalem, the centre of Judaism, to its establishment in Rome, the centre of heathendom.

There is, however, a set of biblical students, either professed members of what is called the Tübingen school, or more or less under its influence, who find themselves unable to take such a simple and natural view of the purpose of the Acts of the Apostles as has been now stated. They discern a hidden aim, and think it was written with a set purpose to justify one party in the Christian Church at the expense of another, or at least to reconcile two opposing sets of principles. Thus Schneckenburger believes the book to be an apology for the Apostle Paul, and a vindication of his work against his Judaizing opponents ; while Baur and Zeller think that it was manifestly meant to conciliate two opposing parties, and that its aim is to show that the Apostle Paul was really and in spite of many incidents that almost prove the contrary, a brother in the faith with the Apostle Peter ; and Overbeck, whose analysis is perhaps the ablest, declares that the Acts is “the work of a Gentile Christian, who, without having completely abandoned the principles contained in Paulinism, keeps hold only of the fact that Gentile Christianity began with Paul, but no longer finds its ideal basis in a Pauline Gospel,—finds it rather in a Gentile Christianity, not founded by Paul when he broke through the barriers of the primitive Church, but the legitimate fruit of the old Apostolic Christianity.” The point to be attended to, however, in these descriptions is that all these critics, but especially Zeller, are of opinion that this apologetic and conciliatory purpose in the book is carried out at the expense of historical accuracy, and remove the date of composition from apostolic times to the first quarter of the second century. Space prohibits any full discussion of the theory of Zeller and its grounds, but it is almost necessary to make a few remarks upon the subject. The special position of the Tübingen school has been very generally abandoned, whether with reference to the Gospels, the Acts, or the Epistles, but its criticisms of particular books, their authenticity, historical credibility, and date, are still not without influence. Although Zeller’s criticism of the Acts of the Apostles is based on the denial of the miraculous, on alleged differences between Paul’s statements in his Epistles and what is said in the Acts, and on supposed inconsistencies within the book of Acts

itself, it depends so largely upon a particular view of the condition of the Apostolic Church that it falls to the ground if that view be shown to be historically untenable. According to Zeller and other members of the Tübingen school, two parties existed in the Apostolic Church in irreconcilable opposition, the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. Jewish Christians asserted that their faith was Judaism with a new Prophet, that the law of Moses and Mosaic ceremonial practices were binding on Christians as well as on unbelieving Jews, that Gentile believers must first become proselytes to Judaism before they could become Christians, that circumcision was the only gateway to baptism. Gentile Christianity, on the other hand, refused to admit this, was intolerant of Mosaic injunctions, and insisted on starting with the New Testament, or if it admitted the Old Testament at all, put value only on the prophetic element. These differences within the Church were also represented, it is said, within the college of the Apostles. At the head of intolerant Jewish Christianity stood Peter James, and John ; at the head of intolerant Gentile Christianity stood Paul. As years went on a middle party gradually grew up which became the Catholic Church of Christ: some members of this middle party, wishing to show that it had always been in the Church, or that it ought always to have been there, wrote the Acts of the Apostles, making Peter on occasions speak words and utter sentiments which only one holding Paul's opinions could have made, and showing Paul accepting compromises and submitting to conditions repugnant to his declared convictions. The question arises, What historical evidence is there for these sweeping assertions? When examined, it is ludicrously small. Stript of the glamour of erudition and historical imagination, the real basis of this Tübingen theory is as follows. There were undoubtedly in the second century Jewish Christian sectaries, bitterly opposed to all Gentile Christianity, who claimed St. Peter as their special Apostle ; and there were Gentile Christians, such as Marcion, outside the Christian Church, who hated everything Jewish ; and there was undoubtedly in the Apostolic Church an extreme Judaizing party, called "the sect of the Pharisees who believed," who were continually thwarting Paul. Baur and Zeller take

the opinions of the Jewish Christian heretics of the second century, read them back into the Judaizers of the Apostolic times, make the Twelve sharers in these beliefs and usages, and then by dint of ingenious exegesis they try to find these opinions and practices in those New Testament writings which bear the names of those whom they call the Judaizing Apostles. That is the basis of the theory ; and on this theory Zeller declares that the narrative of the acquiescence of the Church in Jerusalem to the admission of Gentile Christians must be unhistorical, and that Peter could not have baptized Cornelius and his household in the manner described !

Far more natural, surely, is the description in the Acts of the gradual training of the Jerusalem Church to see somewhat of the fulness and liberty of the gospel. What we see in the Acts of the Apostles is what really existed,—the gradual “development of a single force which got possession of the minds of the early disciples, which modified and in time was moulded by its environment, and which found its realization in the Christian Church. . . . Here as always there was a conflict indeed between the old and the new. For the customs and ceremonies which had grown up alongside of the Jewish faith in an earlier stage were not at once given up when it reached its consummation at a higher point. The old ceremonies were indeed broken . . . but they were broken as the bud breaks before the blossom : they fell as the blossom itself falls before the advancing fruit.”¹

THE WRITER.

The writer was Luke or Lucas, “the beloved physician,” frequently mentioned by Paul, whose companion he was, and the author of the Third Gospel. He was not an eye-witness and minister of the word from the beginning (Luke i. 2), and although an old tradition says that he was one of the Seventy sent forth by our Lord during His last journey to Jerusalem (Luke x. 1-24), and identifies him as one of the

¹ Sorley, *Jewish Christians and Judaism*, p. 84. This interesting discussion belongs properly to the second portion of the Acts and must be worked out more fully in the second portion of this Commentary.

two disciples to whom our risen Lord appeared as they went to Emmaus, it is more probable that he was converted to Christianity by the great Apostle to the Gentiles. He was not a Jew (Col. iv. 11 and 14), and he first introduces himself into apostolic history when Paul was at Troas (Acts xvi. 8. “*They*, passing by Mysia, came to Troas. . . . 10. And after he had seen the vision, immediately *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia”). When Paul was in Galatia he had been forbidden, or rather *hindered* from preaching the word in Asia (xvi. 6), hindered by a severe sickness (Gal. iv. 13), and it was immediately after this illness that Luke the beloved physician (Col. iv. 14) became his companion. He went with Paul from Troas into Macedonia, to Samothracia, Neapolis, and Philippi, where they abode some time. When Paul left Philippi for Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica, Luke appears to have been left behind (Acts xvii. 1, “Now, when *they* had passed. . . .”). When he paid a second visit to Philippi on his third missionary journey, Luke was still there, and left the city with him (Acts xx. 5, 6). No record tells what Luke did during his stay ; but it is probable that he preached the word boldly, for Paul, writing to the Corinthians from Philippi, speaks of Luke as the brother whose praise is in the gospel in all the churches (2 Cor. viii., cf. 18 with the subscription). He was Paul’s companion at Miletus, Tyre, Caesarea, and Jerusalem. He was with him in his journey to Rome (Acts xxvii. 1) ; he was near him in his first imprisonment, and comforted him in his labours (Philem. 24) ; and if, as is most likely, the Second Epistle to Timothy was written during Paul’s last imprisonment, Luke was the great Apostle’s faithful companion during the last scenes in his life (2 Tim. iv. 11). Scripture tells us no more about Luke ; but traditions uncertain and untrustworthy have completed the story of his life. He is said to have preached the gospel in Italy, in Macedonia, in Dalmatia, and in Gaul (France) ; to have lived on to an advanced age, and to have died a martyr. The last glimpse the Scriptures give us of him is in the Second Epistle to Timothy, written when Paul was brought before Nero the second time, when the Apostle says, “Only Luke is with me.”

WHEN AND WHERE WRITTEN, AND FOR WHOM.

Critics of the Tübingen school declare that the book was not written until some time between 120 and 130 A.D., and differ about the place. Baur says at Rome, and Zeller agrees with him. Overbeck, on the other hand, follows Kœstlin in contending strongly for Asia Minor and probably Ephesus. Their view as to the people for whom the book was written is of course strongly influenced by their theories of its purpose and aim. Biblical scholars who refuse to accept the Tübingen views usually adopt a much earlier date. The common opinion is that the book was written between the years 64 A.D. and 70 A.D. Paul was brought a prisoner to Rome in the year 61 A.D. or 62 A.D., and was kept in prison two years. In the year 64 A.D. occurred the great fire at Rome, kindled by the Emperor Nero, who in order to avert suspicion from himself blamed the Christians, and began the first Christian persecution which is mentioned by Tacitus (*Annal.* xv. 44) and Suetonius (*Nero*, 16). If Paul was set at liberty after his imprisonment of two years, he must have come out of prison in the end of 63 A.D. or in the beginning of 64 A.D. If he was kept in prison, he probably was one of the first to be executed. In any case Paul was liberated or put to death about 64 A.D., and the manner in which Luke speaks of that imprisonment seems to imply that at the time in which he wrote the Apostle's condition had changed. The probability therefore is that the book was written about the end of Paul's captivity at Rome, or about A.D. 63-64. In any case most scholars believe that the book must have been finished before the year 70 A.D., because it makes no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem. On the other hand it must be remembered that Irenæus, the earliest Church Father who mentions the book, says that it was written after the death of Peter and of Paul. The date cannot be fixed with any exactness.

Nor can the place of writing be determined with anything like certainty. The belief in the early Church was that Luke wrote the Acts at Rome, and the larger number of modern critics support this opinion, founding it for the most part on the fact that while the affairs

and geography of Palestine (i. 12, xxiii. 8), of Macedonia (xvi. 12), of Athens (xvii. 21), and of Crete (xxvii. 8, 12, 16), are described somewhat carefully, a knowledge of Rome is taken for granted (xxviii. 12, 13, 15).

Scholars usually maintain that the Acts was written for the instruction of Gentile and especially of Roman Christians, for the same class of readers to whom Luke addressed his Gospel. It is dedicated to Theophilus, but who he was, or whether the name means a real person, we have no means of determining.

MISSIONARY JOURNEYS RECORDED IN ACTS I.-XII.

The infant Church, during the first five years of its history, was confined chiefly to Jerusalem, but the *First Persecution*, which was the work of the Sadducees and of Saul, while it scattered the converts, was the cause of many missionary journeys. The following are recorded in Acts viii.-xii. :—

i. Journeys of Philip.

- (1) From Jerusalem to Samaria, viii. 1-25.
- (2) From Samaria to the desert land between Jerusalem and Gaza, viii. 26-39.
- (3) Thence to Azotus, and thence to Cæsarea, viii. 40.

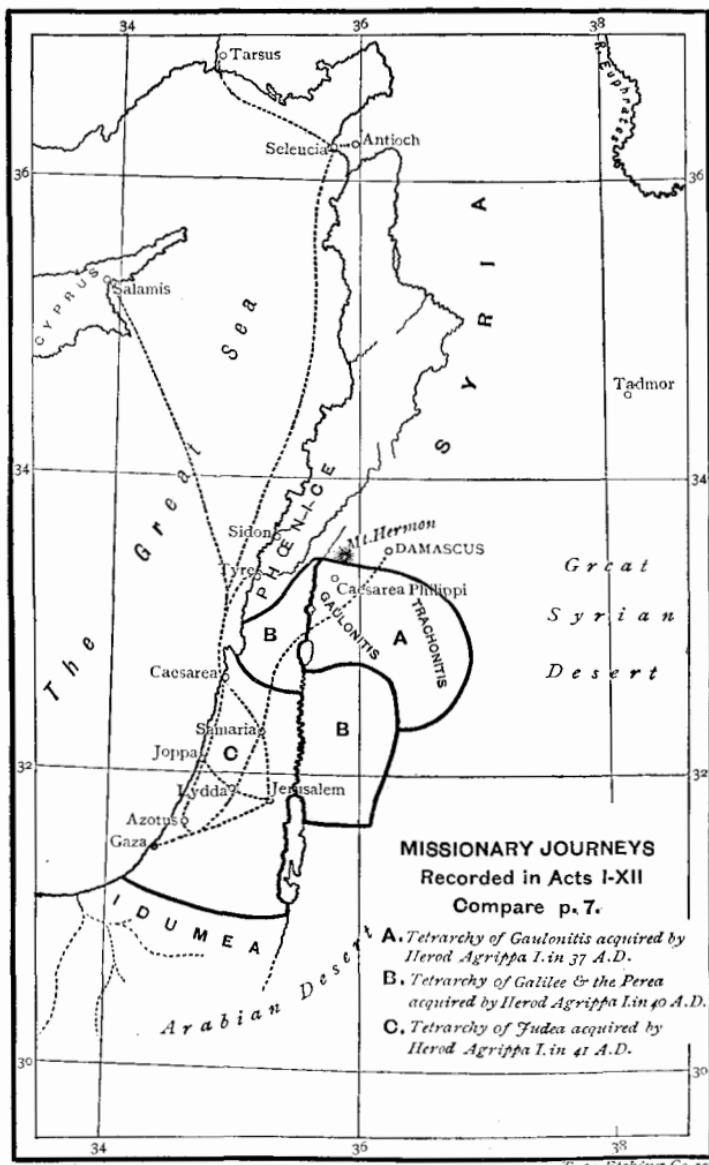
ii. Journeys of Peter.

- (1) (With John) from Jerusalem to Samaria, viii. 14-25.
- (2) To Lydda, ix. 32-35.
- (3) To Joppa, ix. 36-43.
- (4) From Joppa to Cæsarea, x. 23-48.
- (5) From Cæsarea to Jerusalem, xi. 2.

iii. Journeys of Saul.

Saul's Journey to Damascus; his conversion, ix. 2-25.
Three years in Arabia.

- (1) To Jerusalem from Damascus, ix. 26.
- (2) To Cæsarea from Jerusalem, ix. 30.
- (3) To Tarsus from Cæsarea, ix. 30.
- (4) To Antioch from Tarsus (with Barnabas), xi. 26.
- (5) To Jerusalem from Antioch (with Barnabas), xi. 30.
- (6) Back to Antioch (with Barnabas), xii. 25.



iv. Journeys of Barnabas.

(1) To Antioch from Jerusalem,	.	.	.	.	.	.	xii. 22.
(2) To Tarsus from Antioch to find Saul,	.	.	.	.	.	.	xi. 25.
(3) To Antioch from Tarsus (with Saul),	.	.	.	.	.	.	xi. 26.
(4) To Jerusalem from Antioch (with Saul),	.	.	.	.	.	.	xi. 30.
(5) Back to Antioch (with Saul),	.	.	.	.	.	.	xii. 25.

v. Journeys of Missionary Converts.

(1) To Phœnicia,	.	.	.	.	.	.	xii. 19.
(2) To Cyprus,	.	.	.	.	.	.	xii. 19.
(3) To Antioch,	.	.	.	.	.	.	xii. 20.

It is interesting to note that the Church began to act on the aggressive for the first time after Stephen's death. How long but for this persecution they might have stuck limpet-like to Jerusalem, heedless of the Lord's parting commission, it is impossible to say; but as a matter of fact it was through this outburst of hostility that the disciples became witnesses for the Master in all Judea and Samaria and in other places more remote. It is also worth noting that this missionary enterprise forced the Church to face the great question of the relation of Christianity to the Gentiles on the one hand and to Judaism on the other. Had Stephen lived, it is almost certain that he would have forced the Church to consider the problem. All that is told us about his preaching shows that he was the true forerunner of Paul in his understanding and enforcing the catholicity of Christianity. The Twelve almost seem to have avoided raising the question, but it forced itself on the Church without their connivance, and without their having the opportunity of prescribing the conditions under which the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles should take place. Philip, one of the Seven, a Hellenist in all probability, went down to Samaria and preached the gospel there, and this was a great step in the direction of triumph over Jewish national prejudice. The Apostles were in a manner compelled to follow him. Almost helplessly they saw the gospel passing beyond the bounds of the Jewish nation, and they could only follow the guidance of the Spirit, and know that Philip had done right when the Samaritans received the gift of the Spirit as freely as if they had been Jews.

They did not follow Philip's example ; they returned to Jerusalem and to Jewish Christianity.

Philip, however, had no sooner made a breach in the middle wall of partition than he made it wider by the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch, and still the Church of Jerusalem seemed heedless of the way in which the Lord was gradually preparing the minds of Jewish Christians to see the conversion of the Gentiles.

Meanwhile Saul was converted, and this greater and more powerful Stephen would certainly have raised the question in Jerusalem had he been permitted to remain. He was forced to flee to Cilicia, however, where he doubtless preached to Jew and to Gentile alike, but did so far away from the prejudices of the Church of Jerusalem. Then came Peter's mission to Cornelius, and almost at the same time disciples of Cyrene and Cyprus were preaching to Gentiles in far-off Antioch. And at last when the Jewish Christians had been led step by step, in the genuine missionary enterprise of the Church, to see the question practically settled, the field was clear for the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Paul was called to assist Barnabas at Antioch.

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY AND POINTS OF CONTACT.

The Acts of the Apostles describes the first thirty years of the first generation of the history of the Church of Christ. It begins with Pentecost in 33 A.D., and ends with the close of Paul's imprisonment in Rome in 63 A.D. or 64 A.D. During this period Rome was ruled by the successors of Octavius : it had scarcely ended ere the imperial throne began to be the prize of the most successful soldier. In Palestine it was a period full of startling changes, witnessing in its earlier portion the reconstruction of the old kingdom of Herod, and in its later the complete subjugation of all Palestine under the direct rule of Rome, when governors, each one more tyrannical than his predecessor, goaded the unfortunate people into that rebellion which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem. The first twelve chapters of the Acts describe the first twelve years

of the Christian Church. Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius were emperors in Rome. Herod Agrippa I. was slowly gaining the rule over all Palestine. They end with Herod's death. It is necessary to keep these events in mind when reading these chapters, otherwise certain passages are very obscure.

While our Lord's ministry lasted, the old kingdom of Herod the Great was still parcelled out in three divisions. Herod Philip, called in the New Testament *Philip tetrarch of Iturea* (Luke iii. 1), ruled over Iturea and Gaulonitis, lands lying to the east and north-east of the Sea of Galilee; Herod Antipas, called in the New Testament *Herod the tetrarch, Herod, and King Herod* (Matt. xiv. 1; Mark vi. 16, 22; Mark vi. 14), ruled over Galilee and the Perea; while Judea and Samaria were governed by a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who resided usually at Cæsarea on the coast. Our Lord died in April 33 A.D., and the political situation remained unchanged until 37 A.D., when Herod Philip died and was succeeded by Herod Agrippa I. (the Herod of Acts xii.). The Emperor Tiberius had died in that year, and had been succeeded by Caligula, who was a personal friend of Herod Agrippa. Herod Antipas was banished in 40 A.D., and his dominions were added to those of Herod Agrippa by Caligula. The Emperor Claudius, who succeeded Caligula in 41, also befriended Herod Agrippa, and in the year of his succession recalled the Roman procurator of Judea and Samaria, and added these provinces to the kingdom of Herod. On the death of Herod, which took place in 44 A.D., his dominions were ruled directly from Rome, but his son Herod Agrippa II., called in the New Testament *King Agrippa, Agrippa*, or simply *the king* (Acts xxv. 13, xxvi. 1, xxvi. 26), was made tetrarch of Gaulonitis in 53 A.D., and his daughter Drusilla (Acts xxiv. 24) married Felix, procurator of Judea. The death of Herod Agrippa took place in 44 A.D., and the famine mentioned in Acts xi. 28 could scarcely have reached Jerusalem before 45 A.D. The Jews were expelled from Rome in the year 52 A.D. Festus was made procurator of Judea about the year 60 A.D. The death of Herod Agrippa fixes the date of the martyrdom of James at 44 A.D. The

famine under Claudius tells us that Paul and Barnabas came from Antioch to Jerusalem in the year 45 A.D. Paul met Priscilla and Aquila at Corinth in the year 52 A.D., when the Jews were expelled from Rome. He was brought before Festus and sent to Rome in the year 60 A.D. These facts, and inferences drawn from them and others, enable us to construct the following chronological table for the first twelve chapters of the Acts of the Apostles:—

Emperors.	Events in the Acts.	Civil Rulers in Palestine.	High Priests.	Contemporary Events.
Tiberius from 14 A.D. 37 A.D. Caligula.	<p>33 A.D. April. The Crucifixion of our Lord.</p> <p>33 A.D. June. Pentecost.</p> <p>[The growth of the Church, as described in Acts ii.-v. between 33 A.D. and 38 A.D., with the opposition of the Sadducees.]</p> <p>38 A.D. <i>First Persecution by Pharisees and Sadducees</i>— Martyrdom of Stephen.</p> <p>Conversion of Saul. [Missionary journeys of Philip and Peter.]</p> <p>40 A.D. Saul back in Damascus.</p> <p>Saul in Jerusalem.</p> <p>Saul in Cilicia.</p>	<p>Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea from 26 A.D.</p> <p>36 A.D. Pilate recalled.</p> <p>No governor during the disorders following the death of Tiberius.</p> <p>37 A.D. Herod Agrippa I. succeeds Philip in Gaulonitis.</p>	<p>Joseph Caiaphas from 25 A.D.</p> <p>37 A.D. Jonathan, son of Annas.</p> <p>38 A.D. Theophilus, son of Annas.</p>	<p>33 A.D. Drusus, son of Germanicus, starved to death.</p> <p>38 A.D. Philo's mission to Rome.</p> <p>39 A.D. Aretas in possession of Damascus.</p> <p>40 A.D. Caligula orders his statue to be set up in the Temple.</p>
41 A.D. Claudius.	<p>43 A.D. Barnabas in Antioch.</p> <p>Paul in Antioch.</p> <p>44 A.D. <i>Second Persecution</i>— Martyrdom of James.</p> <p>Peter imprisoned.</p> <p>45 A.D. Paul and Barnabas in Jerusalem. They return to Antioch.</p>	<p>40 A.D. Herod Agrippa I. succeeds to Galilee and the Perea on the deposition of Herod Antipas.</p> <p>41 A.D. Herod Agrippa I. gets Samaria and Judea, and rules over all Palestine.</p> <p>44 A.D. Death of Herod.</p> <p>Cuspus Fadus, procurator of Judea.</p>	<p>41 A.D. Simon Cantheras.</p> <p>42 A.D. Matthias, son of Annas.</p> <p>43 A.D. Elionacrus, son of Cantheras.</p>	<p>43 A.D. Claudio conquers Britain.</p>

THE WORLD RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LYING ROUND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The first twelve chapters of the Acts of the Apostles exhibit little contact with heathendom; when the narrative passes beyond the bounds of Palestine it is to describe, with one single exception, men belonging to Jewish communities settled in some distant colony, but still preserving the social customs and the religion of their fellow-countrymen.

The religious condition of Palestine remained in apostolic times what it had been during the life of our Lord. There was little union of thought or feeling among those who belonged to the various parties (sects) into which Judaism was divided. Religion had become the political creed of an aristocratic party of priest-nobles, a fanatical patriotism, or a dreamy mysticism. The Sadducees were the representatives of the *State* once glorious under the Maccabees, now reduced to subjection under Rome or the Herods. The Pharisees were the representatives of the *community* whose foundation and whose end was the Law. The Essenes already saw Judaism a thing of the past, and lived a life of Buddhist separation apart from Temple worship or priestly sacrificial rites.¹

The social condition of Palestine was by no means prosperous, and it had been gradually growing worse under Roman domination. The Roman system of taxation was the great blot upon the imperial administration, and in the end exhausted the empire. All Roman provinces had to pay two direct contributions, a land-tax payable by all cultivators of the soil, and a poll-tax to include those who had escaped the land-tax. These taxes, with many other indirect tolls, etc., were farmed out to *publicani*, and were re-let sometimes twice over. The State always got its money, but the double or treble profit had to be wrung from the unfortunate cultivators of the soil. The result of this appears to have been worst in the eastern provinces, and Roman historians record that the burdens of taxation were producing chronic poverty with its accompaniment of rebellion.

¹ Compare my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, pp. 54-56.

The parables of Jesus reveal constantly the impoverishment of the land and of the people. Debt abounds, and with debt usury. In one parable everybody except the king is bankrupt, the steward is in debt to the king, and the servant to the steward (Matt. xviii. 23; Luke vii. 41). The creditor seizes the poor debtor in the street, the judge's officer is ready to cast him into prison, where he remains till squeezed of the last farthing, or if he has no money, till he is sold with wife and children into slavery, and payment has been made (Luke xii. 58, 59; Matt. xviii. 25). Oil and wheat, the necessities of life, are furnished on credit (Luke xvi. 6, 7); buildings are begun, and remain unfinished for want of money (Luke xiv. 29). This general impoverishment is the soil in which flourish those who live on their neighbours' ills. Speculators keep their grain back from the market, and enlarge their storehouses (Luke xii. 18). Usury flourishes. The speculator soon multiplies his capital fivefold and tenfold (Luke xix. 16, 18). In these and many other ways our Lord describes in simple parables the impoverishment of His countrymen. This poverty was heightened in the first years of the infant Church. The wrong-headed financial legislation of Tiberius brought on a great financial crisis in the empire in 33 A.D. The capitalists stored their money, and bankruptcy followed bankruptcy. This had its effect on Palestine, and increased the poverty of the people. In the very years when even the public treasuries were keeping back their cash payments, when extreme poverty abounded, and the Church was burdened with its poor, there occurred those outbursts of Christian charity recorded in Acts ii. 45 and iv. 32-37, when disciples who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, so that there might be none in the community who lacked food or clothing.

THE JEWS OF PALESTINE AND THE DIASPORA.

The population of Palestine was but a small portion of the great Jewish people. Every conqueror of the land had carried away captive some of its people, and settled them in colonies far from

the Temple and its services,¹ while the stern necessity of finding a livelihood had banished multitudes of them from their native land. These Jews born, residing, educated outside Canaan were called the *Diaspora* or the *Dispersion*, and were also known as Hellenist Jews. They thought it to be their duty, however far from Jerusalem, to come at least once, and as often besides as they could afford to do so, to some one or other of the great festivals, and at such times thronged Jerusalem. These foreign Jews did not mingle freely with their Gentile neighbours. Then as now the Jews lived apart from the Gentiles. They commonly inhabited separate quarters of the cities in which they were found ; they had their synagogues and their worship ; sometimes they were a self-governed community under officers of their own. Whether at home in Palestine or abroad in Parthia or within the Roman Empire, they clung to the customs of their forefathers, and refused to disappear among the people in the midst of whom they were settled. The Romans, who strove to impress cosmopolitan principles on all subject races, could never indoctrinate the Jews, and grew to loathe them. When they saw how resolutely they kept apart, how zealously they maintained those ceremonial usages which separated them like a wall from all other men and women, they called them "haters of the human race," "men who have fallen away from all mankind ; for a people that devises an uncompanionable life, declines to associate at table with others, as well as to partake in drink-offerings, prayers, and incense-offerings, stands further removed from us than Sura and Bactra." These intractable Jews were frequently banished from Rome ; but when they were there, and wherever else they were, it was found that they must be let alone to manage themselves. Accordingly every Jewish settlement was a *parochia*, a colony living as strangers and pilgrims in the midst of an alien society. At Rome they had their own quarter, their own burying-places, and the inscriptions on their tombs prove that they had an internal organization by which they ruled themselves. At Alexandria they were a self-governing community, ruled by a separate governor and council. Wherever they

¹ Compare note on ii. 5-II.

were they had their local synagogues and their local sanhedrin. This dispersion was the link that connected the Hebrews of Palestine with the outer world, and gave Jerusalem as well as Rome an imperial power. All the synagogues of the Diaspora looked up to the great synagogue in Jerusalem, and, with the local sanhedrin, were subject to the decisions of the great sanhedrin or National Jewish Council. The constant presence of these Hellenist Jews at the great festivals tended to link them still more closely to Judaism, and to make all Jews throughout the world one nation although scattered or in dispersion.

When the baptism of the Spirit fell on the Church at Pentecost, and Jews gathered out of every nation heard and believed, Christianity at its very start sent missionaries all over the known world. When the brethren who were dispersed by the persecution after Stephen's death went abroad preaching the word, it was to the Jews of the Dispersion that they went. Paul on his missionary journeys entered the Jewish quarter of the town first, and made his way into the synagogue to preach the gospel of Christ to his countrymen.

ANALYSIS OF CHAPTERS I.-XII.

The book divides naturally into three parts : (1) Chapters i.-xii., which may be entitled :—From Jerusalem to Antioch ; (2) Chapters xiii.-xix., Paul's missionary journeys ; (3) Chapters xx.-xxviii., Paul at Rome, and the events which brought him there. Chapters xiii.-xxviii. may be entitled :—From Antioch to Rome. The analysis of the first twelve chapters only is given here.

Introduction, i. 1-12.

i. The forty days and the commandments of Jesus,	i-8.
2. The Ascension,	9-12.

Part I.—From Jerusalem to Antioch. The Acts in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, i. 13-xii. 25.

i. *The Church of the Upper Chamber*, i. 13-26.

ii. *Pentecost*, ii. 1-47.

1. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit,	ii. 1-13.
2. The effect on Peter,	14-36.
3. The effect on the people,	37-41.
4. The first converts,	42-47.

iii. The Church in Jerusalem, iii.-vi. 7.	
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2. Peter's sermon to the crowd,	ii. 26.
3. Peter and John arrested, examined, and dismissed,	iv. 1-22.
4. A second baptism of the Holy Spirit,	23-31.
5. Brethren and false brethren,	iv. 32-v. 11.
6. Miracles,	12-16.
7. The twelve arrested, examined, and dismissed,	17-42.
8. Beginnings of organization. The seven,	vi. 1-7.
iv. The First Persecution, vi. 8-viii. 4.	
1. Stephen arrested and tried,	vi. 8-15.
2. Stephen's defence,	vii. 1-53.
3. Stephen's death,	vii. 54-viii. 2.
4. The converts scattered become missionaries,	viii. 3-4.
v. The Church beyond Jerusalem in Judea and Samaria, viii. 5-xi. 18.	
1. Philip's missionary journeys,	viii. 5-40.
(1) To Samaria,	5-25.
a. Philip in Samaria,	5-8.
b. Simon the Sorcerer,	9-13.
c. The Apostolic deputation,	14-25.
(2) The Ethiopian eunuch,	26-40.
2. The conversion of Saul,	ix. 1-31.
3. Peter's missionary journeys,	ix. 32-x. 48.
(1) Peter at Lydda,	ix. 32-35.
(2) Peter at Joppa,	36-43.
(3) Peter's vision,	x. 1-16.
(4) Peter at Cæsarea,	17-48.
4. Enlargement of ideas,	xi. 1-18.
vi. The Church beyond Palestine, xi. 19-30.	
1. Wandering missionaries,	19-21.
2. The Church at Antioch,	22-30.
vii. The Persecution under Herod Agrippa I., xii. 1-25.	
1. An Apostle martyred,	xii. 1, 2.
2. Peter's danger and deliverance,	3-II.
3. A Christian household,	12-19.
4. Death of Herod Agrippa I.,	20-25.

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4.	Death of Herod Agrippa I.,	20-25.

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF

Antipas, an Idumean chief, made governor of Idumea under
Antipater, at first confidential adviser of John Hyrcanus,

Phasael,
Joint tetrarch with Herod of Judea, 41 B.C.

<p>Doris.</p> <p>Antipater murdered by his father, B.C. 2.</p>	<p>Mariamne, grand-daughter of John Hyrcanus, and therefore a Maccaean or Asmonean Jewish princess.</p> <p>Aristobulus, murdered by his father, 3 B.C. He married his cousin Bernice, daughter of Salome, his father's sister.</p>	<p>Mariamne, daughter of Simon the high priest.</p> <p>Herod Philip I. had no public office. He married Herodias, his niece, the daughter of his brother Aristobulus, who deserted him for Herod Antipas. [Called in N. T. Philip (Matt. xiv. 3; Mark vi. 17; Luke iii. 19).]</p>
<p>Herod, king of Chalcis, d. 48 A.D. He married— (1) Mariamne.</p> <p>(2) Aristobulus, who married Salome, daughter of Herodias.</p> <p>(3) Bernice, his niece, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I.</p>	<p>Herod Agrippa I. gathered together gradually most of the lands held by Herod the Great. He succeeded his uncle, Herod Philip II., in the tetrarchy of Iturea and Trachonitis, in 37 A.D.; his uncle, Herod Antipas, in the tetrarchy of Galilee and the Perea in 40 A.D.; and gained Judea and Samaria in 41 A.D. He married Cyprus, grand-daughter of Phasael, brother of Herod the Great. He was a persecutor, and died eaten up of worms, 44 A.D. [Called in N. T. Herod the king (Acts xii. 1), and Herod (Acts xii. 6, 11, 19, 20-23).]</p>	<p>Herodias.</p> <p>Salome, who danced before Herod Antipas. She married (1) Herod Philip II. the tetrarch; (2) Aristobulus, king of Chalcis. [Called in N. T. the daughter of Herodias (Matt. xiv. 6; Mark vi. 22).]</p>
<p>Agrippa II., king of Chalcis, 48-53 A.D., tetrarch of Trachonitis, 53-100 A.D. He died in 100 A.D., the last of the Herods, and as the descendant of Mariamne the last of the Maccabees. [Called in N. T. King Agrippa (Acts xxv. 13, 24, xxvi. 2, 7, 19, 27); Agrippa (Acts xxv. 23, xxvi. 1, 28, 32); the king (Acts xxvi. 26, 30).]</p>	<p>Bernice married Herod, king of Chalcis. At his death she came to live with her brother. [Acts xxv. 13, 23, xxvi. 30.]</p>	

¹ This table contains only the principal members of the Herod family. The names

THE HEROD FAMILY.¹

Jannæus, and confidential adviser of Queen Alexandra,
then made procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar, 47 B.C.

Herod the Great,
Joint tetrarch of Judea, 41 B.C.; sole king, 36 B.C.; died February or March, 1 B.C.
[Called in the New Testament *Herod the king* (Matt. ii. 1, 3; Luke i. 5); *Herod* (Matt. ii. 7, 12, 13, 16, 19, 22); *the king* (Matt. ii. 9).]
He married ten wives, among whom were—

||
Malthakè, a Samaritan.

Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee and the Perea. He married—
(1) the daughter of Aretas, king of Arabia;
(2) *Herodias*, the divorced wife of his brother *Herod Philip I.*, and his own niece. He was deposed and banished 40 A.D.
[Called in N. T. *Herod the tetrarch* (Matt. xiv. 1; Luke iii. 1, 19, ix. 7; Acts xiii. 1); *Herod* (Matt. xiv. 3, 6; Mark vi. 16-22; Luke iii. 19, viii. 3, ix. 9, xxiii. 7, 8, 11, 12, 15; Acts iv. 27); *the king* (Matt. xiv. 9; Mark vi. 22, 25, 27); *King Herod* (Mark vi. 14).]

Archelaus, ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea. Deposed and banished 8-9 A.D. [Matt. ii. 22].

||
Cleopatra of Jerusalem.

Herod Philip II., tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis or Gaulonitis. He built Cæsarea Philippi (Matt. xvi. 13; Mark viii. 27) and Bethsaida Julias. He married *Salome*, who was at once his niece and his grand-niece, the daughter of his brother *Herod Philip I.*, and of *Herodias* his niece.
[Called in N. T. *Philip*, tetrarch of Iturea. Luke iii. 1.]

Drusilla (Acts xxiv. 24) married (1) Azizus, king of Emesa;
(2) *Felix*, procurator of Judea
(Acts xxiii. 26, xxiv. 3, 22, 24, 27).
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Agrippa, d. 79 A.D.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

CHAP. I. 1. **T**HE former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through

INTRODUCTION, I. 1-12.

I.—THE FORTY DAYS AND THE COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS, I. 1-8.

The Acts of the Apostles. See Introduction for various forms of title, p. II.

1. **The former treatise, the first treatise,** the Gospel of St. Luke. The Gospel is continued in the Acts of the Apostles : the two are parts of one history, for the Church of Christ is the continuation in time of that union with God and man which, in perfect form, came to pass in the Incarnation. The first treatise, the Gospel, records the life of Christ in His body ; the second treatise, the Acts of the Apostles, the life of Christ in His Body which is the Church.

Theophilus, probably a noble Roman ; but see Godet, *Commentary on Luke*, Introd. p. 30. Luke's Gospel and the Acts were addressed to one man for his private guidance ; they soon became the common property of the Church. God acted through Luke as He commonly does. "He calls a man aside, and puts the mystery of the divine purpose into that man's heart . . . and from an individual centre, there goes out a glowing warmth that fills the whole earth with its gracious ardour" (Parker).

Began both to do and teach. God always *begins*, there is no ending in His working. Jesus too begins working and teaching in the Gospel, and He is still working through His Spirit in His Church. Jesus is always more than a Teacher sent from God ; He is the Saviour who accomplished a perfect work. It is by His deeds that men have salvation. But deeds and words go together. He preached His own life, and lived His own doctrine. The whole earthly ministry of Jesus is summed up by Luke in His doing and teaching, and that was only begun in the Gospels : it is continued in the Acts ; and is now going on in the Church.

2. Until the day in which he was taken up, *received up*, R. V. The Ascension of Jesus was the end of His earthly and the beginning of His heavenly ministry ; hence it finds a place both in the Gospel and in the **Acts.**

the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles **3** whom he had chosen : to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the

Through the Holy Ghost. This may mean (1) that Jesus' human nature was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke iv. 1; John iii. 34) after His Resurrection, as it was before His Passion, and from this measureless fulness of wisdom and power the commandment came ; or (2) that the Holy Ghost was before Pentecost, as after it, the agency through which Jesus gave His commandment. The former meaning seems the better one ; but both imply that what Jesus has taught through the Holy Spirit, we must receive and understand through the same Spirit.

Given commandments. The pierced hands of the Saviour exalted from the cross to the right hand of God still hold the sceptre of the kingdom of God.

Unto his apostles. In the time of our Lord the word *apostle* was in common use among the Jews to mean those officials who were sent on a special mission to a foreign or provincial synagogue about the collection of the temple tribute, or any important matter ; so Jesus' Apostles were to be messengers or envoys entrusted with an important mission and having received commandments to guide them.

3. Showed himself alive. The Resurrection was the evidence that Jesus' death was not mere martyrdom, but triumphant atonement ; it was to be the text for the Apostles' sermons : they were made sure of it as a fact.

The recorded appearances of our Lord (for there seem to be many unrecorded, Acts i. 3) are as follows :—

- (1) To Mary Magdalene (John xx. 11-18 ; Mark xvi. 9-11).
- (2) To the other women who went to the sepulchre (Matt. xxviii. 9).
- (3) To Peter (Luke xxiv. 34 ; 1 Cor. xv. 5).
- (4) To the two on the road to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 13-35 ; Mark xvi. 12).
- (5) To the *Eleven* in the evening, Thomas being absent (John xx. 19-24).

These were all on the day of the Resurrection.

(6) To the "Eleven," Thomas being present *one week later* (John xx. 25-29 ; Mark xvi. 14-18).

(7) To seven Apostles by the Sea of Galilee (John xxi. 1-24).
 (8) To five hundred disciples on a hill in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 16-20 ; Cor. xv. 6).

(9) To James (1 Cor. xv. 7).
 (10) To the Apostles at Jerusalem (Acts i. 3-5 ; 1 Cor. xv. 7).
 (11) Near Bethany at the Ascension (Acts i. 6-11 ; Mark xvi. 19 ; Luke xxiv. 50, 51).

Infallible proofs, proofs. The word infallible is not in the original ; the proofs mean evidence appealing to the various senses as if to guard against the possibility of the thought that the disciples were victims of a delusion.

Being seen of them forty days, appearing unto them by the space of forty days. This is the only passage which tells us the time which elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, during which the various appearances took place.

The kingdom of God. The thought of a kingdom of God was not a new

4 kingdom of God : and, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said*
 5 *he*, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the

one to the Jews : it had found expression continually in the Old Testament, and was connected with the Jewish idea of a theocracy or direct rule of God, shadowed forth in the earthly kingdom. The disciples all through our Lord's life with them clung to this earthly fulfilment of promises, and had dreams of an earthly kingdom when they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus took the phrase which in the Old Testament had attained its deepest significance in Dan. vii. 14, and gave it a new and yet deeper significance. In the New Testament this spiritual idea takes different aspects—(1) The presence of Christ upon earth (Matt. iii. 2) ; (2) The second coming of Christ (Matt. xvi. 28) ; (3) Christ's influence on the heart (Rom. xiv. 17) ; (4) Christianity as a church (Matt. xvi. 19) ; (5) Christianity as a faith (Matt. xiii. 11) ; (6) the life eternal (Matt. viii. 11) ;—but in all these meanings there is one central thought of a holy fellowship on earth founded by Jesus, and the preaching of the kingdom always includes the two ideas of repentance or change of heart and life, and faith or living personal trust on a living personal Saviour. For the things which Christ spoke concerning the kingdom between His Resurrection and Ascension compare Matt. xxviii. 19, 20 ; Mark xvi. 15–18 ; Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45 ; John xx. 21 ; Acts i. 4–8.

Among the things He taught them were—(1) that repentance and remission of sins were to be preached *in His name*, that *atonement* was the foundation of the kingdom (Luke xxiv. 47) ; (2) the *universality* of the kingdom,—to be preached to all nations (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20) ; (3) how to interpret the Old Testament in the light of the fuller revelation (Luke xxiv. 25–27, 45).

4. That they should not depart from Jerusalem. Compare Luke xxiv. 49. The law was to go forth from Zion, and the word of God from Jerusalem (Isa. ii. 3). They were all Galileans, far from home, and in danger (John xx. 19) : but as Jesus had been denied the home comforts of Nazareth (Luke iv. 16), so His disciples were to leave all to follow the Master (Mark x. 28–31).

The promise of the Father. Luke xxiv. 49 ; John xvi. 16–27, xv. 26.

Ye have heard of me. Luke xii. 11, 12, and John xiv.–xvi.

5. Ye shall be baptized. This is *the* promise of the Father ; an Old Testament promise, as Peter saw after the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, and repeated in the New Testament by John the Baptist and by Jesus. The disciples must have felt somewhat awestruck at the intimation that in a few days the promise would be fulfilled. Some of them, who had been disciples of John, had doubtless heard the Baptist's utterance (Matt. iii. 11 ; Mark i. 8 ; Luke iii. 16 ; John i. 26) : some had heard of the mysterious new birth (John iii. 3–5). Now they were to know what it really meant, in whole, as they already knew in part (John xx. 22).

6. Restore again the kingdom. They were still thinking of an earthly

7 kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father 8 hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in 9 Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And

kingdom. They were soon to learn that the same phrase may have different meanings, and that God's meaning is always the wider one. "The change from the spirit which dictated the question in this verse, to that in which Peter (Acts ii. 38, 39) preached repentance and forgiveness to all whom the Lord should call, is one of the greatest evidences of the miracle of Pentecost. Such changes can only come from above" (Lumby). The men who were dreaming about twelve thrones in an earthly Israel, all at once came to see that they were called to be preachers of salvation to their fellow-men.

7. To know the times or the seasons, *χρόνι, long times, καιροί, short seasons.* "Christ names neither day nor hour in His kingdom. He wills that His people watch and pray and wait. To wait is the school of the pious: but the *Not many days, Yet a little while, Behold I come quickly,* strengthen their hearts" (Lange). There is work to be done in the present, why brood over the future?

In his own power, has appointed by His own authority, or has at His own disposal.

8. Ye shall receive power or strength; power from on high, Luke xxiv. 49; what is needed to do work (Luke xxi. 15): not the profitless knowledge they had asked for. Witness-bearing for the Master is a severe task and needs the strength coming from a great promise. Compare Bruce's *Training of the Twelve*, chap. xxx.

After that the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit was to be the source of their power to bear witness for their ascended Master. "By virtue of this promise and the performance of it, we receive the New Testament as of divine inspiration, and we venture our souls upon it" (Matt. Henry).

Ye shall be witnesses. These words strike the keynote of the whole book, which is a history of the beginnings of the living Church of Christ, and they comprise the whole vocation of every Christian. The Apostles were to be witnesses to the past rather than prophets of the future; for the New Testament Church looks back to Jesus, as the Old Testament Church looked forward to Him. "The peculiar mission of the Church is to preserve to the world the living memory of Jesus." Compare John xv. 27, xx. 21.

In Jerusalem, etc. This verse is a table of contents to the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The whole book is a description of the fulfilment of this promise: the Spirit given; the witness-bearing begun in Jerusalem (John iv. 22; Isa. ii. 3) by Peter; in Samaria with its fields white to the harvest (John iv. 35) by Philip; in Judea by Philip and Peter; and to the uttermost parts of the earth by Paul. But when the promise was given, the disciples thought it referred only to the Jews who happened to be in those places.

II.—THE ASCENSION, 9-12.

9. While they beheld. His words were yet in their ears (Luke xxiv. 51), and their eyes were still gazing on Him, when the Ascension took place. They

when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.
 10 And, while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went
 11 up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

were to be witnesses of it, and saw it plainly that they might be able to describe it vividly. Jesus was first raised in visible manner, and while their eyes followed Him ascending, a cloud came down, surrounded and enclosed Him, and removed Him out of their sight. He had instructed them as their Prophet-Teacher, laid His commands on them as their King; and now as their great High Priest, He blessed them with uplifted hands and was parted from them in the act of breathing upon them perpetual benediction.

A cloud received him out of their sight. The *Shechinah*, the sign of God's presence in the Old Testament, which had come back, after long disappearance, and on more than one occasion surrounded Christ (Mark ix. 7). The visible ministry of Jesus had ended, and the invisible ministry of the Holy Spirit was soon to begin. "We cannot get beyond the cloud; but that cloud was the token of the glory of the Eternal Presence, as the Shechinah that of old filled the Temple (1 Kings viii. 10, 11; Isa. vi. 1-4), and it is enough for us to know that where God is, there also is Christ, retaining still, though under new conditions and laws, the human nature which made Him like His brethren" (Plumptre).

10. **Looked stedfastly toward heaven.** "The upward look . . . God's old medicament for wounded hearts and bruised lives" (Parker).

As he went up, taking with Him our human nature, which in His person has entered into heaven.

11. **Ye men of Galilee.** They were all Galileans now; all the Apostles save Judas Iscariot (*Ish-Kerioth*, man of Kerioth), who belonged probably to the town of Kerioth in Judea, were Galileans, and five of them came from the village of Bethsaida.

In white apparel, John xx. 12; Mark xvi. 5; Luke xxiv. 4; Acts x. 30.

Why stand ye gazing. There was work to be done for the Master; and although it is good to look upward, and meditate on heavenly things, yet this must not interfere with the active duties of the Christian life. The disciples wished to linger on the Mount of Transfiguration, but the demoniac boy was waiting at the hill-foot to be healed and Jesus made them descend. The women were invited to see the place where the Lord was laid, but they were also told to depart and tell the disciples and Peter that the Lord had risen. The question reminded them of work to be done, and the promise was given to strengthen and encourage in working. "When we stand gazing and trifling, the consideration of the Master's Second Coming should quicken and awaken us, and when we stand gazing and trembling, the consideration of it should comfort and encourage us" (Matt. Henry).

Shall so come. The heavenly messengers connect the Ascension and the Second Advent in the closest way: the Ascension of Jesus is thus made a promise of His Second Coming. He will come. The same Jesus comes, and

- 12** Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.
13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son of Alpheus*, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother of James*. These all continued with one accord in

He comes in the same way. It was this promise of a second visible coming, doubtless, that made the disciples return to Jerusalem with great joy (Luke xxiv. 52).

12. From the mount called Olivet, usually *the Mount of Olives*. At the foot of the hill was Gethsemane, and from the summit Jesus ascended.

A sabbath day's journey was two thousand paces or yards, about three-quarters of a mile from the city walls. It was supposed to be the distance from the tabernacle to the farthest point of the camp in the wilderness, and the space between the ark and the people at the crossing of the Jordan under Joshua.

PART I.—FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH, i. 13–xii. 25.

I.—THE CHURCH OF THE UPPER CHAMBER, i. 13–26.

13. They went into an upper room, where abode. *They went into the upper room where they were abiding with Peter, etc.* The structure of the phrase implies that the Eleven were temporary tenants or occupiers of this room, and it is to be inferred that the room was a centre for the small company of disciples. It has been conjectured that this upper room (a room in the uppermost story immediately below the flat roof) was the chamber where our Lord and the Twelve met for the Last Supper (Mark xiv. 15; Luke xxii. 8, 12); and was doubtless the room where the disciples were with the doors shut for fear of the Jews when Jesus appeared among them after His resurrection (John xx. 19).

Peter and James, etc. Four separate lists of the Apostles are given in the New Testament, and this is the fourth and last (Matt. x. 2–4; Mark iii. 16–19; Luke vi. 14–16). Compare my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, pp. 95–100. The order varies in the different lists, and this list differs from the others in omitting Judas Iscariot who had been the traitor. Peter, James, and John are the only Apostles whose names occur again in the Acts. They are mentioned here at the beginning of the history of the Church, set in their places at the head of the community of disciples, as if to show that although they had all forsaken their Master in His danger, they were again at their posts, their weakness forgiven (Matt. xxvi. 41; Mark xiv. 38); and that on the foundation of the Apostles, as well as of the Prophets, the New Testament Church is built (Eph. ii. 20).

14. These all continued with one accord, etc. *These all with one accord continued steadfastly in prayer with certain women, literally with women.* The disciple company consisted of four separately mentioned classes of persons:—(1) the eleven Apostles; (2) certain devout women, including Mary the mother of Jesus; (3) the brethren of Jesus, James, Joses (Joseph), Simon and Judas (Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3); (4) the other disciples of

prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were Jesus. Their brotherly fellowship is indicated by the phrase *with one accord*, and their common occupation was continued prayer for the fulfilment of the promise of the Father.

In prayer. They had been told to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, and that the fulfilment was at hand, and they spent their time in prayer to hasten its coming. "God will be inquired of for promised mercies, and the nearer the performance seems to be, the more earnest should we be in prayer for it" (Matt. Henry). The first sight given us of Christ's Church is a little community doing nothing but praying; they were united, but they felt their weakness and the absence of their Master, and praying brought them near Him. They became as "*earthen vessels cleansed by prayer*," and so fitted to receive the heavenly treasure (2 Cor. iv. 7).

The women, certain women. Luke in his Gospel twice mentions a definite company of women who ministered to Jesus of their substance (viii. 1-3), who in Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem had followed Him from Galilee (xxiii. 49), who were at the cross (Mark xv. 40), and at the grave (Luke xxiv. 22). They probably included Mary Magdalene, Joanna wife of Chuza, Susanna, Mary wife of Clopas, Salome, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and others. The frequent mention of these devout and ministering women in the Gospels and in the Acts is a testimony to the fact that Christianity raised the position of woman, giving her her share of Christian rights and of Christian duties. This band of women continued in Jerusalem sharing in the Pentecostal gift, and in the subsequent persecutions (viii. 3).

Mary the mother of Jesus. This is the last glimpse of Mary, and we see her one of a company of worshippers on her knees in prayer, waiting and longing, like the others, for the fulfilment of the promise.

His brethren, now at last a united family. Compare my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, pp. 101-103. Six months previously they had not believed in Jesus (John vii. 5), and at an earlier period in His ministry they had sought to restrain Him, as a madman (Mark iii. 21); now they were believers within the company of the disciples. Jesus had appeared to James (1 Cor. xv. 7), and this may have overcome their unbelief. They are expressly distinguished from the Apostles, and therefore James the son of Alphæus cannot have been the Lord's brother, who afterwards became the head of the Jerusalem Church. Compare note on xii. 17.

15. Peter, who had denied the Master, and who by that denial had fallen like Judas and had expelled himself from the disciple company, is again in his old place, as the impetuous speaker for the Twelve. He had been forgiven: a special message had been sent him by the messenger of the Risen Saviour (Mark xvi. 7), and a special charge given him (John xxi. 15-18). He is here strengthening his brethren. He does not gloss over Judas' sin, but there is no denunciation, rather sadness, "*He was numbered with us.*"

In the midst of the disciples, of the brethren. This is the first formal assembly or congregation of the Christian Church, and the name they give themselves is *the brethren*. They are met to do a deed in common, to elect one of their number to be an *Apostle*. There is no trace of official rank

16 about an hundred and twenty,) Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas, which
 17 was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered
 18 with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity ; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his
 19 bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers

among them : they are all brethren. Even the Apostles do not seem to have thought, that they had the power to act in the name of the community ; they gather the disciples together, and the whole congregation, including the women, listen, deliberate, and act.

And the number, etc. *And there was a multitude of persons gathered together, about a hundred and twenty.* Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6) says that on one occasion Jesus showed Himself to above five hundred brethren at once, but that was probably in Galilee ; the number in the text includes the disciples in Jerusalem.

16. Men and brethren, this scripture, etc. *Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David, etc.*

The Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David. Jesus had taught His disciples (Luke xxiv. 44-48) to find in the Prophets and in the Psalms anticipations of what would happen to Him, and Peter for the first time uses this new mode of interpretation, and reads the present condition of the apostolic company in the light of the word of God. One of the greatest arguments against the claims of Jesus was the treachery of Judas ; it seemed to prove a want of discernment which destroyed His claims to divine Messiahship. Peter's answer is, that this treachery did not happen otherwise than by the purpose of God, declared in Old Testament Scripture. David, God's anointed over Israel, was persecuted and betrayed by enemies, but while he described his own trials from his own knowledge, the Holy Ghost was speaking through him words and thoughts which found their fullest fulfilment in the sufferings of the Christ and in the treachery and malice of his enemies, and particularly in the act of Judas. Applying this mode of interpretation, Peter found three things foretold, and which therefore had to be accomplished :—(1) that the traitor was to be one of themselves ; (2) what his fate would be ; and (3) that his office from which he had been ejected was to be filled by another.

17. For he was numbered with us, etc. *For he was numbered among us, and had received his lot (or portion) in this ministry.* No quotation is made, but there may be a reference to Ps. xli. 9 or to Ps. cix. 2-5.

18. Now this man purchased, now this man obtained his only reward for exceeding baseness. Verses 18 and 19 are not part of Peter's speech, but an explanation inserted by Luke. Matthew (xxvii. 5-8) gives another and apparently different account of the fate of Judas ; but the two accounts are not irreconcilable. Luke does not say—indeed, the Greek implies the reverse—that Judas himself bought the field, and in his attempt to hang himself the traitor's body might easily have been mangled as described in this verse.

19. In their proper tongue. Aramaic, the corrupt Hebrew, spoken in Palestine in the days of our Lord.

at Jerusalem ; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20 For it is written in the book of Psalms,

Let his habitation be desolate,

And let no man dwell therein :

and,

His bishopric let another take.

21 Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be

23 a witness with us of his resurrection. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and

20. In the book of Psalms. Ps. cix. 8 ; Ps. lxix. 25.

Bishopric, office or charge.

21. Which have companied with us. The Apostles were to be witnesses for Jesus, and the qualifications for the office laid down by Peter are :—personal knowledge of the life of Christ, and faithful adherence to Him. They are the personal qualifications given by Jesus Himself (John xv. 27). Two well-marked points in the ministry of Christ are stated—the Baptism of John and the Ascension ; and we see from the summaries of apostolic sermons recorded in the Acts that the oral gospel of the Apostles was a vivid representation of the purpose of salvation as seen in the words, sufferings, and deeds of Jesus between these two points of time. Compare Peter's sermon to the household of Cornelius (x. 37-43), and Paul's discourse at Antioch in Pisidia (xiii. 23-31).

22. Must one be ordained. Peter had quoted two passages from the Psalms, the one of which declared that the traitor's place was empty, and the other that another must fill it. He found the necessity for proceeding at once to elect an Apostle in the fact that Old Testament Scripture must be fulfilled. Peter spoke before the outpouring of the Spirit, and many have believed that this necessity did not exist, that the election was premature, and that God fulfilled His purpose in His own way when He called the persecutor Saul to be an Apostle.

A witness . . . of his resurrection. No fact more vividly testified that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, than the Resurrection, and the earliest Gospel was the witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus. The apostolic Gospel began with the Resurrection, the most recent manifestation of Jesus Christ ; it quickly introduced the Passion and its cycle of events, and working backwards soon included those details of the life of Christ which best represented the divine purpose in it.

23. They appointed. The whole disciple community, Apostles, brethren of Christ, women and men, made the selection, following the advice and persuasion of Peter. The Apostles did not select and present to the Church for their approval : the whole community chose the two men : the first selection to office in the infant Church, at least in its first and human stage, was an election by the people or by the congregation.

Joseph called Barsabas, better *Barsabbas*. These two men Joseph

24 **Matthias.** And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two
25 thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he
26 might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Barsabbas called Justus, and Matthias, are mentioned in this place only, and all that is known about them is what is said here. They must have been among the earliest disciples of Jesus, and must have been faithful to the end; they must have been well known and esteemed among the brethren; what became of them afterwards, and what work they did, are entirely unknown. Tradition and conjecture have not been wanting, however. They had been members of the Seventy, Eusebius says (*Hist.* i. 12); some have without warrant identified Joseph Barsabbas with Joses Barnabas (iv. 36); others have supposed Joseph a brother of Judas Barsabbas (xv. 22); while others have identified him with Jesus or Justus, who was of the circumcision (Col. iv. 11), and with Justus who had a house in Corinth near the synagogue (xviii. 7).

24. Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts. A prayer addressed to Jesus by Peter in the name of the Church, containing the first description given by the Church of its God and Saviour. Jesus is called the *heart-knower* (John xxi. 17). "When an Apostle was to be chosen, he must be chosen by his heart, and the temper and disposition of that" (Matt. Henry); so must it be with every believer. Observe the intimate personal intercourse which the disciples have with their Risen Lord.

Thou hast chosen. They had done their part of the duty, and asked Jesus to do what they could not; they could tell who were fitted by companionship with Jesus to be witnesses; they could not tell whether the heart was right, and they asked the risen and ascended Lord to decide that for them.

26. They gave forth their lots. Each name was in all probability written on a small tablet; the two tablets were then put into an urn and shaken out; he whose lot first fell out was chosen. It was an Old Testament custom. The lot was cast in the case of the two goats at the feast of the Atonement (Lev. xvi. 8); the land of Canaan was divided by lot (Num. xxxiv. 13; Josh. xiv. 2, xxiii. 4). Compare on the casting of lots, 1 Chron. xxiv. 5, xxv. 8. It is to be noticed that this use of the lot occurred before the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that there is no recorded use of it after Pentecost. From the word for lot (*kleros*) has come our word clergy by the following line of thought—(1) the lot by which the office was assigned; (2) the office thus assigned by lot; (3) the body of persons holding the office (Lightfoot, *Philip.* p. 246).

Was numbered with the eleven. The election of Matthias is the first act of the Church of Christ in its corporate capacity, and has therefore an unusual interest. It has these elements. (1) There is no sacerdotalism or ecclesiastical aristocracy in the infant Church. Peter, it is true, prompt of speech and suggestion, stands forth as the leader, but persuades, and does not command. The Christian Church is a democracy in which man and woman have equal

CHAP. II. 1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come,

rights and equal responsibilities. (2) There is a feeling of intimate personal intercourse between the little community and Jesus their ascended Saviour, which finds vent in prayer which makes the act of the congregation the act also of Jesus. (3) Three things co-operate in the choice and ordination of an office-bearer : (a) proper preparation for the work ; (b) a recognition of this by the brethren and their calling him to office ; (c) the confirmation of this call by Jesus the Head of the Church.

II.—PENTECOST, ii. 1—47.

i. *The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, i—13.*

II. 1. The day of Pentecost. This feast was held on the *fiftieth* day after the Passover, and was therefore named *Pentecost, fiftieth*. It was the second of the three great festivals or pilgrimages—the feast of the Passover being the first, and the feast of Tabernacles or Booths, the third. The season of the year at which it was held was better and safer for travelling, and it attracted to Jerusalem larger crowds of foreign Jews than did the Passover. In the Old Testament it is called *the feast of Harvest* (Ex. xxiii. 16) ; *the feast of Weeks* (Ex. xxxiv. 22 ; Deut. xvi. 10), because a week of weeks came between it and the Passover ; *the day of the first-fruits* (Num. xxviii. 26 ; Lev. xxiii. 17), because the feature of the festival was the presentation of two loaves baked of wheat from the year's wheat harvest just gathered in. The fifty days between Passover and Pentecost were the period of the Jewish grain harvest ; the period began with the presentation of the first ripe sheaf of barley at the Passover, and ended with the first two loaves baked of wheat reaped in the wheat harvest. The festival was therefore, according to some writers, the Jewish harvest home, and many of its distinctive features were in harmony with so joyous an occasion. Open hospitality was enjoined and practised (Deut. xvi. 11) ; the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger were to be remembered (the command to leave gleanings for the poor is given along with directions for this feast) ; no servile work was to be done on the feast day, in special remembrance of the deliverance from the bondage in Egypt (Deut. xvi. 12, and Lev. xxiii. 21). Although Scripture is silent upon the subject, a Jewish tradition connected the feast of Pentecost with the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, and declared that the day of Pentecost had witnessed the encampment of the Israelites at the foot of the mountain, the thunderings and lightnings, and the great proclamation of the Law. The day of Pentecost had therefore many memories which made it peculiarly appropriate for the beginning of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It was a day of revelation of God, of deliverance from slavery, of commemoration of the universal brotherhood of Israel, of the fulfilment of the promise of harvest coming from seed-time, and above all it was the day on which Jews gathered in Jerusalem from all ends of the earth could hear the Gospel of the Saviour and could carry back the glad tidings to the uttermost ends of the earth.

It is most likely that the 14th of Nisan fell on a Thursday in the year of the Crucifixion, and that the Paschal lamb was slain on the following evening, on Friday (see my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, p. 212), and on the day after, Nisan 16th, a Saturday, the barley sheaf was presented in the Temple. According to Jewish reckoning, **seven weeks** were counted from that day, and

- 2** they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Pentecost was the next or *fiftieth day*. The forty-ninth day in that year was therefore a Saturday, and Pentecost, the day following, was the First Day of the Week. Hence Whitsunday, or the Sunday of Pentecost, soon became a day of commemoration in the Christian Church, and was a common day for the baptism of Christian converts.

They were all with one accord, together, R. V. The *all* probably includes more than the 120 persons, for Galileans would be at the feast.

In one place. Probably in the upper chamber (i. 13) : several scholars suppose that the descent of the Holy Spirit took place when the disciples were assembled in one of the many rooms in the temple courts, but this is improbable.

2. A rushing mighty wind. Rather *the rushing of a mighty wind, or a mighty breath borne onwards* (Plumptre). The verb used, *borne onwards*, occurs twice in 2 Pet. i. 17, 18, 21, to express (1) the coming of the voice from heaven at the Transfiguration, and (2) the motion of the holy men of old by the Holy Ghost. The word *breath* suggests Jesus' action when He *breathed* on His disciples and said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost* (John xx. 22).

3. Cloven tongues. Rather *tongues parted among them*. It is not said that there was either wind or fire. There was a noise and there were tongues ; but there was neither felt blast nor felt burning. The noise was like a breath of wind borne violently along, and bringing with it tongues of flame which, distributing themselves among the disciples, settled for a moment on the head of each. The sound and the sight were the sensible garment of the spiritual visitation.

4. With the Holy Ghost. This was the real spiritual wonder, their baptism with the Holy Ghost, in which all shared, Apostles and disciples, men and women. This gift of the Spirit was the fulfilment of the special promise of the Father for which they were waiting, and differed from all earlier manifestations and communications of the Holy Ghost. The Apostles had received the Holy Spirit at an earlier period (John xx. 22) : but this was not the abiding, complete, and universal bestowal which had been promised and which was now received. It differed from all other communications (1) in the fulness of the Spirit, with an abundance of His powers and gifts ; (2) in the abiding union of the Holy Ghost with human persons, and through them with all mankind ; (3) in the universality of the gift, it was given to all, not to exceptional or official individuals. It was the gracious gift of God to the whole congregation, and the visible fulfilment of the promise of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

To speak with other tongues. The verses which describe the gift of tongues present some difficulties which space does not permit to be discussed. The following points may be indicated :—(1) The gift was not the permanent power of speaking new languages conferred on the Apostles to aid them in their missionary work ; for (a) no such power was needed at the time, Greek

5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, 6 out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was

was the universally prevailing language. (b) The Apostles never made use of such miraculous gift of new languages ; they always preached in Greek, and wrote their epistles in Greek ; and at Lystra (xiv. 11) it appears that Paul and Barnabas did not understand the people when they spoke "in the speech of Lycaonia." (2) On the other hand, it is clear that on Pentecost the brethren on whom the Spirit fell did speak in such a way that they used the words of the dialects belonging to widely separated parts of the world. (3) When they spoke with tongues it was not to instruct, but to utter "the wonderful works of God ;" they were possessed, as some of the old prophets were, and chanted in ecstatic utterances the praises of God. (4) This gift of tongues was not peculiar to the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (compare Acts x. 46, xix. 6) ; it is spoken about at great length by Paul (1 Cor. xii. 10-xiv. 30) ; and everywhere it seems to accompany an ecstatic frame of mind and manifest itself in adoration rather than in instruction, "in short ejaculations of elevated emotion in praise of God for His deeds and gifts."

The *gift of tongues*, like other miracles, was a sign both to the disciples and to strangers, and was reckoned so by the early Church (Acts iv. 30, 31). It was an external sign of the invisible grace communicated. "If it was to be made plain beyond further gainsaying, that the Holy Spirit of God had Himself descended to make His abode and His temple in the Church and in the hearts of men, there must be some sign accompanying that advent, of which the senses could take cognizance, and from which no inference but one only could be drawn" (Vaughan).

5. Out of every nation under heaven. Only a very small portion of the Jewish people lived in Palestine during the times of our Lord and His Apostles ; by far the largest number were natives of other lands dwelling in large colonies or in small communities. These Jews of the *Dispersion*, while they remained Jews in religion, customs, and mode of life, while they had their synagogues, etc., partook of the character of the people among whom they had lived for generations, and could be distinguished from each other as we can now distinguish between Russian, German, or English Jews. While the temple stood these Jews of the *Diaspora* made pilgrimages to the feasts, and indeed a large part of the population of Jerusalem and Judea lived upon the money brought into the country by these strangers. From a census taken in the time of Nero, more than 2,700,000 were gathered to the Passover feast, and still greater numbers came to Pentecost. Thus at the very beginning the disciple company were witnesses for Christ to the uttermost ends of the earth, for Peter's sermon was preached to men who had their homes all over the known world. (See Introduction, p. 30.)

It is interesting to notice that the wide list of countries mentioned includes all the lands to which the Israelites had been banished, and where they had been settled in for centuries, as well as those countries to which they had gone voluntarily. Hence representatives from all the twelve tribes listened to Peter's sermon, carried back the gospel to their distant homes, and were some time afterwards confirmed in the faith by the *Catholic Epistle of James*, which is addressed *To the Twelve Tribes which are scattered abroad, or are in the dispersion*. The Bible knows nothing about *Ten Lost Tribes*. An obscure apocryphal book (2 Esdras) has given rise to the legend of the dis-

noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites,

appearance of Ten Tribes; but their representatives were among the crowd at Pentecost. There had been more than one exile and several emigrations. The larger portion of the Ten Tribes had been carried off to lands bordering the river Gozan and to cities in the land of the Medes by Shalmanezer (2 Kings xvii. 6); their representatives were present in the Jews from **Parthia, Media, and Elam** (in Persia). Two tribes had been carried off by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (2 Kings xxiv.-xxv.), and only part had come back in the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah; the descendants of those who remained came from **Mesopotamia** to Jerusalem at Pentecost. In the reign of Manasseh (as we learn from the Septuagint), Psammethicus, king of Egypt, had carried off Jewish captives and settled them in the parts of **Libya** about Cyrene, beyond the river of Egypt (Zeph. iii. 10); their children heard Peter's sermon. The men from **Egypt** were most likely descendants of Jews carried captive by Ptolemy Lagos (Joseph. *Antiq.* xii. 1). The sufferers in all the exiles, besides those whom trade, desire for wider spheres of activity, or the wars of Pompey the Great, had scattered over the known world, were represented in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

6. When this was noised abroad, rather when this voice, or this sound, was heard; the sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind could be traced to the house where the brethren were, and the crowd came running.

Confounded, confused or perplexed.

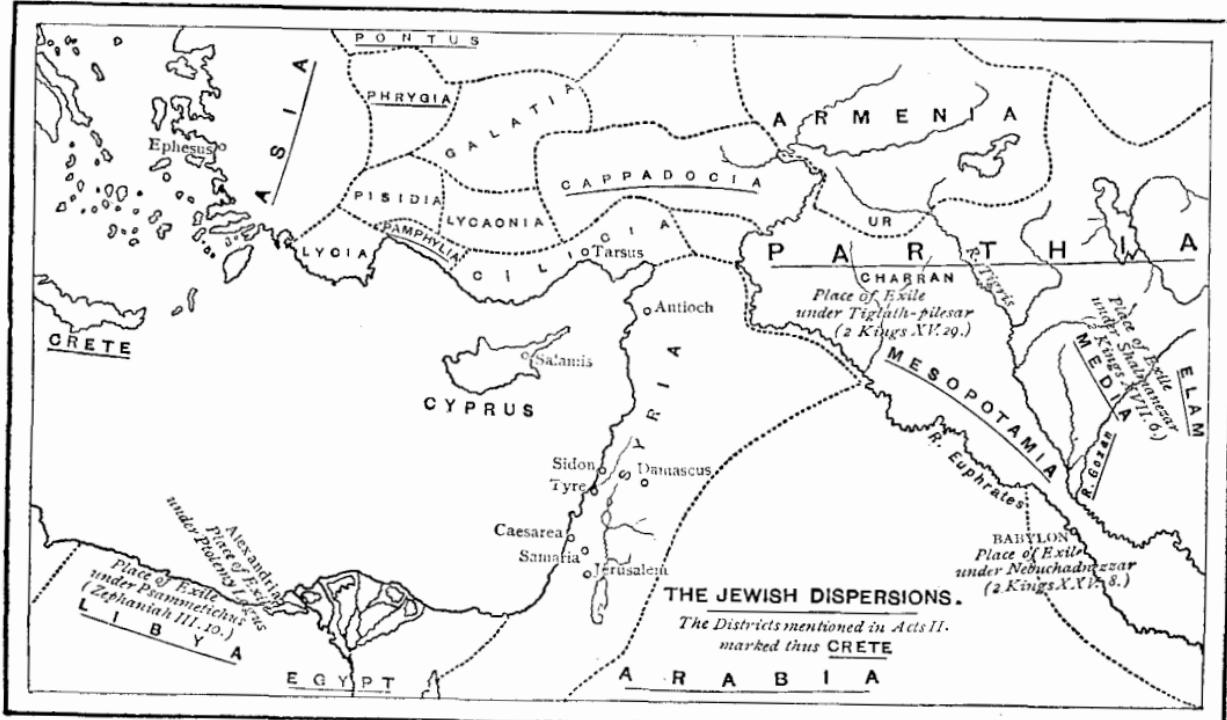
7. **Galileans.** The word used in this connection undoubtedly suggests men who came from Galilee, but it can scarcely be supposed that all the disciples were Galileans. The Twelve who were the leaders of the community, and doubtless the most conspicuous, were known to be Galileans; and the disciples of Jesus had been called Galileans before the Crucifixion (Matt. xxvi. 69-73).

8. In our own tongue, wherein we were born. Greek was almost universally spoken over the whole of the eastern part of the Roman Empire, but most districts had their own colloquial language. Aramaic was spoken in Palestine, and the people of Lycaonia had a language of their own. There can be no doubt but that Luke means to say that the utterances of the disciples inspired by the Holy Ghost were made in a variety of dialects or languages. Compare verses 4, 6, and 8.

9. **Parthians.** The Parthians were the only nation in apostolic times who had held their own against the Romans, and were their formidable rivals. Their empire lasted for nearly six centuries, and their power was at its height during the first century of our era, when their territories extended from the Tigris to India. The Jews who hated the Roman power were to be found in great numbers in Parthia.

Medes were included in the great Parthian Empire; their territories lay east of the Tigris and north of Elam.

Elamites. Elam lay to the north of the Persian Gulf and south of Media.



and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

Mesopotamia is the country between the rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

Judea. It has been conjectured that the word *Judea* is a copyist's mistake for *India*, but the oldest MSS. undoubtedly contain Judea. The *Beni-Israel*, or Indian Jews, had settlements in India from before the time of Christ.

Cappadocia, etc. *Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia* were all provinces in what is now called Asia Minor. Asia means here and elsewhere in the New Testament the Roman Province of Proconsular Asia, which had Ephesus for its capital and was situated on the western shore of the modern Asia Minor.

10. Egypt. Large numbers of Jews were settled in Egypt, where their headquarters were Alexandria. The Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint was made for the Alexandrian Jews. Some of them professed a dreamy mysticism and led an ascetic life. Philo the Neo-Platonist was an Alexandrian Jew.

Cyrene, the capital of Cyrenaica or Cyrenian Libya, contained large Jewish colonies who constituted a fourth of the whole population (*Josephus, Antiquities*, xiv. 7, 2). Constant mention is made in the New Testament of Cyrenian Jews (Matt. xxvii. 32; Acts xii. 20, xiii. 1, vi. 9).

Strangers of Rome. *Sojourners from Rome*, i.e. Romans who were sojourning in Jerusalem. Classical authors (*Horace Sat.* i. 5; *Juvenal, Sat.* iii. 14, vi. 542) refer frequently to the Jews in Rome. Pompey the Great had carried large numbers of Jews as slaves to Rome in 63 B.C., who were settled in the district of Rome across the Tiber. Their descendants became freedmen or *Libertini* (Acts vi. 9), and had many synagogues in Rome. During the reign of Claudius 4000 of these Jewish freedmen were banished to Sardinia (*Tacitus, Ann.* ii. 85).

Proselytes were Gentiles who had accepted the Jewish faith, either entirely or in part. Some had been circumcised and were bound by the whole law of Moses as interpreted by the scribes; others were uncircumcised but obeyed certain injunctions. The numbers of these proselytes were very great in all the large cities, and especially in Rome, where they were frequently satirized by such poets as Juvenal.

11. Cretes. Inhabitants of Crete, now called Candia, a large and well-known island in the Mediterranean Sea.

Arabians. Large numbers of Jews were settled in Arabia, some of the settlements dating from before the captivity, but the larger number were made during and after the exile. It is said that some of the Arab clans of the Hejaz in the present day are of Jewish descent.

13. Are full of new wine. Literally *sweet drink*, i.e. wine—the wine made from the drip of the grapes before the clusters are trodden in the winepress—stronger than the thin sour wines used as daily beverage.

Paul (1 Cor. xiv. 23) describes the effect of a congregation all speaking

14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words : For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ;

17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh : And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams :

18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens

with tongues on unbelievers and ignorant persons, *Will they not say that ye are mad?* The gift of tongues evidently so affected the speakers that they were no longer themselves, but chanted the praises of God in such a way that scoffers and even simply ignorant people might easily accuse them of drunkenness or madness. This is one of the reasons which Paul gives for declaring that other gifts are more important for the edification of the Church. Every revival period, it must be remembered, will have its mockers, and the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.

2. The effect on Peter, 14-36.

14. **But Peter, standing up with the eleven.** The Twelve were to be witnesses for Christ, and the hour of witness-bearing had come. God's gifts are given for the using. They were the leaders of the little community, and had to confront threatened danger.

15. **Are not drunken.** They had spent the vigil of Pentecost in prayer, as all devout Jews were in the habit of doing : the charge was a grave one at any time, but implied more than common wickedness at such a season.

Third hour of the day, that is, about nine o'clock in the morning.

16. **Joel.** Compare Joel ii. 28-32. The verses quoted are slightly different from the A. V. ii. 16, but agree with the Septuagint or Ancient Greek translation. Peter seems to quote this passage for the sake of the promise with which it ends, as well as for the prediction of Pentecost and of the gift of the Spirit.

17. **In the last days.** This expression is common in the Old Testament to denote the coming of the Messiah (Isa. ii. 2 ; Mic. iv. 1) ; and in the New Testament to signify the dispensation of the Holy Ghost now begun at Pentecost.

Your sons and your daughters. Not on priests, nor on official prophets only, but on men and on women. Even on women who were slaves God's Spirit was to come. For Christianity puts every member of the human race on an equality. All have sinned, all need the salvation of Christ. The brotherhood of humanity rests on this, that for my neighbour as for myself Christ died. Fallen humanity, not raised by the gospel, cannot recognise this brotherhood. Woman is oppressed ; slavery denies man's rights and dignity ; the old who are no longer able to work are left to perish. At Pentecost the old, the women, the slaves received the gift of the Spirit ; they were all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 28).

18. **On my servants and on my handmaidens, bondmen and bondwomen.**

I will pour out in those days of my Spirit ; and they shall prophesy :

- 19 And I will show wonders in heaven above,
And signs in the earth beneath ;
Blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :
20 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before that great and notable day of the Lord come :
21 And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.
22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye
23 yourselves also know : him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken,

20. *Notable day* ; in *Joel, terrible day*. Joel's prophecy was primarily fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar ; but every prophecy belongs to what is beyond time, and has endless fulfilments.

22. *Ye men of Israel.* Peter's sermon has two heads and a conclusion : (1) an explanation of the outpouring of the Spirit, it is the fulfilment of the promise of salvation to all that call on the name of the Lord ; (2) a description of the Lord who is to be called upon ; and (3) a pointed appeal to acknowledge the Messiahship of the crucified Saviour. The 22nd verse begins the second part, when Peter goes on to show that "the Lord" is "Jesus whom they had crucified" (verse 36).

Jesus of Nazareth. It required the greatest courage to pronounce the name of one who only seven weeks before had been put to death in the manner reserved for the worst criminals.

A man. Peter begins, where his audience could begin, with the manhood of Jesus. He ends, where only those taught of the Spirit could follow, with His Divinity.

Approved, rather pointed to, accredited.

Of God. All through this sermon Peter shows that Jehovah, the God of Israel, has foreordained and done everything. *God* commissioned Jesus, *God* gave Him His power to work signs and wonders, by *God's* counsel Jesus was delivered up to death, *God* raised Him from the dead, *God* made Him both Lord and Christ, and *God* through His prophets had foretold all this.

23. *Foreknowledge of God.* The purpose of Jehovah, Israel's God, must stand. Men cannot thwart it ; their attempts to do so are themselves used by God to further His purpose coming slowly to pass. Peter does not mean to lessen their guilt, but to obviate a difficulty in the way of their believing that the Messiah could possibly be put to death. It was in the line of God's purpose that the Christ should pass through suffering into glory.

Wicked hands, rather lawless hands, hands outside of the Jewish law. The Jews had delivered a Jew, their Messiah, into the hands of the Romans.

Crucified, the word means "nailed up," a word which brought home vividly their cruelty.

24 and by wicked hands have crucified and slain : whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it
 25 was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him,

I foresaw the Lord always before my face ;

For he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved :

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad ;

Moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope :

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell,

Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life ;

Thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his

30 sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he

31 would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was

32 not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

24. Raised up. There had been rumours of the resurrection in Jerusalem, to counteract which the Pharisees had set a going the story that the disciples had stolen away the body. "Peter stands without equivocation on the historical fact of the resurrection. . . . He talks with the absolute frankness of a man who is relating facts, which every child in the assembly knew to be such, and he was in the presence of men who could have instantly risen and contradicted the statements which he made had they been in a position to do so" (Parker).

It was not possible, because Old Testament prophecy had always implied a victory over death, and it must be fulfilled.

25. David. The quotation is from the Septuagint version in Ps. xvi. 8-11. "David often spoke concerning himself, but the Spirit who spoke in David, spoke concerning Christ" (Alford).

29. His sepulchre. The sepulchre of David was *within* the city (1 Kings ii. 10; Neh. iii. 16); its site, unknown now, was then known to every Jew (Joseph. *Antiq.* vii. 15, 4, xiii. 8, 4, xvi. 7, 1).

30. A prophet. David was a prophet whose task it was to speak of the Messiah and the coming deliverance ; therefore if he was not speaking of himself, and he could not, because he had died, he must be speaking of the Christ.

31. His flesh see corruption. "It is said that the Romans had a practice of lighting up their tombs. . . . It was but a glimmering light, the rays of which were confined to the catacomb walls. But the light Christ sheds on the grave falls on the vista of eternity. We can now stoop, look in, and see immortality beyond."

32. We all are witnesses. We twelve Apostles *saw* Him ; we whom you

- 33 Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he
 34 hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens : but he saith himself,

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

- 35 Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

- 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

see to-day possessed of these gifts of the Spirit, and our one business in life is to witness to His Resurrection.

33. **Exalted.** Jesus was not merely raised from the dead like Lazarus or the daughter of Jairus. He whom the Jews nailed to the cross is now on the throne of the heavens.

Hath shed forth this. Peter gives three proofs of the Resurrection : (1) prophecy ; (2) the eye-witness of the Apostles ; (3) the confirmation of the Holy Spirit.

36. **Therefore.** Another *therefore* and the concluding one, leading the men of Israel to the Lord of salvation at that present time. The word implies a *pointed application* : now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

All the house of Israel, even those who seven weeks before had shouted, "Crucify Him," many of whom must have been present.

That same Jesus, whom ye, etc., rather *God hath made Him, even this Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.* The Lord over all : the Christ to His chosen people. In the Greek *ye crucified* is the last word of the sermon. He leaves that accusation to rankle in their hearts and bring home to them the enormity of their guilt. "From first to last in these early discourses, the death of Jesus is never a revelation of the infinite wealth of divine love ; it is always a revelation of the enormity of human sin" (Dale).

Thus ends Peter's sermon. The preacher reveals himself in it, and the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit upon him. He takes facts present to his audience, sets them in the light of Old Testament history in order to make their meaning clear, and leads up to his conclusion with three pregnant *therefores*. The first fact was the appearance of the disciples under the inspiration of the Spirit ; their ecstatic rapture was the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, and was a manifest sign of the beginning of the Messianic era, an era which was to end in the final judgment. This time of dread, thus begun, had no terrors for the faithful who believe in the Messiah. His second fact was the man Jesus of Nazareth, His death, and His Resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth had been among them, doing signs and wonders. They had taken Him and had nailed Him on the cross, and had buried Him. God had taken Him, and had raised Him from the dead. This life, death, and rising again Peter set before them with a background of Old Testament prophecy lighting it up and giving it a meaning impregnated with the purpose of Jehovah. He took his stand on the historical fact of the Resurrection, and the threefold witness for it from Old Testament prophecy, from human sight, touch, and hearing, from New Testament descent of the Spirit. His first *therefore* brings forward the witness of David ; the Psalmist was a prophet,

37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 38 Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive 39 the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as 40 many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from

therefore he witnessed to the Resurrection though he did not live to see it. His second *therefore* connects the outpouring of the Spirit with the risen, ascended Son of God; Jesus has ascended, *therefore* "He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." He lived, died, rose again, ascended to pour forth His Spirit in the manner His audience had seen, which was the last miracle, the spiritualization of all miracles, the abiding miracle which would mark the whole Messianic era now begun. His third *therefore* condenses the whole argument into a gospel message, that Jesus is the Christ. Peter began with the *man* Jesus of Nazareth, to end with Jesus the *Lord* and the *Christ*.

3. The effect on the people, 37-41.

37. **Pricked in their hearts.** The phrase occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. "Sinners when their eyes are opened cannot but be pricked to the heart for sin" (Matt. Henry). It was the preparation for the outpouring of the Spirit upon them.

And to the rest of the apostles. The Eleven had stood up with Peter, perhaps had spoken, had certainly assented; they were seen to be the leaders of the company of disciples.

Men and brethren. Love awakens love; Peter had called the crowd *Brethren*; they respond in the same manner to the followers of Jesus whom they had crucified.

What shall we do? Exhortation which produces emotion, and that only, fails in its purpose. There must be action on the will also.

38. **Repent and be baptized** (Luke xxiv. 47; Matt. xxviii. 19). The inward change of heart and the outward profession of that change, signified by the sacrament of baptism (1 Pet. iii. 21). The converts by baptism widely separated themselves from the unbelieving Jews and became a visible Christian fellowship. Compare John the Baptist's answer to the same question (Luke iii. 10), there the law, here the gospel—sorrow, faith, and the sign of faith. Remission of sins is limited by faith.

Ye shall receive. Acts viii. 17, x. 47.

39. **For the promise is unto you and to your children.** In the first exhortation to converts to come forward for baptism, the Apostle includes their children. "Your children shall still have, as they have had, an interest in the covenant, and a title to the external seal of it. . . . When God took Abraham into covenant, He said, I will be a God to thee and to thy seed; and accordingly every Israelite had his son circumcised at eight days old. Now it is proper for an Israelite, when he is by baptism to come into a new dispensation of this covenant, to ask, What must be done with my children? Must they be thrown out or taken in with me? Taken in, saith Peter, by all

41 this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added 42 *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and 44 signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were 45 together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions; for the promise, that great promise of God's being a God to me, *is as much to you and to your children as it ever was*" (Matt. Henry).

41. *Three thousand souls*; better, *there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls*. The 120 brethren had now 3000 brethren more. The infant Church was born in a revival, when three thousand hearts felt conviction of sin, repented at the feet of Jesus, received the sign of faith, and became obedient to the movements of the Spirit.

4. *The first converts, 42-47.*

42. They continued stedfastly, etc. This verse gives the four characteristics of the Church of the day of Pentecost. (1) They made progress, for conversion even at Pentecost did not mean transformation into perfect Christians. The expression in the A. V. gives a wrong suggestion. The meaning is, not that the disciples continued stedfast in the doctrinal belief of the Apostles, but that they were eagerly intent to receive the oral gospel which they preached by listening to the *teaching* of the Apostles, and that teaching, as we see from Peter's sermon, was drawn from the Old Testament and from memories of Jesus. (2) *Fellowship* with one another for mutual encouragement; what this fellowship practically means may be learnt from the New Testament ways in which the word is translated; the same word is *communion*, 1 Cor. x. 16, and *contribution* for the poor, Rom. xv. 26. (3) *Breaking of bread* is the earliest New Testament phrase for the *Lord's Supper*, and thus the second sacrament took its place along with baptism in the Christian community from the beginning. It is most likely that the Lord's Supper was dispensed at every evening meal. (4) *Prayer*, which means prayer together, public worship as opposed to private devotion. The better translation of the clause is, *in the breaking of bread and in the prayers*.

43. *Fear came upon every soul*, etc. The Greek tenses used imply that *fear or awe mingled with reverence came on occasions*, while the *signs and wonders* were continually done. This verse, when taken along with verses 42 and 47, implies that the Christian community had a threefold effect on unbelievers. (1) Its presence made them afraid, and perhaps brought on some prickings of heart which did not go deep enough for conviction; (2) the crowd could not help approving with a reverential awe of the conduct of the Christian community; (3) while day by day many were brought to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

44. *Were together and had all things in common*. Living Christianity always teaches (1) that we are responsible for our neighbours, and (2) that what is our property is not *our own*. We are bought with a price. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John iv. 20).

The Greek tenses imply that the acts described went on continuously, and

sions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man
 46 had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in
 the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat
 47 their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising
 God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord
 added to the church daily such as should be saved.

CHAP. III. 1. Now Peter and John went up together into the
 2 temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. And a
 certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom
 they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called

this verse and others which describe what has been called the communism of the Apostolic Church do not describe a communism established by law but one based on love. Brotherly love so abounded that the wealthier brethren sold part of their property in order to give money to those that needed it. They felt that they themselves and all that they had belonged to God, to Whom also belonged their poorer brethren, and that they held what they possessed in trust for God and His saints. Compare notes on iv. 32-37.

46. **And they continued**, etc. These Jewish Christians lived a double religious life, one which they shared with all devout Jews, and the other peculiar to the Christian community. They worshipped Jehovah in the Temple, and observed the prescribed hours for prayer (Acts iii. 1, x. 9, etc.), behaving themselves in all respects like Jewish worshippers. Hence to many the Christian Church was one of the many Jewish sects (compare Acts v. 17 with xxviii. 22), which differed from others by their faith on Jesus which made them observe additional religious duties. On the other hand, they had also their peculiarly Christian worship, which partook largely of the character of family worship, and which was performed in private houses, where they met for instruction, fellowship, prayer, and the dispensation of the Lord's Supper.

Breaking bread from house to house; better, breaking bread at home.

47. **The Lord** probably means the Lord Jesus, who through His Spirit was ruling His Church, and extending His kingdom; it may be, however, that the reference is to the Jehovah of Israel, to whom Peter had so often referred.

Such as should be saved; better, *The Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved*. The Church's external increase was in proportion to the vigour of its inward life.

III.—THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, iii. 1-vi. 7.

1. *The lame man healed, 1-10.*

This miracle is selected from among many because it brought the Apostles into collision with the authorities.

III. 1. Now Peter and John. These disciples had been companions before Pentecost (John i. 41; Luke xxii. 8; John xviii. 16; John xx. 6); and were to be continually together in the Apostolic Church of Jerusalem (Acts viii. 14; Gal. ii. 9).

The ninth hour. About 3 P.M.; see note on ii. 15. The Apostles observed the forms of strictly Jewish worship, and amongst other things went up to the temple at the prescribed hours for prayer. See note on x. 9.

2. Gate of the temple which is called Beautiful. It was a common

Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple ;
 3 who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple,
 4 asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with
 5 John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them,
 6 expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said,
 Silver and gold have I none ; but such as I have give I thee :
 In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.
 7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up ; and
 immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength.
 8 And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them
 into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.
 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God.
 10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the
 Beautiful gate of the temple : and they were filled with

practice for maimed beggars to be set in the approaches to the temple (John ix. 8) ; the practice is continued in Eastern countries at present, where the entrances to mosques are thronged with beggars. The lame man daily laid there was a familiar figure, easily identified. The name *Beautiful* is not found elsewhere, but the door is supposed to be that which led from the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of the Women, and which was made of Corinthian brass.

3. Asked an alms. The cripple desired most the use of his legs, but like many another at prayer he asked for the lesser gift when he really yearned for a greater. God answered him, as He has answered many before and since. The man asked an alms and got a cure.

6. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus spake cures Himself. His Apostles spoke them in His name (John xvi. 23, 24). Only a few weeks before the temple courts had been thronged by crowds of blind and lame seeking to be healed by Jesus (Matt. xxi. 14). The Healer had been crucified and buried, and the maimed were content to ask alms only. He now came again in His disciples gifted with the presence and power of His Spirit, and the wonders of healing were again performed. The man felt that there was no mockery in the command. Its words were interpreted to him by the look and touch of Peter, by the rush of new life through him, and perhaps by some memory of Jesus.

7. His feet and ankle-bones. The Greek words are those that a doctor would use in describing a patient, and make one of those minute coincidences which go to prove that Luke the physician was the author of the Acts. Feet should perhaps be *soles of his feet*.

8. Leaping up, stood, and walked . . . walking and leaping. The man had been lame from birth, and did not know how to walk ; he began by a jump, then a walk, and so on. The story is told by one who had seen the man. Professor Lumby compares the graphicness of this story with the want of vividness of description in the account of the cure at Lystra (xiv.), and infers that Peter told Luke about this lame man, and that Paul had been his authority for the other.

9. All the people saw him. Compare iv. 16. "Miracles were the bells by which God drew the people together to hear the sermon concerning Jesus."

wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11 And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch
 12 that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man
 13 to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate,
 14 when he was determined to let *him* go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted
 15 unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised
 16 from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And his name,

2. Peter's sermon to the crowd, 11-26.

11. Held Peter and John. He could not part with them (Mark v. 18).

The porch that is called Solomon's. A portico or cloister on the east side outside the temple (Joseph. *Ant.* xx. 9, 7). The disciples had come into the court of the women from the court of the Gentiles through the door Beautiful, and with the lame man clinging to them, and the crowd running, they turned to the left away from the temple out of the court of the women into Solomon's porch.

12. When Peter saw it. Saw their amazement. It came out in the wondering glances at the man, and the long stare of astonishment, mingled with awe, at the Apostles.

We had made this man to walk. "Useful men must see to it, that they be very humble. . . . Every crown must be cast at the feet of Christ; not I, but the grace of God that is in me" (Matt. Henry).

13. The God of Abraham, etc. Peter was almost within the precincts of the temple, and he appealed to the memories of Jehovah which clustered there.

Whom ye delivered up. Like a wise physician, Peter probed the wound deeply. He wished to produce again that pricking of heart which is conviction, and neither he nor they could forget that Jesus of Nazareth narrowly escaped stoning in that very porch of Solomon (John x. 23, 31, 39).

Denied him. (John xix. 4, 15.)

14. The Holy One and the Just. (Mark i. 24; John vi. 29; Matt. xxvii. 19, 24.)

Desired a murderer. Barabbas (Mark xv. 7; Luke xxiii. 19). "They preferred the *life-taker* to the *life-giver*" (Stock).

15. The Prince of life. The Greek word here translated *prince* is *captain* in Heb. ii. 10, and *author* in Heb. xii. 2; the phrase implies Him who is the source of life. Peter insists on the combined baseness and folly of those who slew Jesus, who tried to give to death the very source of life Himself.

Hath raised from the dead. Compare ii. 32, and note on i. 22.

Whereof we are witnesses. As if he said, *You are witnesses to the restoration of this lame man, but it is only part of a great truth to which we are*

through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know ; yea, the faith which is by him hath given him
 17 this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also
 18 your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer,
 19 he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, *witnesses*. Witnesses to the Resurrection ; but also witnesses to the rejection and the crucifixion. Dr. Parker calls this sermon of Peter a greater miracle than the healing of the lame man. The Peter who had denied his Master, after the baptism of the Spirit hurls sentence after sentence at the Jews who had given over Jesus to crucifixion, and he did so on the very place where they had attempted to stone the Christ. "That man must succeed in his ministry or be killed."

16. *And his name, through faith in his name* ; better, *and by faith in His name, hath His name*. The name of God, according to Jewish ways of thinking, was used for the power of God, and even for the personal being of God (iv. 12), and the name of Jesus means the power or manifestation of the Father through the Son. It was this which wrought the miracle ; but this Name was not used as an incantation. It did not work a miracle apart from sympathetic relation of the worker and of the receiver. There must be faith, rest on, and trust in the Lord Jesus. The name implied the power to work the miracle, but the power did not act unless through faith. This faith is further explained to be itself produced by the power of God in Christ. The power of miraculous work and the power to share and receive the miracle both come from the Lord Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Peter had said this to the cripple (iii. 6) ; he now repeated it at greater length to the crowd. The faith he speaks of is undoubtedly his own faith, but it also seems to include the faith awakened in the man who was cured, and who was manifesting faith in his praising God.

17. I wot. I know.

That through ignorance. (Compare Acts xiii. 27.) In this verse the tone changes. The gospel is not merely stern accusation, bringing conviction of sin, nor declaration of the mighty power of God. Helplessness and power are brought together ; sin and salvation are brought so near that the sinner may pass from the one to the other. Peter calls those murderers of Jesus *Brethren*, and in suggesting their ignorance he opens a door of hope. "Father, forgive them, *for they know not what they do*" (Luke xxiii. 34).

18. By the mouth of all his prophets, etc. ; rather, *But the things which God foreshowed by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He hath thus fulfilled*. "The purpose of the whole of Scripture is to set forth the redemption of man through the suffering of Christ, so that from the first mention of the bruising of the heel by the seed of the woman there had been a constant chain of testimony that Christ should suffer" (Lumby).

19. **Repent therefore.** Two all-important words. Ignorance does not absolve from sin ; but it suggests hope of pardon : *Repent*. Blessing and continuing in sin cannot co-exist. *Therefore*, "on the ground of the ancient dealings of God with His people, and because of the culmination of those dealings in the recovery of the man who is standing there, the living proof of an undisputed miracle" (Parker), *Repent*.

that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refresh
 20 ing shall come from the presence of the Lord ; and he shall
 send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you :
 21 whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution
 of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all
 22 his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly
 said unto the fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God
 raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall
 ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.
 23 And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not
 hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.
 24 Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow

When the times of refreshing ; rather, that so (by your repentance) there may come seasons of refreshing. The coming of times of refreshing depends on repentance and receiving the gospel, and so every man's sorrow for sin and conversion brings him a time of refreshing which is a time of near communion with God, a foretaste of being for ever with the Lord.

20. *And he shall send Jesus Christ ; rather, and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus ;* for this, the coming again of the Christ, like the coming of the times of refreshing, depends on repentance and conversion.

Which was before preached unto you. Peter throughout his sermon keeps steadfastly before himself and before his audience the continuity of revelation. The same God who manifested Himself to the fathers now manifests Himself through His Son, and with a sameness of manifestation. It was Jesus, the Jesus whom God has now raised up, that was spoken of in all the promises to Abraham, and to Israel through Moses and all the prophets. All that God has promised at all times has come to pass in Jesus Christ.

21. *Until the times of the restitution of all things, until the times of restoration of all things.* Compare Matt. xvii. 11, where *the restoration of all things* means the beginning of Christ's kingdom, and Rom. viii. 21-23 and 1 Cor. xv. 19-28, where the thought of final restoration belongs to the future, as it does here. Christ's two comings are the beginning and the end of the one period of restoration, and the thought seems to be that Christ's life is to be reproduced in the life of His Church until all things are ripe for the final restoration.

Must receive, must receive and retain.

Which God hath spoken, whereof (of which times) God spake. The continuity of Revelation from the first promise to Eve down through all prophetic witnessings to Pentecost.

22. *For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet.* *Moses indeed said, A prophet.* Peter proceeds to quote certain passages from the Old Testament which had suggested what he has already said. The Messiah was to be one of themselves (Deut. xviii. 15-19. The quotation is not verbally exact) ; He was to bring blessing to every nation of the earth (Gen. xxii. 18).

24. *From Samuel, who was regarded by the Jewish Rabbis as the founder of the school of the prophets.*

after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these
 25 days. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the
 26 earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

CHAP. IV. 1. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon

As many as have spoken have likewise foretold; as many as have spoken (or as spake), they also told of these days.

25. Ye are the children, etc. Ye are the sons of the prophet, and the sons of the covenant, and from among you the Prophet has come who is the Saviour of mankind. Salvation is nearer you than any other.

Of the covenant (Gen. xii. 3). Compare Paul's argument in Gal. iii. 8-10.

26. His Son Jesus, His servant Jesus. The word *Son* in this and in the thirteenth verse should be *servant* (Isa. xlvi. 1; Matt. xii. 18). This is the conclusion of the whole matter: Salvation through turning from sin and faith on Jesus. In this sermon Peter takes for his text the lame man whole, a fact to which all can bear witness. He then proceeds:—(1) The fact is evidence that Jesus is risen, is ascended, is still working in their midst, is the *Christ*. (2) They, his audience, had slain the *Christ*. (3) But there is room for hope, they had done it in ignorance, and ignorance gives room for repentance. (4) *Therefore Repent.* (5) Repentance and faith will place them where the saints of their nation had stood, with Abraham, Samuel, Moses. (6) The Resurrection of Jesus is the final blessing, which, evidencing His Messiahship, turns believers from their iniquities. “Peter bears a threefold testimony concerning Christ; (1) He is the substance of all miracles (12-17); (2) the Redeemer of all souls (18-21); (3) the Yea and Amen of all prophecies (22-26).”

3. *Peter and John arrested, examined, and dismissed*, iv. 1-22.

IV. 1. The priests. The priests were divided into twenty-four courses, each of which served a week in the temple. The priests in the text were probably those on duty for that week.

The captain of the temple, or *Ruler of the House of God* (1 Chron. ix. 11; 2 Chron. xxxi. 13; Neh. xi. 11), was a priest whose duty it was to command the guard of Levites stationed in the temple. He posted the sentinels at night, and preserved peace during the day. His presence implied that the authorities were afraid of a disturbance from the crowd surrounding the Apostles.

The Sadducees. The distinction between Pharisee and Sadducee had grown out of national differences dating from the time of the captivity, partly social and partly religious. The Jews who returned to Palestine after the captivity, were not in the position of an independent nation. They were the subjects of Persian, and then of Greek domination, and the influence exercised by these ruling nationalities was more than political. It affected the thoughts and feelings of large portions of the people. It is

2 them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached
 3 through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they
 laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next
 4 day: for it was now eventide. Howbeit many of them which

almost a commonplace in history, that when a nation is in the position that the Jews were, the native ruling classes are more amenable to foreign influence than the mass of the people, and that patriotic leaders are seldom found among an aristocracy. The Sadducees were nothing more than the Jewish, or rather the sacerdotal aristocracy ; for the priest-nobles were the only aristocracy left to the people. In time of foreign domination their aim was selfishly to maintain their places of power, and their right to divide among themselves the temple-dues, the great source of wealth in Palestine. In times of independence, the primary idea of this aristocracy of priests, nobles, and men of wealth, for the three words were in this case synonymous, was conservatism. They aimed at preserving the temple service and the written regulations of the law of Moses. They did so in the spirit of a professional aristocracy, and not with the enthusiasm of religious leaders. In times of national adversity they had witnessed unmoved national degradation, and retained their posts and emoluments ; in times of comparative prosperity they seemed to teach a cold Epicureanism which limited man's existence to this present life, and denied a resurrection and a future retribution. This small but powerful party of the priestly nobles who were supported by the temple dues, had come to regard religion as a matter of profitable living rather than as a heartfelt faith. They disliked any popular movement which might disturb the steady accumulation of the temple revenues, and they saw in the preaching of Jesus and its attendant results only a plebeian revolt to be crushed. They had been peculiarly active in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, and they must have been irritated beyond measure (ver. 2) when they found that a disciple company still survived and were preaching that Jesus was the Christ, appealing to that Resurrection which they in theory denied.

2. Being grieved, or thoroughly vexed and harassed, or sore troubled.

Preached through Jesus, rather proclaimed in Jesus. The Sadducees did not believe in the Resurrection, and religion was for them a lucrative profession, getting their share in the temple dues. Such men do not like the people to be taught, and they especially disliked what the Apostles were proclaiming—that Christ had Himself risen, and that therefore there was a resurrection from the dead.

3. Put them in hold unto the next day. They had meant to go to the temple ; and they found themselves in prison. " See how God trains up His servants for sufferings by degrees, and by lesser trials prepares them for greater ; now they resist unto bonds only, but afterwards to blood " (Matt. Henry). The lame man had been healed about three o'clock, or somewhat later, and the events recorded had occupied about three hours.

For it was now eventide. The Jewish day ceased with the twelfth hour or sunset, and it was not lawful to hold a court in the night (Jer. xxi. 12 was quoted by the Scribes). Hence at our Lord's trial a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin was summoned in order to make legal the informal proceedings of the night session. Compare my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, pp. 222, 223.

4. Howbeit. Though the preachers were persecuted, the word prevailed.

heard the word believed ; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5 And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and *Howbeit* leads us aside for a moment from looking at what the rulers of the Jews were doing (two Apostles in prison) to what the Ruler of the heavens was doing (the Church increased to five thousand men).

5. Their rulers, and elders, and scribes, add from the end of the 6th verse, *who were at Jerusalem*, for some of them were probably absent. The three words *rulers* and *elders* and *scribes* denote the Sanhedrin or national council of the Jews. The *Sanhedrin* in our Lord's days was an ecclesiastical court which had been instituted in imitation of the council of elders who ruled the country under the Maccabees. It was composed of the chief priests, or heads of the twenty-four courses (see p. 78), the elders of the people, and the most celebrated of the rabbis or scribes, and consisted of seventy-one members, at whose head was the Chief of the Sanhedrin and a President. The sittings were held daily in a building near the eastern gate of the temple. It was the lawful court for deciding all questions of public worship, for the authoritative interpretation of disputed passages in Scripture, for appointing the festivals, and so on. The whole life of the Jews was so governed by theocratic ideas that the Sanhedrin really became the supreme civil court. It decided all difficult points of law about betrothals, marriage, divorce, inheritance, contracts, and deeds of gift. Jesus was summoned before it on a charge of assuming the Messiahship ; Peter and John for promulgating heresy ; Stephen on a charge of blasphemy ; and Paul for violating a temple bye-law. The Sanhedrin was, within certain limits, a court of appeal from the local sanhedrin or councils which met in the country synagogues, and decided the civil and criminal cases of the district. The usual punishments were fines and scourging ; but the Sanhedrin claimed the right of inflicting capital punishment. The Romans, who were usually content to allow subject nations to be governed according to their own laws and customs, allowed the Sanhedrin great powers, and insisted only on the right of revising all capital sentences.

The *elders* were the representatives of the people and had existed in Israel from the earliest times.

(1) Moses found them already existing when he availed himself of their services in his government (compare Ex. xviii. 13-26 with xix. 7).

(2) When the tribes became settled in a nation the elders still ruled as *representatives of the nation* (elders of Israel, 1 Kings viii. 1-3) ; as *district governors over the tribes* (2 Sam. xix. 11), or as local magistrates in towns (1 Kings xxi. 8).

(3) They retained their position during the captivity (Jer. xxix. 1 ; Ezek. viii. 1, xx. 1) ;

(4) Subsequently to the return (Ezra v. 5, vi. 7, 14) ;

(5) Under the Maccabees (1 Macc. vii. 33) ; and,

(6) In the time of Christ, where they are a distinct body from the Sanhedrin, but have representatives in it.

The *scribes* formed an exceedingly powerful organization in the time of Jesus. The synagogue services gradually developed a class of zealous scholars who made the study of the law their profession. They were called *sopherim*, *scribes* or *writers*, because they had been the first who wrote out exact copies of the law for the synagogue, and in the times of Jesus the name comprehended all those who made it their profession to study the law and teach their

6 elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By

fellows its requirements. This study required a man's whole time, and the scribes had become a special learned class, which charged itself with the care of the law, as the priests and Levites took charge of the temple services. Celebrated teachers collected disciples and taught them in schools, and in Jerusalem, where the scribes abounded, several of the chambers in the forecourts of the temple were set apart for this purpose. The teacher sat on a raised scat, while the scholars were seated at his feet. The teachers or rabbis as a rule learned some handicraft wherewith to support themselves, for they charged no fees for their instructions. Rabbi Hillel was a day-labourer, Rabbi Joshua was a needle-maker, Rabbi Judah a baker, Rabbi Simeon a carpet-maker, and the Apostle Paul a weaver of goat's hair. These common callings did not interfere with the dignity of the teachers. They were allotted the first seats in the synagogue, the upper places at table were reserved for them, and their dress marked their dignity. Their political importance was great, for it was their instructions which enveloped the whole Jewish life from the cradle to the grave in the precepts of the law, and prevented the nation from amalgamating with Gentiles or submitting to be seduced by the cosmopolitan ideas which the Roman conquerors tried to impart to subject nations. They fulfilled the Mosaic law by multiplying its precepts, and intensifying its minute ceremonial observances, and therefore were instinctively opposed to Christianity, whose aim was to enforce the moral ideas which lay beneath the Mosaic code.

6. *Annas*, or *Hanan*, the son of Seth, had been appointed high priest in 7 A.D., and had been deposed in 14 A.D. by the arbitrary caprice of Valerius Gratus the Roman Procurator, but was universally looked on as the leader of the Jewish Sadducean aristocracy. He was the most astute man of his time, the real political chief of his people, and the determined opponent of the Pharisees. Hence in the Talmud he is loaded with opprobrious names. His son Eleazar had been made high priest in 15 A.D., and now Caiaphas, his son-in-law, whom each successive Roman procurator had found a pliant tool, had been high priest since 17 A.D. Annas lived to see five sons and a son-in-law high priests, and for nearly fifty years enjoyed the real power of the high-priesthood.

Joseph Caiaphas, a Sadducee like his father-in-law, equally astute, unscrupulous, and unpatriotic, who consented to be high priest on the terms the Romans allowed, and was used by them as the Greek Patriarchs of Constantinople are by the Turks to keep their countrymen in thraldom. Jesus had been brought before both Annas and Caiaphas. Compare my *Commentary on Mark's Gospel*, pp. 222-225.

John and Alexander are unknown persons.

Of the kindred of the high priest. The council hastily summoned appears to have been mainly composed of Sadducees.

7. In the midst. The Sanhedrin of seventy-one persons were seated in a semicircle; accused persons were made to stand at the centre of the circle facing the president.

By what name, rather *in what name*. It was impossible to deny the fact

8 what power, or by what name, have ye done this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

of the cure; the man was there, a silent witness, whose testimony could not be gainsaid. So the Sadducees asked for their authority or source of power, perhaps to bring the Apostles under the law of Deut. xiii. The question was asked in contempt, for in the Greek the word *ye* comes last: *such people as you?*

8. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** A fulfilment of promises (Matt. x. 19, 20; Luke xxi. 14, 15). A few weeks before, Peter had quailed before the maid-servants of the men he now faces with courteous audacity (Matt. xxvi. 69-75; Luke xxii. 54-62; John xviii. 15-18, 25-27).

Ye rulers of the people. An inferior, a Galilean fisherman addressing the council of his nation; when Paul was brought before them he began, *Men and brethren*, the address of an equal (Acts xxiii. 1-6).

9. **Be examined of the good deed, etc., are examined concerning a good deed done to an impotent man, by what means this man is made whole.** The man was present, and Peter pointed to him.

10. **By the name**, rather *in the name of Jesus Christ*. Peter pleads guilty at once to a breach of the law of Deut. xiii. as the Sadducees understood it; but he does more, he accuses the Sanhedrin in a terrible indictment, which places them and their God as two opposing powers; they have been and are fighting against God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth—whom *YE crucified*—whom *GOD raised from the dead*.

Here before you whole, (1) no longer lame, but (2) also suggesting health of soul as well as soundness of limb; for these miracles were pregnant spiritual parables.

11. **This is the stone, etc.** (Ps. cxviii. 22). The sentence must have startled them. Jesus of Nazareth had used it against them when they sent a deputation to Him as He taught in the temple (Mark xii. 10). They had crucified Him, buried Him and His words under the ground, and now Peter hurls at them both name and words. The argument is that the condemnation of Jesus by the supreme court of the nation in no way disproved His Messiahship. It was no new thing for the leaders of Israel to reject the deliverers whom God had sent them. The passage quoted had been fulfilled again and again (see Stephen's speech, vii. 2-53), but this was their supreme rejection.

12. **Neither is salvation.** It is more than a question of healing ankle-bones, it is a matter of souls' salvation: that is what is meant by being made *whole*. You have rejected the Christ once, Peter says, but there is given you place for repentance; Beware lest you repeat that sin: for except in Him there is no salvation.

- 12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.
- 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had 14 been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed 15 standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But, when they had commanded them to go aside out of the 16 council, they conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is manifest* to all them that dwell in 17 Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that 18 they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor 19 teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered

Whereby we must be saved. If the Sanhedrin had its emphasis of contempt (ver. 7), Peter had his emphasis of earnestness. The *we* is the last word in the Greek sentence; as if he said *we—priests, elders, scribes, fishermen—all of us here; you our judges and we the judged*: salvation is only through Jesus.

13. Boldness of Peter and John. John had not spoken a word so far as we know, but his attitude was enough: the *son of Thunder* was not a whit behind the *Rock-man*. Brought before the Sanhedrin as criminals, they bore themselves as ambassadors.

Unlearned and ignorant: *unlearned* means without such education or special training as the scribes had to undergo: *ignorant* is best understood by Luther's phrase, *the rude common man* of the workshop, or the farm, or the fishing-boat.

They took knowledge of them. The words do not mean that the Sanhedrin began to recognise Peter and John. John at least (John xviii. 15) was well known to Annas or Caiaphas, and the disciples of Jesus must have been known to many of the rulers. It rather means that they began to discover that the Spirit of the Master had taken possession of the disciples, and that the work of silencing Jesus would have to be done over again.

That they had been with Jesus, the mark of a true disciple.

15. To go aside out of the council. It seems to have been a practice with the court to remove prisoners while they deliberated on their verdict.

16. We cannot deny it. How can we evade it? was their thought. There was no pricking of the heart, no turning to Jesus whom they had pierced: the only question was how they could put the whole matter from them, and how they could prevent it spreading to others.

17. Let us straitly threaten them. *Let us threaten them*, or more literally, *Let us threaten them with threats.*

18. Not to speak at all, etc. The Greek seems to imply that the Apostles were warned not to let the name of Jesus pass their lips.

and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God
 20 to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For
 we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and
 21 heard. So, when they had further threatened them, they let
 them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, be-
 cause of the people : for all *men* glorified God for that which
 22 was done. For the man was above forty years old on whom
 this miracle of healing was showed.

23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and
 reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto
 24 them. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice
 to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which
 hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in

19. **Whether it be right.** The Sanhedrin were to learn that there were some things that they could not do : they could not silence the Apostles. The *safe* policy is in the long run no match for what is *right*. Men accustomed to act on reasons of mere policy are incapable of estimating the strength of spiritual force.

20. **We cannot but speak.** “It is the way of lovers to be unable to conceal their love” (Augustine) : a lesson to young converts. “There is no greater service done to the devil’s kingdom than to silence faithful ministers, and to put them under a bushel that are the lights of the world” (Matt. Henry).

21. **Because of the people.** Compare Luke xx. 6, 19.

4. *A second baptism of the Holy Spirit, 23-31.*

23. **To their own company,** to a common place of meeting ; perhaps to the house of Mary, mother of Mark (xii. 12).

Reported all. Fancy the conversation, the questions and answers, the devout thankfulness that their Lord had fulfilled another promise, to be with them and give them words when they were brought before rulers for His name’s sake (Mark xiii. 9-11).

24. **They lifted up their voice.** Comp. xiv. 11. The words have usually been taken to mean that the company engaged in prayer, an Apostle leading and the others joining in ; it is more likely, however, that these verses give us the earliest recorded thanksgiving hymn or chant of the Apostolic Church, a hymn chanted which is a prayer.

Lord. The Greek word is *Despotes* (absolute master), and it is used to denote the Lord in a few other passages only (2 Pet. ii. 1; Jude 4; Rev. vi. 10).

Hast made. The hymn begins with *making* and ends with *healing* ; from the Lord the Creator to the Lord the Redeemer (30). And it finds consolation in the thought that God the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth is their Saviour and Redeemer ; Omnipotence has revealed itself in Love ; God is able because He is the Omnipotent Creator. He is willing because He has revealed Himself in love for salvation. This earliest prayer-hymn grew out of trouble : “this beautiful flower grew at the cross ;” and thus the mouths of disciples are never stopped : they preach to the people or they cry to God.

25 them is : who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said,
 Why did the heathen rage,
 And the people imagine vain things ?
 26 The kings of the earth stood up,
 And the rulers were gathered together
 Against the Lord, and against his Christ.
 27 For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast
 anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles,
 28 and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do
 whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to
 29 be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings : and
 30 speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal ; and

25. By the mouth of thy servant David. The quotation is from the second Psalm, commonly attributed to David. The better reading is, *Who by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David.*

27. Against thy holy child Jesus. *Against Thy holy SERVANT Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint.* *Against his Christ* (26) should be *Against His anointed*, to bring out the force of *whom Thou didst anoint*. The psalm is quoted and applied : Jesus the Servant had been anointed and is the Christ, and against Him gathered—(1) the *heathen or Gentiles*, the Roman soldiers ; (2) the *peoples* of the Jews ; *kings of the earth*, Herod, Pontius Pilate ; and (3) *rulers*, the Sanhedrin.

Herod. *Herod Antipas*, a son of Herod the Great, who shortly after his father's death was made tetrarch of Galilee and the Perea ; he imprisoned and slew John the Baptist, threatened Jesus, mocked Him, and gave Him over to Pontius Pilate (Mark vi. 14-29 ; Mark iii. 6 ; Luke xiii. 31 ; Luke xxiii. 6-11). Herod was deposed and banished in 40 A.D. Compare *Table of Herod Family*, pp. 34, 35.

Pontius Pilate was a Roman knight who had been made the sixth Roman procurator of Judea and Samaria by Tiberius at the suggestion of Sejanus, and had succeeded Valerius Gratus, fifth procurator, in 26 A.D. His headquarters were at Cæsarea Stratonis (Acts xxiii. 23) : He had a cohort for a bodyguard (Matt. xxvii. 27) : as a Roman judge he sat on a portable tribunal or *Bema* placed on a tessellated pavement (*Gabbatha*, John xix. 13) : and at the great festivals he came up to Jerusalem. He had been a rapacious governor (Luke xiii. 1, 2) who could not afford, especially after the downfall and execution of Sejanus, to be accused to Cæsar, and had more than once been rebuked by the suspicious tyrant who ruled in Rome. He was recalled in the year 36 A.D.

28. To do whatsoever. There is a continuity in divine action, as well as a continuity in revelation : the God of grace is the God of providence and the God of creation, able to make all things work together for the good of His people.

29. Grant unto thy servants. They pray for (1) courage to go on witness-bearing ; (2) new healings or conversions ; (3) God's support in their preaching by manifestations of His presence : not for the overthrow of their enemies or of protection from them.

that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy
 31 holy child Jesus. And when they had prayed, the place was
 shaken where they were assembled together ; and they were
 all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of
 God with boldness.

32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one
 heart and of one soul : neither said any *of them* that ought
 of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had

30. *Thy holy child Jesus.* *Thy holy SERVANT Jesus.* Compare ver. 27.

31. *When they had prayed.* Their answer came in a second outpouring
 of the Spirit, which gave them the powers they asked for.

They spake the word with boldness. The first baptism of the Spirit
 made them "speak with tongues," the second made them preach the gospel
 first thanksgiving, then work for Christ.

The place was shaken. Compare ii. 1, xvi. 26.

5. Brethren and false brethren, iv. 32-v. 11.

32. *Were of one heart and one soul.* A better translation is : *And the heart and the soul of the multitude of those that believed were one.* The Church was one visible community, and it was invisibly one also. This oneness in heart and soul came out in the way in which they thought, felt, and acted towards each other. The Lord had summed up one of the two tables of the Mosaic law in the command : *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* The Apostolic Church in this time of holy enthusiasm and devotion to the memory and commands of Jesus, fulfilled His precepts in the most literal fashion. A Christian who had money or the means of securing it, could not see his poorer brother believer in want, but loving him and treating him as another part of himself, freely shared what he had with his less fortunate neighbour. All were good Samaritans.

Neither said any one, etc. *And not one of them said that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, etc.* This remark is made about those who had possessions : *they*, the richer brethren, said and felt that their wealth was not their own, but belonged to others, to their poorer brethren, as well as to themselves ; for they owed their all, even their very selves, to God and to His Christ. But it is not said, nor is it meant, that the poorer brethren thought that what belonged to their richer neighbours was theirs ; a distinction sometimes lost sight of in socialist theories which appeal to Scripture in support of their view of the abolition of private property. Compare Introduction, p. 30.

They had all things common. This phrase must be read in the light of the whole verse, and is based on the preceding clauses. The disciples had all things common, not because any law for the division of property was published in the community, but because the disciple company was so united in brotherly love, that the wealthier, loving the poorer as they loved themselves, were prompted by their Christian neighbourliness to share their possessions with those who required assistance. This implies that the wealthier did not give up their possessions, but feeling the responsibilities of their wealth, used them for the benefit of their neighbours. Roman Catholic theologians have deduced from this, and from other similar passages in the New Testament,

33 all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great
34 grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things

the conclusion that the higher Christian life is lived only when men renounce all their earthly possessions and take the vow of poverty. It is manifest, however, that such an idea must rest on the distinction between a higher Christian life which only a few can share, and a lower Christian life which the vast majority of Christians must lead. The only civil community which enacted communism and lasted for a long period, was the kingdom of Sparta, and its organization endured only because of the helot or slave class who were the producers, and worked for the wealth which the freemen shared in common. The Roman Catholic vow of poverty and its supposed higher Christian life of communism in monkish confraternities, is only possible because of the great number of everyday Christians, on whom those who devote themselves to the higher Christian life really live. Scripture, however, gives no warrant for such a helot-Christian class, and the highest Christian life which it points to is one which may be shared in by *all* Christians. If any proof were wanted that Christianity does not demand the abolition of private property, it is to be found in the peculiarly Christian idea of the dignity of labour. Paul exhorts the Christians of Thessalonica to "study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands as we commanded you" (1 Thess. iv. 11), and says emphatically, "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (2 Thess. iii. 10, 11). Labour is property, and the recognition of the Christian value and of the dignity of labour is an apostolic protest against the idea that the highest Christian life implies that a man must denude himself of his possessions and of the responsibilities which wealth brings.

33. **With great power gave the apostles witness.** The elevated tone of the Apostolic Church, and the Christian enthusiasm and self-denial which inspired the disciples, reacted on and was felt by the Apostles. They also felt the glow of Christian feeling which the whole community shared, and they were able to do their work of teaching and guidance with greater power. For this Christian charity was a new evidence of the fact that the Lord was risen, was ascended, and was bestowing His gifts of grace upon His followers. The whole community felt the power of the Apostles, and great grace was upon them all.

34. **Neither was there any among them that lacked;** better, *For neither was there any among them in need.* This was one of the reasons why the Apostles had more power to give *their* witness, and why the whole community had a greater share of grace: this self-sacrificing spirit of brotherly love in which each esteemed the other better than themselves. The Church did great social duties and made great social sacrifices, impelled by the inward promptings of the Holy Spirit; but it is to be observed that this Christian socialism had these characteristics—(1) It was voluntary, coming from the prompting of the inward Spirit (v. 4); (2) It was not universal, every one did not sell his property, nor does any one seem to have sold his all;

35 that were sold, and laid *them* down at the apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

36 And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a 37 Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

(3) When the fresh warmth of Pentecostal life departed, it led to inconveniences (compare vi. 1-7).

35. *At the apostles' feet.* The Apostles had complete control over the distribution of the moneys ; a charge that they afterwards begged to be relieved from (vi. 2).

According as he had need. The profession of Christianity by a Jew then, as now, led to social disgrace, which in turn prevented a man getting employment (John ix. 22); hence the urgent need of provision for the poor.

36. *Joses . . . surnamed Barnabas*, was the nephew of Mary or Miriam the mother of John Mark (Col. iv. 10, where *sister's son* should be *cousin*). He introduced Saul, after his conversion, to the Apostles at Jerusalem, and the fact is mentioned in such a way as seems to imply that he had a previous acquaintance with the Apostle to the Gentiles. Scholars have noted that the Jewish colony of Cyprus, to which Barnabas belonged, had very intimate relations with the Jews of Cilicia and Tarsus, and that it is not improbable that Barnabas might have been sent for education to the city to which Saul belonged. He acquired very early a position of influence in the Church at Jerusalem. When the men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had fled from Jerusalem during the persecution which followed the death of Stephen, gathered converts among the Gentiles of Antioch, Barnabas was sent to report upon their work (Acts xi. 19-26). He went to Tarsus and brought back Saul to work with him in Antioch (Acts xi. 25, 26) ; along with Saul he carried the contributions of the Christians of Antioch to the famine-stricken Church at Jerusalem (Acts xi. 30). Along with Saul he was specially appointed to work among the Gentiles (Acts xiii. 2), accompanied him on his first missionary journey (Acts xiii., xiv.), and appeared with him to plead the cause of the Gentiles at the Council in Jerusalem (Acts xv.). He separated from Paul or Saul at the beginning of the latter's third journey, and with Mark went to Cyprus, his native island. Scripture tells nothing about his further career ; but it has been inferred from 1 Cor. ix. 6 that he was married. Tradition says that he was one of the Seventy (Luke x. 1-24), that he preached in Milan and in Rome, and that he was the author of the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*.

The son of consolation, rather *the son of exhortation*. He was a great preacher.

Levite. The Levites were descendants of Levi, not of the house of Aaron. They occupied a very subordinate position in New Testament Judaism, and when engaged at all in the service of the great sanctuary, were chiefly employed as temple police.

Cyprus had a large colony of Jews from the time of the Maccabees (1 Macc. xv. 23). Compare Acts xi. 19, xiii. 4, xv. 39.

37. **Having land.** *Having a field or a farm.* The Levites had no share in the land of Canaan ; but they were allowed to acquire land by bequest or

CHAP. V. 1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira
 2 his wife, sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price,
 his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part,
 3 and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias,
 why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost,
 4 and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it
 remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was
 it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this
 thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto
 5 God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave
 up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard
 6 these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and
 carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

by purchase (Num. xviii. 20, 21; Jer. xxxii. 7-12). The gift of Barnabas
 was probably unusually great, and it is therefore mentioned.

V. 1. *But*. "The *but* with which the fifth chapter opens is like a blow in
 the face" (Parker).

Sold a possession. It was a piece of land, a field well known to all
 (ver. 8). "Ananias and Barnabas both sold fields for the good of the poor;
 Cain and Abel both brought their offerings to God."

2. *And kept back part.* The Greek word translated *kept back* is used in
 the Septuagint to describe the sin of Achan (Josh. vii. 1), and is translated
purloining in Tit. ii. 10. His act was a sin which might have been expected
 in the Church, a spurious imitation of exalted Christian virtue. Forced
 enthusiasm, having a name to live when one is really dead, is a danger
 which Christians in times of revival ought to be on their guard against.

3. *Why hath Satan?* There is an inspiration of the devil, as well as an
 inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

To lie to the Holy Ghost. "It is much to be noticed how from the first
 the Apostles disclaim any power in themselves. It is Christ who works the
 miracles, the God of Abraham who gives the power of healing, and the Holy
 Ghost who is grieved by sins like that of Ananias" (Lumby).

4. *Was it not thine own?* The community of goods was not compulsory,
 it was permitted and encouraged because it sprang voluntarily from love to
 one's neighbour. This is the true glory of all Christian service: it is pure
 thanksgiving. Enthusiasm for Christ when it becomes forced is dangerous
 and deadly. The better rendering is, *While it remained, did it not remain
 thine own?*

6. *The young men* (*oi νεώτεροι* and *oi νεανίσκοι*, ver. 10). The *younger
 men*, as if in opposition to the *elders*. The words were sometimes used in
 a technical sense to denote the class of synagogue officials who were inferior
 to the *elders*. Hence some have thought, not without reason, that these
young men were officials in the Christian community, who were afterwards
 called *deacons*.

Wound him up, wrapped him round: they hastily stretched the dead body
 and wrapped round about it the outer robe or *abba*, preparatory to burial.

And buried him. In a hot climate like that of Palestine, burial had to
 take place at once, and the graves (caves with niches) were always open.

7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his
 8 wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter
 answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so
 9 much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said
 unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt
 the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which
 have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry
 10 thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and
 yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and
 found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her
 11 husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and
 upon as many as heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and
 wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with
 13 one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest durst no
 man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

8. **Tell me.** The question was Sapphira's place for repentance; the Holy Spirit strove with her in Peter's words, but she resisted His strivings.

9. **Ye have agreed together.** The sin was aggravated by being long thought over, and planned in combination. Husband and wife, who ought to have guarded each other's character, and stood between each other and temptation, tempted each other to sin, and profanely risked detection in the thought that the Holy Spirit would not reveal their fraud.

11. **Great fear came upon all the church.** This is the first use of the word *Church* to denote the Christian community. Professor Lumby points out that stronger punishments are necessary in infant communities, which are more easily torn asunder than longer established institutions. "The death of Ananias and his wife is the finger of God interposed to save His Church from danger, just as He interposed to build it up by stretching forth His hand to heal, and that through the name of His Servant Jesus mighty works might be wrought by the first preachers."

"Ananias represents those who say they have done *all* that they can do when they know that their statement is a lie" (Parker). He simulated a devotion which he did not feel, to get credit from men; his hypocrisy led on to falsehood.

6. *Miracles, 12-16.*

12. **Were many signs and wonders wrought.** A fulfilment of promises (Mark xvi. 17, 18); vers. 12-16 record a period of supernatural activity, recalling the Lord's earlier ministry at Capernaum, which left no leisure so much as to eat (Mark iii. 20).

In Solomon's porch. Vers. 12-14 seem to say that when the Apostles with the disciples went to the temple to pray, they met for conversation and mutual exhortation in the large portico called the Porch of Solomon; that the Jewish authorities, although they had not yet proceeded to open repression, had made it clear that the Christians might soon suffer persecution; that in consequence no one cared to be seen much in their company; that notwithstanding many converts were made.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes
 15 both of men and women;) insomuch that they brought forth
 the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches,
 that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might over-
 16 shadow them. There came also a multitude *out* of the cities
 round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them
 which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed
 every one.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with
 him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled
 18 with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and
 19 put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord
 by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth,
 20 and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people
 21 all the words of this life. And when they heard *that*, they
 entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.
 But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and

14. **Added to the Lord;** became converts to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Women. Luke in his Gospel notes the ministry of women: in the Acts he also takes care to mention the higher place which Christianity assigned to them.

15. **Beds and couches.** The *bed* is what the richer people lay on: the *couch* was the rug or mat of the poor people.

16. **Cities round about.** Bethlehem, Hebron, Jericho, Emmaus, Bethany; perhaps from towns so far away as Lydda, for there were believers there when Peter visited it (ix. 32). In spite of the opposition of the authorities, the public streets between the upper chamber and the temple were lined with sick people, all of whom were healed.

7. *The Twelve arrested, examined, and dismissed, 17-42.*

17. **Then the high priest.** *But the high priest:* the phrase denotes the beginning of a determined opposition. The high priest was either Caiaphas, the nominal high priest, or more probably Annas, his father-in-law, who possessed the real power. See p. 67.

All they that were with him. Compare iv. 6.

Sect in the original is *heresy*. The word was used to denote any religious party among the Jews. Compare Acts xv. 5, xxiv. 5, 14, xxvi. 5, xxviii. 22.

Sadducees. See p. 64.

Were filled with indignation, were filled with jealousy.

18. **In the common prison, in public ward;** not for punishment, but for detention until they could be examined; but the Apostles were, nevertheless, made to associate with all sorts of criminals detained in like manner.

19. **But the angel, an angel.**

20. **All the words of this life.** (1) The Life or Christ, who also gives (2) life to His people (2 Tim. i. 10; 1 John v. 11; John xvii. 3).

21. **Early in the morning.** The first sacrifice took place at daydawn, and the temple was then open for prayer. The phrase means soon after daybreak.

called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.
 22 But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison,
 23 they returned, and told, saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers standing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man
 24 within. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted
 25 of them whereto this would grow. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison
 26 are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have
 27 been stoned. And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,
 28 saying, Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood

The council, the Sanhedrin, the supreme ecclesiastical and civil court among the Jews, which had large powers under Roman rule. It consisted of seventy-one members, the chief priests, a number of elders, and a number of scribes—how chosen is unknown. It had two presidents, one of whom was usually the high priest, while the other was a learned rabbi. The Sanhedrin met daily in a hall in the outer court of the temple.

All the senate, a body of elders, probably selected to be assessors to the Sanhedrin (Acts xxii. 5).

22. The officers of the Levitical guard which was under the orders of the high priest.

24. The captain of the temple, the chief of the Levitical guard (iv. 1).

The chief priests, the heads of the twenty-four courses into which the whole of the priests were divided.

25. Standing in the temple, etc., doing what the angel had commanded (20). “Recoveries from sickness, releases out of troubles, are to be looked upon by us as granted, not that we may enjoy the comforts, but that God may be honoured with the services of our life” (Matt. Henry).

26. Lest they should have been stoned. The Jews were a bold, turbulent people; the Apostles were at the head of a great popular movement which had deeply impressed even those who were not Christians, and the Levite in command was afraid of an insurrection in favour of the prisoners.

27. The high priest asked them. No question was asked about their escape from prison, notwithstanding the wonder and conjectures recorded in verse 24. Perhaps Caiaphas was afraid to ask about it.

28. In this name . . . this man's blood. Caiaphas does not name Jesus: he seems afraid to do so; the judges “take the place of culprits,” and complain of being accused of murder. The speech of the high priest is a strange testimony to the power of the Apostles.

29 upon us. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and
 30 said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of
 our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a
 31 tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a
 Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and
 32 forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these
 things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given
 to them that obey him.

To bring this man's blood upon us. "His blood be on us and on our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25); but they had shouted these awful words when they had no thought of a resurrection and of apostolic appeal to conscience and to the people. "Those that with a great deal of presumption will do an evil thing cannot bear to hear it afterward, or to have it charged upon them" (Matt. Henry). Peter had made the charge they complained of. Compare ii. 36, iii. 13, 14, iv. 10, and he was to make it again, verse 30.

29. **We ought to obey God.** The old answer of Peter and John (iv. 19, 20), but given now with great boldness, and made at the beginning of their statement.

30. **The God of our fathers.** The Apostle to the circumcision is always at pains to appeal to the covenant God of Israel, whether in the temple courts or before the supreme council of his nation. He asserts that the followers of Jesus believe and act as the Jehovah of Israel would have His people do; that they and not the Sanhedrin are His obedient servants.

Raised up Jesus. The Resurrection is again insisted on as a witness to the Messiahship of Jesus. "The high priest will not name Jesus; Peter names Him, and celebrates Him" (Bengel).

Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Better, *whom hanging on a tree ye slew*. They had slain Jesus by the cruel Roman fashion; for the Jews did not crucify until the culprit was dead. Peter will bring home to them the charge of blood-guiltiness; His blood was upon Annas and Caiaphas and the sect of the Sadducees beyond all others.

The phrase *hanged on a tree* is not a common one (Deut. xxi. 23, Septuagint version); but Peter uses it twice here, in his speech to Cornelius (x. 39), and he uses *tree* for *cross* (1 Pet. ii. 24).

31. **A Prince and a Saviour.** The exalted Jesus has kingly power that He may save. The gospel of Jesus has taught men that Omnipotence is also love.

Repentance to Israel. This is the meaning of Peter's repeated charges of blood-guiltiness: to bring conviction of sin, and that sorrow for it which would lead to pardon, iii. 19. Salvation in Jesus is only to be obtained through change of mind or repentance, and that change and the pardon of sins which accompanies it are both the free gift of God to His people.

32. **We are his witnesses** (1) of the Crucifixion, (2) of the Resurrection, (3) of the Ascension—the three main topics in the early apostolic preaching. Dr. Plumptre points out that the apostolic message was the same as the Baptist's (Mark i. 4), with a fuller revelation (1) of the way in which forgiveness had been obtained; (2) of the spiritual gifts that followed on forgiveness; and (3) the existence of the society which was to bear witness of both.

The Holy Ghost. There was a double witness—*men* who had seen and

33 When they heard *that*, they were cut to the heart, and took
 34 counsel to slay them. Then stood there up one in the
 council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law,
 had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to
 35 put the apostles forth a little space; and said unto them,
 Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to
 36 do as touching these men. For before these days rose up
 Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a

heard; and the *Holy Ghost*, who taught them the Divine meaning of what they knew, and confirmed their witness by signs (John xv. 26, 27). Compare ii. 31-33, where a threefold witness is mentioned, (1) prophecy, (2) the Apostles, (3) the *Holy Ghost*.

To them that obey him. Obedience is the condition of the gift of the *Holy Ghost*; and this implied (1) a reason why the Apostles must obey God (ver. 29), and (2) a promise that even the persecuting Sanhedrin, if they also were obedient, might themselves receive the same gift.

33. Cut to the heart, literally *sawn asunder*, not with conviction of sin, but with rage, which maddened them to plot to murder twelve men, as they had before murdered One. There was another voice besides Peter's inwardly accusing the high priest of this man's blood.

34. Gamaliel was the son of Rabbi Simeon and the grandson of the famous Rabbi Hillel, and a man so had in reputation that it was a common saying—*When Gamaliel died, the glory of the law ceased*. He was president of the Sanhedrin during the reigns of the Emperors Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius, and is said to have died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. He was succeeded in the presidency of the Sanhedrin by his son Simeon who was slain during the siege. His grandson, Gamaliel the younger, was one of the most celebrated rabbis after the destruction of Jerusalem, 80-118 A.D. He was a Pharisee, and therefore the political and religious opponent of Annas, Caiaphas, and the whole party of the Sadducees, and was the teacher of St. Paul (Acts xxii. 3). Christian tradition makes him a secret Christian, and declares that he, along with Nicodemus and a son called Gamaliel, was baptized by Peter and by Paul; but the story has no foundation in Scripture, and is in the highest degree improbable. His action on this occasion was perfectly natural and in accordance with the policy of the party whom he led. The charge against the Apostles was that they were preaching the rising again of Jesus, and the Pharisees were strenuous upholders against the Sadducees of the doctrine of a resurrection of the body. When the Christians, led by Stephen, attacked the doctrines of Pharisaism, then Gamaliel must have opposed them determinedly, and his famous pupil Saul led the attack. In this chapter he acts as the politic leader of a party taking advantage of the preaching of the Apostles to inflict a blow on the theological position of his opponents.

Commanded to put the apostles forth, etc. Compare iv. 15. The better reading is, *commanded to put the men forth a little while*.

35. Take heed to yourselves: not a threat: the phrase means only, *Think well before you act: Be careful or Take care* (Matt. vi. 1, vii. 15, x. 17; 1 Tim. i. 4, iv. 13; Tit. i. 14).

36. Theudas. Josephus mentions a Theudas, the leader in an insurrection;

number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain ; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up 37 Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished ; and all, *even* as 38 many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought : 39 but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it ; lest haply ye 40 be found even to fight against God. And to him they but he could not have been this Theudas, for his rebellion was fifteen years later. The times were full of small revolts, and as not less than three insurrectionary leaders were called Judas, and four Simon, there may have been two of the name of Theudas.

37. *Judas of Galilee*, with Zadok the Pharisee, during the early years of our Lord, had raised the standard of revolt with the watchword, “It is not lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar.” When Archelaus was deposed and Judea and Samaria made a Roman province ruled by a Roman procurator or governor, the governor of Syria, P. Sulpicius Quirinus, ordered a census of the people, in order to measure the country’s capacity for taxation. The Roman principles of taxation were very different from the Jewish, and the change of system was sufficient to rouse a people so tenacious of their ancient customs ; but the imposition of a land tax seemed a denial of the rule of Jehovah. Every Jew, according to ancient Jewish ideas, held his field, farm, or estate as a fief from Jehovah, who was the Lord of the land. The tithes or land tax paid nominally to Jehovah went to the temple, and was really the source of the wealth of the Sadducees or priestly aristocracy. The Roman land tax was regarded as a wanton insult against Jehovah ; and Pharisees and Sadducees for once united to oppose it. Zadok the Pharisee headed a revolt, and Judas of Gamala, called Judas the Galilean, sprung from an old freebooting family in the north, a man of fiery eloquence and desperate energy, raised the standard of revolt. There was furious fighting all over the country, but in the end Judas perished. He founded a party, however, who were destined to play an important part in all the Jewish revolts against their Roman oppressors, and his example fired the imagination of many of the youth of Galilee and Judea. One of our Lord’s disciples was a Zealot or follower of Judas. Compare my *Commentary on Mark’s Gospel*, pp. 52, 100, 106.

38. It will come to nought ; better, *it will be overthrown*.

39. But if it be, etc. ; better, *But if it is of God, ye will not be able to overthrow it.* Yet it should be remembered that “Whoever would wait for the complete victory of Christ and His Church, must wait until the Last Day.”

Even to fight against God. “Man cannot fight against God—is the language of the feeble prudence of the cold and cautious. Man must believe and obey God always, even before God’s work is triumphant—is the expression of the true wisdom of the penitent” (Stier). The Church need ask no more from the civil government than Gamaliel proposes to give, to be let alone to do her work.

agreed : and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the
 41 name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted
 42 worthy to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

CHAP. VI. 1. And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were
 2 neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called

40. **And beaten them.** The Sadducees insisted on this punishment at least : the forty stripes save one (Deut. xxv. 1-3) given to those who were in the wrong in a dispute.

God makes His servants gradually accustomed to the cross, to the cup which the followers of Jesus had to drink : (1) threatening, iv. 21 ; (2) imprisonment, v. 18 ; (3) scourging, v. 40 ; (4) martyrdom, vii. 60.

41. **That they were counted worthy to suffer,** remembering doubtless what the Lord had said to them in the days when they could not understand the meaning of His words (Matt. x. 16-39). Compare also Rom. v. 3 ; Gal. vi. 14 ; 2 Cor. vi. 8-10.

For his name, better for the name. Compare vers. 28, 30, and iv. 12.

42. **In the temple, and in every house ; better, in the temple, and at home.** The two fields of apostolic work : where crowds gather, where disciples meet. The mission work of the Church was done in the temple, the work of edification or training and educating disciples was done in private houses in the home or family church.

Teach and preach Jesus Christ, to teach and to preach Jesus as THE CHRIST. We are too much accustomed to read *Christ* as a proper name, and so miss the peculiar point of apostolic preaching. The Jews believed in a Christ ; apostolic preaching declared, and apostolic teaching proved from the Resurrection, from old Testament prophecy, from the descent of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus of Nazareth was *that* Christ. Hence almost all throughout the Acts of the Apostles, the words *Jesus Christ* should be read *Jesus-THE Christ*. This teaching and preaching was what gave most offence to the Sanhedrin.

8. *The beginnings of organization. The Seven, vi. 1-7.*

VI. 1. In those days. The martyrdom of Stephen is usually dated at 36 or 38 A.D.

Multiplying, multiplying. The disciples were increasing rapidly in Jerusalem, until the persecution after Stephen's death dispersed many.

The Grecians, the Grecian Jews or Hellenists, belonging to the "Dispersion among the Gentiles" (John vii. 35; Jas. i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 1), Jews who had come to Jerusalem from the Jewish colonies outside Palestine, who had become Christians, and had remained with the apostolic company. For those Jews of the *Diaspora*, compare Introduction, pp. 30-32.

The daily ministration. The money subscribed by the wealthier brethren

the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve
 3 tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven
 4 men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom,
 5 whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give
 ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the
 6 word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and
 7 they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy
 Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon,
 8 and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: whom
 9 they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed,
 they laid *their* hands on them.

had been given in charge to the Apostles (iv. 37) for distribution among the poor; the plan had worked well when the brotherhood was small, but when it increased beyond such management some organization was felt to be required. Paul gives a sketch of rules to guide those in charge of such administration in 1 Tim. v. 3-16. The word translated **ministration** is *diaconia*—service: it is translated *relief* in xi. 29.

2. **To serve tables.** In iv. 35 we are told that those who sold lands or houses laid the money at the Apostles' feet. We can see that the Apostles thus became the centre of the whole benevolent administration of the Church; and can conceive how much of their time was occupied in the distribution of charity. The larger the number of disciples, the more difficult the task, and murmurings arose. The Apostles met the crisis with singular tact and good feeling. They asked the whole Church, those who gave money and those who got it, to take the whole responsibility upon their shoulders and elect as their representatives men who could do the work.

3. **Seven men.** *The Seven* (Acts xxi. 8). Every Jewish village community was presided over by seven men, commonly called *The seven good men of the City*.

Whom we may appoint. The people elected, not by lot, and the Apostles set apart or ordained by prayer and by the laying on of hands (ver. 6).

4. **Continually to prayer.** *We will continue stedfastly in prayer.* Compare i. 14, ii. 42, 46; Rom. xii. 12.

And in the **ministry of the word**. The word translated **ministry** is *diaconia*, before translated *ministration*. *Prayer*, the devotional side of worship, public and private; *ministry of the word*, the instruction or teaching side.

5. **Pleased the whole multitude.** The Apostles did not impose commands, they made suggestions; the Church approved and carried them out; ecclesiastical democracy.

Stephen. Compare vi. 8-viii. 2.

Philip. Compare viii. 8-40, and xxi. 8. The others of *The Seven* are not again mentioned in Scripture. They have all Greek names and may all have been Hellenists.

6. **Laid their hands on them.** A symbolical act common in the Old Testament (1) to imply transference of guilt (Lev. i. 4, viii. 14, xvi. 21); (2) to

7 And the word of God increased ; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly ; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

imply communication of blessing (Gen. xlviij. 14 ; Mark x. 16) ; (3) to set apart to an office (Num. viii. 10, xxvii. 18, 23; Acts xiii. 3; 1 Tim. iv. 14, v. 22).

7. Increased. The word denotes rapid continuous growth ; harmony had been restored ; the Apostles had more time to do their special work ; there was a period of rapid prosperity.

A great company of the priests. Stephen was the forerunner of Paul in preaching the gospel freed from Judaism, and it was this preaching that converted the priests. The priests were mostly Sadducees, and their conversion was the more remarkable. It was these converted priests, doubtless, who told the writers of the Gospels of the rending of the veil of the temple (Mark xv. 38). This 7th verse marks the culminating-point in the outward prosperity of the Church. Their only opponents had been the aristocracy of priest-nobles called the Sadducees, but the disciples were soon called upon to testify to the truth that Christianity was wider than Judaism, and this brought them in contact with the Pharisees, the leaders of the fierce democracy of Judaism. Then persecution arose which scattered the disciples. It is interesting to note, however, that this persecution which dispersed the Christians did not arise until the Church had in the election of the seven men discovered the secret of organization.

The seven men are commonly called the first deacons of the Christian Church, and the idea has arisen from the frequent use in this chapter, whether as noun or verb, of that Greek word whence *deacon* comes. It is to be observed, however, that these seven men are never called deacons, and that the word deacon is not found in the Acts of the Apostles or in the earlier Epistles. When the men are again mentioned they are called the *Seven*, as if to distinguish them from the *Twelve*. The *Seven* have duties of their own distinct from the *Twelve*, who have their peculiar functions. This suggests that the appointment of the *Seven* marks the beginning of permanent and ordinary office-bearers in the Church, or is the beginning of Church organization. There is not space for a full discussion of the whole topic, but these points may be indicated :—

(1) It is evident from ii. 44, 45, and from iv. 32-37, that the early Christian Church made it a primary duty that those who had this world's goods should help their brethren who were in need. The teaching of our Lord taught them to love their neighbours as themselves, to sell what they had and give to the poor (Matt. xix. 21), and to find in practical love to the visible brethren a means of expressing their devotion to the invisible God (1 John iv.). Charity was of the essence of the Christian community. This is made plain by statements of the earlier Christian writers. Polycarp calls widows orphans, and the poor *an altar of sacrifice*. The poor "were in the new economy what the great altar of the temple court had been in the older economy. Just as the new temple of God was the temple of the regenerate soul, so the new altar of God was the altar of human need."

(2) It is manifest, however, that indiscriminate charity would lead to disorders, and this Christian communism, when the Church became numerous, led to abuses. The case of Ananias and Sapphira showed how it was apt to generate a false enthusiasm in the charitable, which ended in hypocrisy ; the murmuring recorded in verse 1, proceeding from the idea that some were

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders favoured at the expense of others, proves that difficulties arose among those who received the charity. A state of things ensued which called for rigid supervision in the collection and distribution of charity. In short, the Church required guidance in the performance of its primary and distinctive duty.

(3) This necessity for supervision was the occasion of the election of office-bearers by the community, who at first receive no official name, but are called simply *the Seven* in contrast to *the Twelve*. They are office-bearers springing out of and elected by the community, and their appointment marks the beginning of self-government within the Church. The function of the Apostles, as is told over and over again in the Acts, was to be witnesses of the Resurrection ; they were the link between Jesus and the first generation of the Church which was called into being by their witness-bearing, and was therefore founded on the Apostles. Their office was temporary and extraordinary, but that of *the Seven* concerned the ordinary life of the Church at all times, and as they sprang from within the Church their office could always be filled by successors chosen in the same way. They were the representatives of the Church, as the Apostles were the custodiers of the memory of Jesus.

(4) The duty of these Seven was to superintend the discharge of the primary and distinctive duty of the Church, the collection and distribution of money given in charity. It is natural to suppose that this duty was performed by the men appointed to do it, or by others chosen as they had been. Some years after their appointment we read of money collected and sent for distribution among the poor saints in Jerusalem. This money was not given to *the Twelve*; they had handed over that work to *the Seven*. Accordingly we find that Barnabas and Saul did not give the money they brought from Antioch to the Twelve or to those of their number who were at Jerusalem. They gave it to the office-bearers of the Christian Church, who are no longer nameless, but are called elders. The inference is that *elder* is the first official name for *the Seven*, and that *elders* appear as the ordinary office-bearers of the community, in opposition to the *Apostles*, who are extraordinary office-bearers.

(5) These ordinary office-bearers, however, have several names. They are called *προστάτευον* (1 Thess. v. 12; Rom. xii. 8); *προσβάτεροι* (Acts xi. 30, xiv. 23, xv. 2, etc., xx. 17; Jas. v. 14; 1 Pet. v. 1; 1 Tim. v. 17-19); *ἱεροκόποι* (Phil. i. 1); *παπίους* (Eph. iv. 11); *ἀρχόμενοι* (Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24). These names all denote the same office, however (elder = president, 1 Tim. v. 17; elder = bishop, Tit. i. 5-7; elder = bishop = pastor, Acts xx. 17, 18, 28; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2). As the term *elder* is applied (Acts xi. 29, 30) to men who do the work of the Seven, we may believe that all these names denote office-bearers chosen to perform like duties.

(6) These names, with the organization they represent, were naturally borrowed, and adapted to the special circumstances of the Church, from outside associations, both Jewish and Gentile. The Church simply took over under apostolic guidance and sanction modes of organization common in the times (see Hatch's *Bampton Lectures, passim*).

(7) This organization gradually grew with the needs of the Church. The function of distribution implied supervision and inspection. Only the deserving poor were allowed to share in the charitable gifts (1 Tim. v. 4-16); and thus the general charge of looking after Church discipline fell gradually to the elders. It is needless to trace the growth further ; the evidence seems

9 and iniracles among the people. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of 10 Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he to show that all ecclesiastical organization and office grew gradually out of the appointment of these seven men. As before remarked, it is interesting to note that the Church had organized itself as one visible community represented in a body of office-bearers chosen by the whole fellowship, and giving it cohesion, immediately before the persecution arose, and had in this way become fore-armed for the conflict.

IV.—THE FIRST PERSECUTION, vi. 8—viii. 4.

I. *Stephen's arrest and trial, vi. 8—15.*

9. *The synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, etc.* *The synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia, etc.* The different communities of Hellenist Jews had their own synagogues in Jerusalem, and those who belonged to five of these synagogues disputed with Stephen.

It is said that Jerusalem contained four hundred and eighty synagogues.

Libertines, freedmen. Most probably the descendants of Jews who had been carried captive to Rome by Pompey the Great and others, and who had been freed in Rome. Eighteen years before this these Jewish freedmen had been banished from Rome, and many had returned to Jerusalem.

Cyrene was in Africa, about half-way between Carthage and Alexandria. It contained a large number of Jews, who constituted one-fourth of its whole population (Mark xv. 21; Acts xiii. 1).

Alexandria, the capital of Egypt, founded by Alexander the Great. In no city save Jerusalem were there so many Jews, nor had they so much power anywhere out of Palestine. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament had been made at Alexandria for the Jews there; Jewish philosophy flourished in the person of Philo; and the Jewish Therapeutæ of Alexandria were probably the source of the mystical Essenes. The Jews of Alexandria had great privileges as well as great influence; they were permitted to have a council and ethnarch of their own, and were to a large extent a self-governed body.

Cilicia was at the south-east corner of what is now called Asia Minor. It contained a large number of Jews, the descendants of the two thousand Jewish families whom Antiochus the Great transplanted from Palestine. Its principal town was Tarsus, the birthplace of Saul, who in all probability belonged while in Jerusalem to the synagogue of the Cilicians, and was one of those who disputed with Stephen.

Asia in the New Testament always means the north-west corner of Asia Minor, which had Ephesus for its capital, and contained within it most of the seven churches of the Apocalypse. In all these places the Jews lived apart from the Gentile inhabitants, and had their synagogues; they had also in all probability synagogues in Jerusalem which they frequented when sojourning there at the feasts or at other times.

Disputing. They *put questions* to him, as the Pharisees and scribes had done to Jesus (Mark viii. 11, ix. 14): the same word is used.

11 spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and
 12 *against* God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and
 13 brought *him* to the council, and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words
 14 against this holy place, and the law : for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and
 15 shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

CHAP. VII. 1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so ?
2 And he said,

Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken ; The God of glory

11. Blasphemous things against Moses. Compare verses 13, 14. The Jewish rulers had roused the people of Jerusalem against our Lord by declaring that He preached the destruction of the temple and the abolition of its services. This accusation appealed to all their selfish interests ; for if the temple were destroyed, the Hellenist Jews would no longer flock to Jerusalem, and the great part of the people, who made their living by providing for the wants of these crowds of visitors, would lose their means of livelihood. The same charge was made against Stephen, and with a like success, for the populace, who were before ready to stone any one who should attack the Apostles (v. 26), now sided with the rulers against the Christians. This charge appealed to the Pharisees, who were the unwavering champions of the preservation of the personal ceremonial purity of each individual Jew. As a political party the Pharisees had staked the existence of the nation on the strict observance of that ceremonial law which separated them from the heathen, while as leaders of a religious reform in Palestine they had insisted that Jehovah required this ceremonial purity from all His people. They had not interfered with the Christians when the Sadducees had menaced the Apostles for preaching the Resurrection ; but now that a Hellenist Jew ventured to doubt the efficacy of the ritual of the scribes, they were stirred to fury.

13. Set up false witnesses. Compare the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Mark xiv. 56-60. There was a basis of truth in their accusation, only aggravated and distorted.

14. The customs which Moses delivered us, delivered unto us. Not merely the Mosaic law contained in the Pentateuch, but *the traditions of the elders* or complicated code of rules for action which these teachers had deduced from the Mosaic law. It is manifest, however, from the line of Stephen's defence, that the main charge against him was that he taught that God could be worshipped in other places than in the temple. "The Most High," he said, "dwelleth not in temples made with hands" (vii. 48).

2. Stephen's defence, vii. 1-53.

VII. 2. And he said. Stephen's speech can only be understood when the charge against him is kept in mind. He was charged with preaching that

appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldeans, and dwelt in Charran : and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. And he gave him none faith in Jesus implied the abandonment of temple worship and of the Mosaic ritual. In his defence he practically admits the charge and justifies it by a double argument. (1) That the worship of Jehovah had not been confined in time past to Jerusalem, nor had His habitation been the temple only ; for (a) He had been with Abraham in Mesopotamia, and been worshipped by him there (2-8) ; (b) He had been with Jacob, Joseph, and Moses in Egypt, and had been worshipped by them there (9-24, 30-38) ; (c) He had been with Israel during all the wanderings of the movable tabernacle, and had accepted their worship (44-46) ; (d) and even at the dedication of the temple, an event in Jewish history as late as Solomon's time, it was expressly said in the prayer of dedication that the presence of Jehovah was not confined to the temple, but that heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool, and no one spot His place of rest (47-50). (2) That the rulers of the people had continually made the same mistake as his accusers, had threatened and persecuted prophets who like himself had pointed out the true spiritual line of progress in the worship of their God, and had even slain the Messiah (25-29, 39-43, 51-53). The first line of argument contains facts from the past dealings of Jehovah with His people, and the second applies them by historical illustrations to the conduct of Stephen's accusers. The speech, a grand protest for the freedom and spirituality of Christianity, was rudely interrupted, and is in fact only a historical introduction left unfinished by Stephen's murder, but illustrated historically in the Acts of the Apostles, and expounded argumentatively in the Epistles of St. Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Compare Prof. Lumby, *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Introduction, pp. xi. xii. (Paul has reproduced Stephen's words : compare ver. 53 with Gal. iii. 19, and ver. 48 with Acts xvii. 24.)

Before he dwelt in Charran. Gen. xii. 1-4 (in the Hebrew) says that God called Abraham after he had removed to Haran or Charran, which is west of the Euphrates ; but Gen. xv. 7 and Neh. ix. 7 say that God brought Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees or Mesopotamia, which is east of the Euphrates. The statement of Stephen is also made by Philo and Josephus. Stephen refers to the call of Gen. xv. 7.

Abraham first lived in *Ur of the Chaldees*, which was probably in the extreme north of Mesopotamia, near the sources of the Tigris. *Charran*, the *Carrae* of the Romans, where Crassus was defeated and slain by the Parthians, was also in the north of Mesopotamia, but south of *Ur*.

4. When his father was dead. Compare Gen. xi. 26-32 and Gen. xii. 4. It is difficult but not impossible to reconcile these passages. Compare Hackett's *Commentary on the Acts*, p. 97, and Gloag, *Commentary on the Acts*, i. 234-236. Paul's summary of Jewish history (Acts xiii. 20 ; Gal. iii. 17) contains similar chronological difficulties. The chronology does not affect the argument. So with the *four hundred years* of ver. 6 : for which compare Gen. xv. 13 ; Ex. xii. 40 ; Gal. iii. 17.

inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on : yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

6 And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land ; and that they should bring them into
 7 bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God : and after that shall they come forth, and serve
 8 me in this place. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision : and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day ; and Isaac *begat* Jacob ; and Jacob *begat* the
 9 twelve patriarchs. And the patriarchs, moved with envy,
 10 sold Joseph into Egypt : but God was with him, and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt ; and he
 11 made him governor over Egypt and all his house. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction : and our fathers found no sustenance.
 12 But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent
 13 out our fathers first. And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren ; and Joseph's kindred was made
 14 known unto Pharaoh. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and
 15 fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died,
 16 he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem.

5. Promised. Gen. xii. 7, xiii. 15, 16. Compare Gen. xii. 14 and xviii. 12.

6. God spake. Gen. xv. 13, 14; Ex. iii. 12.

7. In this place, not Jerusalem but Mount Sinai. Therefore even in the promise of the land the invitation to worship is not confined to Jerusalem nor to the temple, and Stephen's saying so was not blasphemy.

9. But God was with him. Therefore he could worship God far from the Holy Land and Jerusalem, and Jehovah's worship is not confined to a place.

14. Threescore and fifteen. The Septuagint numbers are frequently different from the Hebrew. Stephen follows the Greek version here. Gen. xlvi. 8-27.

15. Down into Egypt. Far from the land of promise, and yet God's worship was maintained and preserved.

16. And were carried over into Sychem (*Shechem*). This verse appears to make a confusion between Abraham and Jacob, Machpelah and Shechem (Gen. xl ix. 30, xxxiii. 19, l. 13; Josh. xxiv. 32) ; and this gives rise to three difficulties : (1) Stephen seems to say that Jacob was buried at Shechem, while the Pentateuch declares that he was buried at Machpelah with Abraham and Isaac ; (2) the Pentateuch says that Joseph was buried at Shechem, but makes no mention of the burial-place of his brethren ; (3) Stephen says

17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in
 18 Egypt, till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.
 19 The same dealt subtilely with our kindred, and evil-entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the
 20 end they might not live. In which time Moses was born,
 and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's
 21 house three months: and when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.
 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,
 23 and was mighty in words and in deeds. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren
 24 the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong,

that the field at Shechem was purchased by Abraham, the Pentateuch declares that Jacob was the buyer. In answer to the first two difficulties, it has been urged that the words of the text do not necessarily imply that Jacob's *burial* is spoken of. If the words do not include Jacob, who was buried at Machpelah, the statement is that the twelve patriarchs were buried at Shechem, and the Old Testament tells us that one of them, Joseph, was buried there, while a common Jewish tradition, which Stephen has adopted, asserts his brethren were buried there also (Josephus, *Antiq.* ii. 8, 2). It has also been inferred from Gen. xii. 6, 7, that Abraham must have bought land at Shechem or he could not have sacrificed there; but this plausible explanation has not been generally accepted. Calvin says emphatically: "There is plainly an error in the name Abraham, and so the passage must be corrected." Stephen mentions Shechem to show that Samaria itself was a holy place according to Israelitish history.

18. Another king, probably a *king of another dynasty*. Many scholars maintain that the Hyksos or shepherd kings had been expelled from Egypt at the time referred to, and that the other king who was the oppressor of the Hebrews was the first of a race of native monarchs.

20. Exceeding fair. As in the margin, *fair unto God*. The phrase is a Hebrew superlative of the epithet found in the Septuagint version of Ex. ii. 2. Jewish traditions constantly affirm the exceeding beauty of Moses (Josephus, *Antiq.* ii. 9, 6).

21. Took him up out of the water.

22. Learned, *instructed* or *taught*. The Egyptians were esteemed the most learned people of antiquity, and traditions of Greek philosophy continually speak of their wise men acquiring their knowledge from Egypt. "Moses took the wisdom of the Egyptians, as the people did the golden vessels" (Augustine).

Mighty in words. He had not the fluency of Aaron (Ex. iv. 10), but his words were weighty and convincing.

23. Full forty years old. Stephen divides the life of Moses into three periods of forty years each—(1) forty years in Egypt, (2) forty in Midian, (3) forty years leading the people in their wanderings. Compare vers. 23, 30, and 42. This was the rabbinical tradition, and has confirmation in the Old Testament Scriptures (Deut. xxxiv. 7; Ex. xvi. 35, vii. 7).

he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and
 25 smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would
 have understood how that God by his hand would deliver
 26 them: but they understood not. And the next day he showed
 himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them
 at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong
 27 one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust
 him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over
 28 us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian
 29 yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a
 stranger in the land of Midian, where he begat two sons.
 30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him
 in the wilderness of mount Sina an Angel of the Lord in a
 31 flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw *it*, he wondered
 at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of
 32 the Lord came unto him, *saying*, I *am* the God of thy fathers,
 the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God
 of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.
 33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet:
 34 for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have
 seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in
 Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down
 to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into
 35 Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made
 thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a
 ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel which

25. For he supposed, etc. *And he supposed that his brethren understood how that God by his hand was giving them deliverance* (Ex. ii. 11-14).

But they understood not. They did not recognise *their* deliverer, as the rulers of the Jews did not know Jesus to be the Christ.

26. To them. To two of his countrymen (Ex. ii. 13).

Sirs, ye are brethren. *Ye are men who are brethren.*

27. Thrust him away. An open and violent rejection of their deliverer. Stephen throughout the whole address uses history to describe vividly contemporary events.

29. In the land of Midian. *Midian*, probably the whole Sinaitic peninsula.

30. When the forty years. Compare ver. 23.

33. Put off thy shoes from thy feet. *Loose the sandals from thy feet.* To take off the shoe or sandal is a mark of reverence almost universal in the East from time immemorial. The priests went barefoot in the tabernacle and in the temple; no one is allowed to enter a Turkish mosque in his shoes. Verses 31-34 condense Ex. iii. 2-10.

35. This Moses whom they refused. They had rejected Moses, and yet he

36 appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after that he had showed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.
 37 This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your
 38 brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear. This is he that was in the church in the wilderness with the Angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with our fathers* : who
 39 received the lively oracles to give unto us : to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in
 40 their hearts turned back again into Egypt, saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us : for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is
 41 become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of
 42 their own hands. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven ; as it is written in the book of the Prophets,

O ye house of Israel,
 Have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices
By the space of forty years in the wilderness ?

43 Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch,
 And the star of your god Remphan,

was their leader appointed by Jehovah ; they had rejected Jesus, and yet He was their Christ.

37. That Moses which said. Stephen quotes Deut. xviii. 15, which Peter had previously cited (iii. 22). The application to Christ is only suggested here ; it is stated fully in ver. 51.

38. The church. *The congregation.*

Lively oracles. *Living oracles* received by Moses from God. Moses therefore stood between God and the people, a *mediator* (Gal. iii. 19), and may be compared to Jesus (Heb. viii. 6, ix. 15, xii. 24), and he was rejected by their fathers just as they had rejected Christ (Num. xiv. 14, xi. 4, 5 ; Ex. xvi. 3).

39. To whom our fathers would not obey, etc. Num. xiv. 4 ; Ex. xvi. 3 ; Num. xi. 4, 5.

40. Saying unto Aaron. Ex. xxxii. 1-18.

41. They made a calf. Ex. xxxii. 4. Compare Ps. cvi. 20 ; Neh. ix. 18.

42. To worship the host of heaven, *to serve*, etc. Deut. iv. 19 ; 2 Kings xvii. 16 ; Jer. xix. 13.

The book of the prophets. The quotation is from Amos v. 25, 26. The Jews divided the books of the Old Testament in such a manner that the twelve minor prophets were counted one book.

43. Moloch. Lev. xviii. 21, xx. 2 ; 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxiii. 10 ; Jer. vii. 31. And the star of your god Remphan. *And the star of your god Rephan.* The quotation is from Amos v. 25-27. The A. V. has, *But ye have borne*

Figures which ye made to worship them :
And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

- 44 Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should
 45 make it according to the fashion that he had seen : which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before
 46 the face of our fathers, unto the days of David ; who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for
 47 the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house.
 48 Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; as saith the prophet,

- 49 Heaven is my throne,
And earth is my footstool :
What house will ye build me ? saith the Lord ;
Or what is the place of my rest ?

- 50 Hath not my hand made all these things ?
 51 Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do

the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, and a better rendering of the Hebrew would give, But ye have borne the stake or column of your king (Moloch), and the pedestal (Chiun) of your images. A better reading, however, appears to be, *But ye have borne Sakketh (an Assyrian name for Moloch) your king, and Kewan (i.e. Saturn) your God-star, your images.* Stephen follows the Septuagint. However, the passage as taken there seems to be a reference to the worship of two different deities, the Ammonite Moloch and the Phoenician Saturn (Rephan was the Egyptian name for Saturn), whose worship had almost similar rites. The rabbins tell us that the image of Moloch was a hollow figure with an ox head and out-stretched arms. A child was put in the arms and fire was kindled beneath, the infant's screams being drowned in the noise of drums. This was the abominable worship which the leaders of Israel from time to time turned away to. There is again an implicit reference to the cruelties inflicted on Jesus.

44. The tabernacle of witness, or testimony (Ex. xxv. 22, xxxviii. 21). It made God's presence seen, and showed how God moved from place to place and could be worshipped in all these places.

45. *Jesus.* Joshua (Heb. iv. 8). Read, *Which also our fathers, in their turn, brought in with Joshua when they entered on the possession of the nations which God thrust out.* In Canaan the tabernacle moved about from place to place till the time of David, and therefore the worship of Jehovah was not confined to one spot.

46. Desired to find a tabernacle. 2 Sam. vii. 2 ; Ps. cxxxii. 1-5.
 48. As saith the prophet. Isa. lxvi. 1, 2 ; 1 Kings viii. 27 ; John iv. 21-23 ; Acts xvii. 24.

51. Ye stiff-necked. The tone changes from argument to passionate rebuke. Stephen had been interrupted doubtless from time to time, felt that

52 ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers 53 and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, 55 and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand 56 of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the 57 Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran 58 upon him with one accord, and cast *him* out of the city, and further explanation was useless, and that it only remained to bring home their own sins to the hearts of his accusers.

52. *Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute?* Matt. xxiii. 31, 37.

Of the Just One. Acts iii. 14, xxii. 14; 1 John ii. 1; Matt. xxvii. 19.

53. *By the disposition of angels, as it was ordained by angels.* The Jews believed that it was the voice of angels that was heard on Mount Sinai (Ps. lxviii. 17). Compare Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2.

3. Stephen's death, vii. 54–viii. 2.

54. *Cut to the heart, etc.* The words express the frenzy of rage, only restrained by a brute-like grinding of the teeth.

55. *The glory of God.* The *Shechinah*. “The scene before his eyes was no longer the council-hall at Jerusalem, and the circle of his infuriated judges; but he gazed up into the endless courts of the celestial Jerusalem, with its innumerable company of angels, and saw Jesus, in whose righteous cause he was about to die” (Conybeare and Howson)—a vision of the soul and not of the senses.

Jesus standing. Not sitting (Matt. xxvi. 64; Eph. i. 20; Heb. viii. 1, x. 12; Ps. cx. 1); but risen to help His suffering witness.

56. *The Son of man.* Our Lord's favourite title for Himself during His sojourn on earth (Matt. viii. 20, ix. 6, x. 23; Mark ii. 28; Luke xii. 10; John iii. 13, etc.); but never, with three exceptions (Acts vii. 56; Rev. i. 13, xiv. 14), applied to the Eternal Son by His disciples themselves. Stephen's vision was a fulfilment of the prediction—*Hereafter thou shalt see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power* (Matt. xxvi. 64), and he used the epithet in the prophecy.

57. *Then they cried.* Their rage became uncontrollable (*uncircumcised in heart and ears*, ver. 51).

Ran upon him with one accord. Stephen's death was a murder in which Sanhedrin, elders, and people became a brutal mob. But compare Deut. xiii. 9, 10.

58. *Cast him out of the city.* Lev. xxiv. 10–16. Scrupulous to observe the letter of the law with murder in their hearts (Num. xv. 35, 36; 1 Kings xxi. 13; Heb. xiii. 12).

stoned *him* : and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a 59 young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive 60 my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. CHAP. VIII. 1. And Saul was consenting unto his death.

And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem : and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and 2 Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. 3 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, committed them to prison.

Witnesses. By Mosaic law (Deut. xvii. 7) the witnesses had to cast the first stones (John viii. 7); they laid aside the outer garment or *abba* to let the arms free.

A young man's feet. The phrase implies a man between thirty and forty years of age.

Saul belonged to the synagogue of Cilicia (vi. 9); he had been in the Sanhedrin, and had shouted down Stephen and voted against him ; now he presided at the legal murder.

59. **Calling upon God, upon the Lord.** The prayers were to Jesus, who is God. The better rendering is, *calling upon and saying, Lord Jesus*, etc. Stephen's prayers to Jesus are Jesus' prayers to the Father (Luke xxiii. 34 and 46). Contrast with this prayer, *Lay not this sin to their charge*, 2 Chron. xxiv. 22.

60. **He fell asleep.** Rest welcomed, and awakening sure. The early Christians called their burying-places *Sleeping-places (coimeteria)*, cemeteries. John xi. 11; Matt. xxvii. 52; 1 Cor. xv. 18, 51; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

VIII. 1. **Saul was consenting to his death, took pleasure in his murder.** Acts xxii. 20; Rom. i. 32. And all the while the Holy Spirit, in Stephen's speech, in his prayers, in his death, was striving with Saul's heart. "The Church owes Paul to the prayers of Stephen" (Augustine).

At that time, on that day. The persecution broke out in the very day of Stephen's death. His martyrdom, says Calvin, acted like the first taste of blood on a wild beast.

Except the apostles. They could not desert their post (John x. 13), and perhaps their preaching had not been so obnoxious to the people as Stephen's.

2. **Devout men.** Not Christians, probably, else the word *brethren* would have been used ; if so, Stephen was like his Master in his burial as well as in his death.

4. *The Converts scattered become missionaries*, viii. 3, 4

3. **As for Saul.** These two verses describe a reign of terror in Jerusalem, possible only in the absence of any settled government. It is probable, therefore, that the events took place in 37 A.D., the year in which Tiberius

- 4 Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every-
 5 where preaching the word. Then Philip went down to the
 6 city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the
 people with one accord gave heed unto those things which
 Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.
 7 For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of
 many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with

died and Caligula succeeded, when there was no Roman governor in Judea, and the Jewish factions reigned supreme. We see night visits to Christian homes, men and women thrust into vile prisons, then brought before the elders in the synagogue, who tried to force them to deny their Master; on their refusal some were put to death (Acts xxii. 4, xxvi. 10), others were beaten (Acts xxvi. 11), and all suffered wanton outrage (1 Tim. i. 13).

4. Went everywhere preaching the word. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. The converts went to Phœnix, Cyprus, and Antioch (xi. 19), some perhaps as far as Rome, for Andronicus and Junia were disciples before Paul's conversion (Rom. xvi. 7).

V.—THE CHURCH BEYOND JERUSALEM IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA, viii. 5–xi. 18.

I. Philip's missionary journeys, viii. 5–40.

(1) Work in Samaria, 5–25.

(a) Philip in Samaria, 5–8.

5. Philip, one of the *seven* (vi. 5, xxi. 8).

Samaria, called then *Sebaste* in honour of Augustus Cæsar, and about to become “the bridge between Jerusalem and the world.” Philip's work in Samaria was a witness by the Spirit to Stephen's preaching and to his speech. The promise of the Spirit was not tied to Jerusalem. The prayers of the brethren for boldness to preach and for confirmation by signs (iv. 29, 30) were answered in Samaria as well as in Jerusalem. Samaria was the name of the country as well as of the town. The people of one of the Samaritan towns had welcomed Jesus (John iv. 42), and in reference to them Jesus had spoken of fields white already to harvest (John iv. 35).

Christ, the Christ. He preached that Jesus was the Messiah, the apostolic gospel. The Samaritans of half heathen descent accepted and professed a corrupted Judaism, and looked for the Messiah (John iv. 25), who was to rebuild the temple on Mount Gerizim, reign over all nations, and restore everywhere the law of Moses.

6. The people with one accord gave heed. *And the multitudes*, etc. The words imply great throngs of people crowding round the preacher, and listening with eager attention.

Hearing and seeing, when they heard and saw; the Holy Spirit aided the preaching of the word with signs following.

7. Unclean spirits, etc. For from many of those which had unclean spirits they came out crying with a loud voice; and many that were palsied and that were lame were healed. The cry may have been a testimony to the Messiahship of Christ (Mark iii. 11; Luke iv. 41); or an inarticulate shout of rage.

8 palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.

9 But there was a certain man called Simon, which before-

It is to be noticed that demoniac possession is clearly distinguished in this passage from ordinary disease.

The question of **demoniac possession** suggested by this miracle is too wide to be discussed here. The fact of "possession" is continually referred to in the Gospels, but no explanation is ever given, and the opinions of theologians differ on the subject. On the one hand it may be gathered from Scripture :—(1) that our Lord Himself refers "possession" to Satanic agency (Luke x. 17-19, xi. 14-22); (2) that "possession" of the body by a demon is distinguished from Satanic influence in the soul; (3) that "possession" is distinguished from disease, and perhaps from lunacy (though the lunacy may really be epilepsy), as in Mark i. 32, "all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils," and in Matt. iv. 24, "those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy;" (4) that "possession" was commonly accompanied by infirmity or disease, such as dumbness, blindness, the symptoms of epilepsy or violent insanity (Matt. ix. 32, xii. 22; Mark ix. 17-27, v. 1-5). On the other hand, it must be remembered (1) that the Jews attributed nearly all diseases, and especially all cerebral or mental diseases, to the direct power of Satan, or at least to the immediate action of evil spirits; (2) that our Lord assents to this ordinary mode of speaking, and ascribes ordinary disease to direct Satanic agency, as in Luke xiii. 16—this woman being a daughter of Abraham whom "Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years;" (3) that Scripture commonly classes those "possessed" with maniacs. Upon the whole, it seems best to conclude that there was in the case of those "possessed" the exertion of a unique power of the spirit of evil altogether distinct from what is to be seen either in mental or bodily disease. Physicians assert that there are still cases which cannot be otherwise explained in Eastern lands, as in Syria and in India. (Compare Mr. Caldwell's remarkable paper in the *Contemporary Review* of 1876.) May we not, however, see some analogy to these cases of possession in the strange and awful cases quite common among us, where sin lays hold on a man's soul by first taking possession of his body, where every tissue of the body becomes a temptation to sin, a chain to bind to sinful habit?

Philip found Samaria, what the gospel finds mankind, diseased, possessed, and deluded : he brought his message, the people received it, and joy abounded.

(b) *Simon the Sorcerer, 9-13.*

9. **Simon Magus, or Simon the Sorcerer.** The old religions of paganism had lost most of their power in the age in which our Lord appeared. Scepticism, and its usual accompaniment gross superstition, abounded throughout the Roman Empire. Hence multitudes of sorcerers abounded, and most great men had a diviner or reader of the future in their households. Elymas the Sorcerer was in attendance on the Governor of Cyprus (Acts xiii. 6, 7): and Simon was the great wizard of Samaria. Simon Magus may be looked on as the type of this numerous class of religious teachers, who were partly sincere in their belief in the power of the supernatural and in their capacity to wield its influence, and were partly fraudulent quacks working on the ignorance and credulity of their fellows.

time in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one : 10 to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, 11 saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched 12 them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. 13 Then Simon himself believed also : and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Most scholars agree in making this Simon the same as the Simon mentioned by Josephus (*Antiq.* xx. 7), who, a professed magician, was employed by Felix to persuade Drusilla, daughter of Herod Agrippa I., to desert her husband Azizus and marry him ; for wizards or magicians were used to execute shameless deeds.

It is quite impossible to trace Simon's history with any certainty. He has become the principal heretical figure in early Christian history. It is said that he was born at Gitta or Gitton in Samaria, that he founded a theosophist or Gnostic sect in Syria, that he was reverenced as a god and had divine honours paid to him, and that he died at Rome (Irenæus, *Adv. Her.* i. 27 ; Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* ii. 13-14 ; Hippolytus, *Adv. Her.* vi. 20).

Bewitched, astonished, the same word as *wondered* in ver. 13.

10. *This man, etc.* *This man is that power of God which is called great.* These words are expounded in the *Philosophoumena* of Hippolytus. Simon went about accompanied by a woman Helena who was also "a power of God." He taught a great first principle, hidden but omnipresent. This principle manifested itself in two different ways : as an active and spiritual, and also as a passive and receptive principle. The one is the good, the other the evil, for it is ever deteriorating. The first is the *great power of God* manifesting itself for the recovery of the other or passive receptive principle. Simon himself was the incarnation of the active principle, which made for salvation : Helena was the incarnation of the passive receptive principle. Her life of degradation was a type of the deterioration of the visible universe, and her recovery by Simon was the process of salvation by the great power of God made visible. This crass dualism, with its simple almost childish symbolism, its male and female principles, its opposition of good and evil, was the source out of which sprang most Gnostic systems.

12. *The things concerning, etc.* *Preaching glad tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus the Christ.* Philip's sermons probably contained an outline of the Ascension, the Resurrection, and the Passion of Jesus (31-35). Glad tidings which appealed to what was deepest in his hearers, who had been fascinated but not satisfied with the pretentious philosophy of Simon.

Were baptized. The words imply a succession of baptisms.

13. *Simon believed . . . was baptized.* Yet he was not a really converted man ; for Christ's ministers can never truly know the heart, they can only judge by an outward consistent profession and must often make mistakes.

Wondered. Was bewitched or made amazed in his turn. Philip's miracles

14 Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John : who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. 16 (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them : only they 17 were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them bearing the twofold seal of God's glory and love to men, are here set in contrast to Sim. a's sorceries. Simon's deeds were things to be marvelled at, but Christ's are always more than *miracles* or marvels, they are also *signs* of His purposes of mercy.

(c) *The apostolic deputation, 14-25.*

14. When the apostles . . . heard that Samaria. The story is common-place to us, but what a revelation it must have been to the Apostles ;—Samaritan believers (Matt. x. 5 ; Acts i. 8). Compare Introduction, p. 25.

They sent. The Apostles *sent* Peter ; he was their messenger, not their master.

John, who had once sought to call down fire on a Samaritan village (Luke ix. 54).

15. Might receive the Holy Ghost. The special gift of the Holy Ghost, whatever it might mean, was (1) given by the Apostles only, the only exception recorded being the case of Paul, who received the gift from Ananias ; (2) it implied such a communication as had visible effects (ver. 18) ; (3) it was commonly imparted by the laying on of hands, although the household of Cornelius received the gift while Peter was speaking, and before baptism ; (4) it implied miraculous gifts.

16. Had fallen. This expression is continually used to denote the gift of the Spirit (x. 44, xi. 15) ; it expresses that a real change took place in the believer after the gift ; what that change was, and how far it was different from what is now bestowed on His people by God, it is impossible to say.

They were baptized. They had received the outward sign of separation from the world and union with Christ ; but this outward sign is not always accompanied by the inward change, it was not so in the case of Simon.

17. Laid their hands on them. Compare note on vi. 6.

18. When Simon saw. There was something to be seen in this gift of the Holy Ghost, a transference of powers from the Apostles to believers.

He offered them money. Simon's whole attitude is that of a professional wizard convinced that strangers have at command magical powers of wonderful strength. He fancied that he could by money be instructed how to acquire, use, and impart, all in the way of trade, these powers. To the end he got no nearer the truth, for his prayer is to avert such power from harming him. From this act of Simon's comes our word *simony*, the crime of buying, selling, or bargaining for spiritual functions. The sin of Simon is virtually repeated when a man gets himself appointed to office in the Church, not that he may do God's work, but that he may make a living or gratify his ambition ; when he seeks a reputation for piety that he may secure his own temporal

19 money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever
 20 I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said
 unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast
 thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.
 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart
 22 is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this
 thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of
 23 thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou
 art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.
 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for
 me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come
 upon me.

25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word
 of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the Gospel
 in many villages of the Samaritans.

advantage; when for the sake of fame he covets the power of converting others,
 while careless of his own spiritual state.

19. **Give me also**, that I may be able to give to others in sale; he asks
 the power as something which can be traded in; not as a spiritual gift to
 seal his baptism.

20. **Thy money**, etc. *May thy silver with thee be for destruction.* It is
 not a sentence of condemnation nor an imprecation, because Peter afterwards
 points out a way of escape even for Simon (ver. 22). It is simply an ex-
 pression of intense abhorrence.

21. **In this matter**, *in this word*, the word which Samaria had received
 (ver. 14). "The state of his heart was such as to exclude him from the
 ordinary benefits of the gospel," and therefore much more from the reception
 of the higher communications of the Spirit, or from the power to be a medium
 to confer these on others.

22. **Pray God**, the Lord [Jesus]. "Peter neither forgives nor condemns,
 but bids the offender turn to the Searcher of hearts and pray for forgiveness.
 Had he seen repentance, he might have said, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee.'
 Had he seen a conscience utterly dead, he might have closed the door of
 hope. As it is, he stands midway between hope and fear, and keeping
 silence, leaves judgment to the Judge" (Plumptre).

23. **In the gall of bitterness**; better, *Thou wilt become a gall root of
 bitterness (or a bitter gall) and a bond of iniquity*; progress towards hopeless
 wickedness unless repentances comes (Deut. xxix. 18; Heb. xii. 15; Isa.
 lviii. 6). There is a double metaphor. The ancients considered that the
 gall of noxious reptiles was the source of their venom, and Peter warns
 Simon that unless repentance comes he will become worse and worse until
 he becomes all venom; that is the first metaphor. The second represents
 Simon as a chain or band of iniquity, and perhaps means that not only
 will Simon become concentrated essence of evil, but that he will become so
 habituated to being it, that he will not be able to back away from it.

24. **Pray God for me**. The man is terrified, not repentant. "He con-
 fesses his fear of punishment, not horror of guilt" (Bengel).

25. **And preached**. On their way back to Jerusalem, after confirming the

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went : and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem
 27 for to worship, was returning, and sitting in his chariot read
 28 Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go
 29 near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither
 30 to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said,

Church in Samaria, conferring the gift of the Holy Ghost, and notwithstanding Simon the Sorcerer, the Apostles became village preachers. Yet this was only by the way. They did not consider it their duty to become itinerant preachers yet. They returned to Jerusalem and to Jewish Christianity.

(2) *The Ethiopian eunuch, 26-40.*

26. Spake unto Philip, either in vision or by inward suggestion. Gaza, an old city of the Philistines about sixty miles south-west from Jerusalem.

Which is desert. There were at least two roads, perhaps three, from Jerusalem to Gaza ; Philip is told to take the "desert road," probably the one by Hebron which went through the desert hills of southern Judea. The Jews called any place "desert" which was thinly peopled and was unfit for tillage.

27. A man of Ethiopia, now Nubia and perhaps Abyssinia (which is still Christian) ; the island of Meroe, on the Nile, sometimes gave its name to the kingdom. It was ruled over by queens, not by kings, and its monarchs were all called Candace, like the Pharaohs of Egypt. This far-off nation had been specially mentioned in prophecy (Ps. lxviii. 31 ; Zeph. iii. 10).

Early Church history tells us that there were traces of Christianity in South Egypt from the earliest times.

28. Was returning. He was a Gentile and a proselyte, and was returning somewhat sadly (compare verses 31 and 39) from worshipping at Jerusalem. "Perhaps as disappointed as converted heathen who now come to England and find so much vice and crime instead of everybody loving Christ" (Stock).

Read, was reading. It is the custom in Eastern nations to read aloud even when there are no listeners. It is possible that the eunuch had heard at Jerusalem about the death of Jesus, of the deeds of His disciples, and how they preached that He was the Messiah who had fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. His mind seems to have been prepared for the reception of the truth.

29. Go near, and join thyself. Philip had been watching the man reading in his chariot for some time before the inward prompting sent him to accost him.

30. Heard him. He was reading aloud : silent reading is almost never practised in the East. "We should not be so shy of all strangers as some affect to be. Those we know nothing else of, we know this, that they have souls" (Matt. Henry).

31 Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired

32 Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the Scripture which he read was this,

He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;

And like a lamb dumb before his shearer,

So opened he not his mouth:

33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away:

And who shall declare his generation?

For his life is taken from the earth.

34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some

35 other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at

36 the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder

31. *How can I*, etc. The man was an inquirer, anxious, bewildered, but teachable.

32. *The place, the section.* The Jews divided the law and the prophets into sections which were read in regular order in the synagogue services. The section which the treasurer of Candace was reading was the passage appointed for the feast of Tabernacles, and therefore some think that he had been attending that feast. The passage is quoted from the Septuagint or ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament (Isa. liii. 7-8). If he had read a little further on (Isa. lvi. 3-8), he would have found something very interesting to himself.

33. *In his humiliation*, etc. The A. V. in the Old Testament reads: *He was taken from prison and from judgment.* In this passage the difficulty lies in the phrase: *In His humiliation His judgment was taken away.* Various explanations have been given, but perhaps the best is: *In the contempt, violence, and outrage which He suffered as part of His humiliation, the rights of justice and humanity which belonged to Him were taken from Him.* It can easily be imagined how Philip with these words before him could describe the betrayal, double trial, and crucifixion of the Master.

For his life is taken from the earth. The words imply a violent death.

34. *Of whom speaketh the prophet?* The Jews did not apply these words to the Messiah: their Messiah was a conquering captain, not a suffering Saviour. Philip showed how the Messiah was appointed by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to endure all these things for His people's salvation. It was part of the uniform apostolic gospel. Compare Acts ii.

23, and 1 Pet. ii. 21-24.

35. *Preached unto him Jesus.* The beginning and the end of all true preaching; the name which was not to be pronounced in Jerusalem was preached on this desert road to an African ruler, that he might carry it to Ethiopia. The sermon was the oral gospel of the Apostles, and apparently ended with some account of baptism.

36. *Unto a certain water.* Various conjectures have been made about

37 me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I
 38 believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he com-
 manded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both
 into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized
 39 him. And when they were come up out of the water, the
 Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw
 40 him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip
 was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in
 all the cities, till he came to Cesarea.

the place where this African chancellor of Candace's exchequer was baptized. (1) Ancient tradition recorded by Eusebius and Jerome says that the baptism took place at Bethzur (*Josh. xv. 58; Neh. iii. 16*), near Hebron, about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. The water is a spring which at present wells forth perennially from the base of the hill; part of the water runs to waste in the fields, while part is collected in a drinking trough. Scholars objected for the reason that the ground is so broken that no chariot could pass that way, but Hackett and other travellers have discovered traces of a paved road and the marks of wheels on the stones. A chapel was erected during the early centuries to mark the spot, and its ruins remain. (2) In Crusading times tradition associated the place of baptism with Ain Haniyeh, about five miles south-west of Jerusalem. A fountain, called by the Latins St. Philip's fountain, irrigates the neighbouring valley with an abundance of water. It lies on one of the ancient roads to Gaza. (3) Dr. Robinson supposes that the baptism took place in a brook at Tell-el-Hasy, on the road from Beit Tibrin to Gaza. "When we were at Tell-el-Hasy, and saw the water standing along the bottom of the ancient wady, we could not but remark the coincidence of several circumstances with the account of the eunuch's baptism. This water is on the most direct route from Beit Jibrin to Gaza, on the most southern road from Jerusalem, and in the midst of a country now desert, that is, without villages or fixed habitations."

37. **And Philip said.** This verse is omitted in the Revised Version. It was probably written on the margin by an early copyist and then copied into the text by some later scribe.

38. **Into the water,** for it was the almost universal practice in the early Church for the recipient of baptism to lay aside his garments, to enter into and stand waist deep in the water, and to be plunged beneath the surface "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

39. **Caught away Philip.** There is no need to suppose any supernatural disappearance; Philip was compelled to depart by the same irresistible spiritual impulse that had sent him there.

Rejoicing, for now he knew Jesus. What pains God takes to save a human soul! Philip taken from work in Samaria, sent down to the desert road, all to meet and convert this man.

40. **Azotus, Ashdod,** an old city of the Philistines. It was about thirty miles from Gaza, midway between it and Joppa. It maintained itself a Philistine city till the time of Nehemiah (*Neh. xiii. 23, 24*).

In all the cities. Joppa, Lydda, and the numerous villages in the fertile plain of Saron lay between Ashdod and Cæsarea.

CHAP. IX. 1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the **2** high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto **3** Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: **4** and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **5** Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou

2. The conversion of Saul, ix. 1-31.

IX. 1. And Saul. The narrative goes back to Jerusalem and the persecution there.

Breathing out; threatening and slaughter was the air he breathed: a madness to persecute had seized him (Acts xxvi. 11). The verse implies that others beside Stephen were slain. Saul's earnestness in the matter made him eager to make the most of the time of disorder in the empire.

The high priest. The Sanhedrin claimed to rule over foreign synagogues in all matters of religion, and religious observances so enmeshed the Jews' whole life that this claim extended far beyond what we now call the sphere of religion. The high priest was one of the presidents of the Sanhedrin.

2. Damascus was properly within the government of the prefect of Syria; but Vitellius, the prefect, had hastened to Rome on hearing of the death of Tiberius (37 A.D.), and it is probable that during this period of misrule, Aretas, king of Arabia Petrea, had seized the town, and wished to strengthen his position by granting every liberty to the heads of the Jewish community, which formed a very large proportion of the population, and who had great influence with the Gentile women of the town, almost all of whom professed the Jewish faith.

Of this way, of the Way (xix. 9, 23, xxii. 4, xxiv. 14, 22), a common expression for Christian discipleship. Dr. Plumtre notes how *Methodists*, those of the Method, has a similar use in England.

Or women. The Acts of the Apostles continually makes prominent the faith, ministry, and witness-bearing of Christian women; and we know from heathen, as well as from early Christian writers, that the lives of Christian women bore noble testimony to the faith of Jesus.

3. A light from heaven. It happened at noon-day (xxii. 6), but the light was brighter than the noon glare of an Eastern sun. It was the Shechinah or glory of God, and Jesus revealed in the midst of it (I Cor. xv. 8), as Stephen had seen Him.

4. Saul, Saul. The Greek spelling makes it plain that Jesus spoke to Saul in the familiar Aramaic of Palestine (see also Acts xxvi. 14), the language which He used while on earth, especially when He was deeply moved.

Why persecutest thou me? Isa. lxiii. 9; Zech. ii. 8. "What wrong, great or small, hast thou suffered from me, that thou doest these things?" (Chrysostom). Jesus and His people are one (Luke x. 16).

5. I am Jesus. Our Lord does not call Himself Messiah, Son of man, or

persecutest. *It is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6 And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7 And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, 8 hearing a voice, but seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no

Son of God, but Jesus of Nazareth, the man who was crucified. He recalls to Saul's mind His humiliation, suffering, and death,—all stumbling-blocks to the Pharisee; for what Paul had to be taught was that *Jesus of Nazareth* was the Christ. The name he had execrated, which he had compelled men and women to deny, which he had resolved to send into oblivion, was spoken in his ears from the midst of the excellent glory which his nation knew manifested the near presence of Jehovah.

It is hard . . . the Lord said unto him. These words are omitted in the Revised Version: they are not found in the oldest manuscripts, and have probably been supplied from xxvi. 14.

The *pricks*, or goad used to spur on oxen. Jesus spake to Paul in the same familiar parables which He had used when on earth.

6. *Lord, what wilt thou?* Paul does not recognise Jesus, but he knew that a heavenly messenger is in his presence, and he uses *Kurie, Lord.*

Go into the city. Silent submission is demanded from the impetuous Pharisee. “The great change in conversion is wrought on the will, and consists in the resignation of that to Christ” (Matt. Henry).

7. *Stood speechless.* They heard the sound but did not hear the words; they saw the light but did not see the form; they had fallen to the ground and *remained* motionless, for that is the meaning of *stood*.

8. *He saw no man.* He was blind and had to be led by the hand. The Acts gives us three different accounts of Paul's conversion: the student should compare carefully all the three, xxii. 6-11, xxvi. 13-18, as they are given here from the Revised Version.

ACTS IX. 3-8.

And as he journeyed, it came to pass that he drew nigh unto Damascus: and suddenly there shone round about him a light out of heaven: and he fell upon the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *And he said, Who art thou, Lord?* And he said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: but rise and enter into the city, and it shall be told thee what

ACTS XXII. 6-11.

And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and drew nigh unto Damascus, about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *And I answered, Who art thou, Lord?* And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they

ACTS XXVI. 12-19.

Whereupon, as I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them that journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice saying unto me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why per-

man : but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into
9 Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither
did eat nor drink.

ACTS ix. 3-8.

thou must do. And the men that journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing the sound, but beholding no man.

And Saul arose from the earth ; and when his eyes were opened, *he saw nothing* ; and they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.¹

ACTS xxii. 6-11.

that were with me beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord ? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus, and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus. And one Ananias, etc.

ACTS xxvi. 12-19.

secutest thou me ? it is hard for thee to kick against the goad. And I said, Who art thou, Lord ? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But arise, and stand upon thy feet : for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee ; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith in me.

They led him by the hand. The leader of a persecution led by the hand. Saul began feebly, led by the hand like a child ; why should we hesitate to begin our service for the Master on a very small scale ?

9. And did neither eat nor drink. He was full of strange new ecstasy, secluded from the world of sight he held communion with God (2 Cor. xii. 1-4; Gal. i. 16) : full of penitence and yet full of hope : Jesus was risen, therefore He was the Christ, and therefore what He had said and what Stephen had repeated about the temple and the Mosaic ritual must be true. His whole past life faded behind him during those three days of blindness.

Two things in this beginning of another life perpetually recurred to Paul in after times. He fed his faith and zeal by recurring to them : (1) The Lord, Jesus of Nazareth, had appeared to him in real visible presence, in the very way and form in which He had appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection (1 Cor. ix. 1, xv. 8 ; Acts ix. 17, xxii. 14) ; (2) He had been called to his

¹ Italics mark what are given in two narratives : black letters what are peculiar to one.

10 And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias ; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias.
 11 And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of
 12 Tarsus : for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on
 13 him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how
 14 much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem : and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that
 15 call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way : for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel :
 16 for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my
 17 name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house ; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the office without any human intervention, by the voice of Jesus speaking to him "in the Hebrew tongue" (Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1, etc.; Gal. i. 1).

10. **Ananias** is only mentioned in connection with Saul (xxii. 12). He was a devout man according to the law, was in good report among the Jews of Damascus, was in communication with the brethren in Jerusalem, and was trusted by them.

11. **Called Straight.** There is a long straight street still seen in Damascus which may have been, and probably was, the one which contained the house of Judas where Saul lodged.

12. **In a vision.** These words are omitted in the Revised Version : they are not found in the oldest MSS.

13. **Thy saints.** The word *saint* is commonly used in the Acts and Epistles to denote those that called upon the name of the Lord Jesus. This is the first use of the word in that sense.

15. **A chosen vessel, a vessel of election.** Plumptre suggests that the word contains the germ of Paul's parable of the potter's vessel (Rom. ix. 21-23).

Gentiles. They are put first because Paul was to be *the* Apostle to the Gentiles.

Kings. Agrippa (xxvi.), Nero (2 Tim. iv. 16).

The children of Israel. Paul always began in the synagogues of the Jews, and witnessed for Jesus before the Sanhedrin.

16. **How great things he must suffer,** 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5, xi. 23-28. God was to show Saul his labours and sufferings gradually by experience, but at this time the convert was forewarned of what would come to him. The suffering Saviour needed a suffering Apostle.

17. **Brother Saul.** Saul so addressed by one of the very men he had come to drag to Jerusalem.

The Lord, even Jesus. *The Lord* whom Saul had seen, whose power he had felt, who was and had declared Himself to be *Jesus of Nazareth*. The

way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive
 18 thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.
 19 And when he had received meat, he was strengthened.

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were
 20 at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the
 21 synagogues, that he is the Son of God. But all that heard
him were amazed, and said, Is not this he that destroyed
 them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came
 hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto
 humanity, divinity, and Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, whose followers Saul
 had persecuted, are put in the forefront.

And be filled with the **Holy Ghost**. Saul received the Holy Ghost through an ordinary disciple. Usually the gift of the Spirit was conferred only by apostolic hands; but Saul was not to be dependent on the Twelve, and he whom the Lord had Himself called in peculiar fashion received the gift of the Spirit in quite a different way from that in which it came to ordinary believers.

18. As it had been scales. It is probable that a white filmy substance had encrusted the eyes. Many believe that this blindness left permanent effects on Paul, and that his eyesight was weak while life lasted.

Was baptized, on the invitation of Ananias (xxii. 16).

19. When he had received meat. He had been fasting for three days. "He refreshed not his body with meat until his soul had received strength" (Calvin).

Certain days, a phrase which when used by Luke invariably means a short space of time. He spent these days in private intercourse with the disciples.

20. And straightway preached. He began his work at once. He went to the synagogues, not to produce his letters from the high priest, but to preach that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. The ambassador of the high priest became almost at once an ambassador of Jesus.

Christ, rather Jesus. Saul preached that Jesus of Nazareth who had appeared to him on the road, was the Christ or the Son of God. "This miracle upon the mind of such a man, outshone the miracles on men's bodies; and giving such a man another heart, was more than giving men to speak with other tongues" (Matt. Henry). "The conversion and apostleship of Paul alone, duly considered, is of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a divine revelation" (Lord Lyttleton). The Jews did not deny that the Christ was the Son of God; on the contrary, that title was universally given to the Messiah. What they refused to acknowledge, and what Paul preached, was that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, was the Christ, and was hailed by every Jew as the Son of God. Paul tried to make them acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ or the Son of God, as Nathanael (John i. 49) and as Peter had done (Matt. xvi. 16).

21. Were amazed. They all knew why he had come to Damascus, and the miracle of his conversion was acknowledged by all.

On this name. *Jesus of Nazareth.*

22 the chief priests? But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

23 And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took **24** counsel to kill him: but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill

22. Increased the more in strength. A continuous increase of growth (Phil. iv. 13; 1 Tim. i. 12; 2 Tim. iv. 17).

This increase of strength meant not only Christian progress, but also growth in preaching power.

Confounded the Jews. He was a trained rabbi, had all Jewish learning and much Greek culture at his command; a trained intellect set on fire by the Holy Spirit; his enemies were paralyzed, and for some time could only bow to the storm of his preaching.

Proving. Saul the Pharisee *persecuted*; Saul the believer *proved*. He traced the promise of the Messiah through law and prophets to Jesus of Nazareth.

That this is very Christ, that this man [Jesus] is the Christ. "They thought they were rid of disputation in such matters in getting rid of Stephen; but they found another more vehement than Stephen" (Chrysostom).

23. And after that many days were fulfilled. The phrase *many days* denotes a length of time. It is used in the Septuagint (1 Kings ii. 38, 39) to mean *three years*. Between ver. 22 and ver. 23 come the three years' sojourn in Arabia (Gal. i. 17, 18). The order of events seems to have been: —(1) Saul struck down on Damascus road near the town (3-8); (2) three days of blindness, silent communion with God in the house of Judas in the street called Straight (9); (3) sight restored, baptism, received the Holy Ghost (10-19); (4) preached that Jesus is the Christ in the synagogues with such power of learning and spiritual force that the Jews were paralyzed (19-22); (5) sudden departure to Arabia for solitary communion with God (Gal. i. 17, 18); (6) back to Damascus; (7) conspiracy to slay him (23); (8) escape to Jerusalem (25); (9) disciples afraid of him (26); (10) Barnabas vouches for his conversion (27); (11) takes the place of Stephen and preaches to the Hellenists (29); (12) conspiracy to slay him (29); (13) sent to Cæsarea, and thence to Tarsus (30).

It is probable that Saul went to Arabia for solitary meditation. It is not known where he went; the word Arabia may mean at least three districts: (1) the great desert stretching from Palestine to the Euphrates, and southward into the modern Arabia, part of which is near to Damascus; (2) the kingdom of Arabia Petrea, which was then ruled by Aretas, who had obtained temporary possession of the city of Damascus, and which corresponded in part to the ancient land of Edom; (3) the peninsula of Sinai. Most scholars take the word in the first of these three meanings; but Stock has pointed out that Paul (Gal. iv. 25) speaks of *Mount Sinai in Arabia*, a phrase nowhere else found in Scripture. This may be an obscure intimation that the great Apostle, like Moses and Elijah, received strength for his mission at "the mount of God." If so, we can well imagine what thoughts of Old Testament revelation and Messianic promise would mingle with new visions of the kingdom of God come in Jesus of Nazareth in the mind of Saul, as he wandered among the solitudes of Sinai.

4. They watched the gates. Compare note on ver. 2, and 2 Cor. xi. 32,

25 him. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples : but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a
 26 disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he
 28 preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out of Jerusalem.
 29 And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians : but they went about to slay

33. The Jews, who were powerful in Damascus, had enlisted the governor on their side, and in the fuller account given in 2 Cor. xi. 32, 33, we are told that soldiers under the ethnarch of Aretas watched the gates to prevent the Apostle's escape.

25. *And let him down*, etc. *And let him down THROUGH the wall, lower-ing him in a basket.* Houses were built on the city walls, with windows, through one of which Paul was lowered in a great basket, the *spuris* of Mark viii. 8.

The incident is quite in accordance with the present customs of the country. Workmen are lowered into wells, or raised to the upper stories of houses, in such a basket as was used to let Paul down to the foot of the wall. Compare also Josh. ii. 15, and 1 Sam. xix. 12, where the Septuagint uses the word *spuris*.

26. *Believed not.* Saul's sudden activity in Damascus had been followed by a long disappearance into Arabia. They had not known evidently of his second period of preaching in Damascus, and hesitated to admit such a persecutor. The language of the text does not mean that the disciples had not known of Saul's conversion, but that they questioned its sincerity. This was Saul's first visit to Jerusalem, and is also mentioned in Gal. i. 18. Compare note on ver. 23.

27. **Barnabas** was a Levite from Cyprus, and the Jewish colony there had close relations with the Cilician Jews. It has been inferred that Barnabas may have known Saul : at all events, he knew enough of him to vouch for him.

Had seen the Lord. Paul, like the Twelve, was to be a witness of the Resurrection, and his sight of the risen Jesus is always brought forward.

Preached boldly at Damascus. Probably the second period of preaching, for they must have known of the first.

28. **Was with them . . . at Jerusalem.** For fifteen days only, Saul himself tells us in Gal. i. 18. Short as the period was, it was long enough to show the reality of Saul's conversion and the power of his ministry. Some critics have declared that the time was too short to account for what follows ; but when we remember that Saul had been the leader of these Hellenist Jews whom he had come to dispute with, the objection is worthless.

29. **Against the Grecians**, taking Stephen's place : the word *disputing* is the very word used to describe Stephen's work (vi. 9). His special work was among the Hellenist unbelievers, whose leader he had formerly been. He had a recantation to make and a testimony to deliver. They tried to treat him as he had incited them to treat Stephen.

30 him. *Which* when the brethren knew, they brought him down to Cæsarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus.

31 Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.

32 And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at

30. *When the brethren knew.* Saul himself gives a different reason (xxii. 17). God revealed to him in a vision that another sphere of work awaited him; the persecution was the outward call or impulse to this new sphere.

To Cæsarea. Saul tells us (Gal. i. 21) that he went from Jerusalem to Syria and Cilicia, and some have inferred that the Cæsarea mentioned is Cæsarea Philippi at the base of Hermon, on the direct route to Lower Syria. This is very improbable. Saul most probably went by road to Cæsarea on the coast, the Roman capital of Palestine, the great seaport of the district; there took ship to Seleucia, the port of Antioch, the capital of Syria, and thence to Tarsus in Cilicia.

To Tarsus, his birthplace—"a Jew of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, *a citizen of no mean city*" (Acts xxi. 39). It was situated in a fertile plain on the banks of the Cydnus, and was celebrated for its schools of learning. "They of Tarsus are much addicted to the study of philosophy, and excel Athens and Alexandria, and every other place where there are schools of philosophy. And the reason of this is, because at Tarsus both the natives and strangers are fond of learning: whereas in the other cities, except Alexandria, many come to them: but you will see few of the natives either going abroad or caring to study at home" (Strabo). Saul tells us elsewhere that he was engaged there in preaching (Gal. i. 21-23), and his ministry must have been eminently successful (Acts xv. 23, 41). Dean Howson suggests that during this period Saul won over to Christ some of his own relatives (Rom. xvi. 7, 11, 21), possibly his sister and her son (xxiii. 16 sq.). The Church was not yet ripe for Paul's great work. See Introduction, p. 25.

31. Then had the churches rest. Petronius was appointed Governor of Syria in 40 A.D., and firm government was restored. In the same year the mad Emperor Caligula ordered his statue to be set up in the temple, and the Jews had to employ all their energy to prevent the desecration. In 41 A.D. Herod Agrippa I. was made ruler in Judea and Samaria. All these events would prevent the persecutions which had taken place with impunity during the three or four preceding years of anarchy.

And were edified, built up in faith and in piety. The word always means a spiritual growth, and not increase in numbers or in outward organization (1 Cor. viii. 1, xiv. 4; 1 Thess. v. 11).

3. Peter's missionary journeys, ix. 32-x. 48.

(1) Peter at Lydda, 32-35.

32. As Peter passed through all quarters. *As Peter went throughout all parts.* This was a tour of visitation or oversight. "Like the commander of an army he went about inspecting the ranks, what part was compact, what in good order, what needed his presence" (Chrysostom). These churches, founded

33 Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Eneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt in Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36 Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and alms-deeds which she did. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto

by the dispersed disciples, had also suffered from the persecution, and were now enjoying the repose which could be used with advantage by the Apostle.

Lydda. Anciently *Lud*, or *Lod*, a town which was a day's journey, or about thirty miles, from Jerusalem (1 Chron. viii. 12; Ezra ii. 33; Neh. vii. 37). It was called Diospolis in the early centuries of Christianity, and was the seat of one of the Councils which acquitted Pelagius of heresy in 415 A.D. The Acts returns to the work of the church of Jerusalem during and after the persecution.

33. Eneas, from his name probably a Hellenist. He is not called a believer, only "a certain man," and may not have been a Christian; but the miracle required preliminary faith.

Eight years. "Christ chose such patients as those whose diseases were incurable in course of nature, to show how desperate the case of fallen mankind was when He undertook their cure" (Matt. Henry).

34. Jesus Christ maketh (iii. 12, iv. 9, 10). The Master is still working, though the disciple is the visible agent.

Thy bed. The word denotes the sleeping mat of the poor. He was a poor man.

35. Saron. Sharon, a beautiful and fertile district, extending from Joppa to Caesarea, a distance of about thirty miles (1 Chron. xxvii. 29; Song of Sol. ii. 1; Isa. xxxiii. 9, xxxv. 2, lxv. 10).

(2) Peter at Joppa, 36-43.

36. Joppa was the seaport of Jerusalem, about thirty-five miles distant. It is the Japho of Joshua (Josh. xix. 46), and was the port to which Solomon and Ezra brought the materials for the temple (2 Chron. ii. 16; Ezra iii. 7). Compare also Jonah i. 3; 1 Macc. x. 76; Josephus, *Bell. Jud.* ii. 18, 19, iii. 9, 2-4. It is the modern Jaffa.

Tabitha. The Aramaic or corrupt Hebrew for antelope or gazelle; Dorcas is the Greek. The spirit of the Jerusalem church had spread to Joppa, and to help the poor was recognised to be one of the first duties. Dorcas did her own part, and got others to help her in it.

37. They laid her in an upper chamber. Did not bury her at once, for Peter was only nine miles off, and he might be able to help them. There was faith in the act.

him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come
 39 to them. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he
 was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and
 all the widows stood by him weeping, and showing the coats
 and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.
 40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed;
 and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she
 opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.
 41 And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up; and when he
 had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.
 42 And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed
 43 in the Lord. And it came to pass, that he tarried many
 days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

CHAP. X. I. There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cor-

38. Desiring him; rather, *entreating him, Delay not to come to us.*

39. And when he was come. It is the house of Jairus over again, with real mourners instead of hired ones, and almost the very word of power, *Tabitha cumi*, instead of *Talitha cumi* (Mark v. 41).

All the widows. Some think that the verses suggest an organization for Christian charity like that presided over by the Seven in Jerusalem; they note that Philip, one of the Seven, had preached in Joppa, which was one of the cities near Azotus (viii. 40).

40. And prayed. "This prayer is the essential feature by which the resurrection of Tabitha is distinguished from that of the daughter of Jairus. Jesus, without any preceding prayer, took the dead child by the hand, and recalled her to life; but Peter does not do so until he has prayed to the Lord for the miracle" (Lechler). Otherwise it is almost pathetic to see how the disciple copies the *Master* in the smallest detail.

41. The saints, the believers, a common New Testament name (Acts ix. 13, 32, xxvi. 10; Rom. i. 7, xii. 13, xv. 26, etc.).

42. And many believed (iv. 29, 30).

43. Many days, a long time, probably more than a year.

A tanner. Peter had got half-way to Cornelius and the Gentiles when he lodged with a tanner. A tanner's trade was so disgraceful among the Jews, that a woman whose husband became a tanner could claim a divorce. God's providence leads men step by step.

(3) Peter's vision, x. 1-16.

X. I. Cæsarea (compare viii. 40 and ix. 30) was about seventy miles from Jerusalem, at the northern extremity of the plain of Sharon. It was called Cæsarea Palestinæ and Cæsarea Stratonis, and owed its magnificence to Herod the Great, who built a great city on the site of an obscure village, and constructed a vast artificial harbour "at all times free from the waves of the sea." When Judea became a Roman province, Cæsarea became the Roman capital, the residence of the governors or procurators, of Pontius Pilate, Felix, and Festus, and the headquarters of the Roman troops. It was the great Gentile city of Palestine, and in the sections which treat of the transition from

2 nelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, a devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God
 3 alway. He saw in a vision evidently, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying
 4 unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial
 5 before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one*
 6 Simon, whose surname is Peter. He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side: he shall tell thee
 7 what thou oughtest to do. And when the angel which spake

Jewish to Gentile Christianity, it was natural that Cæsarea and not Jerusalem should be the centre of Christian activity.

A centurion. An officer in command of the sixth part of a cohort, or sixtieth part of a legion. Not a very high rank. **Band** means in the New Testament *cohort*.

2. **A devout man**, and, like the centurion of Capernaum, one who believed in the God of Israel. Cornelius evidently instructed his household in religion; the soldier he sent to Peter was also *a devout man*; and he did not hesitate to tell the members of his family about his vision. Compare the accounts of the centurion of Capernaum (Matt. viii. 5); of the centurion at the Cross (Matt. xxvii. 54); and of the centurion who accompanied Paul to Rome (Acts xxvii. 3, 43).

Who gave much alms to the Jews of Cæsarea; a singular trait in one belonging to overbearing Rome, and commanding foreign soldiers, ready to crush a national rising.

Prayed to God alway that he might learn the way of salvation (xi. 14): he had been a heathen, and now knew enough about the God of Israel to pray to Him, but not enough to become a Jewish proselyte. Cornelius was one of those Gentiles who, in an age of fading faiths, had become attached to the pure monotheism of the Jews. He kept the hours of Judaist worship, probably attended synagogue service, and studied the Old Testament.

3. **Evidently, openly.** He was not in a trance; he was praying when the heavenly visitor entered and spoke.

4. **Are come up for a memorial, are gone up**, etc. His prayers had ascended like incense, were remembered by God, and were about to be answered. He had had the faith to pray, but he wished for more knowledge that he might have more faith. "He believed in the Messiah of the Old Testament, and was now to be led to a higher faith—belief in Jesus, the Messiah of the New Testament." It appears from vers. 36, 37, that Cornelius had already heard a good deal about Jesus. He was anxious to know more; and prayed for this new knowledge.

6. **Whose house is by the sea-side** (Acts ix. 43). The trade of tanner was unclean, and tanners were not allowed to live within the walls of a town.

He shall tell . . . oughtest to do. These words are omitted in the R.V., and have probably been inserted here from xi. 14.

7. **Was departed.** The heavenly visitor did not vanish, but went away like a living person.

unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually ; and when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour : and he became very hungry, and would have eaten : but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, 11 and saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, 12 and let down to the earth : wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping 13 things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him,

8. He had declared all these things unto them. A devout centurion has devout soldiers, and a master who speaks to his servants about religious subjects will be well served.

9. On the morrow. Joppa was thirty miles from Cæsarea, more than a day's journey ; the messengers of Cornelius approached Joppa a little before noon.

Upon the house-top. The roofs were flat, and were constantly used as places of retreat from the petty bustle of life (Matt. x. 27, xxiv. 17 ; Luke xvii. 31 ; 1 Sam. ix. 25, 26 ; 2 Sam. xi. 2).

To pray (Jer. xix. 13 ; Zeph. i. 5).

The sixth hour ; noon ; it was the second stated hour of prayer. The Jews had three hours for daily prayer : (1) the *third hour*, or nine o'clock A.M. (Acts ii. 15) ; (2) the *sixth hour*, or noon ; (3) the *ninth hour*, or three o'clock P.M. (Acts iii. 1, x. 3). Peter and Cornelius observed the Jewish hours of prayer.

10. A trance. The word is *ecstasy*, which might have been induced by the combination of fasting and fervency in prayer ; but God used the trance for His own purposes. "What mysterious combinations of experiences and events are continually taking place ! Cornelius 'saw in a vision evidently,' 'an angel of God coming in to him.' Peter fell into a trance, and heard a voice. That is our daily life. We cannot be shut up within the four corners of a rude and vulgar materialism" (Parker).

11. Saw heaven opened ; for the vision was from God, and belonged to the kingdom of heaven.

Knit at the four corners, *let down by the four corners*. Peter in his dream saw something like a great linen sheet let down by ropes fastened to the four corners, and held by some invisible power.

12. Wherein were. The wide area of what was let down swarmed with living creatures, a picture of the whole animal creation. "We must not measure this seeing according to the manner of men, because the trance gave Peter other eyes" (Calvin).

And wild beasts. The words are not found in the oldest MSS., and have evidently been added from xi. 6.

13. Rise, Peter ; kill, and eat. The animals were unclean and clean (but the clean had become unclean by contact with the unclean), and Peter, to

14 Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

15 And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What

16 God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17 Now, while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate, and called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there. While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore,

satisfy his hunger, is told by a voice from heaven to break the Mosaic law, and in his eating do away with the distinction between Jew and Gentile. How much more may the distinction be neglected in the work of saving souls!

14. **Not so, Lord.** Very like the impetuous Peter, who, when he first heard of his Master's death, said, "Be it far from Thee, Lord" (Matt. xvi. 22). Had not Daniel fed on pulse and water rather than defile himself (Dan. i. 8, 12); had not Eleazar died rather than eat unclean food (2 Macc. vi. 18)? And yet he had been taught long before that meats do not defile (Mark vii. 15).

Common or unclean, etc., common and unclean. Compare Mark vii. 2 (margin), where *common* means *defiled*.

15. **What God has cleansed, that call, etc., that make not thou.** Compare Mark vii. 15; Rom. xiv. 20. "In the interpretation of the vision all that belongs to humanity had been taken up into heaven: first, when man's nature was assumed by the Eternal Word in the Incarnation (John i. 14), and, secondly, when that nature had been raised in the Ascension to the heaven of heavens, sitting on the right hand of God" (vii. 56; Mark xvi. 19) (Plumptre). All things are consecrated by the Incarnation and by the Ascension; creation is redeemed by the death of Christ. No limits of race, or position in society, no barriers of circumstances or upbringing, can separate men from each other. For all men, the outcast, the savage, the felon, as well as for us, Christ died. This was the truth taught at the beginning of the first attempt at *foreign* mission work, and it lies at the basis of all mission work still.

(4) Peter and Cornelius, 17-48.

17. **While Peter doubted, was much perplexed.** Peter evidently felt that he had been taught a lesson, but what the lesson was he scarcely knew: was it that henceforth he should eat what he had before thought unclean, or had it wider application?

The men which were sent. They had come to teach him the meaning of the vision. The necessities of practical Christian work solve many speculative difficulties.

18. **And called.** They were Gentiles, one of them a soldier, and they did not enter a Jewish house, anxious not to give offence (ver. 28).

19. **Three men.** The two servants and the soldier.

and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing : for
 21 I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which
 were sent unto him from Cornelius, and said, Behold, I am
 he whom ye seek : what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come ?
 22 And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one
 that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation
 of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send
 23 for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee. Then
 called he them in, and lodged *them*.

And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain
 24 brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And the morrow
 after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for
 them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.
 25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell

20. **Doubting nothing.** The phrase means here *unhesitatingly, nothing wavering* (Jas. i. 6) ; God was leading him on, and he was to follow His guidance without hesitation, although he did not at the moment know where the matter would end.

He, a stubborn Jew, had been sent to lodge with one Simon a tanner, and having been got so far on the road, he is next sent to a Gentile called Cornelius. Men are unconsciously prepared for higher communications, wider services, deeper sufferings and nobler sympathies (Parker). When Peter tells the whole matter to the brethren at Jerusalem, he had by that time been taught the whole truth, and knew what the first prompt step had led to, and the phrase *doubting nothing* in xi. 12 means, *making no distinction (between Jew and Gentile)*, and is so translated in the Revised Version.

21. **Which were sent unto him from Cornelius.** These words are not found in the oldest MSS., and are omitted in the R.V.

22. **One that feareth God.** An expression commonly used to denote a proselyte of the gate, who worshipped Jehovah in Jewish fashion, but had not become a full proselyte (xiii. 16). Thus Cornelius prayed at the Jewish hours of prayer ; and the Ethiopian treasurer went up to Jerusalem to the feast of Tabernacles, and read the Scriptures in sections.

To hear words, to receive commandments.

23. **Certain brethren from Joppa.** Six Jewish believers of the circumcision (ver. 45), who were to be witnesses (45, 46) and also advisers (47), and one of them probably was destined to baptize Cornelius and his household (48).

24. **And the morrow after.** Compare note on ver. 9, and observe how accurate the narrative is in small details.

Waited for them, was waiting. He had perfect faith in the vision and in the God who had sent His angel, and he had gathered his friends and kinsmen to meet Peter, whom he anxiously expected. "We should not covet to eat our spiritual morsels alone" (Matt. Henry).

25. **Fell down at his feet.** Cornelius was a Roman, and a soldier, and was not accustomed to make Oriental salutations ; if he went out to meet Peter, and made low obeisance, it was because he looked on Peter as a supernatural messenger.

26 down at his feet, and worshipped *him*. But Peter took him
 27 up, saying, Stand up ; I myself also am a man. And as he
 talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come
 28 together. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is
 an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company,
 or come unto one of another nation ; but God hath showed
 me that I should not call any man common or unclean.
 29 Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as
 I was sent for : I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent
 30 for me ? And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting
 until this hour ; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house,

26. *Took him up, raised him up.* Compare Rev. xix. 10 ; Acts xiv. 15. Jesus never refused any honours paid Him, nor reproved men for worshipping Him who was the Son of God.

27. *As he talked.* The phrase implies a long conversation which took place without the house.

28. *It is an unlawful thing* ; rather, *Ye yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man that is a Jew.* The position in which Peter found himself was strangely unfamiliar, so much so that he can scarcely help apologizing, even to Romans, for his conduct. There is nothing harder to learn than the fulness of the gospel. “The Hindoo feeling of caste, shrinking from contact with those of a lower grade, driven to madness and mutiny by ‘greased cartridges,’ presents the nearest modern analogue” (Plumptre) to the feelings of a Jew in contact with Gentiles.

To keep company, *to join himself* (viii. 29). The separative ceremonial law, partly Mosaic, but in larger part consisting of deductions from and additions to the Mosaic code, lay between the Romans and the Jews—a barrier which the conquerors could not pass. They tried in vain to implant in the Jews those cosmopolitan feelings they had instilled into other subject nations, and in the end they came to loathe the people whom ceremonial law fortified against all foreign domination over the mind, and called them “haters of the human race.”

That I should not call any man. Peter had something to learn at Cæsarea as well as Cornelius. This was the meaning of the vision ; that no man is common, that he, a Jew, was not defiled by contact with a Gentile, that only contact with sin defiles ; but Peter did not yet know the fulness of God’s grace. He did not yet see with his Master’s eye, but God was training his vision to see the man, made in the image of God, heir through Christ to the kingdom of heaven, in the figure of the Gentile centurion. “Said the murmuring multitude respecting Zaccheus : ‘Christ hath gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ But Jesus called the sinner ‘a son of Abraham.’ He saw the man within the figure, the ideal within the actual, the spiritual within the material. Through the window of the eye he saw the guest of the house, beautiful as a lost angel, worthful as a creation of God ! Lord, open our eyes that we may see one another” (Parker).

29. Without gainsaying. Compare the *nothing doubting* in ver. 20.

30. I was fasting, etc. ; rather, *Four days ago, until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house.* There is no mention of fasting in

31 and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, and said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had
 32 in remembrance in the sight of God. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of one Simon a tanner by the sea-side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of
 34 God. Then Peter opened his mouth, and said,

the oldest MSS. This implies that Peter had reached Cornelius' house shortly after 3 P.M.

In bright clothing. A common mode of describing heavenly messengers (Luke xxiv. 4; Matt. xxviii. 3; Rev. xv. 6).

The three accounts of Cornelius' vision should be compared:—

ACTS x. 3-8. ACTS x. 30-33. ACTS xi. 13-15.

He saw in a vision Four days ago until And he told us how he openly, as it were about this hour, *I was keeping* had seen the angel stand-
 the ninth hour of the *the ninth hour of prayer in* ing in his house, and say-
 day, an angel of God *my house;* and, behold, a *ing, Send to Joppa, and* coming in unto him, and man stood before me *in fetch Simon, whose sur-*
 saying to him, Cornelius. *bright apparel,* and saith, name is Peter; *who shall*
And he, fastening his Cornelius, thy prayer is *speak unto thee words*
eyes upon him, and heard, and thine alms are *whereby thou shalt be*
being affrighted, said, had in remembrance in *saved, thou and all thy*
What is it, Lord? And the sight of God. Send *house.*
 he said unto him, Thy therefore to Joppa, and
 prayers and thine alms call unto thee Simon,
 are gone up for a me- who is surnamed Peter;
 morial before God. And he lodgeth in the house of
 now send men to Joppa, one Simon a tanner by
 and fetch one Simon, the sea-side.
 who is surnamed Peter: Forthwith therefore I
 he lodgeth with one sent to thee.
 Simon a tanner, whose
 house is by the sea-side.

And when the angel
that spake unto him was
departed, he called two
of his household servants,
and a devout soldier of
them that waited on him
continually; and having
rehearsed all things unto
them, he sent them to
*Joppa.*¹

¹ The quotations are from the Revised Version, and what is peculiar to each narrative is in italics.

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons :
 35 but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh
 36 righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which *God*
 sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus
 37 Christ : (he is Lord of all :) that word, *I say*, ye know, which
 was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee,
 38 after the baptism which John preached ; how God anointed

34. **God is no respecter of persons.** This is a second step made by Peter, a further lesson learnt. (1) God had sent him among Gentiles and had prepared him by a vision for the venture, and he had thereby learned that he, a Jew, had not defiled himself in God's sight by such association—no man was so unclean that physical contact with him would defile a Jew. (2) It was another thing to know that the Gentile was the same in God's sight as the Jew, and that God would treat him in the same way as if he belonged to the chosen people. Cornelius' history taught Peter this, and so he preached Christ to him, without thinking, as he might otherwise have done, that he was casting pearls before swine. (3) The third step came when he found that God gave the gift of His Holy Spirit as freely to Gentile as to Jew; then at last Peter saw clearly that the middle wall of partition had been broken down. Compare Peter's words with Paul's (Rom. ii. 11).

35. **Is accepted with him.** All men who repent and seek God in faith are His chosen people. God will receive without any external limit of circumcision, or baptism, or creed, all of any nation or rank or condition of men who sincerely seek after Him (Rom. x. 12, 13).

36. **The word which God sent.** The construction in vers. 36–38 is involved and the meaning somewhat obscured in the Authorized Version. The meaning is : [Ye know] the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching the glad tidings [gospel] of peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all) ; — Ye know that word which was published throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached ; — [Ye know] Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost, etc. Peter wishes to make sure that they, Gentiles in Cæsarea, knew three things, all three one, which he could presuppose known in Jerusalem or in Galilee : —(1) a new message of the kingdom of heaven ; (2) this new message set in the framework of a great popular movement in Judea and Galilee which was heralded by John the Baptist's ministry ; (3) this new message the personal manifestation of Jesus of Nazareth. That knowledge presupposed, Peter repeats his old address (ii. iii. v.), witness-bearing to the death and Resurrection of the Saviour, foretold in the prophets and confirmed by the gift of the Holy Ghost.

He is Lord of all. Cornelius had sent to Peter for instruction : Peter spoke of Jesus the preacher ; but lest Cornelius like Nicodemus might be misled into thinking that Jesus was simply a great teacher or prophet sent of God to instruct, he inserts this striking parenthesis, to assert and place in the very forefront the truth that Jesus is both Lord and King.

37. **Began from Galilee, after the baptism of John.** Compare i. 22, and xiii. 23–31. The oral gospel of the Apostles began with the baptism of John and ended with the Resurrection and Ascension. Compare my *Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel*, Introduction, pp. 13, 25.

Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power : who went about doing good, and healing all that were 39 oppressed of the devil : for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem ; whom they slew and hanged on a 40 tree : him God raised up the third day, and showed him 41 openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him 42 after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead. 43 To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

38. **Healing all that were oppressed of the devil.** This refers probably to more than casting out devils. The Jews spoke of all diseases as the work of Satan, and our Lord assents to this ordinary mode of speech (Luke xiii. 16). The words denote a world-wide conflict between the oppressor Satan and the deliverer Jesus.

39. **We are witnesses.** Compare i. 8, ii. 32, iii. 15, v. 32. Their Lord had commissioned Peter to bear witness for Him ; this was his one work.

39. **Whom they slew.** Even when speaking to Romans, Peter insists that it was the Jews who crucified Jesus : the reluctance of Pilate to condemn had been marked and remembered.

40. **Showed him openly ; rather, gave Him to be made manifest.** It was not a mere vision, but such a sight of the risen Saviour with pierced hands and side as made it manifest that the crucified, buried Jesus had actually risen from the dead.

41. **Witnesses chosen before of God ; rather, witnesses that were chosen or appointed of God** (John xvii. 6), set apart in the predeterminate wisdom of God for the purpose of witness-bearing and preparing for the work.

Who did eat and drink with him. Luke xxiv. 30, 42 ; John xxi. 13.

42. **Commanded us to preach.** Matt. xxviii. 19 ; Acts i. 8.

Judge of quick and dead. So Jesus had told the Jews (John v. 22, 27), and had connected His office as Judge with His power *to have life in Himself*. In this passage Peter connects Jesus' office as Judge with His Resurrection. Compare Paul (Acts xvii. 31).

43. **Whosoever believeth in him.** This was the word Cornelius was to receive from Peter. He and his friends were *proselytes of the gate*, and doubtless had anxiously thought how they were to get nearer the God of Israel, whom they recognised to be God of the whole earth. Not by obedience to the Mosaic law, not by circumcision, but by faith on Jesus, who had power, as all the prophets testified, to forgive the sins of all who believed on Him.

Peter claims the whole of Old Testament prophecy as bearing witness to the universality of the gospel offer. All the prophets witness to the fact that the one condition of pardon is faith in Christ, and this condition brings the gospel of Christ within the reach of all, whether Jew or Gentile ; for it is not

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell
 45 on all them which heard the word. And they of the cir-
 cumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came
 with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out
 46 the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak
 with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,
 47 Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized,
 48 which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he
 commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.
 Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

CHAP. XI. 1. And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea

outward conditions or circumstances of national birth and privileges that pro-
 cure entrance into the kingdom, but trust in Jesus.

44. **While Peter yet spake.** These Romans, listening with intentness to
 Peter, with emotions as intense as those which possessed the Church of the
 upper chamber, all at once, while Peter was speaking, received the gift of the
 Holy Ghost. It did not come to them by the laying on of hands, it came to
 them in the very way in which it had come to the earliest disciples, without
 any human (Jewish) intervention, and made itself manifest in the very same way.
 There was no difference between Jew and Gentile. The Gentiles, like the
 brethren at Pentecost, burst out into ecstatic raptures magnifying God (ver. 46).

45. **They of the circumcision.** The six Jewish believers who had come
 from Joppa.

Were astonished. The miracle proved what Peter had said with a fulness
 of proof for which Peter himself perhaps was scarcely prepared. These
 Gentiles had faith, and without any preparatory rite of circumcision they
 received the highest gift bestowed on the chosen people. The Jews who
 were present recognised the meaning of the fact. It was but one instance,
 and yet was conclusive. They saw the universal principle of the admission
 of the Gentiles established in the single instance.

46. **To speak with tongues, etc.** Compare ii. 4, 11.

47. **Can any man forbid water.** *Can any man forbid the water.* There
 is a contrast between *the water* and *the Spirit*. Those who have been
 admitted into the spiritual fellowship by the descent of the Holy Ghost,
 should be admitted into church fellowship through the water of baptism.

As well as we. At last Peter knows what is meant by the fulness of the
 gospel; in saying *we* he places Gentiles on the same level as Jews in all respects.

48. **Commanded them.** He did not himself baptize. Compare 1 Cor. i.
 14-17, where it is said that Paul did not baptize.

To tarry certain days. The narrative implies that Peter did stay with
 Cornelius, and if so, that he broke through the Mosaic ceremonial; but
 Peter was not always faithful to the knowledge given him (Gal. ii. 11, 12).

4. *Enlargement of ideas*, xi. 1-18.

XI. 1. **And the apostles and brethren that were in Judea, throughout
 Judea.** The admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church was an
 event so new and startling, that news of it spread rapidly and created great
 stir among the brethren. Up to this time the gospel had been preached to

heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.
 2 And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were
 3 of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou
 wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.
 4 But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and ex-
 5 pounded *it* by order unto them; saying, I was in the city of
 Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain
 vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from
 6 heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: upon the
 which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw

the circumcised only. The words of the text imply that news came to Jerusalem, and to the other Judean churches, before Peter had left Cæsarea.

Also. Compare 18. "The word *also* . . . is here the creation of a new world. . . . The keynote of Christianity is *enlargement*, continual extension of love and mercy . . . till the whole universe is one Church, and its voice one song" (Parker).

2. **They that were of the circumcision.** This phrase marks the beginnings of evil and of separation in the Apostolic Church. The words had previously been used to denote all Jewish Christians, but now they seem to refer to one party among the Jewish believers, to the Judaizers who were unable to believe that Gentiles could enter the Church save through Judaism. There was no division when the event recorded occurred, but by the time that Luke wrote the Acts the separation had taken place, and he uses the phrase naturally. A party grew up among the Jewish Christians who insisted that all Gentiles must come to Christ through Judaism, that they were to be circumcised before they could be baptized. They were the inveterate enemies of Paul, and caused much trouble afterwards. They are called in the New Testament *they of the circumcision* (Tit. i. 10), *they of the sect of the Pharisees which believed* (xv. 5).

Contended with him. The Greek word is the same as that translated *doubting nothing* (x. 20) and *making no distinction* (xi. 12); but the English can scarcely give the play on words which appears in the Greek. They of the circumcision insisted on making a distinction between Gentile and Jew. "There are narrow souls that are for engrossing the riches of the Church, as there are that would engross the riches of the world" (Matt. Henry).

3. **To men uncircumcised.** Words expressing contempt.

Didst eat with them. Compare note on x. 28, and Lev. xx. 25. The charge brought against Peter is not that he preached to Gentiles, but that he associated familiarly with them, and especially that he *did eat* with them. He was accused of breaking the law of Moses.

4. **But Peter rehearsed, etc.; rather, But Peter began and expounded the matter unto them in order, saying.** A great work for God and Jesus Christ had been done, and yet Peter is called on to defend himself for doing it ; he does so patiently. "It is a debt we owe to ourselves and to our brethren, to set those actions of ours in a true light, which at first looked ill, and gave offence, that we may remove stumbling-blocks out of our brethren's way" (Matt. Henry).

Saying. The account given of Peter's intercourse with Cornelius in vers. 5-16 is almost verbally the same as in ch. x.; the few differences lend

four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter ; slay, and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord : for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven. And, behold, immediately additional vividness to the narrative; for example: *Even to me* (5), *I considered and saw* (6), *Were drawn up* (10), *These six brethren* (12), *Whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved* (14), *As I began to speak* (15), *Then remembered I* (16).

The repetition of the narrative shows the great importance attached to the event in the Apostolic Church.

ACTS X. 9-24.

Peter went up *upon the house-top* to pray, *about the sixth hour*; and he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance; and he beheldeth *the heaven opened*, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth: wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts, and creeping things of the earth, and fowls of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. And a voice came to him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. And this was done thrice: and straightway the vessel was received up into heaven. . . .

Now while Peter *thought on the vision*, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them. And Peter went down to the men, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? . . .

And on the morrow he arose and went forth with them, and certain of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him. And on the morrow they entered into Cæsarea.

ACTS XI. 5-12.

I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even unto me: upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the heaven. And I heard also a voice saying unto me, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath ever entered into my mouth. But a voice answered the second time *out of heaven*, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. And this was done thrice: and all were drawn up again into heaven.

And behold, forthwith three men stood before the house in which we were, having been sent from Cæsarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me go with them, making no distinction. And these six brethren also accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house.

there were three men already come unto the house where I
 12 was, sent from Cesarea unto me. And the Spirit bade me
 go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover, these six brethren
 accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house :
 13 and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house,
 which stood and said unto him; Send men to Joppa, and
 14 call for Simon, whose surname is Peter ; who shall tell thee
 words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.
 15 And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as
 16 on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of
 the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with
 water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.
 17 Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did*
 unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I,
 18 that I could withstand God ? When they heard these
 things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying,
 Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance
 unto life.

12. *Nothing doubting, making no distinction (between Gentile and Jew).*
 Compare x. 20 and xi. 2.

13. *An angel, the angel.* They had all heard about the angel.

15. *As on us at the beginning.* Peter was deeply impressed with the fact that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the household of Cornelius was in all respects the same as the outpouring at Pentecost, and confesses that although he had quoted Joel and explained the fulfilment of prophecy, he had not properly understood his text until he saw the scene at Caesarea, some eight or ten years later.

16. *Ye shall be baptized.* The promise of Christ came home to him with a new depth of meaning (Matt. xxvi. 75 ; John xii. 16). Jesus had promised that His disciples were to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. The promised Spirit had fallen on Gentiles ; therefore the Gentiles were disciples, and the *Ye* of the promise must have included the uncircumcised also. There is also in Peter's mind the connection between the baptism of water and the baptism of the Spirit. If God has conferred on the Gentiles the baptism of the Spirit, how can man refuse them the baptism of water and all the Christian brotherly fellowship which entrance into the visible Church implies ? How can Christian Jews call men common and unclean whom God has cleansed by the bestowal of His Spirit ?

17. *Forasmuch then, etc.* The meaning is, *If then God gave to them, on their believing, the same gift which He gave to us on our believing on the Lord Jesus, the Christ. Who was I, able to withstand God ?*

18. *They held their peace, etc.* The Greek tenses make the scene more vivid—a breathless pause, and then a continuous utterance of praise. The Church of the circumcision at Jerusalem admitted the Gentiles without circumcision to be their brethren, and Stephen the dead martyr lived again in the decision of the Church.

19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but
 20 unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake
 21 unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them : and a great number believed,
 22 and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things

VI.—THE CHURCH BEYOND PALESTINE, xi. 19–30.

I. *Wandering missionaries, 19–21.*

19. **They which were scattered abroad.** The narrative resumes from viii. 4. The persecution which followed on the death of Stephen had a two-fold effect. It made the dispersed disciples preach Christ and found churches (1) within Palestine, and (2) beyond Palestine. This spread of the gospel locally in each case led to its expansion beyond the bounds of Judaism. Peter admitted Cornelius and his household, and while this great event took place within Palestine, wandering believers of Cyprus and Cyrene had begun to preach the gospel to Gentiles at Antioch.

Phœnicio, or *Phœnicia*, was the district, about 120 miles long and 15 broad, which lay to the north of Palestine on the shore of the Mediterranean and on the slopes of Lebanon. Its chief cities were Tyre, Sidon, Berytus (Beirut), Byblus, and Tripolis. It formed part of the Roman province of Syria. These wandering missionaries founded churches in Phœnicia which are mentioned in Acts xxi. 4 and xxvii. 3.

Cyprus, a large and fertile island nearly opposite Antioch, with the cities Citium, Salamis, and Paphos. It is now a dependency of Great Britain.

Antioch was the capital of the Roman province of Syria, situated on the Orontes, about 16 miles from the sea, with Seleucia for its seaport. It was one of the largest, wealthiest, and most luxurious cities of the Empire—an oriental Rome.

To the Jews only is, had been done within Palestine, till Peter was taught otherwise.

20. **The Grecians; better, the Greeks.** *Grecian* means a Jew of the Dispersion, born and brought up outside of Palestine, but a Jew in birth, religion, and training, like Barnabas, Stephen, or Saul ; the best MSS. give *Greeks*, i.e. Gentiles.

Cyrene, in North Africa, had a large Jewish population. Compare ii. 10. Lucius of Cyrene (xiii. 1) was probably one of those preachers who without special revelation preached the gospel to heathen Greeks.

21. **The hand of the Lord.** Gentiles were converted, God's Spirit aided those who preached to Gentiles, and the preachers could not be wrong in preaching to them. The right methods of Christian work are those which God blesses. Notice in this whole passage how the personal Christ is made prominent :—*The Lord* (20) ; *They preached the Lord Jesus* (21) ; *The hand of the Lord was with them* (23) ; Barnabas exhorted them to cleave to the Lord (23) ; *Much people was added to the Lord*.

2. *The Church at Antioch, 22–30.*

22. **Then tidings of these things.** The conversion of Cornelius and the

came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem : and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as
 23 Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of
 24 heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith : and
 25 much people was added unto the Lord. Then departed
 26 Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul : and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the

discussion which followed had prepared the Twelve and the Church of Jerusalem for the news. When we remember the astonishment of Peter and his companions from Joppa at the gift of the Holy Ghost to Gentiles, we may infer that had the news from Antioch come before the conversion of Cornelius, the Twelve might have disowned the work of the bolder missionaries of Cyprus and Cyrene. Now they were chiefly anxious that no abuses should arise in the infant Church, that there should be no division between Jews and Gentiles within Christianity, and they sent Barnabas, who from his earlier treatment of Saul had showed himself a man full of Christian hopefulness, to tell the Jews about the admission of Cornelius, and to declare to the Gentiles that the Jerusalem Church welcomed all who believed that Jesus was the Christ.

Barnabas belonged to Cyprus ; he was sent to Antioch as Peter and John had been sent to Samaria (iv. 36, ix. 27, viii. 14).

23. **Was glad.** Compare ver. 18.

Exhorted them. His name means *Son of Exhortation*.

Cleave. Antioch was full of temptations, and sin must have had strong hold on the bodies of men who had once been heathens there ; nothing but keeping in the closest possible communion with the Lord Jesus could avail.

24. **For he was a good man.** A man of hopeful, benevolent disposition, and fitted to guide such a new movement.

Full of the Holy Ghost, etc. The very description given of Stephen (vi. 5).

25. **To seek Saul.** The work was too heavy for him, and he knew of one who could help as no other man could, living in seclusion at Tarsus when there was work to do at Antioch. Think of the talk the two would have when Barnabas got to Tarsus, and on the way back. Notice how, after the question of the admission of the Gentiles had been settled at Cæsarea, the Church was ready for Saul.

26. **That a whole year . . . the church, that even for a whole year they came together in the church.** The clause shows us continual preaching to large crowds in the place of public assembly, and these crowded meetings continuing for at least a year.

A whole year, probably the year 44 A.D., because it preceded the year in which Saul and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem with contributions from the disciples in Antioch. "This long period, spent with success in the first field where the preaching to the Gentiles had begun, will account for the constant return to Antioch after each missionary journey of the Apostle of the Gentiles. He had preached at Damascus and at Jerusalem, but it was

church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

- 27** And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto **28** Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world : which came to pass in the days **29** of Claudius Cesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren

always with his life in his hand. At Antioch he first found a quiet Church with a wide scope for all his energies" (Lumby).

Christians. This name was probably given to the disciples by the heathen, perhaps in contempt. It is used in two other places only—in mockery by Agrippa (xxvi. 28), "With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian ;" and with the inference that it was a term of reproach by Peter (1 Pet. iv. 16), "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." The Jews, also in mockery, called the disciples *The sect of the Nazarenes*, Acts xxiv. 5. The New Testament names for the followers of Jesus were—*The saints* (Acts ix. 41), *The faithful* (Eph. i. 1), *The brethren* (Acts xi. 1), *Those of the way* (Acts ix. 2), *The disciples* (Acts ix. 1).

27. Prophets. It is very difficult to find out what the New Testament word prophet precisely means. It is used in at least two distinct senses—(1) one who with other gifts foretells the future, as did Agabus, and (2) one who has the gift of instruction as opposed to the gift of tongues (1 Cor. xiv. 29, 37). One of the most striking features of the Christian Church of those days was a revival of the prophetic order (Plumptre). Compare xiii. 1, xv. 32, xxi. 9, 10, xx. 23; Luke xi. 49; Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5, iv. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 14.

28. Agabus is mentioned again when twenty years afterwards he came from Jerusalem to warn Paul against going there (Acts xxi. 10).

A great dearth. The reign of Claudius witnessed several famines : (1) In Rome in the first and second years of his reign, A.D. 41 and 42 ; (2) in Judea in 44 A.D., when Cuspus Fadus and Alexander Tiberius were governors, the famine mentioned in the text, and one of such severity that many died of want of food ; (3) in Greece in his tenth year, A.D. 50 ; (4) in Rome in his twelfth year, so severe that the famished people rose in revolt.

Throughout all the world. The words do not necessarily mean *throughout the inhabited earth* ; they rather imply, *throughout the whole government*. In the mouth of a Roman they would mean, over the whole Roman Empire ; on the lips of a Jew, *throughout Palestine*.

29. The disciples, the believers in Antioch, Jewish and Gentile.

Every man according to his ability. Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 2, where Paul commands believers to lay by their contributions in store as they may prosper.

To send relief. The brethren in Judea had sent Barnabas to the Church at Antioch ; in return, they sent what money they could to aid the poor saints at Jerusalem. It was the custom for the wealthier Jews of the Dispersion to send contributions to their poorer brethren in Palestine in times of distress, and proselytes joined them in their work of benevolence. Helena,

30 which dwelt in Judea : which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

CHAP. XII. 1. Now about that time Herod the king stretched 2 forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates, Jewish proselytes, sent large supplies of food to Judea during this very famine to feed the Jews (Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. 2, 5. 5, 2). And the Gentile Christians of Antioch joined with the Jews their kinsmen in the faith in their Christian benevolence ; and we can suppose that Paul eagerly seized the opportunity of bringing Jew and Gentile nearer each other.

30. Which also they did. They not merely talked about it, and determined to do it, but they actually made collection of such a large sum of money that Saul and Barnabas were commissioned to take it to Jerusalem.

The elders, or *presbyters*. The first mention of these office-bearers in the Christian Church ; they are seen doing the work the Seven were appointed to do. Compare notes on vi. 1-7.

Barnabas and Saul. It is probable that the visit of Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem took place after the events recorded in xii. 1-23. This visit is omitted in Gal. i. 18, ii. 1. Compare note on viii. 25.

VII.—THE SECOND PERSECUTION UNDER HEROD AGRIPPA I., xii. 1-25.

I. *An apostle martyred*, I, 2.

XII. 1. About that time, while Christianity was spreading beyond Palestine, while a Gentile Church was growing in Antioch, while Saul and Barnabas were preaching to crowded meetings for a whole year uninterrupted in Antioch.

Herod the king was Herod Agrippa I., the son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great and of Mariamne the Jewish Maccabean princess. He was the nephew of Herod Antipas, the brother of Herodias, and the father of Herod Agrippa II. (the King Agrippa of Acts xxv. and xxvi.). His history had been a strange one. Sent to Rome at an early age, he had been educated at the court of Tiberius, and had become a companion of Caligula. This friendship excited the suspicions of the emperor, who imprisoned him. On the death of Tiberius and the accession of Caligula, Herod Agrippa was set at liberty, and invested with the tetrarchy of Philip, Iturea and Trachonitis, with the title of king, in 37 A.D. His uncle, Herod Antipas, wishing to obtain the same royal title, went to Rome, and there was accused by his nephew, with the result that Herod Antipas was banished, and his dominions, Galilee and the Perea, were added to those of Herod Agrippa I. in 40 A.D. When Caligula was murdered, Agrippa actively aided the accession of Claudius to the Empire, and was rewarded with the province of Judea and Samaria in 41 A.D. He thus regained the whole of the dominions of his grandfather Herod the Great, and was sole ruler of Palestine at the time when the events narrated in the text took place.

To vex, to injure, or to afflict.

2. James, one of the *Three* (Peter, James, and John, Mark v. 37, ix. 2). The martyrdom of James showed the Church that God did not always mean to interpose to deliver His Apostles, and always taught the Twelve that they

- 3 James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)
 4 And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him ; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.
 5 Peter therefore was kept in prison : but prayer was made
 6 without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains :

were to be partakers of the sufferings of Christ. This martyrdom took place probably about the close of 43 A.D.

With the sword. Four modes of capital punishment were in use among the Jews—(1) stoning ; (2) burning ; (3) decapitation ; (4) strangling. Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, and not practised save under Roman governors.

2. *Peter's danger and deliverance, 3-11.*

3. **Because he saw it pleased the Jews.** The aristocracy of the Sadducees had always hated the disciples. The Pharisees must have heard about Peter's consorting with the Gentiles, a proceeding which gave practical effect to the preaching of Stephen which they had found so offensive. Herod studiously tried to conciliate the Jews, Josephus tells us, hence this second persecution.

The days of unleavened bread. The whole period of the Passover feast, 14th-21st Nisan.

4. **In prison.** Peter had got out of prison before, and was probably guarded with more strictness than usual. Four sets of four soldiers were told off to watch him, relieving each other in turn ; sixteen soldiers in charge of one man ; two inside the cell, Peter chained to them (6), two keeping guard outside at the inner and outer doors (10), and twelve resting. As soon as the feast days were over, Peter was to be brought forth for execution in presence of the people—either by stoning, as Stephen ; or by decapitation, as James ; or by burning or strangling, the other two modes of punishment by death lawful among the Jews.

After Easter, after the Passover ; that is, the whole Paschal feast, which lasted seven days. It was not lawful, according to strict Jewish notions, to execute criminals during religious festivals.

To bring *him* forth, the same word which was used to describe the trial of Jesus : *They led Him into their council* (Luke xxii. 66). When the Paschal week was over, Herod intended to bring Peter to trial and execution, that he might show his zeal for the Jewish religion. He was nearer his end than was Peter, however.

5. **Prayer was made without ceasing.** Vers. 5 and 6 describe a battle between the Church and the world. Soldiers, prison, chains, on the one side ; a company of Christians praying on the other, and perhaps wavering in prayer, for James had been slain : why should not Peter perish ?

Without ceasing, earnestly (Luke xxii. 44).

6. **Peter was sleeping.** Notice the vividness of the description. Peter the night before his execution, **asleep between two soldiers**, the heavenly

7 and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison : and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell 8 off from *his* hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow 9 me. And he went out, and followed him ; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel ; but thought he 10 saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city ; which opened to them of his own accord : and they went out, and passed on through one street ; and forthwith 11 the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the 12 Jews. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was messenger making the prison light, touching Peter, awaking him, giving him command after command, for the man was dazed ; the long tunic to be girt up for walking, sandals put on, *abba* not forgotten ; two doors passed, a warder at each, then the outer gate : then Peter in the street thinking it all a dream.

7. **The angel of the Lord.** Compare Luke ii. 9, where almost the same words are used.

His chains fell off. “The soldier who was appointed to guard a particular prisoner had the chain fastened to the wrist of his left hand, the right remaining at liberty. The prisoner, on the contrary, had the chain fastened to the wrist of his right hand.” In this case double precautions were taken, and Peter was bound to two soldiers with two chains.

8. **Gird thyself.** For convenience Peter had unbound his girdle, unfastened his sandals, and was sleeping with his *abba* loosely over him. When he started up at the angel’s touch, it fell in a heap at his feet.

9. **He went out.** It was the very night before his proposed trial and execution. “God’s time to help is when things are brought to their last extremity” (Matt. Henry).

10. **The angel departed from him.** There was no more need for the miraculous guide ; miracles are not to be expected when the ordinary means can be used.

11. **When he was come to himself.** He found himself free in the open street, awake and not dreaming, but still dazed ; awake enough to praise God for His goodness, and to see distinctly the fate from which he had been delivered, Herod the tyrant, the sea of faces clamouring for his death.

3. *A Christian household*, 12-19.

12. **When he had considered.** His mind at last clear, able to think what was best to do.

13 **Mark**; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to 14 hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told 15 how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even 16 so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw 17 him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren.

The house of Mary. Barnabas was her nephew (the word in Col. iv. 10 means *cousin*, not *sister's son*), a woman of some property like her nephew, who had not sold *all* her possessions; her husband was probably dead; Peter was so intimate with the family that he calls her son Mark the Evangelist his "son" (1 Pet. v. 13).

Praying. Another vivid description. The frightened disciples gathered in the house of Mary, not asleep, but dreading the dawn of the day of execution; prayer their only weapon, but that may be ineffectual, for James has been slain; the sudden knock; the terror; the maid-servant going carefully to the door, recognising the voice; sympathetically too glad to open; Peter at last inside; the eager welcome, all speaking at once; Peter's gesture for silence; the story; the parting messages; the sudden departure—a glimpse into a Christian household eleven years after the Resurrection.

13. **A damsel, a maid-servant**; the portress in Jewish houses was commonly a maid-servant. Compare John xviii. 16, where another maid who kept the door recognised Peter on another and very different occasion.

To *hearken*; the word used to mean, *to answer a knock at the door*.

Rhoda, rose. The Jews frequently gave plant-names to their daughters. Susannah means *lily*; Esther, *myrtle*; Tamar, *palm-tree*.

14. **Having recognised his voice.** The whole scene is so vivid that an eye-witness, perhaps Mark himself, must have told it to Luke.

15. **Thou art mad.** "Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for, we are most backward to believe, because we are afraid of imposing upon ourselves, as the disciples, who, when Christ was risen, believed not for joy" (Matt. Henry). Yet they had been praying for God's help.

Constantly affirmed, *confidently affirmed*.

It is his angel. It was a Jewish belief that each man had a guardian angel assigned to him, and that this angel might assume the bodily appearance of the person whose destiny was committed to him. The household of Mary shared in this popular belief. But see Matt. xviii. 10.

17. **The Lord had brought him.** Compare ver. 11, *Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent His angel*.

To James and to the brethren. In other households prayer was being made, and notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, Peter wished all the brethren to know of his deliverance.

James, the brother of the Lord (compare note on i. 14), was not one of the

- 18 And he departed, and went into another place. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers,
 19 what was become of Peter. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Cesarea, and *there* abode.
 20 And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon : but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace ; because their country was nourished by the king's

Twelve, but is afterwards found acting as the official head of the Christian community at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 13). James was the eldest male relation of Jesus, and according to oriental usage the natural head of the community founded by Jesus. Early Christian tradition, confirmed by one or two passages in the New Testament, affirms that James did occupy a unique position in the Church in Jerusalem, and that he was succeeded in this position by his cousin Simeon the son of Cleopas, who was the head of the Christian fellowship when it migrated to Pella. These facts seem to indicate that according to common oriental usage, but apparently in opposition to the injunction of the Lord (Matt. xii. 50), the family of Jesus maintained a pre-eminence of some kind or other in the Christian community of Jerusalem, which was altogether different from the organization of the Church in other places.

Another place. We do not know where. Roman Catholic writers maintain that Peter went to Rome at this time and founded the Church there, but this is inconsistent with the tone of Paul's statements in 2 Cor. x. 16. Most writers seem to think that the persecution under Herod drove all the Apostles from Jerusalem ; if so, they must have returned after Herod's death. Compare Acts xv.

18. **As soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers.** Why did the soldiers not discover Peter's escape before daylight ? The difficulty is thus explained by Walch : The two soldiers to whom Peter was bound were not relieved as the guards were, for their duty did not hinder them from sleeping ; in this way they did not perceive the escape of their prisoner until the daylight awoke them.

19. **Examined the keepers,** tried them according to the laws of military service.

The keepers, the four soldiers on guard at the time of Peter's escape.
Should be put to death ; rather, *should be led forth to death.*

Cæsarea was the Roman capital, as Jerusalem was the Jewish : it was then for the first time, since the deposition of Archelaus, in the hands of a native ruler. It was Herod's political and military seat of government.

4. *The Death of Herod Agrippa, 20-25.*

20. **They came with one accord,** they sent a combined embassy.

Blastus, a Roman name, probably a Roman who had been retained by Herod Agrippa when Judea and Samaria were made over to him in 41 A.D. ; Blastus was bribed by the embassy.

Nourished by the king's country. (1) Tyre and Sidon were trading

- 21 country.** And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.
- 22** And the people gave a shout, *saying*, *It is* the voice of a god,
- 23** and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.
- 24** But the word of God grew and multiplied.
- 25** And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

towns, and much of the goods shipped at these ports passed through Galilee ; Herod could divert a great deal of it to Cæsarea or Joppa : (2) their country was so populous that they depended on their neighbours for food, and much of that came from Galilee.

21. A set day, a day set apart in honour of the Emperor Claudius, when games were celebrated in Roman fashion in the great theatre of Cæsarea.

In royal apparel, "a garment made wholly of silver and of a texture truly wonderful" (Josephus), such as Caligula had worn at festivals in Rome, which glittered in the sunlight. Josephus gives a minute account of the whole scene, the shouts, and the sudden illness of the king (*Antiq. xviii. 8*), which confirms what is said in the book of Acts. Conybeare and Howson have combined the two descriptions of the scene as follows :—"On the second day of the festival, Agrippa came into the theatre. The stone seats, rising in a semicircle, tier above tier, were covered with an excited multitude. The king came in, clothed in magnificent robes, of which silver was the costly brilliant material. It was early in the day, and the sun's rays fell on the king, so that the eyes of the beholders were dazzled with the brightness which surrounded him. Voices from the crowd, here and there, exclaimed that it was the apparition of something divine. And when he spoke and made an oration to them, they gave a shout, saying, 'It is the voice of a god, and not of man.' But in the midst of this idolatrous ostentation, an angel of God suddenly smote him. He was carried out of the theatre a dying man, and on the 6th of August (five days afterwards) he was dead."

23. Eaten of worms. The same loathsome, excruciating malady which slew his grandfather Herod the Great.

24. But the word of God. There is a sermon in the word *but* : it turns down the page of history on Herod Agrippa and his persecution as things of no lasting moment, and points to the eternity of growth in the seed which is the Word.

25. And Barnabas. This verse seems to belong to xi. 27-30. It is probable that Saul and Barnabas did not come to Jerusalem till the year after Herod Agrippa's death.

Some critics have found a difficulty in this visit of Saul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, which is recorded here and in xi. 27-30. They say that Saul in Gal. ii. 1 makes no mention of this journey, and seems to say that he went up to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, abode there fifteen days, and did not return until fourteen years later, when he went with Barnabas and Titus. There is no need to suppose, however, that Saul was not at Jerusalem, because he does not mention this visit among others in the course of a

narrative in which he is not giving a diary of his life, but an account of his relations to the Twelve for the purpose of vindicating his independent apostolic authority. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul insists that he received his commission from Jesus directly, and not through any human authority, and in the second he maintains that the Twelve conceded this independent position to him. He quotes in support the two meetings with the Twelve in which these facts were made plain, and he had no occasion to mention other interviews.

The first portion of the Acts closes with the growth of the gospel in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria, and beyond Palestine.

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