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FOOTPRINTS OF  
THE APOSTLES

*AS TRACED BY*

**Saint Luke in the Acts**

Being Sixty Portions for Private Study and  
Instruction in Church

A SEQUEL TO  
FOOTPRINTS OF THE SON OF MAN  
*As traced by Saint Mark*

BY  
HERBERT MORTIMER LUCKOCK, D.D.

DEAN OF LICHFIELD

*IN TWO VOLUMES*

VOL. I.

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## Preface and Introduction.

IT is now twelve years since, at the request of the late Bishop Woodford, I published a course of short addresses, on S. Mark's Gospel, which I had delivered on Wednesdays and Fridays at an early Service in Ely Cathedral. In an Introduction which he wrote, with a view to encourage the Clergy to adopt the practice of reading systematically with their congregations whole Books of Scripture, he suggested that to use addresses, carefully prepared by others, would often "be more useful to the people," as it would be "less burdensome to the Parish Priest, than an additional sermon." With such a commendation the practice was certain to be tried; and I have received many requests from Clergy who have so used *Footprints of the Son of Man*, that I would deal with the other Gospels in the same way as I dealt with that of S. Mark. It seemed to me, however, that such a course of

Readings on the Acts of the Apostles would be more helpful, and do something towards clearing men's minds of certain deep-rooted mistakes connected with the *Origines Ecclesie*: so many persons speak as though our information upon these must be looked for outside the pages of Holy Scripture. It will be seen from what follows that S. Luke has left us an inspired account of almost every essential feature of the whole Constitution of the Church.

The title of the Book which he wrote varied in form in the Early Church; the oldest title probably was "Acts," soon enlarged to "Acts of Apostles," and then to "Acts of the Holy Apostles." In the Muratorian Canon it is described as containing "Acts of all the Apostles," which is manifestly incorrect. There is no indication that the Author himself affixed any title to the History, and few persons will be disposed to deny that the above were somewhat unfortunate and misleading to the ordinary reader. "The Acts of the Apostles" does not at all suggest the true idea or primary conception of the Writer, which certainly seems to have been to describe the execution of the Divine Plan

in the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. He shows how, upon the foundations which He had laid during His Three Years' Ministry, the superstructure of the Church was gradually raised, and all the vast and multiplied organisation, of which He had given the outline and sketch during the Great Forty Days, grew with its growth, directed and controlled at each successive stage by the overruling influence of the Holy Spirit, Whose office it was to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men.

The great value, then, of the Book is twofold. It is to set forth the polity of the Church, and to connect it throughout its development with the agency of the Holy Ghost. Let us notice both these points. First, we find in its pages frequent reference to such essential features of Ecclesiastical Polity as the Ministry, Ordination, Apostolic Succession, Public Worship, Forms of Prayer, the Ordinance of Preaching, the Necessity of Baptism, the Daily Celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the Rite of Confirmation, Synodical Action, the Observance of Sunday, the Catholicity of the Church, and others

of a kindred nature; and it is the fact, that we are able to trace all these back to the First Age, which gives such tremendous importance to the Book in which they are so traced.

Now I do not think we should greatly err, if we said that this History of the first beginnings of the Church's existence has not taken the place in the studies and affections of Churchmen which it may rightly claim. It is due, doubtless, in some measure to the title by which it has come down to us. The comparative ignorance of the contents of the Acts has led to serious misconceptions of the Church, especially amongst those who do not belong to her. The first is that they have no idea that the whole Ecclesiastical System, as it is now organised, was laid down in all its parts, as clearly as it is, by Apostolic hands; and the second is a strong and conscientious conviction, though based on imperfect knowledge, that there is an inherent defect in the Church's Constitution, viz., a want of recognition of the agency of the Holy Spirit.

In the second chapter I have endeavoured to meet this latter objection, both by pointing to the

fact that the Third Person of the Trinity is introduced into the narrative almost fifty times, and is associated with each epoch in the development of the Church's constitution and work.

I had originally intended to publish this book under the title of *The Gospel of the Holy Ghost*, but as this designation, though full of appropriateness to those who have studied it, would not interpret itself to the public generally, such a course might, I feared, defeat my object. The publication of it as the sequel to *Footprints of the Son of Man*, which has passed through many editions, is likely to gain for it a wider circulation; and thus my main desire will be obtained, viz., that it may influence as many as possible, especially such as from the above motives have felt unable to conform to the laws and principles of the Church. The objection is one which calls forth the utmost sympathy of religious men, but which an unprejudiced study of the Acts will show to be, perhaps, the least valid of all that are ever alleged. So far concerning the real scope of the Second or Latter Treatise written by S. Luke.

In acknowledging my indebtedness to writers on

the Acts, I find it difficult to particularise. A list of commentators on this book would fill several pages, and not a few of them have, at some time or other, during many years' study of it, been laid under contribution. I have doubtless appropriated thoughts, and given expression to them, without knowing or being able to remember their original source. There is no one to whom I have more frequently referred than Josephus; both in his *Antiquities* and *Wars* he covered much of the ground traversed by S. Luke, and dealt with the same period of history, and his pages enable us to enter more deeply into the life of the Jewish nation than we could do from reading the writings of a Gentile.

In the second half of the book I have learnt much from the Lives of S. Paul by Conybeare and Howson, Lewin, and the present Dean of Canterbury. The first of these books deserves the highest commendation for the unwearied industry of the biographers, who were really the pioneers in modern biographies of the Apostle, and especially for the descriptions of the places

visited by him, and the abundance of illustrative matter, which makes their pictures so complete.

Perhaps the most interesting, from the freshness and unconventional mode of treatment, of all the books which have been written in the last few years on the latter part of the Acts, are *The Church in the Roman Empire before A.D. 170*, and *S. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, by Professor Ramsay of Aberdeen. His pages are full of instruction, historical and political, and I would rather express my obligation to him for this than dwell upon points of a doctrinal nature where I have drawn very different conclusions from those which he has drawn. There is one question of a geographical difficulty, upon which he is so fully convinced, and with so much to support him, that I am constrained to notice it here as well as in the notes.

It is connected with the second Foreign Mission of S. Paul. In the map, I have, by the way in which the route is traced, seemed to fix the question in a manner adverse to that for which he so strongly contends. It has been much disputed

what country is intended by Galatia in xvi. 6: "Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia." Did the writer mean Galatia proper, or only the Galatian "province"? If the former, the words refer to certain northern towns, such as Pessinus and Ancyra, which S. Paul must have visited after leaving Iconium; if the latter, S. Luke is merely summarising the work already done, *i.e.* in such towns as Lystra, Derbe, and Iconium, belonging to what was called Galatian Lycaonia. Lightfoot advocated very decidedly the former view, and maintained that, read in its connection with other countries noticed in the context, Galatia must be a geographical expression; and holding this, he considered that S. Paul made that large détour towards the north-east, which is marked in the map.

Professor Ramsay, however, combats this view with no less decision, and insists that Galatia is not a geographical but a political expression, referring to a far more restricted area. If he is

right, then the "great loop" in the line of the journey marked on the map must be obliterated; and it certainly is very difficult to understand why such a détour to those large and important towns should have been so cursorily passed over, if it had been made. Some points still require elucidation; and though strongly disposed to accept the Professor's theory, I have thought that, in deference to the name of Lightfoot, fuller proof is needed before the ordinary route is altered on the map.

For particular portions of the narrative I would mention my obligation to three writers, Dr. Goulburn, Mr. J. T. Wood, and Mr. James Smith of Jordanhill. It is in Dr. Goulburn's *Acts of the Deacons* that I have gained the farthest insight into the scope and drift of S. Stephen's famous and very difficult Apology before the Sanhedrim. The Doctor may, as he says, with characteristic modesty, have first discerned the speaker's purpose in Alford's commentary; but the student will soon realise, as he reads, how much the latter commentator owes to Dr. Goulburn for having so vividly unfolded and developed his ideas.

Mr. Wood has earned the gratitude of every one who takes any interest in Ephesus, where S. Paul laboured so long. The first to discover any trace of the great Temple of Diana, he laboured on till he was able to give to the world the results of his wonderful excavations in a Treatise, *Discoveries at Ephesus*, which leaves little wanting. The inscriptions, which by the aid of eminent scholars he has succeeding in deciphering, have illustrated many details in the sacred narrative.

Since Mr. Smith published *The Voyage and Shipwreck of S. Paul*, every commentator on the Acts, no matter what his nationality, has turned to its pages, and been rewarded by the flood of light which he has found there poured upon nautical and topographical incidents, which before were most difficult to understand, and had been often interpreted in hopeless error. A well-known American commentator says of it, "No work has appeared for a long time that has thrown so much light upon any equal portion of the Scriptures." How many writers, before these investigations of Mr. Smith were made known, maintained that Meleda in the Adriatic

Gulf, and not Malta, was the scene of S. Paul's shipwreck! Take Coleridge, for instance. "The supposition," he says, "that it was Malta is quite absurd. Not to argue the matter at length, consider these conclusive facts. The narrative speaks of the barbarous people and barbarians of the island; now, our Malta was at the time fully peopled and highly civilised, as we may surely infer from ancient and other writings. A viper comes out of the sticks upon the fire being lighted; the men are not surprised at the appearance of the snake, but imagine first a murderer and then a god from the harmless attack. Now, in our Malta there are, I may say, no snakes at all." So completely has the author of *The Voyage and Shipwreck* traced the whole of the ship's course, and identified the closing scene, that any one would now expose himself to ridicule by expressing the slightest doubt that the Apostle was wrecked on a certain creek a few miles from Valetta, the familiar harbour of Malta.

In preparing for the press, I have received, as on four previous occasions, the greatest help from my old friend and colleague at Ely, Canon Evans; I

have had, in addition, the services of Canon Bodington, whose doctrinal accuracy has been of much service to me. To both, I express a deep sense of obligation. The index is a contribution of filial affection from Mrs. Arbuthnot. In its completeness it testifies to her characteristic zeal and diligence.

One word of apology or explanation of a personal nature. The reader will doubtless be surprised by the frequent reference in the notes to other books written by myself, especially *Footprints of the Son of Man* and *The Divine Liturgy*. The primary object in making references of this kind is, to enable readers to see how views or opinions put forth in the text are supported by other authorities. Under ordinary circumstances, therefore, an author would feel himself naturally precluded from appealing to any writings of his own. What he may say in one place is not commended to the acceptance of the reader one whit more because he has expressed the same in another place. My reason, however, for referring to the aforesaid books is something quite different. There is so much that is common to *The Footprints of the Son of Man* and *The Footprints of*

*the Apostles*, that, if I wished to avoid repetition, I had no alternative but simply to refer to the passages where the subjects in question had been already treated. The same observation may be made about *The Divine Liturgy*, in which I endeavoured to show the continuity of worship from the beginning of Christianity. In dealing here with the first Forms of Worship in the Early Church, I have thought it better to refer to the Book where it is treated specifically, than go again over trodden ground.

Now, it only remains for me to express an earnest hope that the Blessed Spirit, Whose work and agency within the sphere of the Primitive Church I have tried to set forth, will so bless what is here written, that those who value the principles and forms of the Catholic Church may have their loyalty and reverence deepened, and that some at least of those who have rejected them for their supposed unspirituality may be guided to a truer and more Scriptural conception.

H. M. L.



## The Chronology of the Acts.

THERE are only two points of contact between the sacred and secular history where the date can be certainly ascertained. S. James was beheaded shortly before the death of Herod Agrippa, which took place A.D. 44; and S. Paul was brought before Porcius Festus immediately after he entered upon the government of his province, in A.D. 60. By means of these two fixed dates, and by the aid of certain references, we are able to form a conjectural Table of Chronology, which will suffice for general guidance; but the wide divergencies in the conclusions of different chronologists point to considerable uncertainty.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to explain the familiar difficulty which makes the Birth of Christ B.C. 4, and His Crucifixion A.D. 30. When Dionysius Exiguus, in the sixth century, introduced the mode of reckoning by the year of the Incarnation, he made a mistake in commencing the New Era in 754 from the building of Rome, instead of four years earlier, which is generally agreed to have been the actual date.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE HISTORY IN THE ACTS.

	WIESELER.	LEWIN.	ALFORD.	WORDS- WORTH.
	A. D.	A. D.	A. D.	A. D.
The Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Ghost,	30	33	30	30
The Martyrdom of S. Stephen, . . . . .	39	37	37	33
S. Paul's Conversion, . . . . .	40	37	37	34
Cornelius's Conversion, . . . . .	...	...	38	41
S. Paul's First Missionary Journey, . . . . .	43	40	39	37
S. James beheaded and Agrippa died, . . . . .	44	44	44	44
The Synod in Jerusalem, . . . . .	50	48	50	50
S. Paul's Second Missionary Journey, . . . . .	50	52	51	51
S. Paul's Third Missionary Journey, . . . . .	54	..	55	54
S. Paul goes to Jerusalem for Pentecost, and is sent to Cæsarea and imprisoned, . . . . .	58	...	59	58
Festus tries him, and sends him on appeal to Rome, . . . . .	60	...	60	60
He arrives at Rome in Spring, . . . . .	61	...	61	61
End of his imprisonment and supposed acquittal by Nero,	63	...	63	63

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VOL. I.

*FROM THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD TO THE  
CONVERSION OF CORNELIUS.*

*λέγων τὰ περὶ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ.*

Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

ACTS i. 3.

## I.

# The Author of The Acts ; his Attachment to S. Paul.

### THE ACTS I. I.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus.

THERE are, perhaps, few things incapable of absolute proof, which may be more confidently accepted than that S. Luke was the author of The Acts of the Apostles. Eusebius expressed the verdict of primitive belief when, in regard to genuineness and authenticity, he placed the Book in the category of writings “universally acknowledged”; Ecc. Hist. iii. 25. and Renan, who certainly has no conservative instincts in favour of ancient tradition, but rejects it ruthlessly, if his critical judgment prompts him, indorses without reserve what the Father of Church History laid down fifteen centuries ago.<sup>1</sup> If, then,

<sup>1</sup> It was denied by Bauer, who regarded the book as an apology for S. Paul in his relationship to S. Peter's teaching, written in the second century ; but that theory has been abundantly refuted.

we dwell upon characteristics which have been adduced in proof of S. Luke's authorship, it may be well to say that it is only to enable the student of The Acts, by a more accurate acquaintance with the mind of the writer, to have an intelligent appreciation of what he has written. A flood of light is often poured upon a page, otherwise obscure, if the reader happens to know the personal history and opinions of the author. Now we are not told much directly about S. Luke in Holy Scripture, but, when we have obtained the clew to his character and calling, his writings become quick with a new and increasing interest.

Euseb. Eccl.  
Hist. iii. 4.  
Jerome's  
Scrip. Eccl.  
*sub* Lucas.

Tradition makes Antioch his birthplace, but it has not told us anything of his parentage, whether Jew or Gentile, Asiatic or European. By inferences, however, we learn from S. Paul that he was not "of the circumcision"; and as direct conversions from heathendom to Christianity were rare till after S. Paul's preaching, he most probably passed as an Hellenist, or proselyte of righteousness, through the gate of Judaism.

Col. iv.  
11, 14.

He was brought up by his parents for the medical profession, and tradition says that he combined with this the art of painting, and gained celebrity by the success with which he had painted the Face of our

Nicephor.  
Hist. Eccl.  
i. 43.

Blessed Lord and seven portraits of the Virgin Mary. The former statement is corroborated by the indisputable authority of S. Paul as well as by Col iv. 14. numerous undesigned coincidences in his works; but the latter receives no confirmation of any kind from primitive sources. The earliest authority for it is Nicephorus, who in the fourteenth century wrote a History of the Church so full of traditions that he has received the designation of "the theological Pliny." It is not, however, to be rejected on this account as worthless, but may be interpreted as we interpret so many of the mediæval legends, not, that is, as literally true, but as embodying, albeit in a poetic and romantic form, the principle of a kindred truth. No one, I imagine, can fail to see that the most attractive features of our Lord's perfect humanity<sup>1</sup> are more clearly drawn out in the third Gospel than in any other, while almost all that we know of the mind and character of the Blessed Virgin, her awe and wonderment, her anxious forebodings, her reverent humility and resignation to the Divine Will, her grateful sense of the unparalleled honour bestowed upon her,—all this we owe to the pen of S. Luke. It was, then,

<sup>1</sup> Pre-eminently His teaching on the beauty of self-sacrifice, mercy, pity, compassion, pardon, love, universal love.

only the poetic expression of a simple but important fact which led an imaginative generation to transfer S. Luke's delineations of character to the painter's canvas, and make the sacred biographer a skilful artist. If S. Luke was born at Antioch it would be by no means improbable that he received his education with S. Paul at Tarsus. The proximity of the Temple of Æsculapius to that University, and the existence of a hospital for the crowds of sick who flocked to its precincts, hoping to propitiate the god of healing by their votive offerings, led to the formation of a Medical School which stood higher in reputation than any other in the world.<sup>1</sup> This would account for the closeness of their after-relationship, for we may well suppose that then, as now, college friends were proverbially staunch and true.

Some writers, however, have strongly insisted that the testimony of Eusebius is untrustworthy, and that many considerations point to S. Luke's nationality being Greek, and his birthplace Philippi, in Macedonia.<sup>2</sup> The most important supporter of this view dwells especially upon his familiar acquaint-

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the next in importance was in the island of Coos or Cos. Acts xxi.

<sup>2</sup> Greswell, Renan, and Professor Ramsay have maintained this.

ance with the Ægean Sea. He maintains that he has "the true Greek feeling for the sea," which would be greatly fostered by living on the Ægean coasts, and he points to "the wealth of maritime details" with which he records "the incidents from harbour to harbour" on S. Paul's voyages, while he contrasts the poverty or sparingness of his descriptions of land journeys, even those of intense interest, such as from Cæsarea to Jerusalem, or Appii Forum to Rome, with the fulness of detail with which he loves to note down the straight runs, the effect of winds, the lee-shelter, the outline of the coasts, or the position of the islands which they passed in their course.

Again, he says that "he shows himself the Greek when he talks of the Maltese as 'the barbarians,'" Acts xxviii. 4. the designation, that is, which the Greeks gave to all who were not of their own nationality.

Apart from these two considerations, we cannot but feel that his Greek birth would certainly help to account for his superior education and social position. The medical profession was a highly honoured one in Greece, but in other countries it was not uncommonly adopted by men of the lower orders, even by slaves. His writings exhibit manifest evidence of much literary culture, and his Greek is

purser and more classical than that of the other Evangelists.

We turn now from what must always be to some extent uncertain to the one historic and indisputable fact about him, that he was a physician; and there can be little doubt, though it is not stated in so many words, that, whether for pay or out of pure friendship, his frequent attendance upon S. Paul was dictated by the Apostle's need of medical advice. It has been very conclusively proved that his "thorn in the flesh" was a recurrent disease of a repellent nature, and that S. Luke was with him just at those times when he was suffering most from an outbreak of it.

The attachment of a patient to his doctor, especially when he has proved himself able to give him relief in a painful and distressing malady, has often been strongly evinced; and S. Paul was only giving expression to the same affection and gratitude for his efficient services when he described S. Luke as "the beloved physician." He must have been doubly dear to him, if, as has been said, he was at this time the only Christian physician throughout the Roman Empire.

Now it is impossible not to have noticed "a prevailing tinge of medical diction" in all the

Evangelist's writings, and this, not only in his descriptions of disease and its cure, but when he is narrating the ordinary events of daily life. A few illustrations will suffice to show it: in his Gospel, Simon's wife's mother is sick of "a great fever"; "the paralytic" of the other Evangelists becomes "the paralysed" man in S. Luke; in the original language it marks the distinction between a man with a tendency to paralysis and one who had actually had a stroke;<sup>1</sup> the curvature of the spine in the woman, "who was bowed together and could in no wise lift up herself," the relaxation of her muscles, and the straightening of her form, are all described in phraseology peculiar in the New Testament to S. Luke, and drawn from the medical treatises of Hippocrates and Galen.<sup>2</sup>

So also in The Acts, "the scales" that fell from S. Paul's eyes, "the mist" that overspread the sight of Elymas, "the fever" and "bloody flux" of the father of Publius are technical terms; and when S. Luke speaks of "the refreshment" or hospitality which the Apostle received from Julius at Sidon, he used an expression which implied the care

<sup>1</sup> παραλυτικός and παραλελυμένος.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hobart's *The Medical Language of S. Luke*, in which he gives countless quotations from these authors.

and sympathetic treatment such as a doctor would seek for a man in a delicate state of health, as there is reason to believe S. Paul was at that juncture.

Now though, as we shall show hereafter, S. Luke had a further purpose in view than to write the life of S. Paul, yet he has done this latter with singular attractiveness. The true value of a biography is in a great measure dependent upon the sympathy of the biographer with the aims and opinions of the man whose portrait he draws. Between S. Luke and S. Paul there was the very closest sympathy. Their lives were so knit together that they constantly acted and reacted upon each other in a variety of ways. They not only thought alike, but they often spoke or wrote alike. Take for an illustration of this latter trait the use of medical language; S. Paul had caught the habit from his  
1 Tim. i. 10; “beloved physician,” and talks of doctrine as  
vi. 3. “healthy”; of error spreading “like a gangrene  
2 Tim. i. 13; or cancer”; of a conscience “cauterised”; of “itch-  
ii. 17. ing ears”; and of “the repletion” of the flesh that  
1 Tim. iv. 2. follows indulgence.  
2 Tim. iv. 3.  
Col. ii. 23.

Of their common thoughts and feelings we would single out these two,—sympathy with suffering and a large-hearted, all-embracing love. Relief of distress, the benediction of almsgiving, comfort in affliction,

all are enforced in the pages of the Gospel ; and the lesson is repeated in The Acts in the Apostle's thanksgiving to those who ministered to his own necessities, in his anxiety for the suffering saints at Jerusalem. Indeed there is no episode more touching than that upon which S. Luke lingers with such evident satisfaction, when the Apostle tries to bind up the sorrows of the broken-hearted elders at Acts xx. 35. Miletus, reminding them in his parting words that they "ought to support the weak," for it was the Lord Jesus Who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Once more, they shared the common aim of seeing all nations brought into the fold of Christ's Church ; for while to S. Paul by general consent has been accorded the title of "the Apostle of the Gentiles," S. Luke may well claim to be known as "the Evangelist and Historian of the Universal Church." His Gospel is emphatically the Gospel of the Gentiles ; the parables unnoticed by others, but recorded by him, which it records, and others, such as the Lost Sheep, the Lost Piece of Money, the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan, and the Mission of the Seventy, with no word of restriction such as the Twelve received against entering "into the way of the Gentiles" or S. Luke x. 1. "any city of the Samaritans"—all were intended to S. Matt. x. 5.

foreshadow the comprehensiveness and catholicity of Christ's Church. The Acts are the natural sequel of the Gospel, and the Holy Ghost chose and trained and inspired S. Luke to fill in the picture which He had already sketched in outline. So it is that the historian begins at Jerusalem, the home and centre of Judaism, and ends at Rome, the capital of the world.

The Acts begin with a Church composed of a hundred and twenty Jewish converts; when the Book closes, every barrier between Jew and Gentile has been broken down; Samaria, Syria, Asia, Greece, and Italy—to all alike the gates have been thrown wide open, and the Church has begun to realise its Founder's design, that all the nations of the earth should be gathered into it.

Eighteen centuries have passed away, and though the "sound has gone out into all lands," the knowledge of the Lord does not yet "cover the earth as the waters cover the sea"; but if the Church is true to her mission, her destiny will inevitably be accomplished; "it will surely come," yea, it may be, "it will not tarry."

## II.

### The Gospel of the Holy Ghost.

#### THE ACTS I. 1-8.

1. The 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 the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen : 3. 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 kingdom of God : 4. and, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the

Father, which, *saith He*, ye have heard of Me. 5. 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 kingdom to Israel ? 7. And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. 8. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.

THE thrice-repeated mention, within the compass of the first eight verses of this Book,<sup>1</sup> of the Agency of the Holy Ghost, is a striking forecast of what is to follow. From the first page of the history to the last, in all the critical movements which it chronicles, at each progressive stage in the expansion of the Church, stress is laid upon the blessed influence of

<sup>1</sup> The rest of their teaching is reserved for the following chapter.

S. John  
xvi. 14.

Him Whose office it is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto men. The Acts no less than the Gospel tell us of Christ and Christ's work, for while the one describes what He "began both to do and teach," as He went in and out among men in His visible Presence, the other sets forth what He continued to do after His Ascension, by the delegated authority of a human ministry, guided and directed in all things by His promised Spirit in the Church, which is His Body. All is the work of Christ, the Head,—the completion of the design as well as its inception: the superstructure of the building no less than its foundations—the one part consequent on His own Personal action whilst He was Incarnate with men: the other carried out subsequently by the co-operation of His ever-present Spirit.

A comparison of the Gospels with The Acts will show how the latter part is the development of the former. The characteristic of the Gospels is individual life; the characteristic of The Acts is corporate life. As we follow the footsteps of our Lord in the pages of the Gospels, we see multitudes of men and women thronging to His side wherever He went, hanging upon His lips wherever He preached; and though, no doubt, there was a common bond of wondering admiration and love, which held them

for the time spell-bound to the centre of attraction, yet there was nothing to prevent their separation the moment the Object of their affection was withdrawn. They were simply a multitude; there was no outward and visible sign of unity, no enrolment in a society; no Church.

But when we turn to The Acts all this is changed; and "the kingdom," of which Christ had constantly spoken, began at once to be established, and its unity was foreshadowed in the symbolical gift of tongues, by which they heard men "out of every nation under heaven" burst forth in one united voice of praise to declare "the wonderful ii. 6, 11. works of God." This kingdom grew with amazing rapidity, for wherever the Apostles went they set up its government, and "the Lord added to the Church <sup>1</sup> daily."

The first idea, carried out by Christ and His disciples, was to touch the hearts of men; the second idea, carried out by the Apostles under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was so to touch them that they should seek for admission into the society which Christ had foreshadowed. The subject, then,

<sup>1</sup> That the Church is often meant by the Kingdom of God is manifest from such parables as the Tares, the Mustard Seed, the Leaven, the Draw-net, the Great Supper.

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of The Acts is the organisation and development of the Catholic Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Now it is necessary to emphasise this declaration, because not a few of those who have felt unable to conform to the principles of the Church have based their objections upon the strange misconception that it fails to recognise in its organisation and forms of worship the paramount influence of the Holy Spirit. This is not only to shut one's eyes to the Magna Charta of its constitution, but it is to ignore the fact that every Churchman is required, as an Article of Faith, to believe that the Church is the very first-fruits of the Spirit. In the Apostles' Creed all that is required of us to believe as necessary to salvation is set forth under three heads or divisions; the first shows what we owe to God the Father: the second what we owe to God the Son: the third what we owe to God the Holy Ghost. The five clauses which follow the words "I believe in the Holy Ghost," are not to be regarded as so many "independent verities, having no mutual relation, flung together at the end of the Creed, in order that nothing may be omitted."<sup>1</sup> They repre-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bp. Woodford's *Holy Week Lectures*, Lect. i. on the Holy Ghost.

sent the sphere or the result of the Spirit's operations every bit as much as what follows the opening of the first and second divisions exhibits the actions of the Father and the Son. The first article of Faith in connection with the Holy Ghost is "the Holy Catholic Church," and it demands our acceptance because it is based on the teaching of Christ and the authority of The Acts. The former prepared men by predicting the nature of the Spirit's office; the latter describes its actual exercise in completing the full organisation of the Church.

Now let us illustrate this by what is told of the influence of the Holy Spirit on the Church as a Body, and especially on its Ministry. The first "note" of the Church is unity: the Church is one; for if Christ is the Head, He can only be the Head of one Body. This characteristic was symbolised by the very first gift of the Spirit at Pentecost, which was bestowed upon all, in fulfilment of the prophecy, "I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh"; not the Apostles only, or the Apostles with the Blessed Virgin, as Christian Art has erroneously taught, but upon the whole body of believers. The rushing mighty wind filled all the house; and the effect was, that every one present understood his neighbour, and all burst out in one united hymn of praise.

Joel  
ii. 28, 29.

It was a foretaste of the final consummation, when all, of whatever clime, or nation, or tongue, shall be made one in Christ, Who is the Head of the Body, that is, His Church.

Then look at the influence of the Holy Spirit in organising and endowing the Ministry of the Church. Christ, Who knew the end from the beginning, as the Source of all Ministry, gathered into Himself all the offices of the Threefold Order, into which He intended them to be one day resolved. He was Deacon, inasmuch as He "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," that is, to become a deacon;<sup>1</sup> He was a Priest, for it is said that He abideth such continually, "a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek"; and S. Peter tells us that He is "the Shepherd and Bishop" of our souls. All these ministerial functions He delegated to the Apostles, concentrating them for the time in each one of them, as they had been concentrated in Himself: "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Each Apostle, like Christ, was Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. At their ordination Christ endowed them with the gift of the Holy Spirit, Who, He had repeatedly promised, should guide them

S. Matt.  
xx. 28.  
S. Luke  
xxii. 27.

Heb. vii. 17.

1 S. Pet.  
ii. 25.

<sup>1</sup> *διακονεῖν*, following immediately upon the words *ἔστω ὑμῶν διάκονος*.

aright in their coming work; and during the forty days when He spoke on "things pertaining to the kingdom of God," that is, His Church, He doubtless explained how, in the exigency of fresh and increasing requirements, a subdivision of the Ministerial Office would become necessary. The manner and the time would rest with the Holy Ghost, to teach them. Now the acceptance of this principle is incumbent upon us; for otherwise there is no answer to those who, rejecting Apostolical Succession, propound the plausible theory that the Episcopate was raised by elevation from the body of Presbyters themselves selecting a President. Christ's preface to the Apostles' commission involves the belief that Ministerial offices were developed from above, not from below, for no one can give that which he has not himself received.<sup>1</sup>

Now, the first delegation of Ministerial functions to a subordinate Order took place at the appointment of a separate Diaconate. We shall see hereafter how the influence of the Holy Spirit directed

<sup>1</sup> It is the conviction of this that interposes an insuperable obstacle to recognising the validity of the Wesleyan Ministry. The first body of their Ministers, after they left the Church, received their "laying on of hands" from six Methodist Preachers, all themselves unordained, Dr. Jabez Bunting repeating over them the words of their commission, in the year 1836.

the rulers of the Church to seize the opportunity, afforded by a pressing need, for a permanent division of the Ministerial Office. We may not fail to notice that though the deacons were primarily appointed "to serve tables," it was made an indispensable qualification for the work that they should be "full of the Holy Ghost."

The institution of the Order of Priesthood followed, but the time and circumstances are unrecorded. It is, however, a reasonable supposition that, as the martyrdoms of S. Stephen and S. James were two important stages in the spread of the Church, so each was marked by the establishment of a new Order, the Diaconate at the former, the Priesthood at the latter. At all events, after this epoch, priests or presbyters<sup>1</sup> take their place in the organisation of the Church; and as bearing upon the point which we are illustrating, S. Paul is careful to remind those who were in charge at Ephesus that they had received their appointment from the Holy Ghost.

Lightfoot,  
Christian  
Ministry,  
191.

Acts xx. 28.

It is not possible to fix upon any definite epoch for the final devolution of the highest functions of all upon the Order of Bishops: in all probability it

<sup>1</sup> Usually translated "elders" in the A. V. The author has shown that the nature of the office does not depend upon the name, in *The Divine Liturgy*, ch. v. on The Christian Priesthood.

was gradual, necessitated both by the increasing needs of an ever-widening Church, and by the Apostles' sense of their own approaching death. Now, just as the different Orders of the Ministry only exercised their offices in the power of the Holy Ghost; so it was that by His direction they entered upon their several spheres. This supernatural guidance is most marked whenever the beaten track of Judaism is left, and the Gospel is preached to the heathen. Philip heard the voice of the Spirit expressly bidding him to go to the Ethiopian eunuch. While S. Peter was bewildered with the mysterious vision which he had seen upon the house-top at Joppa, the Spirit bade him accept the summons of the messengers from Cornelius at Cæsarea, adding that He Himself had sent them. S. Paul and Barnabas were set apart for their mission to the Gentiles, called, separated, and commissioned by the Holy Ghost. S. Paul and Silas, eager to preach the word in Asia, were "forbidden of the Holy Ghost"; and again when "they assayed to go into Bithynia the Spirit suffered them not"; and yet once more, when S. Paul was longing to go to Jerusalem, the same Divine Voice warned him, by the mouth of the prophet, of the bonds that awaited him, if he persisted in his purpose.

S. John  
xx. 22.  
Acts i. 8.

viii. 29.

x. 19, 20.

xiii. 2, 4.

xvi. 6, 7.

xxi. 4, 11.

It would be easy to illustrate the exercise of this Divine influence in other matters connected with the organisation of the Kingdom of God; but enough has been said. Suffice it to add only one significant fact in this book, which records the *origines* of the Church, that the Name or Agency of the Third Person of the Trinity is found nearly fifty times. Well, indeed, might it be called "The Gospel of the Holy Ghost."

Now, amongst the manifold obligations which the Church owes to the influence of the Spirit, not the least is the inspiration of S. Luke, to embody in a single history such varied instruction for the guidance of her members, both priests and laity, in the different works unto which they may be called. This book is "the Magna Charta of Kings who would reign well and prosperously, and be crowned hereafter by Christ; it is the Manual of Christian Statesmen in their glorious conflicts in public life for Christ and His Church. It is the Pastoral of Christian Bishops in feeding Christ's Flock, and in teaching others to feed it; it is the Guide of the Parish Priest in the cure of souls, and in dispensing God's Word and Sacraments; it is the Martyrology of the Christian Confessor; it is the Itinerary of the Christian Missionary in his voyages and journeys to

preach the Gospel in distant lands; it is the companion and comfort of every Christian, in the troubles of life, and in the hour of death.”<sup>1</sup>

God grant that a reverent study of its pages may be profitable to us who read them “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” that all—each in his appointed sphere—may be made more “perfect, and thoroughly furnished <sup>2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.</sup> unto all good works.”

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth's *Introd. to the Acts of the Apostles*, xxiii.

### III.

## The Risen and Ascended Lord.

#### THE ACTS I. 8-11.

8. . . . And ye shall be witnesses as He went up, behold, two men unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in stood by them in white apparel; all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto 11. which also said, Ye men of the uttermost part of the earth. Galilee, why stand ye gazing up 9. And when He had spoken these into heaven? this same Jesus, Which things, while they beheld, He was is taken up from you into heaven, taken up; and a cloud received him shall so come in like manner as ye out of their sight. 10. And while have seen Him go into heaven. they looked stedfastly toward heaven

THIS history, like the third Gospel, is dedicated to Theophilus.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of all authentic information about him, and with the natural desire to know something of one so greatly honoured, the curiosity of men has been quickened in conjecturing who and what he most probably was. In the earliest age the Fathers treated him in some cases as a fictitious personage,—an ideal Christian, —to whom the author gave a name significant of Divine favour, Theophilus, a lover or friend of God.

<sup>1</sup> He was once identified with a High-priest of the name spoken of by Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. v. 3, but he was far more probably a Gentile convert. There is a tradition that he became Bishop of Cæsarea Philippi.

Such a personification, however, is alien to the spirit of the New Testament; and the epithet "most excellent," prefixed to his name in the Dedication of the Gospel, is a strong argument against this supposition. It is applied frequently to real historical characters, Felix and Festus, in this same book; and it implies high social position, if not also official rank. The friendship and interest of such persons was, we may be sure, eagerly sought by authors in an age when there was no printing, and the publication of a book was a costly undertaking. To dedicate this history to Theophilus was to make him the sponsor for its promulgation to the world.

Theophylact.  
S. Clem.  
Recog. x.

S. Luke takes up the thread of the narrative where it had been dropped at the close of the Gospel. In the last page of "the former treatise," he had dwelt upon the manifestations of the Risen Lord to the Apostles; in the opening verses of this he reverts to them, adding some details of interest, and one at least of unspeakable importance. He tells us, what none of the other Evangelists have noticed, that the duration of our Lord's stay upon earth after the Resurrection was forty days, a period of marked significance in the Old Testament history, and recurring more than

Deut. x. 10.  
1 Kings  
xix. 8.

once in the life of our Lord. Forty days elapsed between His Birth and His Presentation in the Temple; forty days and forty nights were the extent of His fast in anticipation of His approaching Work and Ministry; and now, forty days from the grave to His re-admission into the Holy of Holies, the Heavenly Temple.

A greater point of interest for which we are indebted to S. Luke is the glimpse which he gives us into the nature of the Lord's Risen Life by a single expression. The English translation, "being seen of them," loses the force of a somewhat peculiar word,<sup>1</sup> which indicates the sudden, unexpected appearance, as of a vision, coming they knew not whence, going they knew not whither. It bespeaks the distinction between the Risen Body of Christ and the bodies of all those who had been raised from the dead before, the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son, and Lazarus. They rose to return to their former life, and then to die again. Christ rose to die no more, and by His example to give to men an earnest and pledge of their higher life

<sup>1</sup> ὄπτανόμενος rather than θεωρούμενος or φαινόμενος. The purposely chosen ὄπτανόμενος—conspiciendum se præbens—corresponds to the changed capacity of the Risen One (Meyer). For a detailed account of the different manifestations, cf. *Foot-prints of the Son of Man*, ch. lxxix.

after death. So it was, that in the properties of His Risen Body we see a very marked distinction from that which had been laid in the grave. After that first Easter-Day it became, so to speak, natural to Him to be visible or invisible according to His own immediate will; to come and go instantaneously, like an apparition; to pass through closed doors; to be so like His former self as to retain the scars in His Hands and Side, and yet so unlike as to escape the recognition of His most intimate friends.

S. John xx.  
15, 19, 26.

Then there is the most important fact, which gives the key to much that would otherwise be unintelligible in the action of the Apostles, viz., that they received during the great forty days directions for the development of the Church. S. Luke alone tells us that the things upon which He spake to them were those which pertained to "the kingdom of God"; not only to that kingdom which is in the hearts of men, but to that visible organisation which He here described under its proudest and truest title. It did not suffice that He should give them the promise of the Holy Spirit to guide their future conduct; He prepared them beforehand by foreshadowing the rules and constitution, the work and worship, of the Church which they were to

build up. When we look on a few years and see with what confidence and boldness they proceeded to act in all that was connected with the expansion of the Church's system, we can have no doubt of their conviction that they were carrying out in detail directions which He had at least laid down in principle.

Let us illustrate this in two particulars:—First, in regard to Eucharistic worship. When we realise that the Holy Eucharist was absolutely the only service which bore the impress of His appointment, there is a very strong presumption that He would instruct them as to the leading lines upon which He wished it to be conducted. Knowing, as He did, how large a part it was destined to fill in the Public Worship of all future time, it was naturally one of the first points upon which He would deem it necessary to speak to them. The entire agreement of all the primitive Liturgies<sup>1</sup> in their general structure and essential features, admits of no other explanation. Secondly, consider the transference of all religious observance from the seventh day to the first. There is not a single line of direction in the New Testament to enforce or authorise the change; and yet the regulations

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Divine Liturgy*, p. 6, or *After Death*, ch. ix.

for keeping the Sabbath were so woven into the very web and fabric of Jewish life, that any the least innovation upon the holiness of the day would have been repudiated as profane, unless those who made it could appeal to some Divine sanction. It would seem that our Blessed Lord realised the great difficulty there would be in effecting the change, and for a time, probably till Jerusalem was destroyed, both days were marked by a religious observance. Then, as heathen converts were made, and Jewish Christians passed away, the obligations of the Sabbath ceased to be recognised, and the sacred associations of the Day of the Resurrection became paramount; but unless the Apostles had known from the lips of our Lord that the ultimate suspension of the Sabbath was in accordance with His will, the Fourth Commandment would have remained, not only in spirit but in letter, binding upon the Church. This, then, must have been one of the "things pertaining to the kingdom of God," upon which He spake during the forty days.

Apostol.  
Constit. ii.  
59; vii. 23, 36.  
Socr. Eccl.  
Hist. vi. 8.

From the record of our Lord's last instructions to the Apostles S. Luke passes to tell of His Ascension. Now it is somewhat surprising that we should owe the account of this to those two Evangelists

who had not been eye-witnesses of it. S. Matthew and S. John pass it over, or rather stop short of it; though the latter bears his testimony indirectly to the fact by inserting in his Gospel our Lord's inquiry, "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" If he had not known that these words had received their fulfilment, he would hardly have thought it necessary to bring them before the Christians at the close of the Apostolic age.

S. John  
vi. 62.

S. Luke here adds to what he had reported in the Gospel some details of especial interest. He tells, for instance, of the Apostles watching their Lord's gradual disappearance, and of the straining eyes with which they gazed after His vanished Form.

Herein a distinction is drawn, in an important particular, between the Resurrection and the Ascension. No man saw our Lord burst the bonds of death and come forth from the tomb. There was no object to be gained by the witness of men; no confirmation of the event by those who had seen it could add anything to the existing proof. All knew that He was dead; many had seen His Body laid in the grave; if, therefore, He reappeared amongst them, His Resurrection was indisputably

established. Nothing could add to their realisation of the fact.

But it was quite otherwise with the Ascension, because after He had gone back to "where He was before," no man would see Him; His session at the Right Hand of God would be wholly invisible to men; it was necessary, therefore, for the contradiction of those who might attribute His disappearance to the hand of violence or fraud, that His departure into heaven should be attested by eye-witnesses; and so it is written, in demonstration of the event, that "while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Now it will not profit us to think of the physical or material phase of the Ascension. What we have learnt of the relationship of the earth to the surrounding orbs involves us in difficulty, when we attempt to follow the ascending cloud, and ask whither it went, when it had passed out of sight, and above all, where it terminated its journey, and left the Ascended Lord? Enough to know that it bore Him to heaven, and, wherever heaven may be, there in the Glory of the Father is the Incarnate Son. And so we take courage in the thought, which this record suggests, that now on the very throne of the Ruler of all things, visible and in-

visible, there is One Who bears to the God and Father of all the same relation that we bear, for He ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

S. John  
xx. 17.

Our Lord had foretold to Nathanael that he should  
S. John i. 51. “see heaven open,” and “the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.” They had ministered to Him at His Baptism in the Wilderness, in Gethsemane, at the Resurrection, and now from the choir which, we cannot doubt, surrounded His Ascension, two come back to earth to bear His last bidding to the Apostles and assure them of His future return: “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.” The key-note of the message is heaven, thrice-repeated in the compass of a single verse, and was intended to strike the ears of all who hear it, and bid them in this life, “in heart and mind thither ascend,” that they may be prepared hereafter to dwell with Him continually, in Whose “Presence is fulness of joy,” and at Whose “right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”

Ps. xvi. 11.

## IV.

### The First Corporate Act of Worship.

#### THE ACTS I. 12, 13.

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 Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

FOR many centuries pilgrims and travellers to the Holy Land have visited the Church of the Ascension, which marks the traditional spot where our Blessed Lord took His final leave of the Apostles. It contains the rock on which, it is said, His foot rested immediately before He rose from the earth; but it has been noticed with satisfaction that no deliberate deception has been practised, such, for instance, as marks the Garden of Gethsemane,<sup>1</sup> or the famous Church of

Stanley's  
Sinai and  
Palestine,  
xiv.

<sup>1</sup> There is a spot in the enclosure called *terra damnata*, on which the grass is never suffered to grow, because it marks, it is said, the exact spot where the traitor betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss. Cf. *Footprints of the Son of Man*, lxvi.

“Domine quo vadis” in Rome,<sup>1</sup> where a clearly marked footprint in stone is said to be that which our Lord Himself impressed upon it, when He stood to speak with S. Peter. It is now generally agreed that this site on which the Church of the Ascension is built was that of the cave where the Apostles are supposed to have conversed with their Lord some time before He ascended, and at a distance from the scene of His departure. This is out of sight of Bethany, and in full view of Jerusalem; whereas both “the letter and spirit of the Gospel narrative” seem to contradict this.

More probably it was at some secluded spot in the district of Bethany, and at a distance from the village, which was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem. One who has studied local history and tradition fixes the scene on that part of the Mount of Olives “where it ceased to be called Bethphage, and began to be called Bethany.”

When the Apostles had strained their eyes in vain for the reappearance of the vanished Form,

<sup>1</sup> During the persecution of Nero, S. Peter was flying along the Appian Way to save his life, when he was met by a vision of our Saviour, to Whom He said in amazement, “Lord, whither goest Thou?” “I go to Rome,” was the answer, “to be crucified a second time”; whereupon the Apostle accepted the rebuke and returned. The Church called as above, about two miles from the gates, marks the spot sanctified by this vision.

S. John  
xi. 18.

Lightfoot,  
Horæ Hebr.  
Acts.

after the "cloud received Him out of their sight," they returned to Jerusalem; it is added in S. Luke's Gospel, "with great joy." The addition marks the effect of what they had been taught, since the first intimations of their Lord's departure had filled their heart with sorrow. They had learnt at His lips that it would be expedient for them that He should go away to His Father and their Father; and they remembered how He had told them that the measure of their love for Him would be tested by their joy in His Ascension, and they determined that they would not disappoint Him.

S. John  
xvi. 7.

S. John  
xiv. 28.

We are quite prepared for what S. Luke tells us, viz., that their first thought on returning to Jerusalem was to assemble together for prayer and supplication. It is the Church's first corporate act of worship after the Ascension; for though we often speak of Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, we forget that the Apostles had already received their commission by the Divine inbreathing as her authorised Ministry, and that whatever they did, whether in this congregation, or in the subsequent preaching of S. Peter, and the ordination of S. Matthias, was done in no private capacity, but as the Church of Christ.

S. John  
xx. 22.

It creates no surprise to read where the first public assembly was held; not in some chance meeting-place, but in the Upper Chamber, for it is definite in the original; on a spot fresh with many most hallowed memories, consecrated first by the Final Passover, and the celebration of the earliest Eucharist; and made more sacred still by two manifestations of the Risen and Glorified Lord. It was destined moreover to be the scene of another predicted Epiphany of the Divine Presence, when the waiting-time of the disciples should be over, and the Blessed Spirit be revealed to them in tongues of fire, to complete their equipment for their appointed work.

S. Luke  
xxiv. 33.  
S. John  
xx. 26.

Acts ii. 1.

We follow the stream of ancient tradition in identifying the Upper Chamber as the earliest Christian Church.<sup>1</sup> There is a record in the fourth century which tells how the Emperor Hadrian found it surviving the wreck and ruin that had wasted Jerusalem in the memorable siege of Titus; and how it was preserved as "a Church of God, of small and insignificant dimensions"; and we have it also on later authority that, when the Empire had been converted from Paganism, the Queen-mother of Constantine, on her pilgrimage to the Holy City,

Epiphanius  
de mens.  
et ponder.  
xiv.

Nicephorus  
Ecl. Hist.

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Quaresimus, *Terre Sanctæ Elucidatio*, ii. 119; ed. 1639.

burning with zeal for the honour of the Lord, built a magnificent church, more worthy of its associations, enclosing in its vestibule "the Upper Room," which she learnt had been set apart for three hundred years by the Christians of that place.

Men have often said, and sometimes earnestly believed, that the churches of mediæval and modern times departed unwisely from primitive simplicity ; that there was no outward magnificence or material splendour in that first Upper Chamber, and that we have no right to seek for our model in those later days, when the Church and the world became so thickly intertwined. There might have been reason in the objection if the Will of God had not been revealed before ; but it disappears when we remember that He, Who changeth not, had Himself unrolled Mal. iii. 6. to Moses the pattern of the Tabernacle, with its Exod. unrivalled structure, and inspired His craftsmen, xxv. 40. Bezaleel and Aholiab, with the breath of Divine Heb. viii. 5. wisdom "to devise cunning works, to work in Exod. gold, and in silver, and in brass," and "all manner xxxii. 2-5. of workmanship" for the glory and beauty of His House.

In the light of what is written, it is not difficult to see that the early history of Christian worship has been misread and necessity mistaken for prefer-

ence. For the first three centuries the Church of Christ was everywhere persecuted by scoffing Jews and Gentiles alike, and men and women were compelled by the exigency of imperious circumstances to assemble for worship in seclusion from the outer world, in the dark recesses of the Catacombs, and the dens and caves of the earth; but believing implicitly that the creature is bound to give to the Creator of the very best that he possesses, directly the sword of persecution was sheathed and the Church was emancipated from poverty, her devoted children flung aside the beggarly accompaniments, to which their common worship had been forcibly restricted, and built churches of solidity and beauty, to express their recognition of the paramount claims of their Lord and King to a willing tribute from wealth and art.

S. Luke tells us who formed the component parts of that first congregation in this Upper Chamber: the Apostles, the women, and our Lord's brethren. The order in which the Apostles are named, for some unknown reason, varies somewhat from that which the Evangelists have given in the Gospels. They are not classed together in pairs; S. Andrew, though first called, is placed only fourth on the list; S. Bartholomew is separated from his companion

S. Philip and linked with S. Thomas. And there is one more difference, the cause of which is only too well known, for it is a subject of undying sorrow both for men and angels: the name of Judas of Kerioth is erased from the record.

Of the men that were present besides the Apostles, S. Luke mentions our Lord's brethren. They were James and Joses, Judah and Simon: children of Joseph by a former wife.<sup>1</sup> It is a relief to be told that they have come to believe in Him at last. For thirty years they had lived under the same roof, hearing His words and seeing His life—a life how unlike their own! perfect in childhood, perfect in youth, perfect in manhood, perfect in every stage as He passed through it; but they shut their ears and eyes to the strongest evidence, and S. John sums up their relationship in the sad but pregnant sentence: "neither did His brethren believe in Him."

S. John  
vii. 5.

But now all is changed. They are admitted into the fellowship of believers, and have their place in the first sanctuary of Christian Worship. Do we wonder what it could have been that wrought such a change? S. Paul gives us the clew. In his

<sup>1</sup> A full discussion of the divers views which have been held on their relationship will be found in *Footprints of the Son of Man*, i. xvi.

record of the appearances during the Forty Days, 1 Cor. xv. 7. he says: "After that He was seen of James." He was the chief of the family.

There seems to have been a special design in this manifestation, and it affords yet one more proof of our Lord's exceeding tenderness for human frailty and of His forgiving love. It was, no doubt, in the recognition of old companionship, to prevent S. Peter, with his impulsive and affectionate spirit, from being completely crushed by the memory of his denial, that He let him hear from His own lips the words of absolution; and with the selfsame consideration for family ties, He made one last effort to save His brethren from unbelief, by showing Himself alive to the foremost of their number.

This was the turning-point; and it is the first witness of the power of the Resurrection for the conversion of unbelievers, that those who had before denied Him are now most eager to join in His worship.

## V.

### Women in the Congregation.

THE ACTS I. 14.

With the women.

A THIRD component part of the first Christian congregation was "the women."

Of these, one only is mentioned by name, "Mary the mother of Jesus." It is the last time she is ever noticed in sacred history. O how gladly we would have read some details of her after-life in the home of the beloved disciple! How deeply interested we should have been to hear what had passed in that meeting, which, we feel sure, must have taken place between the sorrowful Mother and her Risen Son; or to know what words of comfort He spoke to her, before the cloud of the Ascension bore Him from her sight! But all is veiled, and veiled, we believe, in perfect wisdom.

Jameson's  
Legends  
of the  
Madonna,  
300.

It is no matter of surprise, however, that imagination should have tried to fill the void. The legends

of S. Mary overpass in number, and, as was natural, exceed in extravagance, all that has been written of Saints and Martyrs. There is just one<sup>1</sup> connected with her death<sup>2</sup> and apotheosis, which is, perhaps, worthy of notice, because it gives the key to so much that we have seen in Christian art. In the early Church it was commonly believed to be veritable history, written by Melito, Bishop of Sardis, in the second century, but was condemned as apocryphal in the fifth; and there is a touch of irony in the fact that it was one of the Popes<sup>3</sup> of Rome who passed sentence upon it. It gives a vivid description of her daily visits to the tomb on Calvary, and of her departure, through the persecution of the Jews, to live at Bethlehem. The closing pages, from which the Mediæval artists drew their imagery, tell how she prayed that she might be comforted on her deathbed by the presence of the Apostles, and they were carried by the Holy Spirit from their divers and distant spheres to Bethlehem. When they were gathered around her, the angels appeared, and finally her Lord Himself; and as her

Jameson's  
Legends  
of the  
Madonna,  
307-9.

<sup>1</sup> *Sancti Melitonis Episcopi Sardensis de Transitu Virginis Marie* Libr. apud *Bibl. Max. Patr.*, ii. 2, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> *Dormitio B. Virginis* is the title always given to this in Christian Art, in Italian *Il sonno della Madonna*.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Gelasius.

pure soul departed, it was taken by Him into heaven. Her body was laid by the Apostles in a new tomb in the valley of Jehoshaphat, but this too, the legend says, was carried away, by Michael the Archangel.

There is at the close a touching episode associated with S. Thomas. He had been delayed in Palestine for the baptism of a royal child, and had not witnessed the death and burial, and he demanded to see the sepulchre, "For you know," he said, "that I am Thomas, and unless I see I will not believe"; and the stone was rolled away, and nothing was found but the grave-clothes in which her body had been laid.

The legend adds that there were present at her death, besides the above, Mary Salome, Mary Cleophas, and a faithful handmaid, whose name was Savia. Of these latter, we can hardly doubt, two were included in that first congregation of which we are writing. Salome was the mother of James and John, and sister of the Blessed Virgin.<sup>1</sup> Mary of Magdala, Mary and Martha of Bethany, and Joanna the wife of Herod's steward, and Susannah, would probably be there also; they had all ministered to

<sup>1</sup> For this relationship cf. *Footprints of the Son of Man*, i. xvi.

Jesus in His earthly life ; and even if they were not allowed to be present at the final scene on Mount Olivet, they would be the first to hasten to the place of meeting to join in prayer to their Ascended Lord. We can hardly believe that these were all ; perhaps the Syrophœnician mother, who had pleaded so passionately for her child ; and the Cæsarean lady,<sup>1</sup> the Veronica of legendary lore, who could never forget the blessings she had received. It is interesting to speculate who formed that goodly company ; but the really instructive thoughts are suggested by the fact, that any women at all should have been allowed to be present. It shows us how soon the blessings of the Incarnation made themselves felt. In heathen religions women had been so degraded that it was even doubted whether they had souls to save. In Jewry they were held in the lowest contempt ; there was a form of daily prayer, in which a man was taught to bless God because He had not made him a Gentile, a slave, or a woman ; and though women were admitted to take part in the Temple-worship, they did not mingle with men, but were confined to a separate court of their own. Here, however, in the first Christian congregation, every barrier of exclusion is swept

S. Mark  
v. 25.

Pir'ke Avoth,  
tr. by Dr.  
Taylor, 29.

<sup>1</sup> *Footprints of the Son of Man*, i. xxv.

away ; there is no more distinction of religious caste between sex and sex ; “ there is neither male nor female,” but all are “ one in Christ Jesus,” and all men and women together are united with “ one accord in the<sup>1</sup> prayer ” of the Upper Chamber. Gal. iii. 28.

It is a marked feature of Christianity that it restored to woman her claim, not only to an equality with man of social position, but to an equal share in the privileges of the Church. Much has been said and written in the last twenty years about women’s rights. So far as the movement has raised the standard of female education, and held up to women higher and nobler aims, and above all inspired them with a truer sense of the responsibilities of life, it deserves universal support. There are, it must be remembered, at the outset of all revolutions, extravagancies which are apt to prejudice sober-minded people ; and the demand for an equality of rights between men and women has not been exempted from the common tendency ; there is, however, good ground for hope that the ultimate result, when the struggle for impossibilities has been abandoned, will be a distinct gain ; and women will be able to fulfil the ends for which they were created, with greater

<sup>1</sup> In the original the definite article is inserted ; *καὶ τῆ δεήσει*, “ and in supplication ” is absent from the best MSS.

happiness to themselves and more advantage to the community.

We know what women have done in the past to make or mar the lives of men ; all history is full of examples to illustrate the extraordinary power which they possess either for good or evil ; and the one source of regret, connected with this later agitation, is that it has not been initiated and controlled, or even materially encouraged, by the Church. Few will deny that the influence of women on the character of the Church and nation is incalculably beyond that which is exercised by men. We often think how many of the world's judgments will be reversed when the Books shall be opened, and the true history read out in the presence of the angels and an assembled universe. Then we shall learn who they are who have fixed the deepest and most enduring stamp of God's image upon the human race. They will be the mothers, who have taught their children, as no one else can teach, the beauty of gentleness and purity and truth, and have frowned upon all that was mean or selfish or base. They will be the sisters—the elder sisters, who have given themselves in ungrudging devotion to help the young and more helpless ; who have thrown themselves into the pursuits and enthusiasms of their brothers, and taught

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them, by a silent but irresistible enforcement, those principles of chivalry for woman which will stand them in good stead when the passions of later life may tempt them to forget it.

We can conceive of no greater benefit to the Religion of Christ than that the women who profess and enjoy the fulness of its blessings, no matter what their age or degree, should be ever mindful of their prerogative—a prerogative from which their sisters of the Elder Dispensation were rigidly excluded—and exercise their ministry in training and moulding those whom they were created to help, to cling to the principles and the worship of Christ's Church.

## VI.

### The First Ordination.

#### THE ACTS I. 15-26.

15. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) 16. Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. 17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. 18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. 19. And it was known unto all the dwellers 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 a witness with us of His resurrection. 23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. 24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, Which knowest the hearts of all *men*, show whether of these two Thou hast chosen, 25. that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. 26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

THIS is the second corporate act of the Church; S. Peter resumes his position as leader, and leader even with a fuller confidence than before. At first it creates a little surprise, for it is not after

the common manner of men to make great and notorious sins stepping-stones to higher and nobler things; but the Apostle was no common man, and he had not only been absolved by his injured Lord, but reinstated in his office. He gathers the Church together, and with no faltering voice proclaims a fact of vital import to her future work. A vacancy had been made in their ranks; it must, therefore, be filled up without delay. It was true that Christ Himself had not done it, as might have been expected, during the Forty Days, but it was because He wished the Apostles to realise, as quickly as possible, their appointed office; and it is more than probable that He explained to S. Peter, that after His departure it would devolve upon them as their first duty. Nothing else will explain the peremptory nature of his declaration: "one must be ordained" to fill the vacated post; let another take his office. Now, S. Peter's sermon at that first ordination has been the type and model of all the best that have been preached at every Embertide even to the latest, if at least the preacher has recognised its object;—it is twofold: to set forth both the necessity for a Ministry and the qualifications for it.

The circumstances under which they were met were not, or need not have been, S. Peter reminds

S. Luke  
xxiv. 34.  
S. John  
xxi. 15.

Ps. cix. 8.

them, wholly unexpected; for they had been foreshadowed in the predictions of the Psalmist. In describing the faithlessness of Ahitophel, the trusted councillor and familiar friend of David, and the expectation that deceitful men would "not live out half their days," whether consciously or not, he anticipated the treachery of Judas and his suicidal end.

Ps. xli. 9;  
lv. 14, 23.

Now, there are apparent discrepancies between the report of S. Luke and the history of S. Matthew; and they have not been overlooked by the enemies of Christianity. The former speaks of Judas as having "purchased a field with the reward of iniquity," but the latter says that when Judas flung down the thirty pieces of silver, "the chief priests bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in." Again, in the Gospel we read that the Traitor "hanged himself," but the present history narrates that, "falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst."

S. Matt.  
xxvii. 5.

There is no contradiction in either of them; for whoever actually paid over the money, the purchase was due to what Judas had done; and so far from conflicting, the two narratives of his death may both be perfectly true, the second supplementing in detail the brevity of the first. There is an old tradition that, the rope breaking before he was suffocated, he

threw himself from a precipice, and was dashed in pieces.

Again, the statement of S. Peter that Akeldama was the scene of the traitor's death helps to explain how it came to pass that the sale of a field, large enough for a public cemetery, realised no more than thirty pieces of silver. The Jews had an instinctive horror of pollution, especially that which was produced by bloodshed; after it became known that the field was the scene of his tragic death, it would be looked upon with feelings of execration, and a purchaser would only be found with the utmost difficulty. A paltry sum might buy it; and the rulers seized upon the opportunity, and because they regarded it as unclean, they turned it to an appropriate purpose, and made it a burial-ground for those whom they looked upon as also unclean.

Stier, Reden  
der Apost.  
i. 10.

Then the preacher states the qualification for the Apostolate. It is all summed up in a single sentence, that the candidate for the ministry had been with Jesus, a disciple at His Feet, a witness of His Life. Two were chosen from the hundred and twenty; and then the appeal was made in prayer to the great Head of the Church, in recognition of His promise—a recognition of the fact of His sovereign control, which comes out again at each

S. Matt.  
xxviii. 20.

stage of the Church's development. But the final selection they felt unequal to make; and the reason was, as S. Chrysostom says, because the Holy Ghost was not yet given to guide their judgment. And so they adopted a special course—almost unique in the history of the Church,<sup>1</sup> though it had been common enough in the Old Dispensation.

1 Sam.  
xiv. 42.  
1 Chron.  
xxiv. 31.

Through not understanding that the election of S. Matthias was an exceptional one in many ways, fanatics among the Moravians pre-eminently, but Wesleyans also at times, especially at the memorable epoch following Wesley's death,<sup>2</sup> have revived the practice. They did not see that the Apostles were justified in what they did, before the Holy Spirit had been given to guide them into all truth, but that such an action would be inconsistent afterwards. They had the warrant of Scripture and the Wise Man's positive assurance, that "the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." Since the fulfilment of our Lord's promise, the Church has felt that if she committed

Prov. xvi. 33.

<sup>1</sup> The Council of Barcelona, 599 A.D., witnesses to the existence of the custom in Spain. Bingham, IV. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* in 1792 the Conference cast lots whether the lay preachers should administer the Sacraments or not. Wesley had strongly opposed it, and the decision of the lot was against it. Their present practice was decided by their own votes the following year.

herself in prayer to the Spirit's direction, she would have a right judgment in this, as in all else that concerned her welfare. For this reason, though the name of the clergy, as the designation of the ministry, is derived from that which signifies "allotment," sortilege has not been continued as having any part in their call or ordination. Now we would gladly know more of the two candidates who gained the first suffrages of the Church as qualified for the Apostolate. Tradition says that both had gone forth in "the Mission of the Seventy," and it is on the face of it more than probable.

Euseb. Eccl.  
Hist. i. 12.  
Epiphan.  
i. 20.

One was called Joseph Barsabas ; Joseph is, by interpretation, the son of conversion, or of an oath, or of wisdom ; all are possible, no one of them is certain. To this had been added a Roman surname, Justus ; and if, as was so often the case, it had been given in later life to express the man's moral character, it would seem that S. Luke was careful to mention it as an indication that, though Matthias had been chosen, nothing but good was known of Barsabas.<sup>1</sup> It is believed that he shared with S. John the immunity which our Lord had promised to the Apostles, and that he drank a poisonous cup

Lightfoot,  
Horæ Hebr.  
in loco.

<sup>1</sup> *Quamvis Matthias electus esset, ipsum tamen sua laude non excidisse.*—Bengel, *Gnom.* in loco.

Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. iii. 39.  
Nicephor.  
Eccl. Hist.  
ii. 60.

and felt no hurt. If history is silent about the rejected candidate, it has but little more to tell us of the chosen one. Among the spheres which have been traditionally assigned to the Apostles, S. Matthias is said to have laboured and died a martyr's death in Ethiopia. We often regret that so little is said, when everything would have interested us. In this case it may have been in order that men might think more of the false apostle whom he succeeded, and learn from the contemplation to take heed lest they too fall into temptation.

Now the election of Matthias seems to emphasize a truth, insisted on again and again in Holy Scripture, that whether we be laymen or priests, our privileges often fail to save us. It was one who talked with God, as a man talks with his friend, who abused the blessing, disobeyed His will, and brought sin into the world.

It was the chosen race, the favoured people, who rebelled in the face of unbroken loving-kindnesses, and ended by crucifying their King.

And how many of the greatest leaders of heresy have fallen from high positions in the Church; nurtured at her breasts, cherished in her bosom, and receiving even of her best, but only to turn like the serpent and sting her in return!

O what untold prerogatives were bestowed upon Judas! what supernatural gifts and powers were intrusted to him! but he preached to others only to become himself a castaway. He healed the sicknesses of others, but it aggravated his own infirmities. He cast out evil spirits from the possessed, whilst he harboured them himself in his own heart; and his end was perdition.

S. Luke with a reserve that is perfectly natural hesitates to usurp the office of the supreme Judge, and veils the traitor's destiny under the vague description of "his own place"—the place, that is, which was meet for him, or which he had earned and appropriated by a life of deception, and an unparalleled act of treachery. But we are left in no possible doubt, for we have the testimony of Christ Himself, in the unmistakable sentence, that "it had been good for that man if he had not been born." We will learn then never to be high-minded, but always to fear, even in the midst of the richest blessings.

S. Matt.  
xxvi. 24.

## VII.

### The First Whitsuntide.

THE ACTS II. 1-4.

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2. 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. 4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

“EXPECTATION week,” as the waiting-time of the Apostles has been often called, was over; the day of Pentecost had dawned, and during the course of it<sup>1</sup> the oft-repeated promise of their Lord was destined for fulfilment. He who does everything “according to the counsel of His Will,” selected the time and occasion most fitted for the purpose. Pentecost was the Feast when “the first of the first-fruits” of the wheat harvest was offered as an oblation to God. What day could have been more

Exod.  
xxiii. 19.  
Numb.  
xxviii. 26.

<sup>1</sup> ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι—it is the present tense—while it was being fulfilled, the day would begin at six o'clock in the evening; this assembly probably gathered at the usual hour, viz., nine in the morning.

appropriate for the beginning of the ingathering of the harvest of the world, the pledge and earnest of the sevenfold fruits of the Spirit of God? Pentecost, again, was the day on which the Jews commemorated the Giving of the Law on Sinai, the inauguration of that rule which stamped its character on the whole religious life of the nation, with its stern unbending code of laws, written in deep symbolism on tables of stone by the finger of God. It was chosen significantly for the promulgation of the Christian Law, to be engraven with no less symbolism on the tables of man's heart by the Holy Spirit, no written code of external enactments, but penetrating and pervading the soul and spirit, and leavening with its own characteristics the whole being and constitution of the new-born Church. Pentecost, once more, was singularly appropriate from the very numbers that habitually attended it. The crucifixion had taken place at the Passover, and been witnessed by many thousands. To most of them it was an undoubted evidence of the discomfiture of the New Faith. True, there were mitigating circumstances, and they could hardly have escaped the notice of the more thoughtful spectators; but to the great majority the scene on Calvary was regarded as a distinct failure. It did not suffice that the vic-

Jerome ad  
Fabiol.  
Mans. xii.  
Maimon.  
More Ne-  
vochim,  
iii. 41.

tory so soon to follow would be seen by an equal number; far greater multitudes would be present at Pentecost; it was invariably the case, for though in theory every Jew was expected to attend the Three

Deut. xvi. 16. Festivals, in practice only one was made obligatory.

Tabernacles was too late, and Passover too early, for the Jews of the dispersion; both seasons were pro-

Acts xxvii. 9. verbially dangerous<sup>1</sup> for travelling, especially by sea.

At Pentecost "every nation under heaven" was represented, and at no other time was the Descent of the Holy Ghost likely to produce such widespread results.

"They were all with one accord in one place."

There is no absolute certainty what that place was or who were the recipients of the gift there bestowed.

Some have thought that it was within the precincts

Antiq.  
viii. 3. 2.

of the Temple, and the early testimony of Josephus<sup>2</sup>

is appealed to in support of this; but it is extremely difficult to believe that the Priests and Pharisees would have allowed such a gathering of the despised

<sup>1</sup> Navigation was suspended for the winter months between Tabernacles and Passover, except for short distances. In the account of S. Paul's shipwreck, which fell within this time, a long voyage to Rome was discouraged.

<sup>2</sup> He says the term here used, *oikos*, was applied to describe the thirty chambers which ran round the Temple of Solomon; but though open and easily accessible, none of them could have held so large a multitude.

followers of One Whom they had crucified but a few weeks before. Although, then, it would have been intensely significant had the New Covenant been inaugurated within the very shrine of the Old, we are compelled to look for some other scene. Tradition has placed it in the Upper Chamber, in which we have seen that the first Christians held their religious meetings.

S. Cyril,  
Catech.  
xvi. 4.

It is impossible, again, to say whom S. Luke intended when he spoke of "all." Perhaps the more general belief has limited it to the Apostles, as the Whitsuntide preface in our Prayer-book unhesitatingly teaches; there is ancient testimony, however, to the inclusion of "the one hundred and twenty," and some extension beyond the Twelve is almost necessitated by the language of Joel's prophecy,<sup>1</sup> which, S. Peter says, was fulfilled on this occasion. Indeed, as we shall see, the expression was perhaps meant to embrace all the believers in Christ then congregated in Jerusalem. Whichever view be accepted, it should be understood that it neither traverses nor confirms the doctrine of the

Joel ii. 28.  
S. Chrysos.  
Hom. iv. 1.  
S. Aug.  
Serm. 87;  
and Tract.  
in S. Johan.  
92.

<sup>1</sup> Women are spoken of among the recipients of the gift. It may have been that Christian Art has intended to emphasise this by placing the Blessed Virgin as their representative in the midst of the Apostles when they received the gift, but as she usually occupies the position of honour, it admits of another explanation.

S. John  
xx. 21-23.

Apostolical Succession, which depends not upon the Pentecostal Gift, but on the Commission previously given on the evening of the Resurrection, and accompanied by a symbolical act of unmistakable import.

Reserving the nature of the Gift of Tongues for future consideration, we notice a few of the circumstances connected with it. The Authorised Version, by speaking of "cloven" tongues, and Christian painters by their pictorial representations, have imported into the scene an unauthorised feature. It has been supposed that a bishop's mitre, with its divided crest, was first suggested by this erroneous idea of the shape of the tongues which rested upon the heads of the Apostles. The word translated "cloven" should be rendered "dividing" or "distributing themselves."<sup>1</sup> The flame-like forms descended into the Upper Chamber in a body or compact mass, and then at once scattered themselves over the assembled company, one<sup>2</sup> lighting upon the head of each. The original language seems to imply that it rested there for a moment only, and

<sup>1</sup> *διαμεριζόμεναι*, not past pass. tense, but pres. middle. S. Chrysostom says they parted themselves off from one source; so the R. V. "parting asunder."

<sup>2</sup> *ἐκάθισε*, significant both in number and tense: the change from the plural implies the above, and the aorist rather than the imperfect indicates that it did not remain for any length of time.

then suddenly vanished, symbolising perhaps its transitory nature as a gift of tongues.

The Descent was preceded by "a rushing mighty wind" which "filled all the house where they were sitting." It bespeaks the irresistible force of the Spirit, and the fact that it filled the whole chamber would seem to be emblematical of the universality of its influence. Apart, then, from its immediate effect upon the assemblage there gathered together, it was the first-fruits of that indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the whole mystical Body of Christ's Church in all places and through all time. It is this which marks off the Dispensation of the Spirit then inaugurated from those which had preceded it. God had deigned to be present with special people, and at special times; He had even caused an embodiment of His presence to be manifested in a special place, resting like a cloud of glory above the mercy-seat.

Again, God had been present in the Person of His Incarnate Son among the inhabitants of Palestine, but in both cases the Divine Presence had been circumscribed and local only; but from that first Whitsuntide and onwards God has enabled men, through the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, to realise His Presence everywhere, and what before seemed to men to be local only has become universal.

Yet once more, to the Jews in the wilderness and to the people in Palestine, the Presence of God was wholly external, outside of themselves, but now  
1 Cor. iii. 16; vi. 19. it is within; "Know ye not," says S. Paul, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" He meant to remind us of the inspiring thought that as the indwelling Spirit is felt to be ever prompting us to do what is right, so it should act as a deterrent from doing what is wrong, to realise that every time we yield to temptation, we sin not only against a God above and about us, but also against a God within us.

## VIII.

### The Nature of the Gift of Tongues.

THE ACTS II. 5-11.

5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. 7. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans? 8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? 9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, 10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, 11. Cretes, and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

BEFORE entering upon the difficulties which have gathered round the interpretation of the miraculous Gift of Tongues, as to its nature and duration and particular purpose, there are a few points in the above passage that call for explanation. The multitude on hearing the strange outburst of praise were filled with amazement, and asked a question about the nationality of the speakers: "Are not all these which speak Galilæans?"<sup>1</sup> At first sight it seems

<sup>1</sup> The question arose out of the well-known ignorance and want of education which characterised the people of Galilee. It was quite inexplicable that a Galilæan should speak foreign languages.

to contradict the suggestion that all the hundred and twenty disciples had received the gift. Though Judas was the only one of the Twelve who had not come out of Galilee, it is next to impossible that there were none from Judæa in the wider circle of discipleship. It lends, therefore, some support to those who would limit the reception of the gift to the Apostles. Probably, however, these were prominent, and took the leading part in speaking with tongues, and, being better known than the rest, they might well occupy the thoughts of the questioners to the exclusion of the rest.

“How hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born?” If nothing else had been said, we should have concluded that only one language or dialect was spoken, but that the Jews of different nationalities heard it in their own particular tongue. The difficulty is increased by transferring the miracle from believers to unbelievers, while it destroys the symbolism of the special gift, which is certainly indicative of speaking, not of hearing. Possibly the explanation is, that some spoke one language, some another, not that all the languages were spoken by all; and that every one of the multitude heard his own tongue from one or other of the disciples. Indeed, it has been

Cyprian,  
Gregory  
Nazianzen,  
Bede,  
Erasmus.

thought that the gift of a particular language to any one was intended as a Divine intimation of the future sphere of his missionary labours; but this would prove an untenable theory, if the common interpretation of the purpose of the Pentecostal Gift be abandoned, as many modern divines insist that it must be. The question which causes so much perplexity is whether the power of speaking in unknown languages was a permanent endowment in those who received it, to facilitate the spread of the Gospel among foreign nations; or whether, under a transient inspiration, it was intended to be exercised only in a great outburst of praise and thanksgiving on this eventful occasion in the presence of the assembled multitudes.

Severus.  
S. Jerome.

Meyer,  
Alford,  
Farrar.

There is much to commend the former view. When we recognise the overwhelming difficulty confronting the first emissaries of the Faith, it is easy to believe that God would have given them supernatural assistance in mastering the languages of the people whom they were sent out to convert. The principle is conceded in the other credentials which they received in the power to heal the sick, to cast out evil spirits, to tread on serpents, or even to drink deadly poison without being injured by it. In the Authorised Version of S. Mark's Gospel xvi. 17, 18.

we read, "they shall speak with new tongues," and, taken by itself, it seems at first sight to necessitate our placing this inspired gift in the same category. Indeed, if those "ignorant and unlettered men," whom God selected for the dissemination of the Gospel, were to receive Divine aid for the speedy accomplishment of their work, it is hard to conceive of a more practical or effective form in which it could be given. But there are several obstacles in the way of accepting such a view. In the first place, though such supernatural aid would have been, humanly speaking, of invaluable service, it is by no means certain that it was indispensable; and it has been very often pointed out that God does not interfere with the course of nature if His purpose can be attained without doing so. Now had it been necessary for the furtherance of the Gospel that the first preachers should have a knowledge of foreign languages, they might have learned them as modern missionaries do, only far more easily under the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, which was sent to "guide them into all truth." There were, however, interpreters then, as now; indeed it is often mentioned, though not exactly in this sense, that S. Peter found an interpreter in S. Mark, and perhaps also S. Paul

Tert. adv.

Marc. iv. 5.

S. Jerome,

de viris illus.  
viii.

Euseb. Eccl.

Hist. iii. 39;

v. 8.

in S. Luke.<sup>1</sup> It is moreover a well-ascertained fact that at this time, in the Providence of God, the civilised world was united in one empire, and one language, Greek, was very widely spoken throughout the same. Nothing could be more significant than that the very first sermon in the Christian Church should have been delivered in this language, and not only so, but that it was apparently understood by the inhabitants of fifteen different countries.

Merivale,  
Hist. of  
Rome, xxix.

Again, we should have expected such a phenomenon, had it been witnessed, to have often been mentioned in the writings of the Early Fathers. There is repeated notice of the exercise of other miraculous powers, though in their frequency and importance they could have borne no comparison with this, if it had existed. There is an ambiguous description in S. Irenæus, where he speaks of the result of the Pentecostal Gift being "the union of all nations, in praising God the Holy Spirit, bringing distant tribes into unity, and offering the first-fruits of all nations to God"; but this is equally available in support of those who think the Gift was only bestowed for purposes of praise at the First Pentecost.

S. Cyprian,  
de Idol.  
Van. 7.  
Iren. adv.  
Hær. iii.  
32. 4.  
Euseb. Eccl.  
Hist. iii. 39;  
v. 7.

Adv. Hær.  
iii. 17.

<sup>1</sup> Note the surprise of the people when S. Paul did not speak Greek to them, Acts xxi. 40, xxii. 2. Cf. Merivale's *History of the Romans*, ch. xxix.

cost, and as such it has been claimed. The unquestioned testimony to this interpretation dates almost entirely from the close of the fourth century. Perhaps the most serious obstacle is raised by the fact that wherever the expression, "to speak with tongues," is used in subsequent parts of Holy Scripture, it came to be understood in this sense. Thus, when S. Peter preached to the people on the

Conversion of Cornelius, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word; and they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, . . . for they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God." There is no indication in this case that the Gift was bestowed to enable the speakers to preach in foreign languages; indeed, the circumstances almost necessarily preclude the idea. The passage, however, upon which the chief stress has been laid is S. Paul's exposition of spiritual gifts in his letter

to the Corinthians, in which it should be noticed that the unauthorised introduction of the term "unknown," before "tongues," in the English Version has created much misunderstanding. The Apostle shows the superiority of prophecy or inspired preaching over "speaking with tongues." The latter was "not intelligible without an interpreter; it was expressed not in the ordinary voice, but

S. Chryso-  
stom.

Acts x. 44-6.

1 Cor. xiv.

probably with some musical intonation, for it is likened to sounding brass, the blare of a trumpet, or a clanging cymbal; it was a means of communication with God, not man, for the benefit of the speaker's own soul rather than for the good of his fellows; it was, in short, the result of a sudden influx of supernatural inspiration, the sign of a quickened spiritual power, which found its exercise in a kind of ecstatic devotion and in outbursts of praise. In S. Paul's view, five clear words, spoken from the mind of one man to the mind of another, were better than ten thousand of these more startling and wonderful phenomena."<sup>1</sup>

There is yet another incident which may not be passed by in weighing the evidence for the right interpretation of the Gift. S. Paul, at a very critical juncture, seems to have failed to understand the language of the Lycaonians, to whom he was sent; and it is all the more significant, because he was one who laid claim to a superior enjoyment of the faculty of "speaking with tongues." The difficulty has been recognised, and unworthy attempts have been made to explain it away. For instance, it is said that the Apostle quite understood what the people intended, but pretended not to do so, and

Acts xiv.

11, 14.

1 Cor.

xiv. 18.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Divine Liturgy*, p. 260.

acquiesced in their preparations to do sacrifice to him, "that he might make his protest afterwards with a greater dramatic effect." Such a suggestion is quite inconsistent with the indignant question of the Apostles, "Sirs, why do ye these things?"

Neither can his ignorance of the language be accounted for by the supposition that the Gift was not a general one, but intended only for occasional use, "when the Spirit gave them utterance"—on the analogy of the gift of healing, which the Apostles were not able to exercise arbitrarily whenever they wished, as S. Paul's inability to cure Trophimus at Miletum clearly shows. It is quite conceivable, however, that a special purpose might be attained by leaving the sick to bear his infirmities unrelieved, but it is extremely difficult to discover any reasonable motive for restricting the operation of miraculous gifts to be used in the conversion or enlightenment of the heathen. The analogy, therefore, is a false one. If we may sum up briefly the testimony, without appearing to be over-confident, we should say that the common acceptation of the nature of the Gift has the unbroken tradition of the last fifteen centuries to support it, while that which dissociates it altogether from preaching in unknown languages seems to accord more nearly with the earlier history

and the usage of the expression in these places of Holy Scripture.

It need not, however, cause any distress if a definite conclusion is beyond our reach. The Gift was a miraculous one, and it is only to be expected that anything supernatural may baffle our comprehension. Though, therefore, the miraculous aspect of the outpouring of the Spirit should remain wrapt in mystery, its interest, after all, is only an historic one for us, at least at the present time; that for which we have to thank God in connection with the great Pentecostal Gift is known and read of all men; it is the Mission of the Comforter, from Whom we received the fruits of "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, Gal. v. 22. gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," by the cultivation of which all may be sanctified and made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of Col. i. 12. the saints in light."

## IX.

### The First Sermon.

THE ACTS II. 12-21.

12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? 13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. 14. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: 15. for these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day. 16. 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 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.

THE effect of the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit on the assembled disciples was such that the people were filled with amazement. Some said that it was quite inexplicable; they had never seen anything like it before; others, however, pretended that it might be accounted for, but only in one way: they had partaken too freely of "the sweet

wine”<sup>1</sup> which had been supplied for the Feast. S. Peter and the eleven, for the number had been filled up by the election of S. Matthias, at once stood up and protested against such an imputation upon the character of the disciples. Drinking, he said, belonged to the night; it was a thing of darkness; “they that be drunken are drunken in the night.”<sup>1</sup> Thess. v. 7.

To suppose that he and his friends could commit such excess, and as early as nine o’clock in the morning, was quite preposterous; they must be utterly bad to do anything of the kind, and on the morning of Pentecost too, when every respectable Jew had been spending the night in devout preparation, and, in accordance with their invariable practice, fasting from meat and drink.

Joseph. Vita,  
54.  
Talm.  
Berachoth,  
fol. 28. 2.

Then, when he had thus indignantly repudiated the charge, he began to preach unto the people. What he said must ever be of undying interest, for it was the first sermon preached in the Christian Church. He took for his text an important prediction of Joel, the first prophet to the Jewish Kingdom, uttered eight centuries before; and in his mode of dealing with it he shed a flood of light

<sup>1</sup> “The new wine” (A. V.) was not yet made, for the first vintage was in August; Pentecost fell in June. It was probably the wine from some specially luscious grape, perhaps that of Sorek: Gen. xlix. 11, “The choice vine.” Heb. Sorek.

upon the interpretation of ancient prophecy. The Jewish seer had foretold a great public calamity, under which the country would be visited by a long-continued dearth and a plague of locusts; and he accompanied the prediction with the promise, that if the people turned to the Lord the plague would cease, and the land, fertilised by refreshing rains, again yield its accustomed fruits. Such was the primary application of his words; but there was much in the imagery which clothed the prophecy to show that the fulfilment would not be exhausted in the more immediate future, but have its perfect completion in Messianic times.<sup>1</sup>

Joel ii. 23.

S. Matt.  
xxvii. 45.

History does not state when the first event happened, but S. Peter has asserted that its more important fulfilment was realised in that "out-pouring" of the Spirit at Pentecost, of which the refreshing showers upon the thirsty land were so apt a type. The predicted gloom had spread over the land, when the sun was turned into darkness in broad daylight at the time of the Crucifixion, but all the clouds of sorrow and sadness which it bespoke had been dispersed by the abundant effusion of the Pentecostal gifts, under the inspiring influence of

<sup>1</sup> In the original it is "afterward," but S. Peter says "in the last days"; both, however, are recognised formulas for "the Messianic age." Cf. Rabbi D. Kimchi, *in loco*.

which multitudes<sup>1</sup> were calling upon the name of the Lord.

In olden times, he said, the Spirit of God had only fallen upon individuals here and there; henceforward there would be no distinction in the recipients of the Divine favour. Formerly God had revealed His will to the prophets only in certain appointed ways; His most direct communication was by an audible voice, and "face to face," by a visible manifestation of Himself—not, it is true, in the unveiled Glory of His Being, which no man could see and live, but yet so as to be "cognisable to mortal eye." "With him," said God, "will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches."<sup>2</sup> Such was the highest prerogative Numb. xii. 8. bestowed on the prophet; but ordinarily the Divine revelation was made in visions or by dreams. It is not always easy to distinguish these from each other, though a vision is more indicative of a trance or state of ecstasy, under which the common faculties of the mind are supernaturally suspended, while in a dream the channel of communication itself is natural, the interpretation alone extraordinary. We

<sup>1</sup> "All flesh," *i.e.* Gentile as well as Jew.

<sup>2</sup> Maimonides says this mode of revelation was confined to Moses, while other prophets only saw visions or had prophetic dreams.—*Yad. Hachazzah*, vii.

have many visions recorded in the Old Testament ; they were seen by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others, but perhaps the most striking was that which Balaam saw, "falling into a trance but having his eyes open." "I see him but not now ; I behold him but not nigh ; there shall come forth a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (R. V.).

Isa. i. 1.

Ezek. viii. 4.

Dan. ii. 19.

Numb. xxiv.

16, 17.

Gen. xxxvii.

1 Kings iii. 5.

Dan. i. 17.

Again, the dreams of Joseph and Solomon and Daniel are familiar history.

Even so, Joel predicted that, in the latter days, these extraordinary means of ascertaining the purposes of the Almighty should receive such a wide development that, without distinction of age or sex or rank, "all flesh" should be brought under the influence of the Divine Spirit. The imagery of the methods of communication between God and man is borrowed from the Old Dispensation, but they will be vastly multiplied under the New, for "there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit, . . . and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God Which worketh all in all."

1 Cor.

xii. 4, 6.

But even here, in the first advent of the Messiah, and all that followed, there is much of the prophet's prediction still in reserve, waiting for our Lord's second coming, when all shall be brought to pass.

It may have seemed to the seer as though the two events were to follow in quick succession, just as when one looks at a great landscape in some mountainous country—all is seen in perspective, and two lofty peaks, separated in reality by a vast intervening space, may almost appear in the same plane, at times but as a single object. So behind this first Messianic fulfilment there rose before the prophet's eyes all the terrible circumstances of "the great and notable day," of that last epoch of judicial visitation, which should gather into itself the various plagues and destructions that had gone before. He saw, by anticipation, "wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath," when, as never before, "the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light," when amidst "blood and fire and vapour of smoke," the final judgment should be accomplished. S. Matt. xxiv. 29.

From the terrors of that day those only will be saved who call now upon the Name of the Lord. It carries one's thoughts on to the Revelation, in which another seer describes the opening of the last seal, and predicts that many will then try other expedients, and not appeal for deliverance to this all-potent Name. "The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, Rev. vi. 15-17.

and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Nothing then will avail but the conviction that we have recognised beforehand all that is implied in the invocation of the Sacred Name, and have worshipped the Lord in His eternity, His omniscience, and His Almighty power.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the first part of the first sermon preached by an Apostle at the inauguration festival of the Church of Christ. It carried with it all the credentials that were needed to win the acceptance of those who heard it, and showed to men, by a striking illustration, what the transforming power and penetrating influence of the Holy Spirit was; for it exhibits the preacher in an altogether changed and new character; every trace of timidity has disappeared, and he who trembled before the inquiry

<sup>1</sup> According to the Hebrew conception, the name was for more than the designation of a person; it signified his being and essence: *e.g.* the Name of Jehovah is synonymous with Jehovah Himself.

of a little girl<sup>1</sup> in the presence of his enemies, is emboldened by the courage which he had received to proclaim his Lord even in the face of His murderers.<sup>2</sup> All his perverted carnal conceptions, too, of the nature of Christ's kingdom, have vanished, and he speaks as one who had completely grasped the spirit of Messianic prophecy, and understood infinitely more than he did before of the wide embrace of the Catholic Faith. There is one thing, and only one, which can explain the change: he had been endued, in the outpouring of the Pentecostal gifts, with power from on high, to do the work of an evangelist and preach the Word with boldness, and bring the enemies of the Cross into subjection to the law of Christ.

S. Matt.  
xxvi. 69.

S. Matt.  
xvi. 23.

<sup>1</sup> παιδίσκη is a diminutive of ἡ παῖς.—Xenoph. *An.* iv. 3-11.

<sup>2</sup> What could be bolder than the declaration about "Jesus, *The Nazarene*," a few weeks after his hearers had held that title up to scorn and derision? v. 22; or on their wickedness in putting Him to death? v. 23.

## X.

# Its Bearing on Christ's State after Death.

THE ACTS II. 22-41.

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 yourselves also know: 23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: 24. whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it. 25. 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

speaking unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. 30. 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 would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; 31. he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. 32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. 33. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. 34. 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. 37. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do? 38. 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 the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39. For the promise is unto you, and to your

children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call. 40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. 41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

THE Apostle proceeds to show that the same Jesus, Who had sent the Spirit, was none other than the despised Nazarene, whom they, in spite of miracles and wonders and signs,<sup>1</sup> had nailed to the Cross and slain. He had, however, triumphed over the work of their hands, and had risen from the dead, proving thereby not only His power over death, but also His claim to have fulfilled Messianic prophecy.

Ps. xvi. 9, 10.

S. Peter appeals to the language of David, whom they all recognised as a great prophet, endowed with supernatural gifts, which enabled him to speak for God and foretell the future, whose sepulchre their ancestors had built with such splendour, and successive generations had so jealously preserved, that after the lapse of more

<sup>2</sup> Kings ii. 10.  
Josephus  
Antiq.  
xiii. viii.  
xvi. vii. 1.

<sup>1</sup> *δύναμις*, a miracle, is something out of the natural course done by the exercise of Divine power. *τέρας* is a prodigy, *e.g.* the darkness over the land at noon. *σημεῖον*, sign, is something natural used to attest the claim or character of him who uses it.

than a thousand years it was still with them.<sup>1</sup> It was his prediction of the Messiah which he was ready to prove to them had received its fulfilment in that Jesus whom they had crucified. On its primary application he did not dwell, save incidentally; but he would have them fix their thoughts upon its bearing upon the Messiah.

Now this part of his sermon deals with four distinct events which find their place in the Church's Creed, viz.—the Burial of Christ's Body; the Descent of His Soul into Hades; His Resurrection; and His Ascension into Heaven.

Ps. xvi. 9, 10.

David had said that his heart rejoiced because God would not suffer His "Beloved<sup>2</sup> One to see corruption"; and this is here interpreted by S. Peter, speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, of Christ's Body: "neither did His Flesh see corruption." The Apostle followed the translation of the LXX.;<sup>3</sup> but the primary and more

<sup>1</sup> The use which S. Peter makes of this fact in connection with the prophecy in Ps. xvi. shows that he fully believed in the future resurrection of the body.

<sup>2</sup> There are two readings in Hebrew mss., one singular, the other plural. The latter has been adopted by most modern critics, especially such as wish to escape from the Messianic reference; but the weight of authority is against them, viz., the oldest mss., all the Versions, the Talmud, and many Jewish writings. The word may mean 'pious,' but 'favoured' or 'beloved' is equally admissible, and perhaps more suitable.

<sup>3</sup> *διαφθοράν*, but in vii. 16 they translate the word *βόθρος*.

common meaning of the word rendered "corruption" is the pit or grave.<sup>1</sup>

If we accept the ordinary meaning, it seems to contradict the historic fact of our Lord's Burial; but not, according to Hebrew phraseology, for "to see death," or "to see the grave," is not synonymous with dying or being buried, but means to abide in death or the grave, just as "to see life" is not merely to live, but to abide in life. If, however, we follow the LXX., all that is asserted is, that if that process of disintegration, which usually begins as soon as the spirit has fled, did in the case of our Lord's Body take the natural course, it was arrested by the resurrection; His Flesh did not see (*i.e.* abide in) corruption.

Whichever interpretation is taken, it witnesses to the separation of Christ's Body and Soul; the former was laid in its kindred dust; while the latter passed into the place of departed spirits, for David said that it should "not be left in hell."

How far he grasped the nature of the Intermediate State it is hard to say. He employed a

<sup>1</sup> The etymology of the word suggests this, *השקט*, to sink down. In two places the sense of destruction has been sometimes given to it, viz., Job xxxiii. 24, Ps. lv. 23, but the ordinary meaning is equally true.

x. 21, 22.

word to express it, Sheol,<sup>1</sup> which in the eyes of those who preceded him suggested the very gloomiest thoughts; Job, *e.g.*, described it as "the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness."

When we read David's words we feel that a gleam of sunshine is penetrating the gloom: at least, it would not be a place of permanent abode.

The Greek translation, Hades, has been misunderstood, mainly through the English "hell" by which it is rendered. Calvin and others maintained that our Lord descended into that part of Hades which is called Gehenna, the place of torment, in order that, as He had taken man's nature, He might learn the extremity of his punishment and experience the pangs of the lost; but there is no Scriptural authority for this; and etymologically "hell" does not imply anything more than the hidden unseen place of departed spirits.<sup>2</sup> The Psalmist

Calvin's  
Institutes,  
i. 15. 4;  
12, 18;  
ii. 5, 6; 10. 5.  
Strype's  
Annals,  
i. ch. xxxi.  
Oxenham,  
Cath. Doctr.  
of the  
Atonement,  
240.

<sup>1</sup> The word occurs nearly seventy times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the A.V. it is translated hell, or grave, each about thirty times, pit three times. The R.V. has varied its rendering, but thirty times leaves it untranslated as a proper name.

<sup>2</sup> Hellen is an Anglo-Saxon word implying to cover or roof in. On this and all the kindred terms the reader may consult *The Intermediate State*, by the Author, chap. iii. iv.

predicted that the soul of Christ would enter this, though it was "not possible that He should be holden of it," that He should be abandoned to it. It bears distinct witness to what the Creed teaches where it says "He descended into hell."

The third Article which the prophecy illustrates is: "He rose again from the dead." Now, it is quite impossible to dwell upon what David here says without passing beyond the immediate object for which S. Peter quoted his words.

It opens up a question of intense interest, viz., how far a knowledge of the future life was revealed to the ancient Church? No little disappointment has been felt that a doctrine which is the very foundation of our Christian hope, which has been the never-failing theme of Christian preachers from S. Peter down to the present day, should have found so slight recognition in the writings of the Old Testament. We have forgotten that God, Who does everything "according to the counsel of His will," has given to men a gradual and progressive revelation.

He chose to govern the Jews by a dispensation of sight, treating them in the beginning as children, who cannot realise a system of rewards and punishment unless they have before their eyes visible

proof of its certainty. They could not look far forward, but expected to reap in this life the due reward of their deeds, to see the wicked overtaken by calamity, and nations and individuals sooner or later exalted by righteousness. The great truth that perfect justice could only be executed and all inequalities redressed in another life, when the Judge of all the earth must do right, only dawned upon their minds by slow degrees; and the way in which the illumination was given is somewhat perplexing. It does not seem, for instance, to have been after the same manner as that by which the revelation of the person or character of the Messiah was unfolded. In this God disclosed His purpose by objective teaching directly by word of mouth; but we listen in vain for His voice speaking to men, mouth to mouth, or revealing His purpose by Urim and Thummim, or vision or dream, on the doctrine of the future life.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, an instinctive belief, at least in the most thoughtful minds, that this life is not all, and this belief God seems to have strengthened in certain favoured individuals, but only subjectively; had it been taught them expressly, as *e.g.* the belief in the coming Messiah,

<sup>1</sup> This does not refer to the later revelations, subsequently noticed.

they could never after have doubted its truth. It was so with Job, who had long been perplexed with the mystery of life; at one time he expresses the current belief of his day: "As the cloud is consumed Job vii. 9. and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more"; at another, perhaps as the outcome of Divine consolation, vouchsafed to encourage him in some deep temporal affliction, he bursts out with the contradictory conviction: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." The first direct inspiration xix. 25-6. was given to David; it is that to which S. Peter appeals in this sermon, and we have his authority for regarding it as a conscious prophecy, for he reminded his hearers that he was "a prophet," and that he saw by anticipation Christ's resurrection. The doctrine of the resurrection was no longer an occasional conviction in some individual's own breast, but a truth Divinely revealed and read by the eyes of men. After this no more real doubts are expressed, but it finds a definite place in the pages of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, each unfolding Is. xxvi. 19. Ezek. xxxvii. 1-10. Dan. xii. 2. it more clearly than that which went before, till at last Christ Himself rose from the grave as "the

first-fruits of them that slept," and so "brought life and immortality to light."

The Apostle assures his hearers that there was no doubt of this; he and his brother Apostles were prepared to attest it; for, though they had not actually seen Him burst the bands of death with their own eyes, He had appeared to them again and again in His Risen Form.

But this was not all; there was yet one further step in the exaltation of the crucified Nazarene, for it was of Him that David<sup>1</sup> spake when he said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand." In these words the supreme God, the Jehovah of the Jews, calls to David's Lord, the Malha Meschika, the Anointed King, to take His place on the throne beside Him, and then to reign in heaven till His Mediatorial Kingdom should cease. In fulfilment of that prophecy He, Whom they had put to an ignominious death, was now ascended to the right hand of God.

<sup>1</sup> Many modern critics have disputed the Davidic authorship. Canon Gore, in *Lux Mundi*, p. 359, implies that Christ assumed this without its being necessarily true. Making every reasonable concession to the limitations imposed by the doctrine of the *Kenosis*, it is extremely difficult to believe that He could have based His argument and been satisfied to gain a victory over His opponents upon something which was distinctly untrue; especially when we reflect that He was speaking not only for that generation but for all time. It is a subject upon which we shall do well to be silent, leaving it, if need be, as an unintelligible mystery.

This was the climax ; and S. Luke tells us it sent the arrow of conviction into the very heart of his hearers. It seems difficult to realise at first reading what there was in the sermon to produce such an effect, but it may be because the words have become so familiar to us. There was much, no doubt, as always, in the preacher's manner ; his voice, his boldness, his eager, impassioned utterance, all may have helped ; but over and above his own personal force, the Spirit of God was making His convicting and converting power to be felt. But whatever the moving cause, the people were deeply stirred, and eagerly asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" There is no hesitation in the answer : Repent and be baptized ; realise your sins, and then wash them away in God's appointed way, by the cleansing waters of Baptism. They heard and obeyed, and no less than three thousand were added to the Church.

The whole sermon is a powerful plea for dogmatic teaching. It is doctrinal from beginning to end. No less than six articles of the Creed are enforced in it ; and not only is this great fact of the Incarnation set forth, but the place of Sacraments, as nothing less than necessary to salvation, is forcibly recognised. It is often said in this age of liberty

and freedom of opinion that it is of little consequence what a man believes provided his life be good. If we value an Apostolic example, we shall cling to the Creed, for certainly S. Peter, fresh from the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit to teach and enlighten his judgment, regarded it as the necessary foundation of a Christian life; and if we magnify the principle of sacramental grace, we shall do it not because man has invented it, but because the Holy Ghost enforced it as an imperative prerequisite "for the remission of sins."

## XI.

### Four Notes of the Church.

THE ACTS II. 42-47.

42. 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 signs were done by the apostles. 44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45. and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need. 46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47. praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

THERE is hardly anything more delightful than when one has been soiled and jaded with the dust of Theological controversy and interminable dispute, to take up the Bible and go back to the time when all were of one heart and one mind. An outlined portrait of the Church in its first bloom and freshness is disclosed to us in these few verses.

It is sometimes objected, as a source of disappointment, that we know so little about the early belief and practice of Christians. It is true we have only a sketch; but the student of ecclesiastical life and

organisation is able to fill it up with trustworthy accuracy. The physiologist, with no more to guide him than a bone or two, can build up the whole structure of an extinct animal, and describe its manner of life in the far-off ages of antiquity. We have more materials to judge from, but we do not always work out the results with the same engrossing care and patient application.

S. Luke exhibits four features, or, to use a more technical expression, four "notes" of the Primitive Church, which are full of significance, and lose much of their reputed vagueness when reverently developed. The community had received a tremendous addition to its numbers, the hundred and twenty names of the first chapter had swelled to several thousands in the second. But there was no division among them : they bound themselves by definite rules, and continued to observe them with unswerving fidelity. The first "note" of Church life was the recognition of authority; those that were baptized knew that the Apostles had been taught by Christ, and had received from Him the credentials of their office to teach others. They were carried about with them wherever they went, and the people could see them without any attested parchment or "letters of orders"; for they could

not possibly do what they did without the Divine commission : "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Those first converts saw S. Peter stand up with the whole company of the Apostles round him, and they heard him speak with such irresistible power that no less than three thousand souls were pricked to the heart, and asked at once to be enrolled as members of the Church; and when they were enrolled they continued steadfastly in "the Apostles' doctrine."

We can have little doubt that during the Forty Days, and before they went forth to their several spheres, they agreed together upon what doctrines they intended to teach, whether as necessary initial tests to qualify for baptism, or as helpful for the after-acceptance of maturer Christians. What they thus agreed upon was for a long time supposed to be "the Apostles' Creed"; and the anxiety to enhance its authority in the Church was so great that it came to be believed that the Apostles had met together, and each of the twelve contributed one clause or article; S. Peter, the first, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth"; and S. Matthias, the last of the Apostles, the final clause, "The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Attractive, however, as such

Ruffinus,  
Expos.  
Symb. Apost.  
S. Augustine,  
Serm. de  
Temp.

an account of its origin may have been, its impossibility is shown by the fact that the clause on Christ's "descent into hell" was traditionally put in the mouth of S. Thomas, whereas it is generally admitted that it was only inserted several centuries later, after that heresy had sprung up which denied to our Lord a human soul. It was intended to teach His perfect manhood, that as Christ had a human body, which was laid in the grave, like other bodies, so He possessed also a human soul, which went, like other souls, to Hades, the waiting-place of departed spirits between death and judgment.

What the exact formulary was we may not know; but that one did exist we cannot doubt, for besides the presumption that some agreement would be found absolutely necessary before the Faith could be offered for the acceptance of men, there are numerous references to it in the New Testament: "the form of doctrine which was delivered": that sacred deposit which was "committed to" Timothy's "trust": "the principles of the doctrine of Christ": "the faith once delivered to the saints." As we read on in history it assumes more definite designations: "the Canon of truth": "the watchword of the Faith": "the rule of

Socr. Hist.  
Eccl. ii. 37,  
41.

Theodor.  
Hist. Eccl.  
ii. 21.

Rom. vi. 17.

1 Tim. vi. 20.  
Heb. vi. 1.  
S. Jude, 3.

Faith":<sup>1</sup> "the Apostolic tradition"; and we are told by Irenæus that "it had been dispersed over the whole world."

It became in later days the password which was given to the Christians, and it was used as a test among strangers "to challenge and detect the infidel."

That it is nowhere found in so many words creates no difficulty, for that same principle of reserve which kept the early Christians from committing their sacred liturgies to writing, led them to treat their Confession of Faith in the same way. The mysteries of their belief, no less than their forms of worship, were hidden from the profane, lest they should be turned to mockery, or possibly used as testimony against them. Whatever the Apostle's teaching was, these first Christians "put it in their inward parts" and wrote it in their hearts. Such was the first "note" of the Church. The second was "the fellowship." It was primarily that community of profession, aim, and manner of living which prompted Christians, otherwise unrelated, to draw from family life their common designations of "brothers" and "sisters"; it was for the maintenance of this closest union that they

<sup>1</sup> ὁ κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας, or Regula fidei, tessera fidei.

never celebrated "the Mysteries" without exchanging with each other "the kiss of peace"; and the bonds of sacred sympathy were so tightly drawn that it called forth the splendid admiration of the heathen: "See how these Christians love one another!"

In the beginning of Christianity, in Jerusalem at least, they went further, and tried the experiment of a community of goods. It never spread beyond the holy city, and however grand and self-sacrificing the spirit that prompted its inception, it completely broke down under the stress of circumstances. It is well that we should remember that it was only a local phase of Christian life; and that it was abandoned even in the time of those who had created it. Men are sometimes so captivated by the simplicity and goodness of the primitive believers that they try to live after their manner, as though the same standard were still attainable. Their picture has been drawn in a well-known character of modern fiction, Joshua Davidson, whose repeated efforts to shape all his actions in exact accordance with an Apostolic model culminated, after many sad and disappointing failures, in that terrible communism in which Paris was wrecked, and he lost his life.

At the time, however, of which S. Luke wrote all the Christians at Jerusalem did live in a common "fellowship," not only of faith and worship, but also of worldly goods and possessions.

The third "note" was the "breaking of bread." It has often been interpreted, especially when read in connection with another statement that they continued daily "in the Temple and breaking bread from house to house";<sup>1</sup> as referring only to a social meal; but to break bread with a person was not in Jewish eyes, as it was with us, to enjoy hospitality. Salt, not bread, was the most essential element of Jewish diet; to make a "covenant of salt" with a man, or "to be salted with his salt," symbolised the ideal friendship and social intercourse.

The bread, which the Apostle says they continued to break day by day, was that of the most sacred Feast. It is placed beyond question by the earliest evidence, for the Syriac Version,<sup>2</sup> dating from the beginning of the second century, in both places translates it, "breaking the Eucharist."

The fourth and last "note" was the steadfast

<sup>1</sup> V. 46. *κατ' οἶκον*, "at home," probably in "the Upper Chamber," not *κατ' οἴκους*, distributively, "from house to house."

<sup>2</sup> Eucharist is simply written in Syriac letters. It was in like manner sometimes treated as a Latin name, in Tertullian, Cyprian, and other writers.

continuance "in prayers," or, as it is more significantly in the original, "the prayers." The early Christians followed the Jews in adopting not only regular hours but also set forms of prayer and praise. Their Eucharistic forms, in principle corresponding to the Temple-worship, are almost undoubtedly to be traced in the early Liturgies. Nothing else but the theory that at least the nucleus and framework of these was constructed by the Apostles can explain the phenomena they present, of the closest similarity in outline and essential elements combined with a manifold variety of details.

Their non-Eucharistic Prayers, suggested by the worship of the Synagogue, have not been preserved, at least with the single exception of the Lord's Prayer. This, it is thought, for the preservation of conformity between the devotions of the Jewish and Christian worshipper, our Blessed Lord took, in part at least, from the Shemoneh Egseh, or Eighteen Prayers, in daily use in every synagogue.

Such, then, are the principles of belief and practice after which the primitive Christians shaped their lives. The model has been copied with many vicissitudes of success and failure in the ages that have passed. In some respects the present generation falls immeasurably short of the primal standard.

Tertullian,  
de Orat. c. 25.  
S. Hieron.  
Comm. in  
Dan. vi. 10.  
Clem. Alex.  
vii. 7, § 40.

The authority of the Church is disregarded in an age of independence both of action and thought, and unless a doctrine or article of belief commends itself to the individual's judgment, he too often puts it aside as not binding on his conscience; at times he even openly criticises it as a relic of the past or an outworn superstition. He does not continue in "the Apostles' doctrine."

"The fellowship," again, which was such a characteristic trait of the pioneers of Christianity—what an empty thing it has become through the invasion of party spirit and factious controversy! We have at times had to confess to our shame that the praise of the early Church has been wellnigh forgotten, and that there is some truth in the parody of it, "See how these Christians hate one another!" At least, let us determine, however strong our convictions, however widely divergent our doctrinal views, that we will obey at least one Apostolic command, and "let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away." Ephes. iv. 31.

Then there remain the other two: attendance at the services of the Church, and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist:—the latter, it is true, of far deeper obligation, even as its influence on the spiritual life is infinitely greater than that of the former; but in

the light of Jewish and Christian observance alike, it may be said here, and with no little emphasis, this “ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

S. Matt.  
xxiii. 23.

We are witnessing on all sides a desire to catch at least the spirit of the early Christians, and recognise the paramount importance of frequent Communion. It is true that at the time of the Reformation, after those evil days in which the love of many had grown so cold, the rule was accepted that “every communicant should receive three times a year.” It was a strange falling away from the fervour of those early years when any member of the Church who missed the great Eucharistic Service for three Sundays together was publicly excommunicated.

Do not let us forget that, though three Communion are all that the Church demands, it is only of those who ask for the *minimum* of obligation, and are content with the fewest blessings. In the Service of the Sanctuary there ought to be no weights and measures; and if only we can silence the question, “How much need I do?” and substitute instead “How much may I do?” the standard of primitive devotion will soon be reached.

## XII.

### The First Miracle.

#### THE ACTS III. 1-10.

1. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*. 2. 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 Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; 3. who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. 4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. 5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. 6. 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 wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

S. MARK's Gospel closed with our Blessed Lord's promise to the Apostles of the gift of supernatural powers. S. Luke has placed on record its first fulfilment in this miracle of healing. Christ knew the difficulties which would beset the progress of the Gospel, when His bodily Presence was withdrawn, and that voice which spake as man never had spoken

before would be hushed in silence. He heard the mocking of His old opponents, emboldened by His disappearance, boasting of the triumph of Good Friday, which all Jewry had witnessed, and denying the Resurrection, which only His followers claimed to have seen. He heard the taunting accusation that He had been proved to be a "deceiver" and "impostor"; and He furnished His Apostles with their answer; He gave them credentials which should convince the gainsayer of the Divinity of their commission. Men sometimes forget the purpose of the supernatural gifts of the Early Church, and wonder why they are no longer exercised; and the wonder is increased because no man can say, for certain at least, at what precise epoch they ceased. If it be granted that they were permitted for the sole object of winning for the Faith an acceptance, which a mere handful of ignorant and unlearned men could never have ensured from a world in bitter hostility to its fundamental principles, it was only natural that they should be withdrawn the very moment Christianity was able to stand alone. History shows that by the middle of the second century the Religion of Christ had rooted itself in all the great centres of civilisation, and, in spite of persecution, held its ground. It is true that there are isolated

notices, after this, of miracles being wrought, but it is probable that they were only remarkable occurrences, not unnaturally exaggerated in the minds of men, who were reluctant to realise that the Church had lost an unique prerogative.

S. Cypr. de  
Idol. Van. 7.  
ad Deme-  
trian, 15.  
Iren. adv.  
Hær. ii. 32. 4.  
Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. iii. 39,  
v. 7.

S. Peter and S. John were going up together to the Temple to pray. They had been close companions during our Lord's earthly ministry; and, when we recall the intense love and constant devotion of S. John for his Master, we should hardly have been surprised if that terrible apostasy and the unspeakable shame of Peter's denial had cut them asunder; but the servant is not above his master, and if Jesus, the injured One, had pardoned the transgressor, it was enough; he could do no less himself, and so he wipes out of his memory that terrible night, and clings to his old companion.

Now this companionship illustrates very markedly the power of union which the Gospel of Christ exercises. Christian Art has emphasised the difference between them by representing S. Peter as much older than S. John; there is no authority for it either in history or ancient tradition; but it is, I believe, a fact that in character it would be almost impossible to find any two men more dissimilar; the one the very embodiment of boldness and impulsive

zeal, the other a perfect type of a gentle and almost womanly tenderness; both are united in Christ, and their union is profitable for the building up of Christ's Church.

As they were about to enter [the Temple, they saw a beggar lying on a pallet at the Beautiful Gate. The approaches were thronged, as we often see them now in Continental cathedrals, and as they will be doubtless in England, if ever ours are largely frequented, as they should be, by daily worshippers; for the blind and crippled, the halt and maimed, are sure to be found where they can best excite the pity of pious people.

The particular spot at which this lame man lay cannot be identified. "Beautiful" is not a name that was given to any one of the gates; but it was a description of several. It may have been the Gate of Nicanor, so called because the hand of Nicanor, the great enemy of the Maccabees, had been nailed to it as a trophy by Judas after his victory over him. More likely, perhaps, it was the gate Shushan, called sometimes the Corinthian Gate, towering to the height of nearly ninety feet, and covered with lilies in silver and gold. It is generally associated with Susa, the capital of Persia, but we must look for its appellation to the fact that

Joseph.  
Wars,  
vi. vi. 3.

16. v. v. 3.

Shushan is the Hebrew for a lily, and that the lily was the Hebrew type of beauty.<sup>1</sup>

And as they entered, the Apostles were arrested by an appeal for alms from a lame man. They fixed their eyes on him, attracted no doubt by some unusual look, and eager to discover something more some indication of faith which would justify them in a manifestation of the healing power they had received. They were not disappointed, and S. Peter grasped his hand to quicken his expectation, and said aloud in the hearing of all, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." "Of Nazareth,"—it was not for nothing that the addition was made; it had been written on the Cross as a mark of shame and humiliation; it is uttered by the Apostle to invest it with honour; and so he cries aloud in the hearing of His enemies, by whom He was despised and rejected, not in the Name of the Son of God—or even of the Son of David—but of the crucified Nazarene, "Rise up and walk." At once a new strength came into the man; the soles of his feet became firm, and his ankle-bones,<sup>2</sup> he felt, could bear his weight, and, almost

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ps. xlv. Upon Shosanim, *i.e.* on lilies—generally interpreted on lily-shaped instruments, but more probably "concerning lilies," *i.e.* a bride fair as the lily.

<sup>2</sup> These technical expressions point to the author's anatomical knowledge as a doctor; cf. *supra*, chap. i.

electrified by the shock, he leapt up, and then stood for a moment, as it were to reflect on the change; he could hardly believe it, for it was the first time in his life that he had stood alone, without support; and then he began to walk about, and when he realised that it was all true, he clung to his deliverers, and entered with them into the Temple, exulting in his cure and praising God for His goodness.

The Gate of Shushan was hard by the porch or cloister of Solomon, which was the only portion of the original Temple which had "escaped all the destructions and the restorations, and had brought down the founder's name from the founder's time"; and being a favourite spot, perhaps used as a public promenade, for it faced the morning sun, it was crowded as the hour of prayer drew on. The news of the miracle spread rapidly among them, and they gathered close about the lame man and the Apostles; and fearing lest the people should do them some honour, S. Peter at once disclaimed the credit of that wonderful work, and bade them give all the praise to Him in Whose Name alone they had power and prevailed.

Now, like all the first works of great and good men, this first miracle wrought by the Apostles is

full of teaching. It is not without a purpose that the first recipient of the healing saving power of the Church was a poor man. It was foretold ages before in the pages of prophecy that Christ's message of glad tidings would be especially for the poor, and it was one of the significant facts to which our Lord appealed in proof of His Messiahship, not only "that the lame walk," but also "that the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." The Apostles, therefore, were but carrying out His will when they stopped on their way to speak a message of salvation to a poor cripple at the gate. S. Matt.  
xi. 5.

This first miracle foreshadowed the work of the Church in its care for the masses. It may not always have been true to its mission. It cannot be denied that in not a few of the great social crises of history her ministry have forgotten this primary object, and given their support to the rich and powerful rather than to the lower orders of men. A strong and enthusiastic effort is being made by some of the leading Churchmen of the present day, in the Christian Social Union, to wipe out the reproach, and the claims of the labouring classes are engaging their most anxious attention. It is at least a praiseworthy desire that has prompted their action, and we may all pray that God will direct and control it for His people's good.

But let me draw another lesson from the power in which the miracle was wrought: "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." We have said that miracles have ceased; those who stand in the Apostles' stead can no longer invoke the Name and authority of Christ to heal the sick or raise the dead; but it is still potent, potent as ever it was—not now, however, according to the counsel of God, exhibiting its efficacy in such startling manifestations. It is true in the nineteenth century, as it was in the first, that it is the sovereign remedy for every ill: for there is "none other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." No matter what our trouble may be from which we would be delivered; be it sickness or sorrow, disappointment or trials, whatsoever we shall ask in His Name, the Father will give it us: give it, not, perhaps, as we will, not in the instantaneous cure and returning health: not in the sudden staunching of the issues of blood, or the silenced ravings of madness and possession, but in ways unseen at the time, yet realised afterwards. The immediate object of our prayer may be withheld, but through the all-prevailing Name of our Mediator and Advocate, something better—better it may be than health, better than friendship, yes, better even than life—given us instead.

### XIII.

## S. Peter's Address in Solomon's Porch.

ACTS III. 11-26.

11. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering. 12. 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 to walk? 13. 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, when he was determined to let *Him* go. 14. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; 15. and killed the Prince of Life, Whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. 16. And His Name 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 this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as

*did* also your rulers. 18. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; 20. 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 His holy prophets since the world began. 22. 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 after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. 25. 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 earth be blessed. 26. 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.

THE cure of the cripple at the Beautiful Gate created great excitement among the people, and as soon as they heard that the men who had healed him were still in the precincts of the Temple, and in company with the man so miraculously cured, they rushed in crowds to "Solomon's porch."<sup>1</sup> This was a cloister on the eastern side—the only part of the original building which had escaped destruction. The Apostles went thither because S. John x. 23. it was the general resort of the people, much frequented for its sunny aspect, and they were anxious to tell them more of Him in Whose Name they had wrought the miracle. The speech which S. Peter delivered was followed by no such tremendous results as on the previous occasion, when three thousand souls were added to the Church, but it must have made a deep impression. He began by showing that their surprise and wonder were quite unintelligible, based on an entire misconception of the author of the cure ; it was not their work, but

<sup>1</sup> Some have supposed that only the foundations of the Cloister were of Solomon's date. Josephus describes it as 400 cubits in length, and built of huge white stones.—*Antiq.* xx. ix. 7.

due to the intervention of the "Servant<sup>1</sup> of God," even that same Jesus Whom they themselves had delivered to be crucified; Who, though once humiliated, had since been exalted,—though once suffering, was now triumphant,—though once slain, was risen from the dead. This humiliation, suffering, and death was, S. Peter said, the work of their hands. "You denied Him, you killed Him"; the Prince, the Author of life, allowed Himself to be robbed by you of that which He Himself created; but He has vindicated His prerogative, and you have the proof of it, not only in His own resurrection, but in the life that He has infused into the long dead and withered limbs of this restored cripple.

As the preacher put the heinousness of their sin in its full light before them, he must have seen marks of compunction in his hearers, for he turns suddenly from severity to tenderness, and finds some excuse for their guilt. He first awakens their fears, then makes known to them a ground of hope: "I wot that through ignorance you did it," and per-

<sup>1</sup> A. V. "His Son Jesus" is probably incorrect. This is usually *Υἱός*, which is the term by which His eternal generation is described. *παῖς* is the LXX. rendering for the Hebrew עֶבֶד, servant, in Isaiah frequently, in its application to the Messiah.

haps reminding them of their Saviour's dying prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he saved them from despair. He even went further, and gave them the consolation that their act had been overruled to fulfil the Divine purpose. "Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." If they had done the deed with a wicked purpose, they could not escape the charge of blood-guiltiness, even though their conduct had been instrumental in accomplishing what God had ordained; but there was a place of repentance open to them because of their ignorance, and if they sought it their sin would be effaced. The figure which the Apostle used bespoke the completeness of the proposed pardon; no trace of guilt should be left to bear witness against them; "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out"; literally it implies that complete obliteration which was made on the tablet when the blunt end of the *stylus* was applied to the wax, on which the point of it had traced the letters. He went on to encourage them by explaining what far-reaching issues would result from their repentance: "Repent ye . . . that<sup>1</sup> so there

<sup>1</sup> ὅπως ἄν never means "when," as A.V. It can only mean "in order that."

may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." (R.V.) It opened up a mysterious and solemn truth, echoed by S. Paul to the Romans, xi. 12, 15, 26. that the conversion of Israel will hasten the fulfilment of God's purpose for the Gentiles, and must precede the coming of His Kingdom in its completeness. The ultimate result of their repentance is described under a double figure in the original language, "seasons of refreshing" and "times of restoration of all things." It is difficult here to maintain the common distinction between times and seasons as indicating respectively longer and shorter periods; but refreshment and restoration express different results. Refreshment has been described properly as "a revival by fresh air, the consequence of letting in a breeze of cool and invigorating air upon one who has long been fainting under an oppressive atmosphere." This will be the immediate consequence of the blotting out of their sins. Perhaps, according to the belief of the early Christians, S. Peter expected the speedy return of Christ, and foretold in these words the deliverance from danger, and the rest and refreshment from persecution and trial, which were the inevitable lot of those who accepted His service; but more probably he intended to assure them of the happy results which always

accompany the forgiveness of sins. It is the universal testimony of pardoned sinners that the work of true repentance and bitter sorrow for past transgression is invariably followed by such refreshing calm and peace, as men experience in nature when a sultry heat and heavy clouds are succeeded by a freshening breeze or cooling shower. Possibly also he had in his mind also the fact that such a "season of refreshing" was only a foretaste of the blessed consummation when the burden of life should be lifted and they should "hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb Which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." This, however, he seems to foretell more distinctly under the figure of "the restoration of all things," which he says definitely shall follow the sending of Jesus Christ into the world, *i.e.* at the Second Advent.

"Restoration"<sup>1</sup>—it is a rare word, not occurring again either in the Greek of the Old or New Testament, though the verb "to restore" occurs where the Lord predicts that "Elias verily cometh first

Rev. vii.  
16, 17.

S. Mark  
ix. 12.

<sup>1</sup> ἀποκατάστασις. ἀποκαθιστάνει πάντα.

and restoreth all things." The Fall of Adam disorganised all the relations of life; the best part of man's nature suffered by grievous perversions; the affections were estranged; the hearts of the fathers were turned from their children, and the hearts of the children from their fathers, but all such distortions would ultimately be rectified, and love and harmony be restored.

And this restoration would extend beyond the life of man to the animal and to the material world. Now, through sin, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together"; the stamp of frustration, decay, and aberration from its appointed end is visible in every part of it; but S. Peter tells them that by their repentance they will hasten the restoration "of all things" to their original purpose and completeness. He sees "the earnest expectation," the straining forward, as with outstretched neck, of all created things, "waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God," and he calls upon his hearers to help forward this fulfilment of their repentance. Rom. viii. 22.

From the time that sin came into the world God has never ceased to predict the final accomplishment of His Divine purpose, and has made known unto men, by the mouth of His prophets, how they may contribute to this purpose; and so all down the

2 S. Pet.  
iii. 13.

ages men, "according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Deut.  
xviii. 18.

Moses had begun the long scroll of prophecy in which it was foretold that One should come Who would restore what Adam had lost, and "make all things new." "A Prophet," he says, "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." The prophet was not in the beginning a predictor of the future, but one who spoke for God, and was the exponent of His will to man. In Paradise he was not needed, because Adam talked himself with God, but sin had cut him off from this close communion, and God, Who designed in the fulness of time to restore the broken unity, sent prophet after prophet in successive generations to prepare the way for Him Who should take the manhood into God and make us again partakers of the Divine nature. "To Him give all the prophets witness."

Acts x. 43.

Then, before the Apostle concludes, he reminds the Jews that God had sent forth His Son to them first; and though they had despised and rejected Him, He had not cast off His chosen people. It was true that the Gospel was ultimately designed for all men,

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but it must begin at Jerusalem, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. All the blessedness, however, of the message was dependent upon one imperative condition, that they should "turn away every one from his iniquities"; and it is true for us as for them, for then and then only will God, even our own God, give us His blessing.

## XIV.

### S. Peter and S. John arraigned before the Sanhedrim.

#### THE ACTS IV. 1-22.

1. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, 2. being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3. And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide. 4. Howbeit many of them which 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 elders, and scribes, 6. 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 what power, or by what name, have ye done this? 8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, 9. if we this day be examined of the good deed

done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; 10. 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. 11. This is the Stone Which was set at nought of you builders, Which is become the Head of the corner. 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 been with Jesus. 14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16. 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 Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*. 17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this Name. 18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus. 19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them,

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

THE excitement in Solomon's porch, caused by the speech of S. Peter upon the miraculous cure of the cripple, led to the interference of the captain of the guard. The Sadducees, roused by the Apostle's appeal to the Resurrection, seem to have satisfied him that the peace and sanctity of the Temple was endangered. The English version speaks of their being "grieved" at what they had heard; it would be more fitly translated "vexed"; they were made uncomfortable, and could ill brook the open proclamation of a doctrine which ran counter to the first principles of their sect: "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." So it is that henceforward, at least for a Acts xxiii. 8. time, opposition to Christianity comes not from the latter, but from the former. Our Blessed Lord had poured His most withering indignation upon

Pharisaic formality and hypocrisy, and in consequence before the Crucifixion the Pharisees were His bitterest enemies; but the great theme of Apostolic teaching cut at the root of the Sadducean materialism; the appeal to a future life with a resurrection to reward or punishment gave a rude shock to their unrestrained indulgence and enjoyment of the present; and so we see a determined enmity manifesting itself in the conduct of the Sadducees.

The captain of the guard to whom they resorted was not a Roman, but Jewish officer. The Temple was protected with such extreme care that no less than twenty-five detachments of priests or Levites were placed in sentry over it, and it was the duty of the officer in command to go round the gates and towers to see that all were at their posts, and that no one slept in his watch. If anything went wrong he was responsible for it. It was from fear of some untoward consequence that he arrested the Apostles. They would naturally have been taken at once before the magistrates; but the only tribunal before which they could lawfully be tried was the Sanhedrim. It was now evening, but by the rules of the Supreme Court it could never assemble till after sunrise. The next morning,

<sup>2</sup> Macc. iii. 4.  
Joseph.  
Antiq.  
vi. v. 3.

however, found the Lischath Haggizith,<sup>1</sup> or hewn chamber, crowded with its members. S. Luke regarded it as an important session, for he not only notices that its three component sections, "rulers, elders, and scribes," were all represented, but that all the most distinguished of them were in their places: "Annas the High Priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander."

The first of these was Annas. He had filled the office of chief Pontiff, but from his intense patriotism, and hatred of everything connected with the Roman supremacy, he had been deposed by the Roman Governor, in defiance of the Jewish law, by which the High Priesthood was invariably held for life. His nation, therefore, refused, as far as they dared, to recognise his deposition, and always regarded him as their rightful head. His popularity was largely enhanced in the eyes of his countrymen by his being made a victim of Roman oppression. It has been said that no man ever possessed a more commanding influence in Jerusalem.

Joseph.  
Antiq.  
xviii. ii. 1, 2;  
xx. ix. 1.

The second person named was Caiaphas, the nominee of Rome, in legal possession of the High

<sup>1</sup> This was a hall of polished marble in the south-east corner of the Temple Mount. About this time the Sanhedrim migrated to "the Booths of the sons of Annas."

Priesthood at the time. In the record of the Crucifixion we should have found his name taking precedence, because although this was prompted, and vehemently urged, by the Jews, it was carried out distinctly by the Roman power; Caiaphas, therefore, the High Priest of Roman appointment, takes his place as leader; but after the Resurrection the Roman power no longer interferes; persecution is at least in the beginning the act and deed of the Jews. So it is that Annas, their spiritual representative, comes, as here, into prominence;<sup>1</sup> and the order is changed to Annas and Caiaphas.

Lightfoot.  
Selden de  
Syned.

The third is John, the son of Zaccai, the last of the seven Rabbans of the Great Synagogue, of whom it was said that at his death the wisdom of the nation suffered an eclipse. The scene of his last days has been preserved in the archives of the Jews, and it may well be rehearsed in these later times, if only for the mighty contrast which it presents to the deathbed of a Christian saint. His disciples were overwhelmed with distress by seeing him in tears, and asked him the reason of his grief. It was, he replied, because he knew that he was not going into the presence of some king of

Talm.  
Berachoth,  
286.

<sup>1</sup> In S. John xviii. 13 Annas is mentioned first for special reasons. Cf. *Footprints of the Son of Man*, lxviii.

flesh and blood, whose anger and punishment could only last for a few short years, even if he failed to avert it by persuasion or propitiate it by gifts. He wept in the dread anticipation of standing in the presence of the King of Kings, Whose wrath was eternal, Whose bonds were everlasting, and Whom nothing could pacify. He wept, again, because two paths were open before him, one to Gehenna and one to Paradise, and he could not be sure by which he was going.

The last of the four was Alexander; perhaps the wealthy and powerful magistrate or "Alabarch" of Alexandria, and brother of the learned Philo; but all is uncertain. And now the great judicial Court of the Sanhedrim is in session, and all is ready for the trial to begin. They sat in the form of a semi-circle, and the prisoners were placed in the centre, confronting the Presidential Chair; and their examination commenced. They were not asked whether it was true that they had restored the poor cripple; men had ocular demonstration of the fact, for he had been seen "walking, and leaping, and praising God." The question to be tried was, How was it done? Was it by magic or witchcraft? Was it, as they had accused Christ of working His wonders, because they were

Joseph.  
Antiq.  
xviii. viii. 1;  
xix. v. 1.

in league with Beelzebub, the prince of the devils? Tell us, they said, what sort of power you used, and what is the character of the name which you invoked? S. Peter was ready with his reply; it had been promised that in every crisis and danger, both in councils and synagogues, without thought or premeditation it should be given them what they should speak: "it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost." It shows the transforming power of the Spirit of God, when we see the Apostle who had cowered before the accusation of a child, divested of every trace of fear, confronting the most august tribunal, and telling them to their very face that the Author of that miraculous work was none other than the Being Whom they had condemned to an ignominious death. They had despised Him, had rejected Him, to use the oft-repeated figure, just as the masons of the Temple had put aside an apparently worthless stone, to find afterwards that it was exactly what was wanted to hold the building together. This, he said, This Jesus, Whom ye crucified, by Whom this cripple stands before you whole: this is "the Stone which was set at nought by you builders," and it is my province to declare unto you the tremendous truth, that but for Him the universe would fall to pieces,

S. Matt.  
x. 20.  
S Mark  
xiii. 11.

Ps. cxviii. 22.

for He, and He alone, is the Helper, the Defender, the Saviour of the world. And then in the midst of his speech they discovered Who it was that was speaking; one after another of the judges began to recognise the faces of the prisoners. It so happened that S. Peter and S. John were the only two out of the twelve that followed Jesus into the High Priest's palace on the night of our Lord's trial, and every thing and person associated with Him must have left a mark upon their memory. And then they made further inquiries, and found that they were "unlearned and ignorant men":<sup>1</sup> it rather means, untaught in Jewish literature, without a Rabbinical training, or professional knowledge, such as would entitle them to preach to the people. It all filled them with doubt and bewilderment; and the Court was cleared that they might find a way out of the perplexity in private consultation. We know their decision; they were afraid to condemn them; the populace would have resented it: they were afraid to acquit them, for they hated the very mention of Him to Whom they appealed, and hence the miserable compromise—they command

<sup>1</sup> ἀγράμματοι; so in S. John vii. 15, πῶς οὗτος γράμματα οἶδε μὴ μεμαθηκώς; How does this man know Scripture-learning having never been in a school—μαθητῆς—a disciple or pupil?

them “not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus.”

Now there are just one or two thoughts arising out of their action that may help some at least of us in our daily life.

S. Luke tells us that the Sanhedrim came to the conclusion that they had been with Jesus from discovering these two things, that they were “unlearned and ignorant,” *i.e.* not authorised teachers like the Scribes, but private persons, and yet full of “boldness.” That strange combination was associated in their minds with Jesus Christ, and convinced them that these men must have been His followers.

Let the world see that we are not ashamed to confess Christ, and that we believe His promise, that in every time of difficulty and danger the Holy Spirit will fill our minds with wisdom, and inspire us with courage; and men will find out, as the Sanhedrim did with S. Peter and S. John, where and in Whose Presence we have been.

Then there is the spirit of obedience exhibited in the confession, “We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” They remembered the Divine command: “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in

Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth;" and, no matter what the consequence, it must be obeyed. They would do their duty and leave the issue in God's hands.

O for more of the spirit which breathed in their determination! We are not standing, and, humanly speaking, there is no probability of our ever standing, at the bar of judgment under the same circumstances; but we are every bit as much on our trial as they were. Society takes the place of the Sanhedrim, and the worldliness of friends and companions lays upon us the very prohibition which was laid upon them: "not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus." If we ever dream of compromising our profession, and are tempted through love of peace and quiet to suppress the unwelcome truth and be silent, may the recollection of the Apostles' example inspire us with courage to do what is right and brave the consequences.

## XV.

### A Community of Goods.

#### THE ACTS IV. 23-37.

23. And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. 24. 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 them is: 25. 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, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, 28. for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. 29. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, 30. by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of Thy Holy Child Jesus.

31. 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 all things common. 33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34. 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 that were sold, 35. 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 Levite, *and* of the country of Cyprus, 37. having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

ALL through the world's history there has been a yearning in the heart of man for an ideal

state of true fraternity and perfect equality. To philosophers like Plato it was a favourite but an unfulfilled dream. The theory of such a condition of society was developed in the *Republic*, the greatest, perhaps, of all his works; it was a state in which there was no prerogative of birth, no inequality of rank, no rivalry of class with class, but one in which all wants were provided for, and all were able to live in a great brotherhood of common interests and united aim. He believed that such a commonwealth as he conceived would be realised sooner or later, though he might not live to see it, and that till then mankind could not reach its highest development.

The first real attempt to carry it out was made on a limited scale, for the furtherance of religion, by the Essenes amongst the Jews,<sup>1</sup> and was copied by the Christians at Jerusalem, who adopted most but not all of their principles. They lived together, as far as was possible, like one family, to realise the idea of brotherhood; all who wished to join the community sold their possessions, and threw the proceeds into a common stock; they disallowed the exercise of authority of one over the other, but enjoined that

Josephus,  
Wars,  
ii. viii. 3.  
S. Matt.  
vi. 33.  
S. Luke  
xii. 31.

<sup>1</sup> For full particulars cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. i. 5; *Wars*, ii. viii. 2, 3, 7; Lightfoot's Essay on *Ep. ad Col.* 114-179.

S. Matt.  
xx. 25-6.  
S. Mark  
x. 42.

all should live by the employment of mutual service. There was unquestionably much to be said in favour of such principles; they, both Jews and Christians, could appeal to Divine precepts for almost everything that they did; and they gained great admiration for their virtuous and holy lives; but they left out of sight much that was inculcated in God's Word of a countervailing nature, which ought to have largely modified their schemes.

Acts v. 4.

But leaving the earlier "community," it will be well to examine that which was purely Christian more in detail. It differed from its predecessor in that it was based throughout upon voluntary principles; there was no compulsion; every Christian was left perfectly free to surrender his property for the common good, or to retain it for his own personal use and enjoyment; nothing whatever was done by the force of external law to obliterate the rights of private property; and so far it had a greater prospect of success than many of those communistic projects which leave no option to any one.

What prompted the Christians at Jerusalem to frame such a community was, no doubt, a strong conviction that our Blessed Lord was about to return speedily;<sup>1</sup> as the time was short, it behoved

<sup>1</sup> On the common belief, cf. *After Death*, p. 49 n.

them to concentrate all thought and energy upon the preparation for His coming. Lands, houses, riches, all would be useless when the whole present constitution should be broken up; the only thing worth living for was to trim their lamps and watch for the Bridegroom, that they might be ready to go out to meet Him when He should come.

They seem to have risked everything on this expectation being fulfilled, and as they were entirely deceived in it, their plan inevitably broke down. Thinking that they had only to provide for a limited period, they did not trouble themselves to supplement the voluntary offerings to the common fund by the labour of their hands; they gave up doing anything to earn their livelihood, and then, when all the offerings had been made, and there was no fresh supply to replenish the exhausted coffers, poverty and destitution set in, "the poor saints at Jerusalem" became an object of general pity, and contributions from other Churches were necessary to save them from starvation.

Rom. xv. 26.  
1 Cor.  
xvi 1, 3.  
2 Cor. viii. 4;  
ix. 5.

This community of Christians must have served as a warning for that generation, for the experiment was nowhere repeated in primitive times. If there have been imitations of it by such societies as the Perfectionists, or Bible Communists, in America,

or the Princeites in this country, it is little more than in name, and certainly the brotherhood of Jerusalem would not have recognised any real similarity. It is extremely doubtful whether such a mode of living would have even been attempted, save under the exceptional circumstances which we have noticed.

S. Luke, however, has excited our curiosity, and given to this episode in early Church history a lasting interest by what he has recorded in connection with two men, Barnabas and Ananias. Both of them were attracted by the project, but to one it was "a savour of life unto life," to the other "a savour of death unto death." In the former it stirred a spirit of self-sacrifice and total surrender; in the latter, of vanity, hypocrisy, and the worst kind of deceitfulness. In later chapters we shall be brought into frequent contact with Barnabas, and if only as one outside "the Twelve," who bore the title of "Apostle," he claims our attention. S. Luke speaks of him as "Joseph,<sup>1</sup> who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation), a Levite, a man of Cyprus by race" (R.V.). Literally, it is son of prophecy;<sup>2</sup> the Vulgate, from which the familiar

<sup>1</sup> Joses (of A.V.) is found in no Uncial ms.

<sup>2</sup> In Greek, *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, the primary sense of which is exhortation, and this is more a function of the prophet than consolation. Cf. xi. 23.

explanation of the Authorised Version is taken renders it, Son of consolation ; both are possible, but neither is certain. The notice that he was a Levite is at first sight suggestive of a difficulty, for in the original polity of the Jews the tribe of Levi received no landed inheritance or settlement except in the Levitical cities, but depended for their support upon the tithes of the people. It is, however, quite possible that they could acquire possessions by purchase outside of Palestine ; and this, doubtless, is what Barnabas had done in the island of Cyprus. This island, the Chittim<sup>1</sup> of the Old Testament, contained a large colony of Jews. It is not unlikely that it was from its proximity to Tarsus that Barnabas gained the friendship of Saul, in company with whom he was separated by the command of the Spirit for the work of the ministry. Now this Barnabas, hearing of the intention of the saints of Jerusalem, and having determined to set an example of self-sacrifice for the common good, sold his property<sup>2</sup> in his native island, and laid the price of it at the Apostles' feet. It is the first recorded act in a life devoted to his Master's cause.

Numb. xxiv. 24.  
Jer. ii. 10.  
Dan. xi. 30.  
Acts xiii. 2.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus speaks of "the island of Cethima, which is now called Cyprus."—*Antiq.* i. vi. 1.

<sup>2</sup> ἀγροῦ, a field or farm. It sometimes means an estate ; cf. Thucyd. ii. 13.

Now in this attempt to realise a common life there is nothing to lead us to believe that it was intended to be of more than temporary duration or local application. Attractive, as it doubtless was, in idea, it proved in reality most impracticable, as all such communistic schemes must do, because they take no account of a very important factor in the problem, viz., man's natural perverse tendencies. So long as human nature is what it is, they are doomed to ultimate failure.

It is quite true that the Church is the most favourable society to make the experiment, because it is pervaded by a correcting influence; but it is God's will that even here the evil shall be mixed with the good till the final separation, and this alone makes the attainment of a workable communism little less than hopeless. Moreover, distinctions in rank and position, in wealth and riches, are ordained of God; and though He may from time to time call upon individuals to forego their rights and to sell all that they have, yet under ordinary conditions He is pleased that a man's highest aim should be to show himself a good steward of what is intrusted to him, rather than to give up all by a single act of self-surrender, and in so doing escape further responsibility.

Whilst, however, we have little to learn in the way of imitation from the example of the early Christians at Jerusalem in establishing "a community of goods," there is just one other characteristic in their life which is worthy of all admiration. As members of the Body of Him Who prayed to the Eternal Father "that they may be one, as We are," S. Luke tells us that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul,"<sup>1</sup> "neither was there any difference between them."<sup>2</sup> Nowhere was the noble testimony, "See how these Christians love one another!" so true as at Jerusalem. The record may well inspire us, as we realise the miserable contrast of Christendom as it now is, to pray constantly that God will "take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord," that so we, following the example of those holy men and women, "may henceforth be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth" glorify Him.

S. John  
xvii. 11.

<sup>1</sup> The two words imply in the original that in their affections and mental apprehension of things they were united.

<sup>2</sup> *καὶ οὐκ ἦν διάκρισις* (or *χωρισμὸς*, in E) *ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδεμίᾳ*. This addition is found in D and E, the Cambridge and Oxford mss.

## XVI.

### The First Public Sin in the Church.

#### THE ACTS V. 1-10.

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2. and kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. 3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? 4. 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 God. 5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*. 7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9. 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 thee out. 10. 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 husband.

A SHADOW falls for the first time across the bright landscape of the early Church. Hitherto nothing, as far as we know, had happened to mar the beauty of its whole-hearted zeal and devotion; but Satan, who broke the peace of Paradise, could

ill brook the uninterrupted progress which the Church of Christ was making, and his suggestions of evil entered into the heart of two of its members, Ananias and Sapphira, and found only too favourable a welcome. It was the first realisation of our Lord's assurance that tares were to be expected to spring up amongst the wheat, and that even the kingdom of God must be troubled while here on earth by the presence of evil. S. Matt.  
xiii. 25.

The sin commonly ascribed to Ananias and his wife is falsehood; but when the whole story, together with the probable motives of the transgression, is unfolded, it is found to involve a combination of numerous offences. We can read in it at least four: vanity, hypocrisy, lying, and deliberate defiance of God.

The generous spirit of self-sacrifice, which was so conspicuous in the case of Barnabas, was caught, no doubt, by many others; difficult as it is to embrace, it is never exemplified in such a marked and noble manner as this, without exciting in some a desire to emulate it; it would seem as if this was one of the ways in which the attraction of the Cross was destined to act upon the hearts of men. It is not unlikely that among the new Christians a holy rivalry had sprung up; on all sides men were eager

Olshausen,  
*in loco.*

to place their worldly goods at the disposal of the Church, and this desire actuated some who were not in heart by any means entirely freed from attachment to their earthly possessions. Ananias was one of these; he could not bear to be outdone by Barnabas and the rest. No doubt their praises were being constantly spoken, and his jealousy was aroused by what he heard. Why should he be thought less of? He was not, it was true, quite as zealous or enthusiastic, but he would like to stand well with the community and get the same credit for open-handed liberality. He coveted the applause of his fellows, and vanity was the prime motive of the sale by which he hoped to win it. But in order to gain his purpose he must play the hypocrite; if he was not prepared to sacrifice everything, and yet wished people to think he had done so, he must become an actor, he must wear a mask, and assume a character which was not his own; and this he did, and he did it with great deliberation.

It would be impossible, he knew, to keep the secret entirely to himself, for at least his wife would find it out, but no one else should be privy to it. In this, the first recorded sin in the Church, as in the first of all sins, she who was intended to be

a helpmeet for her husband, wholly forgot her appointed mission, for if Sapphira did not originate the wicked plan, she gave it her ready countenance, and joined hand in hand to carry it out. Ananias sold his estate, privately, no doubt, for obvious reasons, and then, having kept back for his own use and the supply of luxuries he felt unable to do without, a portion of the sum realised, he went to the Apostles, and imitating to the letter the action of Barnabas, laid the rest at their feet, and gave them to understand that he too had surrendered all that he possessed. Just then, as vanity was the motive of the transaction, hypocrisy was the means by which he falsified and misrepresented what he had done. The third sin is like the second; it is falsehood; and when we read, in combination with the act of Ananias, the unreserved admission of Sapphira, it is falsehood in a double aspect, acted and spoken, in word and in deed. The wife, as the common phrase goes, "told a lie." "Tell me," asked St. Peter, "did you sell the land for so much?" "Yes," she answered; "for so much." It was a deliberately uttered untruth. No such question was put to Ananias; but, when he laid the sum of money at the Apostles' feet, he gave it to be understood that it was all that he had realised, and the

deception in this case was as deliberate as in the other, and not a whit less sinful.

According to the world's standard it is sufficient to avoid giving utterance to what is false; indeed, men are satisfied if they can so fence their words that they shall be susceptible of an interpretation which is consistent with truth; they do not feel that they are guilty of falsehood unless in so many words they have spoken what is untrue. The terrible punishment with which Ananias was visited—precisely the same as was meted out to his wife—leaves not a shadow of doubt that in the judgment of God there is no difference, in point of guiltiness, between an acted lie and a spoken one.

1 Thess.  
iv. 8.

Gen. xxii. 1.

The fourth sin was his daring and presumptuous defiance of God the Holy Ghost. "How is it," Sapphira was asked, "that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?" To tempt is to put His powers to the test, to challenge Him to exercise them. St. Peter laid great emphasis on the fact that the offence was committed against the Holy Ghost,<sup>1</sup> and in his eyes this was a special aggravation, because they were living under His

<sup>1</sup> ψεύσασθαι τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, to try to defraud the Holy Ghost, and by purloining part of the money dedicated to God.

distinct dispensation. Ever since the "rushing mighty wind" had filled the Upper Chamber in Jerusalem, everything that had been done in the Church had been through the inspiring influence of that Divine Agent; He had given them utterance to speak the praises of God in divers tongues; had driven home the arrow of conviction through St. Peter's words into the hearts of three thousand men; had shaken the very foundations of the place in which the converts were praying; had enabled the Apostles to work miracles, to discern spirits, and read the hearts of men. The conduct of Ananias implied a doubt, even more, a disbelief, in all this. "I will show," he seems to say, "that the power of the Holy Ghost has been greatly exaggerated; I will put it to the proof, whether in the laying on of hands the Apostles did really receive supernatural means of discriminating men's characters, and finding out what is beyond all human ken to discover."

St. Peter had been inspired with this spiritual discernment, and under the Divine illumination he gave his answer to the unspoken challenge. An audacious attempt had been made to evade the Searcher of all hearts, to deceive the Holy Ghost. It was the first time that the sin of that religious hypocrisy, which called forth the withering de-

S. Mark  
iii. 29.

nunciation of our Blessed Lord, had shown itself in the Church; and inasmuch as it had eaten out the very heart and life of the Jewish Faith, it needed to be crushed at the outset by an immediate and condign punishment.

The Apostle unmasked the sinner's pretended devotion; and as soon as ever the community had been made aware of the nature of his sin, without one other word from human lips, God Himself intervened to vindicate His honour and exact retribution. If in the case of Sapphira the Apostle speaks, it is not to pronounce the doom of impenitence on his own authority, but, in the light of what had already happened, to foretell the judgment of God that was hanging over her head. There is no force, then, in the objection of hostile critics, so often repeated from the very earliest times, either that the Apostle acted in a spirit quite inconsistent with his ministry of mercy,<sup>1</sup> or else that the fact is unhistorical in the way that it is told. We have read St. Peter's action in another way, but when we deny that the sentence was his own, we are told that this is only to shift the accusation from the servant to the

Porphyry,  
De Wette,  
Davidson's  
New Introd.  
ii. 243.

<sup>1</sup> "The cruelty cannot be justified on the ground that such a warning was necessary. Did Christianity at this time require such aid? Must the Holy Ghost kill sinners in the midst of their sins?"—De Wette's *Apostelgeschichte*, 3rd ed., p. 56.

Master. Be this as it may, we can only veil our faces in the presence of God's visitation, and ask, under the shadow of that "great fear" which "came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things," whether it can ever be otherwise than that the Judge of all the earth, though we may not always understand it, must do that, and that alone, which is right?

## XVII.

### The Miracles of the Early Church.

#### THE ACTS V. 11-17.

11. 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 one accord in Solomon's porch. 13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15. 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 overshadow some of them. 16. 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 with indignation.

WE have before us a striking testimony to the effect produced upon the whole community by the terrible judgment which had fallen upon Ananias and Sapphira.

Some were drawn irresistibly to the Apostles; others were so completely awe-struck that for a time at least they were afraid to approach them. When, however, the first shock had passed off, they came to realise that the Power Which had been exer-

cised for destruction was, as the cure of the lame man testified, strong also to heal, and under the influence of a common movement, they brought their sick out into the streets and squares, the report spread to the neighbouring villages, and the whole suffering population sought to be touched, or at least to let the shadow of the Apostle fall upon them.

Now, above and beyond the immediate result of the exercise of the Divine gift of healing in curing their physical disease, these miracles deeply impressed the people, and were regarded as credentials for the Divine authority of those who worked them. The more the Apostles healed, the more widely the Faith was accepted.

The scene here described by S. Luke is a repetition almost in detail of what had happened under the teaching and preaching of our Blessed Lord in the land of Gennesaret, where, we read, they “began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages or cities or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment; and as many as touched Him were made whole.” In both cases there was all that was needed for a cure;

S. Mark  
vi. 55, 56.

S. Matt.  
ix. 21, 22.  
Acts xix. 12.

on the one side a Divine power present to heal, and on the other an intense faith to be healed; it mattered little what the medium was upon which the mind of the sick fixed itself to create and confirm their faith, whether the fringe of a dress or the impalpable shadow of the Apostle. The result was the same: "they were healed every one."

Now we may be sure that S. Luke was inspired by the Holy Ghost to place on record this remarkable scene so closely corresponding with that in the Gospels, to show the continued operation of the Ascended Lord, and to give proof of His Promise that death would not separate Him from His Church. What He had done before, He was ready to do now. It was all-important, not only for that generation but for all future ages, that it should be clearly understood that Christ's work was not interrupted by the withdrawal of His visible Presence behind the veil; and the story of the Apostles' miracles, which runs like a golden thread throughout the Book of the Acts, places this beyond a doubt.

Woodford's  
Ordination  
Sermons: On  
The Power  
of Christ's  
Name.

"It was essential, for the completeness of the Divine revelation, that the four histories of human suffering overcome by Christ upon earth should be followed by a history of similar results produced by

His Power when seen upon earth no more. Apostolic miracles thus became needful, but the power of Christ's Name outlasting His departure being a point once established thereby, post-apostolic miracles became so far unnecessary."

This last sentence opens up some questions of very considerable interest. When did miracles cease, and was the cessation abrupt or gradual?

When Christ was upon earth, wherever He went during His three years' ministry, He exercised His Divine power to heal the sick, and it is certain that the miracles which He wrought were largely instrumental in advancing His Cause. What the people witnessed in His miracles could not do otherwise than satisfy them that there was in their midst One from Whom healing virtue was for ever going out; and what they witnessed under the hand of His Apostles after His departure was intended to assure them that they were His agents, sent to continue and carry on His work.

It was not unlike what happened to Moses, who brought down from the Mount traces of the ineffable glory, which he had caught from the Divine Presence; and just as this supernatural irradiation lingered upon his face, as his credentials from the Almighty, and only gradually died away, so it may

Exod. xxxiv.  
29, 30, 35.

have been with the Apostles. As Christ's delegates, they reflected not their own but His power, and reminded men thereby from Whom it was that they derived their authority; but this manifestation would naturally be discontinued by a gradual process corresponding to the growing conviction in the minds of men. It would cease, in short, when its appointed work was done.

Now, what does history teach us in this matter? Nothing at all definite: but various epochs for the discontinuance have been suggested by different writers, such as the death of the Apostles or of their disciples, or the Conversion of the Roman Empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy; each one has had its advocates, but no one is historical.

Gibbon<sup>1</sup> has used the silence of history as an argument to show that miracles were never wrought in the Church at all. If, he implies, the Apostles and their disciples had received miraculous powers, it would have been a prerogative of such vital consequence that the Church could not possibly have been insensible to their discontinuance; the closing era of miracle must have stirred the whole Christian

Gibbon's  
Decline and  
Fall, ch. xv.  
Schaff's  
Ante-Nicene  
Christianity,  
§ 40.

Kaye's  
Eccl. Hist.  
96-102.

<sup>1</sup> His exact words are not given; only the gist of his argument. On the whole question of his objection, Bishop Kaye's remarks are very valuable. The reference is given in the side-note.

community to its very foundations; but Gibbon assumes that the fact would be known and realised, whereas it is far more probable that the cessation should have been gradual and imperceptible, and therefore of necessity unnoticed in the writings of the time.

The most probable hypothesis seems to be that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which miracles were wrought, were not extended beyond the second generation, and ceased altogether with the death of the last upon whom the Apostles had laid their hands. This in the ordinary course of events would be about the middle of the second century; and we can easily understand that they would be no longer indispensable, seeing that by this time the Church had taken root in every part of the Roman Empire, and even in countries far beyond, and could depend upon her natural ministrations. Now, how are we to explain the apparent indifference of those who witnessed the cessation, which excited the surprise of Gibbon? The fact is, we believe, that they were by no means indifferent. Either they refused to believe that the miraculous powers had been really taken away, and lived in constant expectation of seeing the revival; or, if they had misgivings, they were careful to conceal

Neander's  
Church  
History, § 1.  
Tertullian's  
Apology,  
c. 37.

them, as they were quite justified in doing, lest the faith of friends should be shaken, and the arguments of enemies appear to be strengthened.

It is impossible to read what the Fathers of the second century, Justin Martyr, Theophilus, and Irenæus,<sup>1</sup> say upon this subject without finding in their language traces of a suspicion that the miraculous gifts had been withdrawn side by side with an anxiety to keep up the belief that it might not be so. All of them make general statements to the effect that miracles were still wrought, but they never supported them by any specific instances. Further, they refer mainly to the exorcism of evil spirits and cases where it is very difficult to draw the line of demarcation between natural and supernatural cures.

Tertullian's  
Apology,  
c. 5.  
ad Scapulam,  
c. 4.

Now, if what we have said be true, if the Apostolic miracles were only the lingering traces of Christ's Presence, and if they were necessary only so long as Christianity required such attesting evidence, we shall feel less disappointment when we miss them in later times. The history of the Church witnesses to a constant craving for a renewal

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus mentions that dead persons had been raised, and were alive: but he does not specify, and he may have referred to miracles wrought in his early life upon some whom he had known. *Adv. Hæc.* ii. xxxi. 2, xxxii. 4.

of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost ; indeed, at times it has been so strong, that men have actually believed in their restoration. The history of Monasticism and the lives and chronicles of such men as Bede and S. Bernard, teem with miracles. The more we study the history of the second century, the more we shall sympathise with men in their desire to realise in their personal experience that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," no less in the exercise of supernatural operations than in His ordinary care for the Church. We cannot, however, shut our eyes to the fact that they completely failed to appreciate one at least of the chief objects for which miraculous powers were originally given. They were, humanly speaking, absolutely necessary, when nothing less than ocular demonstration and startling evidence could satisfy man that Christ was still in this lower world, though the eye could no longer see Him "manifest in the flesh." But that necessity has long since passed away ; there is hardly a country on the face of the globe where His authority is not more or less recognised.

God, Who "doeth everything according to the counsel of His will," operates on the hearts of men in divers manners at sundry times. At such a crisis

as the birthday of the Church the dispensation of the Spirit was inaugurated by a rushing mighty wind in the midst of miraculous and bewildering circumstances ; but in the even tenor of its gradual growth and development, His influence is exercised by gentler ministrations ; and so, acknowledging the wisdom of God, we express the desire for a return of the miraculous, and pray that we may be renewed day by day by the ordinary means of grace, till the whole Church is transformed from glory to glory into the image of her Lord.

## XVIII.

### The Apostles a second time before the Sanhedrim.

THE ACTS V. 17-42.

17. Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, 18. and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. 19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, 20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. 21. 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 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, they returned, and told, 23. 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 within. 24. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief

priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow. 25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people. 26. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned. 27. 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 upon us. 29. Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. 30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31. Him hath God exalted with His right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32. And we are His witnesses of these things; and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him. 33. When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them. 34. 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 put the apostles forth a little space; 35. and said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the

days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38. 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 be found even to fight against God. 40. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the Name of Jesus, and let them go. 41. And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. 42. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

THE popularity of the Apostles, and the enthusiastic admiration of the multitude, stirred the envy of the Sadducees. Annas the High Priest, who was regarded as their leader, was too determined a man to brook with patience the hateful doctrine which seemed now to be always on their lips. In the time of our Lord they only occasionally came into conflict with Him or His followers, because His preaching was aimed more at Pharisaic principles; but now, since "Jesus and the Resurrection" has become the universal theme of the Apostolic message, Sadducæan persecution springs to the front,

and the Pharisees draw off into a position of indifference and acquiescence, or even at times of tacit approval.<sup>1</sup>

Annas, undismayed by his previous failure, made up his mind to a second arrest; before, they had laid hands only on S. Peter and S. John; now they proceed to take all the Apostles,<sup>2</sup> and instead of locking them up in the precincts of the council-chamber, they put them this time in the public prison. It must have been towards evening when the arrest was made, for their trial was postponed till the morrow. It was a rule of the Sanhedrim that a prisoner be tried and condemned or acquitted on the same day; so it was that they placed them in custody for the night, and every precaution was taken to preclude the possibility of an escape; "the prison was shut with all safety," and sentinels were posted outside to keep watch over the gates.

At daybreak the Sanhedrim assembled in court, and the case to be brought before them was deemed of such special importance that the members of the Council called to their assistance a number of assessors. They were a body of men who were

<sup>1</sup> Witness the moderate counsels of Gamaliel in this trial, and afterwards the part taken by converts from the Pharisees, xv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> All the Apostles were now in Jerusalem, and verse 29 implies that all were arrested.

Macc. i. 10; dignified with the title of "the Senate of the Sons  
iv. 44. of Israel." They have been described as "a council  
of laymen," the Nestors of the people, men qualified  
by age and ripened experience to speak with  
weight on any unusually perplexing case or critical  
inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

As soon as the session was formed, the officers of the Court were despatched to bring the prisoners to the bar; on their arrival there was nothing to excite any suspicion of their purpose being defeated; but on opening the cells, the warders found them empty. By what means the escape had been contrived no one seemed to have the slightest idea, at least none of those more immediately concerned, gives even a hint; but S. Luke, when he wrote, had heard the tradition, which he clearly believed, that an angel had brought them out. Possibly the prisoners themselves, for they alone would be cognisant of it, divulged their supernatural deliverance to their judges, and told them how they had been expressly commanded by the angel to preach to the people the words of

<sup>1</sup> The title is nowhere else in the N.T., but the shorter form, the Senate, is found in 2 Macc. i. 10, and iv. 44, as a designation of the Supreme Council. From this, some have thought that it is merely explanatory here, and should be translated, "the Council, even the Senate," etc., but the other view is far more widely supported.

eternal life.<sup>1</sup> It would give force and pertinence to their conclusion that their conscience had left them no alternative as to the course they should take; they were bound to obey the direct command of God rather than the prohibition of men.

Their defence made a very strong and adverse impression upon the Council; something they said seems to have stung them to the quick. It is described by a remarkable figure, for which we have no English equivalent; every word they spoke went deeper and deeper, till "they were sawn asunder"; it is repeated in describing the effect of S. Stephen's vii. 54. speech; and in both cases the result was the same: it filled them with rage and fury. It is quite possible that the immediate cause in this instance may have been the appeal of the prisoners to the intervention of an angel.<sup>2</sup> Nothing could have been more galling to a body of Sadducees than to be openly told that their plans had been frustrated and the prison doors unbarred by an angel—a being

<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt a reference to the resurrection, which ζωή, the principle of life, here used, suggests; cf. S. John xi. 24, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (ζωή). It is not βίος, as the expression seems to indicate—that is the life we live, not that by which we live.

<sup>2</sup> The consideration of this angelic appearance is reserved for ch. xii., where it will be more fully dealt with, together with the objections that have been raised to it.

Acts xxiii. 8. whose very existence it was known they positively denied, for it was one of their distinctive and most cherished tenets that "there is neither angel nor spirit."

The Council was upon the point of proceeding to extremities, when it was saved from the guilt of bloodshed by the interposition of a very distinguished member, Gamaliel. He is, perhaps, the most interesting character, outside the pale of Christianity, that we meet with in the pages of the New Testament. We say "outside" with reluctance, for the tradition that he was converted and died in the faith of Jesus Christ, is now discredited as resting on insufficient authority.<sup>1</sup> He belonged to one of the most famous of all Jewish families. It was now about eighty years since the rise of those two antagonistic parties or rival Rabbinical Schools, whose disputes fill so large a portion of the history of the nation during the period immediately preceding the ministry of Christ. They represented respectively what we should call Conservative and Liberal opinions in all matters connected with the

Baronius,  
Ann. Eccles.  
Photius,  
Cod. 171,  
p. 199.  
Clem. Re-  
cognit. i. 65.  
Lightfoot,  
Exercit. in  
loco.

<sup>1</sup> In the *Clem. Recog.* it is stated that he "was secretly a brother in the faith" at the time of the trial. In this place he is said to have pacified the Council by the promise of refuting the prisoners in argument on the next day. The untrustworthiness of the tradition rests upon the distinct Jewish evidence that he died a Jew.

Law and its interpretation; the head of the former was Shammai; the head of the latter, Hillel. This Hillel was the grandfather of Gamaliel. Both of them were Rabbans, a title given to only seven in all Jewish history, and none of them gained greater distinction or was more beloved<sup>1</sup> than Gamaliel, for he was commonly designated "the Beauty of the Law"; and posterity went so far as to say that "when Rabbi Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law was extinguished."

It was, no doubt, the weight of authority attaching to his name, combined with his great popularity, which gained him a hearing at a crisis when the whole Court was in a tumult of excitement and anger. What influenced him to stand up in the face of such opposition, and offer advice which went in the very teeth of his brother councillors' determination, we can only conjecture. It is not unlikely that he was intimate with Nicodemus, and that he remembered his wise interposition when the Pharisees were so indignant that Jesus had not been arrested. He may have known Joseph of Arimathæa, and have been of the number of those who refused to condemn Jesus in such precipitate

S. John  
vii. 50, 51.

<sup>1</sup> It was said that there was the greatest lamentation at his death, and as much as seventy pounds' weight of precious perfumes was burned at his funeral.

S. Luke  
xxiii. 51.

haste. His policy was to do nothing rashly, but to wait the course of events. He was wise and observant enough to know that "hasty judgments are dangerously liable to error," and that "there is a strength and majesty in truth which needs no aid from violence and persecution."

As soon as Gamaliel had calmed the excitement, he had the prisoners removed, and then began his condemnation of what the Court had resolved upon, appealing to history in support of more moderate counsels. He could put before them two cases, he said, with some remarkable points of resemblance to present circumstances, the lesson of which ought certainly not to be lost upon them. Within their memory a man named Theudas had created a great disturbance by exciting a rebellion against the government, but somehow or other it all subsided, the ringleader was slain, and nothing more was heard of the movement.<sup>1</sup> And this was not the only case: a number

Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. ii. 17.

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke has often been accused of inaccuracy, because he places the insurrection of Theudas before that of Judas, whereas Josephus places it many years after it, even after this time. The mistake, if there be any, was made by Gamaliel. S. Luke only records what his informant told him that Gamaliel had said; and even if he had known that it contained an historical mistake, he could hardly have corrected it in a report of his speech. But it is by no means certain that there is any mistake at all. Although there are many points of resemblance in Josephus's account of the revolt of Theudas to what Gamaliel says of him, it is well known

of religious fanatics, headed by a turbulent Galilæan, had refused to pay the taxes imposed by the Romans, insisting that they owed allegiance and ought to pay tribute to God alone. A religious war was imminent, but at the critical moment he too met with his death, and the whole revolution collapsed.

Joseph.  
Antiq.  
xviii. i. 1-6;  
xx. v. 2.  
Wars,  
ii. viii. 1.

Here surely, Gamaliel argued, was sufficient encouragement to induce them to wait the order of Providence. If, like their predecessors, these men were mere revolutionary agitators, they would probably share their fate; if, however, they had right on their side, all opposition would certainly be useless, possibly it might recoil upon themselves with disastrous results; if the work were of men, it would fall to pieces; if it were of God, no human power could cause its destruction.

As an argument, based upon prudential principles pure and simple, it was unanswerable; and it appears that the Sanhedrists thought so, for they

from Josephus that about this time there were innumerable insurrections, and the land was constantly in a state of tumult from fanatical aspirants. Theudas was an extremely common name, and there may easily have been two rebels so called within forty years. Josephus mentions four insurgents of the name of Simon, and three called Judas, within the same period. It is unreasonable to say there could not be two named Theudas. Bengel, Winer, Ebrard, Olshausen, and others, accept this theory.

agreed to act upon his advice. It was necessary, however, that their dignity should be maintained, which they feared would hardly be the case if the trial issued in nothing; accordingly it was proposed as a compromise, which Gamaliel accepted, that the prisoners should be flogged and then released, with a strict admonition to be more careful in future.

There are few Christians who may not learn a salutary lesson from the conduct of this Jewish Rabban. We constantly find ourselves in positions of doubt and perplexity, anxious, it may be, to carry out some scheme, which is presented to us with evident and plausible attractions; and we are apt to decide hastily in its favour. How much wiser it would be if we would always bring to the consideration of it the calm critical wisdom of Gamaliel! Does conscience suggest any doubt? has the Church anywhere disallowed such a thing? is it inconsistent with the spirit of Holy Scripture? If any one of these Divine counsellors create misgivings, there is only one safe course to take, no matter how bitter the disappointment: "Refrain from it, and leave it alone"; otherwise we may be found fighting against One Whom no man has ever met in conflict and prevailed.

## XIX.

### The Institution of a Diaconate.

THE ACTS VI. 1-7.

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 neglected in the daily ministration. 2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. 3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. 4. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. 5. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: 6. whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them. 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.

WE reach here an eventful epoch in the development of the constitution of the Church. Hitherto the Apostolate has been the sole fountain of government and ministration; this was the only Order directly appointed by our Blessed Lord. Whether He revealed to the Apostles during the Forty Days the exact organisation of the Church, with its threefold

graduated ministry, we are not told, but the absence of all hesitancy and doubt, when the need for development arose, points to such a conclusion. There are so many correspondences between the Old and the New Dispensations that we are almost forced to conclude that they had the express sanction of Him, Who asserted that "He came not to destroy, but to fulfil," *i.e.* to fill up and develop. If it was one of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" upon which He gave His directions, it would seem, by what happened, that while the principle was then laid down, they were told to wait for the needs of special offices to arise in the ordinary course of events, and to depend upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how and when to organise what was required. The one undoubted truth that the organisation of the Ministry grew out of temporary emergencies has been often pressed in disparagement of its Divine authority; but "the grand counter-truth which corrects and adjusts this conception" must never be forgotten. It might have been said, for instance, that the Diaconate was "an accident of history," had not the Holy Ghost been given to guide the infant Church how to deal with that accident. This idea has been very clearly and forcibly worked out in the exposition of the two

Acts i. 4.

Collects in the Ordinal, one of which ascribes the appointment of divers Orders to Divine Providence, the other to the Holy Spirit. "Both," it is said, "are in harmony, and require to be thoroughly recognised, if we would not be betrayed into error on the right hand or the left."<sup>1</sup>

The "accident" which led to the creation of the third Order is fully explained by S. Luke. A dispute arose between the Hebrews and the Grecians, or Hellenists, as they are commonly called. A Hebrew,<sup>2</sup> according to the description of the time, was a Jew born in Palestine, who spoke the Hebrew tongue, or the dialect of it called Aramaic, and read the Scriptures in their original language. An Hellenist was a Jew of the Dispersion, or a converted foreigner, who used, not the sacred language of his race, but Greek, and read his Bible in the Septuagint Version. They seem to have had considerable jealousy of each other, and easily took offence. An opportunity for showing their antagonism was given through the daily

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Great Commission*, by the late Bishop Woodford, ch. x.

<sup>2</sup> Generally a Hebrew is a title applied to a Jew by a foreigner, or used by a Jew in describing himself to a foreigner. In late times it distinguished him especially on the side of his language; Jews, heathens, and Christians alike have observed this distinction. Cf. Trench's *New Test. Synon.* 153.

administration of the funds contributed for the common support of the Christians at Jerusalem. The Hellenists made a formal complaint that the distribution had not been marked by the impartiality which they had a right to expect. The Apostles at once determined to have the matter investigated, and, to avoid all possibility of dissatisfaction in the future, by the appointment of duly accredited officers to attend to this business. In asking the community to make the selection, they insisted upon these qualifications: they must be careful to select only those who were well spoken of for unimpeachable honesty, who combined learning and wisdom with a sound judgment, and, as became all who were to hold office in the Church, thoroughly religious-minded men.

Lightfoot,  
Horæ Hebr.

The multitude of believers at once recognised the reasonableness of relieving their chief rulers of the burden of secular occupations, that they might be free for the discharge of their highest duties, and they made a selection of seven names for the approval of the Apostles. Now it is quite impossible not to see the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit in the whole of this transaction; first, in seizing an event, in which the Hellenistic party were specially interested, for the organisation of

a new order of ministers in the Church; and secondly, in so overruling the first appointment as to impart to it a distinct stamp of Catholicity.

The Founder of the Church was by birth and education a Jew. The twelve Apostles were all Jews. This created a presumption that the constitution of the Church would be distinctly Jewish in all its parts when it came to be developed; that, in short, like its predecessor, it would be confined to a more or less limited number, and become, what Judaism had been, a privileged sect rather than an all-embracing Catholic Church. We have only to follow the steps of the chief Apostle, S. Peter, to realise how thoroughly Jewish he was, how deeply steeped from head to foot in Jewish prejudices, how God was obliged, so to speak, to employ supernatural means to convince him that the door of acceptance was thrown open to the Gentile, and that the prerogative of Israel must cease to be a barrier to the admission of other races to an equal fellowship in Christ Jesus.

Even after that miraculous vision in which God told him that nothing was common in His sight, Acts x. 15. S. Peter seemed to be still afraid of free and open intercourse with Gentile society, for it is recorded that his brother Apostle was compelled to re-

Gal. ii. 12. monstrate with him publicly, because "he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision."

Nothing could show us more convincingly what great danger there was that, if the preaching of the Gospel had been confined to S. Peter and those who shared his views upon Jewish exclusiveness, Christianity would have degenerated from the ideal of its Founder, and in lapse of time have become wholly sectarian. This single page of its early history teaches us how the wisdom of God, by the agency of His Holy Spirit, guided the counsels of the Church, and overruled an apparently unimportant complaint of one section of the body to stamp indelibly upon the whole those characteristics which Christ intended it to bear, when He gave the Apostles their commissions to "make disciples of all the nations" (R.V.).

S Matt.  
xxviii. 19.

The people who lodged the complaint before the Apostles, that their widows had been neglected and treated unjustly by the almoners<sup>1</sup> of the Common

<sup>1</sup> It must not be supposed that the Apostles had administered the Fund with their own hands; probably men had volunteered their services for the work; and the plea of the former, that they ought not to be made "to serve tables" was based upon the fear that they might have to undertake it *per se* if a recurrence of complaints was to be avoided. This would be avoided by a careful selection of persons with special qualifications for the office.

Fund, were men of wide sympathies and much knowledge of the world, men who had lived and moved among different races, and had imbibed largely of the spirit of Greek civilisation.

They had a distinct grievance, and they laid it before the authorities. How was it received? Not at all as it would have been in these later days. We should have appointed a "committee of investigation," and care would certainly have been taken to avoid any preponderance on the side of the aggrieved party; the most that would have been conceded to the complainants would have been to divide the commission, so as to give them an equal number of representatives with those of the accused. But the primitive Christians thought first of redressing the wrong, and to ensure full justice being done to those who felt themselves injured, they chose seven, every one of whom was known to sympathise with them. Their names are all Greek, and it is a fair inference that they were all Hellenists.

Now what momentous results flowed from such an appointment! In speaking of this it must be borne in mind, as after events proved, that the deacons were designed ultimately to perform more important functions than that which occupied their

first thought and attention. Almost the next thing that we hear of after their ordination is the rapid spread of the Gospel ; it was due, no doubt, to their preaching, and the exercise of supernatural gifts, which some of them are reported to have possessed. Further, the conduct, the prayers, and the death of their chief, led to the conversion of an Apostle who more than any other moulded the character of the Infant Church, and set himself resolutely to crush every attempt to make it less Catholic than our Lord intended it to be, I mean S. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles.

Now it is worthy of notice at the present day, that one distinct testimony is borne by S. Luke to the necessity of wisdom as a qualification for a deacon, and also to its invincible power when inspired by the Holy Ghost ; and “ they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by Which he spake.” There are men who are ready to lower the intellectual standard of the Diaconate in view of drawing greater numbers into the ministry of the Church to meet the demands of a rapidly increasing population. It must never be forgotten that it is the province of the Church to teach no less than to preach, and in an age of liberty and freedom of opinion, there is the utmost danger of

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even fundamental doctrines being ignored or denied, unless dogmatic truth is clearly and forcibly taught; and no man can teach unless he has learnt, and learnt that wisdom which enabled the first deacon, S. Stephen, to resist all his adversaries.

## XX.

### Preparations for the Trial of S. Stephen.

#### THE ACTS VI. 8-15.

8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people. 9. Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. 11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God. 12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council, 13. and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: 14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us. 15. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

S. STEPHEN was interrupted in his work by the opposition of certain members of the leading Hellenistic synagogues in Jerusalem. Five are named, the Libertines, the children of those Jewish captives whom Pompey led in triumph and afterwards emancipated, some of whom settled in Rome, while others returned to Jerusalem. The Cyrenians and Alexandrians came from places where the Jews

Joseph. Ant.  
xiv. vii. 2;  
xvi. vi. 1.

had taken deep root and almost outnumbered the native population. The Cilicians attract our attention from the probability that they were represented on this occasion by Saul of Tarsus; while the Asiatics belonged to the district known as Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital. It was a formidable array for S. Stephen to confront, but he was so irresistible in his arguments that they abandoned fair and open controversy and betook themselves to dishonest charges and wilful misrepresentations. They entered in their service men who accused him in the most reckless manner of blaspheming God and dishonouring Moses; but when they came before the Council and were put upon their oath, they seem to have been afraid of their words, and modified their accusations. What S. Stephen had really said we shall see when we read his defence. His trial is such a momentous one that we feel constrained to enter into the fullest details of it. The Sanhedrim, before which he was arraigned, was the supreme ecclesiastical Court of the nation; its origin is unknown, but the Jews claimed to be able to trace it back to Moses, who associated with himself seventy elders, and hence, as the Rabbis maintained, the peculiar number of seventy-one councillors was accounted for. "How," one of

Mishn.  
Sanhed. i. 6.

them asks, "can you prove that the great Sanhedrim consisted of seventy-one judges? The answer is given in Numbers xi. 16, where it is said, 'Gather unto me seventy elders of Israel.' Add Moses to these and we have seventy-one." This, however, has been disputed, and in the light of the fact that there is no trace of such a tribunal all through the Judges and Kings, it is thought that

<sup>2</sup> Macc. i. 10;  
iv. 44; xi. 27.

"the Senate of the Jews" (R.V.), which is the Maccabean title for this Court, had its beginning subsequently to the return from the Babylonian captivity. After this it is universally recognised as the Supreme Court, comprising in its membership all the most influential elements in Jewish life; senatorial, sacerdotal, and legal. It used to hold its sessions in "the Lischath Haggazith," or chamber of polished marble at the south-east corner of the Temple;<sup>1</sup> and though it is commonly said that at this time it had migrated to "the Booths of the Sons of Aaron," the narrative before us suggests a doubt of this. The charge against Stephen was that he had depreciated the inviolable sanctity of the Temple, but his accusers think to add force to

Mishn.  
Sanhed. xi. 2.

<sup>1</sup> It was a tradition among the Jews that the Temple site had been chosen for its sessions in order that the proximity to the altar might inspire the judges with awe to give a righteous judgment.

the charge by saying that he had spoken "blasphemous words against this holy place," and had threatened that Jesus would "destroy this place." They did not mean Jerusalem, for the way in which the accused rebuts the slander shows that it was the Temple—the building, that is, in which they were then assembled.

The Court sat in a semicircle, the High Priest occupying the central seat; on his right sat one who was called "the Father," the Nestor of the people, chosen for his age; on his left the most learned, entitled "the Wise Man." The rest of the Councillors were placed in order of seniority, an equal number on either side, while at the extremities there were two scribes to keep the minutes of the trial, and record the judgment. The prisoner stood in the chord of the arc confronting the President, having his prosecutor on his right hand, as in all Jewish Courts, hence the significance of the expression in the Psalmist's imprecation, "Set thou a wicked man over him, *i.e.* as judge, and let Satan stand at his right hand"; *i.e.* let him have the impersonation of malice to prosecute him.

Selden, de  
Synhed. vet.  
Ebræoram.  
Winer,  
Realwörter-  
buch, Syn-  
hedrium.

Ps. cix

Such was the arrangement of the Court before which S. Stephen made his memorable defence. Before we give a summary of his argument, it

will be well to notice a few circumstances of interest in connection with it.

First, it was in all probability spoken in the Greek language. Stephen was an Hellenist, one who habitually spoke Greek and used the Greek translation of the Scriptures, as distinct from the Palestinian Jews, who spoke Aramaic and read the Word of God in the original Hebrew. The Sanhedrists before whom he pleaded were the most highly educated men in Jerusalem, and as Greek would be more familiar to them than French is at the present time to an Englishman of ordinary culture, the accused would not feel himself at any serious disadvantage if he was unable to address his judges in the vernacular of the country.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the report of what he said was in all probability made by one who heard the trial. Saul of Tarsus was present, either as an assessor or a member of the Court, probably the former, for his youth is especially noticed, and no one was eligible for actual membership until he was married and had children of his own. It was supposed to be

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, it has been urged that he would be likely to speak Aramaic to ingratiate himself with the Court, but the probability is greater that they would be able to understand Greek, than that he, an Hellenist, could be sufficiently conversant with the vernacular to risk making his defence in it.

a guarantee that his decisions would be influenced by kind and merciful considerations. Inasmuch, however, as the age of youth did not cease among the Jews before thirty, or even later, it is not conclusive, and if the vote that he speaks of having given in condemning saints to death at Jerusalem Acts xxvi. 10. can be rightly referred to this occasion, it may well have been that he was actually a Sanhedrist. In whatever capacity he was present, it is certain that Stephen's defence made a deep and lasting impression upon his mind, and influenced him very largely in the speeches which he made after he became a Christian. It is a most interesting study to trace out the numerous coincidences in phraseology, figures, quotations, and illustrative examples which are to be found in this utterance and in the Apostle's letters and speeches. Indeed, it has been said that "the whole of the Pauline theology finds its germs in this apology of Stephen."

Goulburn,  
Acts of the  
Deacons,

With the knowledge of this, it seems only natural i. v. to conclude that he reported to St. Luke that which had sunk so deeply into his memory; for the connection between S. Luke and S. Paul is generally admitted to have been very close, and certainly of such a kind as would have prompted the one to give and the other to receive such information.

This suggests, thirdly, a mode of accounting for several slight discrepancies between some historic circumstances, as described in Stephen's survey and in the Book of Genesis.<sup>1</sup> The only person who could have given a full and strictly accurate report of the speech was dead; and it is hardly likely that Saul had remembered the whole; some of the inaccuracies, therefore, or lapses of memory, may have been due to the reporter rather than the speaker. It was not the office of the Evangelist to find out where the mistakes had occurred, even if he had noticed them; indeed, they were so unimportant that they did not affect the drift of the argument, and the knowledge of this would have made it unnecessary to dispute what was then incapable of being proved.

If, however, it is believed that S. Paul gave a true and complete version of Stephen's argument, it does not in any way traverse the trustworthiness of Holy Scripture. There is nothing in this narrative to indicate that he claimed that guidance of the Spirit "into all truth," which Christ had promised

<sup>1</sup> In the belief that strict historic accuracy was not necessary in such a speech, I far prefer to pass the difficulties by without attempting explanations, which, to judge from some of the most familiar commentaries, are far more calculated to increase than remove objections. Inspiration was given to reveal what man could not discover for himself, not to make him infallible on unimportant details.

to the Apostles. He had, moreover, no time to prepare his defence, caught as he was in a sudden outburst of popular indignation and fury; he was put upon his trial without a moment's premeditation; and though it is true that it was such a case as our Lord had contemplated when He had said to His disciples, "Take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye, for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost"; it may fairly be distinguished from the promise which was made by Christ to the Apostles of Divine assistance in bringing all things to their remembrance, which He Himself had said unto them. It was all-important that Christ's words should be reported with perfect accuracy, for the instruction of after-ages; it was quite unimportant that some details of long bygone history should be imperfectly represented, especially if, as in the case of Stephen, it in no way affected the force of his argument. "The great scope of the revelation" which he made to the Jews would not have been a whit clearer if every detail in his illustrations had been in strict accordance with accepted history. "Inspiration," it has been well said, "like the kingdom of God, is not in word but in power."

S. Mark  
xiii. 11.

S. John  
xiv. 26.

Goulburn,  
The Acts of  
the Deacons.

## XXI.

### S. Stephen's Deductions from the History of the Patriarchs.

#### THE ACTS VII. 1-19.

1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so? 2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, 3. and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee. 4. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Charran: and from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell. 5. And he gave him none 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 bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years. 7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve Me in this place. 8. 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 twelve patriarchs. 9. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him, 10. and delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11. 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 out our fathers first. 13. And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh. 14. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. 15. So Jacob went

down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, 16. 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. 17. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn

to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt, 18. till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. 19. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

S. STEPHEN was placed at the bar of the Supreme Court on a distinct charge of having spoken "blasphemous words against the holy place (*i.e.* the Temple) and the Law." The witnesses are described as "false," and they are said to have been "suborned"; their evidence was a studied perversion of the meaning of what he had said; and he proceeded to rebut the charge by showing how entirely they had misrepresented him. There are, however, two main purposes apparent in his speech: first, by the exigency of the circumstances, his personal defence, the overthrow of his adversaries, by whom he had been placed on trial for his life; but beyond this, and in his eyes far transcending it in importance, a counter-charge that the treatment of Moses by their ancestors, and indeed all their national history, bore unmistakable evidence of their own sinful rejection of grace and truth.

He did not attempt to deny that he had spoken of the destruction of the Temple and the suppression of the Law; his Master had predicted of the former

S. Matt.  
xxiv. 2.

Gal. iii. 24.

that "there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down"; and he had seen that the Law, with its elaborate ritual, was only "a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ"; but he had the profoundest reverence for both of them. Both had a high and holy purpose, and it would have been impossible for him to disparage them; they had been given by God to the Jews as a special prerogative, but all the time it was designed by God that the blessings which they symbolised should receive a fuller development, and ultimately extend over a wider range—to the Jew first, but also to the Gentile.

This great truth S. Stephen sets himself to prove. His line of defence and method of argument were prompted, no doubt, by the Holy Spirit with which he was filled, for the skill and wisdom that he exhibited bespeak some supernatural assistance.

Every eye in Court must have been fixed upon him, when the High Priest asked him whether he pleaded guilty to the charge on which he had been arraigned. The form in which he put the question comes as a surprise. In its moderation and pacific tone it seems to consist so little with the rage and indignation which had marked the prisoner's arrest, and the whole conduct of the scribes and elders.

It is the language, not of an overbearing judge eager to crush his victim, but almost of an earnest inquirer after truth. How is such a sudden transformation to be accounted for? S. Luke has explained it; "all," he says, that sat in the Council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." We cannot tell whether it was a preternatural brightness, illuminating his whole countenance in evident attestation of the Divine favour, like the reflection which shone upon the face of Moses, after he had been in communion with God; or whether it was the majesty of innocence making itself felt, as it did, only with more striking power, in the Garden of Gethsemane, when it struck the company of Judas prostrate on the ground;<sup>1</sup> or whether it may have been, as we have often read in the dying hours of Saints and Martyrs, a foregleam of the future glory, the beautiful sunset of an earthly life overspread with the coming light of eternity. Whichever of these, or whatever else it may have been, it transfixed for the time the whole Council with amazement, and in the silence that ensued the High Priest was awed into meekness, and for a moment, perhaps,

S. John  
xviii. 6.

<sup>1</sup> I use this illustration, because it is the interpretation of many. More probably it was a flash of His Divinity which struck them.

trusting the truth of the allegations, spoke to the prisoner in a relenting tone: "Tell me, is it so? Is it true what they are saying?" and Stephen began his defence with calmness and confidence. The wisdom and judgment with which he spoke shows itself at the very outset; his sudden and unexpected appeal to the great traditions of the nation would ensure at once the closest attention of the Court; a public review of their history was always a pleasant thing to hear, for it fostered a legitimate pride, and revived the memory of the unique privileges which their ancestors had enjoyed as the chosen people of God. Knowing this, S. Stephen began to survey the lives of three of the greatest heroes of Israel, whose names were written indelibly on the records of the past, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses; and he proceeded to illustrate from their history the principles which he had maintained, and to show how their contemporaries had been guilty of the very charges, which he meant them to infer, that their children had incurred by rejecting their Saviour.

Abraham, the founder of our race, he says,<sup>1</sup> was called by the voice of God to be the father of the

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter we give the meaning of his speech, expanding or paraphrasing his words in order to convey this more clearly.

faithful, but this great honour was not conferred upon him in the Temple or in Jerusalem, or even in Palestine. It is a witness to God's purpose, that spiritual privileges are not tied to any special locality. Not only was he not called in the Holy Land, it was not even in Haran, but in Mesopotamia,<sup>1</sup> far away beyond the great river. God's first appearance to him was not within what they accounted the sacred confines; it was on heathen soil. So with the promise; God had assured him that our land should be the possession of his seed, but how far was he from seeing its fulfilment! He had in it no fixed abode whatever. The grave in which he was laid was all that he could call his

Joseph.  
i. vii. 1.  
Philo de  
Migratione  
Abrahami,  
§ 32.

<sup>1</sup> This is one of the difficulties spoken of in the previous chapter. In Genesis xi. there is no mention of an appearance of God to him before he was in Haran, but it is confirmed by tradition that he received a double call, viz., from Ur in Chaldæa and from Haran. Cf. Philo *de Abrahamo*, t. ii. p. 11, ed. T. Mangey, and side-notes above. Another supposed mistake is in verse 14, where Stephen makes those who went down into Egypt threescore and fifteen souls, whereas the number is elsewhere (Genesis xvi. 27, Exodus i. 5, and Deuteronomy x. 22) stated to be seventy.

A third and fourth are found in the 15th and 16th verses, where Jacob is said to have been buried in Sychem, while in Genesis i. 13 the cave of Machpelah is noted as his burial-place; and Stephen makes Abraham the purchaser of the plot of ground at Sychem, while in Genesis xxxiii. 19 Jacob is said to have bought it. I am not careful to attempt an explanation, and have already given my reason for not being troubled by the apparent discrepancies.

own. For four hundred years his descendants were excluded from their promised inheritance, and obliged to live as captives and sojourners in a Gentile country. If there were any such virtue in local conditions as his accusers claimed, God could hardly have kept His favoured race for so many centuries in foreign lands. During all this time Abraham was "the Friend of God," and his posterity were "the children of promise," and it proves that the prerogative of Divine favour and sonship was not circumscribed by time or place, for if they had been, God would have removed him without delay within the borders of Canaan.

S. James  
ii. 23.

Then further there is the Covenant of Circumcision, by which we are brought into union with God; that which every Jew values as his distinctive privilege, the seal of God's favour. It was given expressly by God to Abraham, and was continued from him through Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs, and, save during the wanderings in the wilderness, never omitted. But when did Abraham receive it? Not till after God had appeared to him, and had given him the promise that in his seed "all families of the earth should be blessed." There is only one conclusion to draw. God may call others, and make them

Josh. v. 5.

Gen. xii. 3.

participators in His blessings, who have never received the Rite, which you regard as the sign of an exclusive claim to the Divine favour.

From Abraham S. Stephen passes to Joseph. It is not however so much in self-defence that he appeals to his history, as in evidence of the sin of their ancestors in rejecting their appointed deliverer. But he states, and with much significance, that when Joseph's brethren had "sold him into Egypt," the Divine presence never forsook him; "God was with him" there, and it seemed to him another proof of what he insisted upon, that the blessings and favour of God were not confined to those who dwelt in the Holy Land. And this was not all; the history of Joseph reflected, though this he left them to gather for themselves, as in a mirror, their conduct towards Jesus, their would-be Saviour, even as his brethren rejected Joseph, who in the foreknowledge of God was to save them from famine and destruction. The parallel could not be missed by any possibility: "as your fathers did, so do ye." The patriarchs, moved with envy, sold their brother, the favourite son of his father, to the Midianitish people, and thought that they would hear no more of his claims to their homage; but years went by, and they saw him whom they had

evil-entreated raised to be second only to the King of Egypt.

Was it not, he meant to ask his judges, an exact foreshadowing of what, in part at least, had been fulfilled by them? Had they not taken one of their own countrymen, ay their very brother, bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh, Jesus the Son of Mary, Who was also the Beloved Son of God, and delivered Him up to heathen and wicked hands, with the patriarch's cry upon their lips, "Away with Him! away with Him!" "we will not have this Man to reign over us"? And the parallel did not end here, for that same Jesus Whom they had despised, and rejected, and sold, like His forerunner, for a mere handful of shekels,<sup>1</sup> was now raised to an even higher position, for He was seated on the very throne of God.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver, Gen. xxxvii. 28; our Blessed Lord for thirty, S. Matt. xxvi. 15.

## XXII.

### S. Stephen's Repudiation of the Charge of Blasphemy.

THE ACTS VII. 20-56.

20. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months: 21. 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, and was mighty in words and in deeds. 23. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. 24. And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: 25. for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not. 26. 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 one to another? 27. But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? 28. Wilt

thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? 29. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, 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 flame of fire in a bush. 31. When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32. *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: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. 34. 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 Egypt. 35. 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 appeared to him in the bush. 36. 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 brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear. 38. 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 received the lively oracles to give unto us: 39. to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt, 40. 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 become of him. 41. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42. 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, 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 wilder-

ness, as He had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that He should make it according to the fashion that he had seen. 45. Which also our fathers that came after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David; 46. who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. 47. 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 stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye. 52. 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 and murderers: 53. 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, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth. 55. 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 of God, 56. and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God.

IN the second half of his speech we have his answer to the charge which they had laid against

him of blaspheming Moses. His whole life told him that Moses was a chosen vessel of God. I yield to no one, he seems to say, in my belief of this. I see God watching over him and dealing graciously with him throughout all the three great periods of forty years into which his life is divided. Take his infancy; no fairer child ever breathed; he was beautiful even in the eyes of God.<sup>1</sup> Is it not said by our Rabbis that if any one saw him pass they turned to look, quite fascinated by his face? And did not God put it into the heart of Pharaoh's daughter to deliver him from peril and bring him up as her own child, till he became "learned in all the wisdom" of the country, and "mighty in words and in deeds"? I acknowledge all this, but I cannot forget that these marks of distinction and favour were heaped upon him, not in the favoured land of Palestine, but in heathen Egypt.

Vorstius,  
de Synhed.  
Hebr. xvi.

Then look at the greatest honour that any mortal man can possibly receive—the unveiling to him of the Divine glory. It was vouchsafed to Moses when he entered upon the second epoch of his life. But where? The vision of God in the burning Exod. iii. 2.

<sup>1</sup> ἀστειὸς τῷ Θεῷ; for a similar phrase cf. Jonab iii. 3 in LXX., πόλις μεγάλη τῷ Θεῷ.

bush was on ground that He declared to be so holy that Moses must uncover his feet before he drew near; but again, it was not in Palestine. God's Presence was every bit as much in the bare uncultivated wilderness of Midian as within the curtains of that Temple which David had said "must be exceeding magnificent."

1 Chron.  
xxii. 5.

Deut.  
xxxiii. 2, 3.  
Ps. lxxviii. 17.

But what shall I say of the Law? Was not Moses chosen to be the recipient of those Tables which God had written with His own Finger, and were not myriads of angels summoned to add dignity to the promulgation? Now how did your forefathers treat the divinely appointed lawgiver? Why, before he had come down from the Mount they broke one of the very first commandments: "they made a calf and offered sacrifice unto the idol." Even though God had revealed to Moses the pattern of the Tabernacle, they were dissatisfied, and in mutinous rebellion against the Most High, they raised aloft the shrine of Moloch and the star of Remphan,<sup>1</sup> emblems of the hosts of heaven, to which they transferred their homage.

It is true, he said, that at last the worship of

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew it is Chiun, in LXX. Remphan. Gesenius thinks that Chiun, which is an ἀπαξ λεγ., means an image or idol; he also says that Raiphan or Rephan was an Egyptian word for the planet Saturn.

God was all centred in the Temple which Solomon built, but in the very dedication prayer its builder foretold that the Presence of God could never be confined within its walls; "the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded!" 1 Kings viii. 27. And lest the people should forget the great fact which Solomon was constrained to set forth in these words, Isaiah was inspired to re-echo them with emphasis in condemnation of that narrow spirit of exclusiveness which strove to "comprehend" God within the walls of the Temple, against which I have protested, and for which alone I am charged with "blasphemy against this holy place." Such was the argument by which he defended himself; but through all that he said ran an undertone of severe rebuke. At first it was covert and restrained, not expressed at all in words. Joseph, whom your ancestors, being filled with envy, despised and sold as a slave, had been raised to a position of the highest dignity, and made lord and ruler over them. Have you, he seems to ask them, no eyes to see that the children on the self-same ground delivered over to Pilate one of your own brethren, Who wished to be your Saviour?

It was the same with Moses. He had taken his life in his hand, and interposed to save his country-

man by slaying the Egyptian, but the only return for his patriotism was the scornful inquiry, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" Are you so blind that you cannot see a repetition of this history, when He Who was ready to lay down His life for the brethren, "came unto His own, but His own received Him not"?

All this was left for their own inference, but the time came at last for him to throw off his reserve. Hitherto he had kept "his mouth as it were with a bridle, while the ungodly were in his sight," but now "the fire kindled," and he could restrain his indignation no longer. It may be that he saw signs of anger and heard murmurs of disapprobation; but whatever the cause, he suddenly gathered up his denunciation into an outspoken vehement invective. I have recapitulated the history of our nation; it is a tale of unparalleled forbearance and goodness from the hands of the Almighty, but it is an awful record of unbroken resistance to Divine grace; "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," you have betrayed and murdered Him, every one of Whose servants your ancestors ruthlessly persecuted; and though you make your boast of the Law, there is not one of its precepts which you have not violated. At this point it is

almost certain that he was abruptly stopt in his speech. The termination is quite unexpected, and we feel, that after the severity of his rebuke and his withering denunciations, he would not, unless the opportunity was denied him, have failed to close with an equally passionate appeal to them to repent of their iniquity and save themselves from the threatened punishment; but he suddenly ceased; and seeing the effect which his words made upon his judges, and hearing them gnashing their teeth with rage, he realised that his fate was sealed, and at once his eyes were raised to heaven from whence alone he knew that he could expect any help; and he was not disappointed of his hope; for the veil was withdrawn, and in the midst of the Divine Glory he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. In the rapture of the scene he lifted up his voice and told them what he saw. It was "the Son of Man" Whom Jesus at the supreme moment of His own trial had assured His accusers would hereafter be seated where Stephen now declared that he saw Him. It filled up the measure of their rage against him. They would hear him no longer; and at once all order was at an end. No formal sentence was pronounced, but the Supreme Court of the nation became a scene of

the wildest tumult, and the prisoner was left at the mercy of an infuriated mob.

The Jews knew that they had nothing to fear, if they took the law entirely into their own hands, and proceeded to extremities.<sup>1</sup> The imperial throne was vacant at the time ; the Roman Governor had quitted Jerusalem, and there was no personal authority to overawe and control them. They might do as they liked without fear of retribution, and being goaded almost to madness by what they had heard, they resolved to wreak their vengeance upon their reprover, and stone him to death.

How he died we shall see hereafter.

<sup>1</sup> They did sometimes act in defiance of the Roman authority *e.g.* they sentenced James the Just to death ; but the Roman Governor deposed Annas the High Priest for the illegal act. Josephus, *Antiq.* xx. ix. 1.

## XXIII.

### The Death of the First Christian Martyr.

THE ACTS VII. 57—VIII. 8.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, 58. and cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. 59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. 60. 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.

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 Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. 2.

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. 4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. 5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6. 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 palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8. And there was great joy in that city.

THE death or martyrdom of S. Stephen has been regarded all through the Christian ages as a theme of never-failing and most touching interest. It has been represented by Christian Art in devotional

Jameson's  
Sacred and  
Legendary  
Art, ii. 534-8.

pictures more frequently perhaps than any subject not immediately connected with our Blessed Lord. The few words in which S. Luke has recorded it are full of suggestiveness. In the vision, for instance, which was vouchsafed to nerve him for his doom, we are told that he saw Jesus "standing" at the right hand of God. Elsewhere in Scripture our Lord is described as "sitting"; hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of God. S. Paul says that God "set Him at His own right hand": and in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read, "We have such an High Priest Who is set on the right hand of the throne"; and in both these places the original implies the posture of sitting. This, however, is not the posture in which we should wish to find one to whom we went for help in time of trouble and distress. It was doubtless for this reason that when the veil was drawn, Jesus was manifested to His faithful servant as standing, as One Who has risen from His seat and is stretching out a helping hand to him in the crisis of his need. Our Church has been careful to preserve this beautiful idea in one of her most beautiful collects: "Grant, O Lord, that in all our sufferings here upon earth for the testimony of Thy truth, we may stedfastly look up to heaven, and by

S. Matt.  
xxvi. 64.  
Fph. i. 20.  
Heb. viii. 1.

The Collect  
for S.  
Stephen's  
Day.

faith behold the glory that shall be revealed ; and, being filled with the Holy Ghost, may learn to love and bless our persecutors by the example of the first martyr, S. Stephen, who prayed for his murderers to Thee, O blessed Jesus, Who standest at the right hand of God to succour all those that suffer for Thee, our only Mediator and Advocate." When we compare this with the extremely meagre form which was abbreviated from the Sarum Missal, and in use till 1661, we have reason to be grateful to Bishop Cosin, who seized a circumstance too touching to be lost, and enshrined it in his revised Office. It was probably to emphasise the same idea that he closed the Collect by appealing to Jesus as an Advocate. An advocate never sits, but stands to plead his client's cause. Now although no thought is more familiar than that "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous," it is particularly noteworthy that the Collect for S. Stephen's Day is the only one<sup>1</sup> in which the thought is allowed to find expression.

<sup>1</sup> S. John  
ii. 1.

"They cast him out of the city." It surprises us that in their excitement and rage they could

<sup>1</sup> It is found in several other prayers, *e.g.* For the Clergy and people ; also at the close of the Litany ; and among the Special Prayers and Thanksgivings.

wait to do this ; but though they would not hesitate to put him to death uncondemned, yet they thought the precincts of the Temple, which in their eyes he had blasphemed, must not be defiled by the blood of a malefactor. They remembered the Law which ordered that such should be executed beyond the walls, and hurried him out either by the gate which opens on the road to Damascus, or by that which is now called S. Stephen's Gate, on the east leading down to the brook Kedron over against Gethsemane.<sup>1</sup>

Then they stoned him ; one of the witnesses, if at least they did as they were wont at such executions, flung him violently over the side of a rock,<sup>2</sup> and then with the help of a second lifted a huge stone and dashed it upon his breast ; and lastly, all that stood by cast stones at him till he died.

While they stoned him, it is said that he was "calling upon *God*." In the original text the Person upon Whom he called is not named. Our

<sup>1</sup> There are two traditions ; the former of the above was believed down to the fifteenth century, since which time the latter has been more generally accepted. The difficulty of identifying places associated with Biblical History is one of the most disappointing things to travellers in the Holy Land, though much has been done by the Palestine Exploration Society.

<sup>2</sup> The depth was fixed at twice the height of a man. The first stone must be such as only two men could lift ; falling on the heart, it often destroyed life at once.

Lev.  
xxiv. 14.

Conybeare  
and Howson's  
S. Paul, i. 89.  
Dr. Robin-  
son's Re-  
searches,  
i. 475.

G. Williams'  
Holy City,  
364.

Deut.  
xvii. 7.

S. John  
viii. 7.

Lightfoot's  
Horæ Heb.  
et Talmud.  
in loco.

present version has supplied what seemed to be wanting, "God," intimating that it was the First Person of the Trinity. The last Revisers have substituted "the Lord," to indicate that it was the Second Person; and this is certainly more in accordance with the prayer that follows: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

They were anticipated in their interpretation by Bishop Cosin, who, in view of perpetuating another characteristic feature of S. Stephen's martyrdom, has addressed his collect to God the Son. With very rare exceptions,<sup>1</sup> Liturgical Collects have always been addressed to the Father, because they form part of an office in which the Son joins with the Church in presenting to the Father the Memorial of His own Sacrifice. It seems, therefore, to introduce an incongruity to appeal at such a time to Him, Who is acting as Priest. It was for this reason that certain of the Early Councils directed that "when we are officiating at the altar, prayer should always be addressed to the Father."

Council of Hippo, 393 A.D.; and Carthage, 397 A.D. Can. 25.

Now we are told in the sacred narrative that S. Stephen "kneeled down" while they were in the

<sup>1</sup> This principle is set forth at length, and the exceptions are fully considered, in *The Divine Liturgy*, ch. xi.

act of stoning him.<sup>1</sup> The picture fills us with amazement. It is so unlike what we should have expected, that some have attempted to persuade us that this was not a voluntary or deliberate act of the martyr. We are not, it is said, to understand that it expresses the purpose of one who was resolved, despite all the violence to which he was subjected, to spend his last moments in a posture of calm resignation and prayer; that would have been next to impossible for any human being to do under such circumstances. He had no alternative; “another crash of stones brought him upon his knees.” I do not think the Christian conscience will readily consent to have such a beautiful feature in the scene explained away. It shows us the dying martyr gathering up his failing strength and all the energy of his expiring life for one last, one crowning act of homage to his Lord; and a record of it stands on the sacred page, to teach us what the greatest of Saints have felt about the value of external forms or bodily postures in expressing the worship that is due from the creature to the Creator. Then let us hear his prayer: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” What an echo it is of his Master’s dying words! “Father, forgive them;

Dean Stanley, in Smith’s Dict. of the Bible.

S. Luke xxiii. 34.

<sup>1</sup> In the Greek it is in the imperfect tense, ἐλιθοβόλουν.

for they know not what they do." No cry that his murderers may receive the due reward of their deeds; that the blood which they shed may be speedily avenged, but an unreserved entreaty that their sins may never be remembered against them. Then there is that other prayer: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He would not use the exact commendation with which His Master had yielded up His soul. He would not say, "Father, into Thy hands": for though the Son of God, needing none to intercede for Him, could go straight to the Father, he, as man, could only draw near through a mediator, for it was expressly said by our Lord, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He S. John  
xiv. 6. remembered it in the supreme moment when the time of his departure came, and prayed to Jesus, "the One Mediator between God and man," to receive his spirit.

He would not even say, "I commend my spirit." Christ could say this, because He had no misgivings, no consciousness of sin of any kind, but was able in perfect confidence to lay His life as an acceptable offering without fear or blemish in God's hands; but S. Stephen, knowing that when he had done all, he was only an unprofitable servant, asked

as a suppliant for Divine mercy, that God would be pleased to receive it.

Such was the first martyrdom. How soon did the martyr's blood become the seed of the Church! He had met his death for declaring the universality of God's Kingdom, that Christianity was destined to spread the blessing of salvation far beyond the Jewish race, even over the whole world; and his dying prayer was answered by the conversion of one, who, as the Apostle of the Gentiles, helped most to preach the Gospel to "every creature which is under heaven." Col. i. 23. S. Augustine said, "If Stephen had not prayed, Paul would never have been given to the Church."<sup>1</sup> It is true the answer was delayed. There are some, however, who believe that the effect was immediate, and that the wild fury of the persecutor, which broke out with such violence, was only a desperate attempt to stifle the convictions which arose in his mind. Painters<sup>2</sup> have caught it up,

<sup>1</sup> Nam si martyr Stephanus non sic orasset, Ecclesia Paulum hodie non haberet.—Sermo cclclxxxii. *De sancto Stephano.*

<sup>2</sup> Conybeare and Howson dwell upon a Spanish painting in the Gallery at Madrid by the founder of the Valencian School, in which this view is distinctly embodied; and they think that "the painter worked according to the true idea of his art in throwing upon the persecutor's countenance the shadow of his coming repentance," ii. 92.

and expressed the idea by the strongest contrast between his face and the faces of the others who witnessed the end. It may have been so; it may be that a foregleam of the coming dawn did touch him even then; but whether it came at once or only in after days, no one will think of denying that there is an eternal link between the martyr's prayer and the Apostle's conversion.

Stirling's  
Annals of  
the Spanish  
Artists,  
i. 363.

## XXIV.

# Simon Magus and Baptismal Regeneration.

THE ACTS VIII. 9-25.

9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime 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, saying, This man is the great power of God. 11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. 12. 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. 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: 15. 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 were baptized in the Name of

the Lord Jesus.) 17. 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 money, 19. saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 20. 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 is not right in the sight of God. 22. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23. 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.

THERE are several characters who come suddenly and unexpectedly on the stage of Scripture History,

and then, after filling us with wonder and curiosity, as suddenly disappear, and are not mentioned again in the sacred page. Simon, the magician or sorcerer, is not the least remarkable of these. He is never named again in the New Testament; but a multitude of legends, more or less improbable, have gathered round his name, and fancy seems to have run quite wild in the marvels it attributed to him. So powerful was his influence, it was said that he was able to convert human beings into brute beasts; that he could make lifeless statues speak; that he claimed to be able to fly, and exhibited his power in the presence of Nero, but was arrested in his flight by the prayer of S. Peter; that he was buried alive at his own express desire in the firm assurance that he would burst the bands and rise from his grave; and finally that his hold on the Romans was so strong that they erected an altar and statue to his honour on the shores of the Tiber.

Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. ii. 14.  
Hippolytus,  
adv. Hær.  
vi. 20.

Justin Mart.  
Apol. i. 26.  
Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. ii. 13.

He has been designated "the hero of the romance of heresy"; and we may judge of the wildness of his heresy from a single sentence in one of the Early Fathers, who has summed up his extraordinary claims in the few words: "He was glorified by many as God, for he taught the people that it was he who appeared to the Jews as God the Son, who

Iren. adv.  
Hær. i.  
xxiii. 1.

had come down to Samaria as the Father, and had come to other nations as the Holy Ghost."

We find him in the sacred narrative at a city of Samaria, Sebaste or Sychar, the inhabitants of which country were said to have been a most simple-minded and credulous folk, especially susceptible to impressions from anything of a supernatural character. It was an age, we must remember, when thaumaturgy was a rôle of the time. Our Lord Himself had prepared men for a great development of deception and imposture ; false Christs and false prophets were to arise and, if it were possible, deceive even the very elect. Simon was the foremost among them ; he had been trained in the act of magic or sorcery in its degenerate form, and had no difficulty in gaining a complete mastery over the Samaritans by the charms and spells which he practised.

In the midst of his wonder-working he was suddenly interrupted by the arrival of S. Philip the Evangelist, whose signs and miracles completely eclipsed all that he had done. Indeed, he was so impressed by their superiority that, in the hope of becoming initiated into the secret, he was baptized, and joined himself to his company. Then, to add to his discomfiture, two of the Apostles, S. Peter and S. John, arrived, and still greater wonders were

wrought by the imposition of their hands. What we commonly call the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were conferred by them on a number whom S. Philip had baptized. Simon Magus was not a recipient of these ; whether S. Philip had discovered the hollowness of his profession or not we are not told ; but he did not bring him, with the rest, for the reception of the Apostolic Gift.

It shows how totally inadequate Simon's faith was, to hear that he thought the power of the Spirit could be purchased by money. Like conjurors and wizards in every age and country, he had spent much to add fresh tricks or spells to his store, and he had come to think that this wonder-working, like everything of the kind, had its price.

He manifested an entire ignorance of the true nature of the miraculous power conferred by the Holy Ghost—both of its character and its object. Love for man and the promotion of God's glory—these two marks were stamped upon every supernatural act which the Apostles performed. To relieve the sufferings of humanity ; to remove physical infirmities ; or to restore the bereft of reason and "the possessed" to self-control and a right mind ; and while doing this to advance God's Kingdom in the hearts of men ; these were the ends

which S. Peter and S. John never lost sight of ; but the magician's horizon was bounded by self ; and all that he cared for was to increase his own resources and to fascinate or terrify the simple folk by the spell of his own personality.

His offer to purchase spiritual gifts called forth the severe and scathing rebuke from S. Peter : " Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." The indignation it expresses is just what we should have expected ; but as the Apostle immediately afterwards exhorted him to repentance, we feel justified in interpreting it as a prediction rather than a curse.

The memory of Simon's proposal has been preserved apart from the Scripture record, for his name has been branded all through the Church's history in connection with an unhallowed traffic in holy things. The purchase of any spiritual office or dignity, or any corrupt presentation to an ecclesiastical benefice for money or reward, is accounted " Simony," though an attempt by such means to procure the gift of ordination itself more exactly corresponds with the sin of which Simon was guilty.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Theologians have defined three kinds of Simony: (1) Trafficking in spiritual gifts ; (2) in preferments ; (3) unhallowed intrusion into sacred functions without proper appointment or ordination. Cf. Baronius, *Ann. Eccl.* 1057, xxx.

There is a difficulty in connection with Simon's baptism, followed as it was so rapidly by a grievous sin, which it will be well for us to explain, for it has become a stumbling-block to Nonconformists, who misunderstand the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

Now, what does the Church teach concerning this? First, that every one born into the world inherits through his descent from Adam a sinful nature; and, secondly, that the object of the Incarnation was to counteract this original tendency, and place within every one's reach a new nature. The means bequeathed by Christ for this purpose is S. John iii. 5. the initial Sacrament of Baptism. In the case of infants, the change is effected in an unconscious state, because baptismal grace is the correlative of original sin; and, as the latter is received unconsciously, so the former is imparted in like manner, in order that the work of the Second Adam may counteract that of the first. Faith and prayer on the part of the sponsors are of course desirable, for they bring an additional blessing, but they are not essential for the child's regeneration.

In adult Baptism the case is different. The grown-up person has not only sinned through Adam's transgression, but also by his own act and

deed ; and, though the Rite of Baptism will of itself remove the stain of original sin, it will not of necessity secure the forgiveness of actual sin, or win for the baptized that fulness of grace, in the power of which we may be saved. For this, faith, prayer, and repentance are all alike requisite, and, if these be wanting, though transferred from a kingdom of wrath into a kingdom of grace, the adult will not receive that gift which will enable him to fulfil his obligations ; and the last state of that man may be worse than the first.

This was just what happened to Simon Magus. We are surprised, perhaps, that Philip should have baptized him ; it may have been that in his eagerness to gain over such an influential convert, he was less circumspect than he should have been ; or, that if he had doubts of his sincerity, in that spirit of charity which has inspired the Church from the beginning, which permits us to bury a sinful man with words of hope and blessing, Philip accepted Simon on his own profession, and refused himself to sit in judgment upon him.

But where Philip was gentle, because he had no proof of his insincerity, S. Peter was severe, because there was no longer any doubt : “ Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the

thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." But there was no true response to the appeal; no manly confession of his sin; no compunction for the deceptions with which he had bewitched the people; no publican's prayer and broken-hearted cry for forgiveness; nothing but a slavish fear of threatened punishment; not a hint that a word of supplication to the God of Mercy crossed the threshold of his own lips; and he passes out from the sacred story like the ghost in *Hamlet*,<sup>1</sup> "unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd"; and, as with all who dare to trifle with most hallowed things, the blessing of his Baptism was turned into a curse, and he perished in his iniquity.

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, *Hamlet* i. 5.

## XXV.

The Conversion of the Ethiopian  
Chamberlain.

THE ACTS VIII. 26-40.

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. 27. 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 for to worship, 28. was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. 29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. 30. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? 31. And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. 32. 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 other man? 35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. 36. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? 37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 38. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. 39. And when they were come up out of the water,

the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more : and he went on his way rejoicing. 40. But Philip was found

at Azotus : and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

THE persecution that broke out with such violence after the death of S. Stephen dispersed the Christians far and wide ; none but the Apostles remained in Jerusalem. This dispersion was instrumental in a rapid spread of the Gospel, for "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." Amongst them Philip, one of the seven deacons, went forth and began a mission in Samaria, which was attended with the greatest success. Among his converts was Simon Magus, whose strange history was considered in the previous chapter. S. Philip's work, however, received an unexpected check, for he was told by an angel of God to leave the scene of his present labours, and go towards Gaza. There were two roads by which he could reach the place, about fifty miles distant. One of these, by Ramleh, passed through some towns of importance, and was by far the most frequented route. The other led directly southwards, through Bethlehem and Hebron, traversing subsequently an uncultivated and thinly-inhabited country, said to have been infested by robbers and haunted by wild beasts. It was almost certainly

by this latter road that Philip was directed—divinely directed—to take his journey. It is not quite clear from the narrative from whom the information, “which is desert,” is supposed to come. It may be that the words were added parenthetically by the historian, who knew that the city had been destroyed;<sup>1</sup> but it is far more probable that it refers, not to Gaza itself, but to the road, and was part of the angel’s message. If the former be the right interpretation, the information has but little interest; if the latter, it is full of significance, noticed for the express purpose of trying the Evangelist’s faith. Here was a man who had found a sphere in which he was preaching with such power and success that it is said, “There was great joy in that city”; and now he is suddenly told to leave it, to give it all up, not for a sphere of greater or even equal importance, but for what it must have struck him at once, even without being reminded of it, was a most unpromising field of work.

How many men would have demurred, and reasoned themselves into the conclusion that they

<sup>1</sup> By Alexander the Great. In this case S. Luke was distinguishing it as the old Gaza, which, Strabo says (xvi. 2-30), remained *ερημος*, the word here used. To suppose that it refers to the destruction in the Jewish wars, is to place the date of this book too late.

must have been mistaken, and that God could not really have intended what they at first imagined! Philip, however, was more obedient unto the heavenly word, and, as we shall see, he received abundant reward for his obedience. The Gospel which he was preaching in Samaria would, in all likelihood, have been confined in its effects to the Samaritans; but the message which God sent him to deliver on that desert road, was destined to be carried to far distant lands, and to be the first fruits<sup>1</sup> of the Spirit, in what our Lord described as “the uttermost parts of the earth.”

S. Matt.  
xii. 42.

On the road he met an Oriental chamberlain, or officer of state at the court of Meroë, in the north of Ethiopia. Like all the sovereigns of that country, which for many generations was governed by queens, she bore the titular name of Candace.<sup>2</sup>

Pliny, Nat.  
Hist. vi. 35.  
Euseb. Hist.  
Eccl. ii. 1.

It creates some surprise to hear of such a man going up to Jerusalem to worship; the only explanation is, that he was a proselyte, a foreigner, that is, who had been converted to Judaism, and had made

<sup>1</sup> The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is often spoken of as the first admission of the Gentiles into the Christian covenant, but this is to ignore the fact that he was a proselyte of righteousness, for he obeyed the law in going up to Jerusalem. He was, in short, not a Gentile, but a Jewish convert.

<sup>2</sup> This was like Pharaoh or Ptolemy in Egypt, or Cæsar at Rome.

a point of attending one of the great Jewish festivals at Jerusalem. As he drew near in his chariot, Philip heard him reading aloud in the Jewish Scriptures. Judging from the text which is given by S. Luke, it was not in the Hebrew language but in the Greek translation; and this is what would be expected, as Greek was far more widely known, being familiar to most persons of education and position. He was reading aloud, for it is said that Orientals rarely, if ever, read in silence, even when alone. It is not unlikely that he had chosen his subject out of respect to a common maxim of his adopted religion, for the Rabbis were fond of teaching that "one who is travelling without a companion should occupy his time in the study of the Scriptures."

No sooner had Philip caught sight of the stranger than he seems to have realised the object of his mission; a second Divine impulse hurried him forward to go and speak to him; and, when he heard the particular passage he was reading, it quickened his keenest interest. It was the memorable scroll of the great prophet, in which the Passion and Death of the Messiah were so vividly described:

Isai. liii. 7, 8. "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not

His mouth : in His humiliation His judgment was taken away : and who shall declare His generation ? for His life is taken from the earth.”<sup>1</sup> Very possibly he had heard at Jerusalem of the wonderful events in connection with our Lord’s sufferings, that had happened a few years before, and of the condemnation and death of S. Stephen for claiming that Messianic prophecy had found its fulfilment in Jesus Christ ; and, in his eagerness to know more, he had bought a scroll of Isaiah, and was reading the most crucial passage that bore upon it. Philip asked with eagerness whether he could understand the meaning of the words ; and, finding him perplexed and anxious to be enlightened, he opened his mouth<sup>2</sup> and proceeded to unfold the long scroll of prophecy, and showed how it found its complete fulfilment in the Person of Jesus Christ. He “preached unto him Jesus”—His Incarnation, Death, Resurrection,

<sup>1</sup> A great variety of interpretations have been given of the passage ; if we confine ourselves to the LXX. version, which the eunuch was reading, it seems best to understand the latter part thus : “In His low estate to which He humbled Himself, that righteous judgment which was His due was denied Him ; and who can possibly describe the wickedness of the generation in which He lived, for they even took away His life by violence.”

<sup>2</sup> This is the usual phrase to express that the speaker delivered a discourse or sermon ; it is not used for a short sentence ; if so, it helps to explain the brief statement that he “preached Jesus ” in accordance with what we have written.

and Ascension—and he did not stop with these, but went on to explain how He had sent His Spirit on the Church, and made the sacraments the means of uniting individuals with Himself, even after His departure into heaven. His words fell upon a receptive heart, winged no doubt by the same Blessed Spirit which had impelled him to join himself to the traveller; and he asked at once if there was anything to prevent his being made a disciple of Jesus. His inquiry, and the form in which he put it, shows us most convincingly that Philip, in his “preaching Jesus,” had said and taught far more than is usually implied by this familiar phrase. If he had said nothing, for instance, of sacramental grace, how was it that, immediately the arrow of conviction pierced his soul, he said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

Philip, we may be sure, told him the conditions, and they were at once accepted; whether, however, his words and the actual confession of the eunuch are known, we cannot tell, for the verse in which the Authorised Version has preserved them,—“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,”—though

Irenæ.  
iii. xii. 8.  
Cyprian,  
Testim.  
iii. 43.

acknowledged by some of the earliest Fathers, are now rejected on critical grounds.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, Indoch, as he is designated in the tradition of the country; such the first fulfilment of the ancient prophecy, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Ps. lxxviii. 31

The whole story is pregnant with teaching, especially touching the unexpected ways by which God accomplishes His ends. First, then, it shows how He is often pleased to work by the simplest means, it may be by a single individual, to affect for good the whole moral welfare of a nation. That Jewish proselyte, for whose separate soul God had taken so much care, became a centre of life and light to Ethiopia; and out of one conversion, one baptism by the wayside in an uninhabited country, there grew up a flourishing Church in a far-distant land, which, apart from all the more obvious blessings, has left to posterity a version of the Scriptures which carries us back to the fourth century.

<sup>1</sup> They are omitted in all the most important Uncial MSS. *Codex Bezae*, in which they probably found a place, is deficient from viii. 26 to x. 14. Probably they were first written on the margin, to imply that a formula of belief, corresponding to those expected in baptism, must have been used here, and from the margin it was inserted in the text. It is worthy of notice that in other cases of the baptism of converts in the Acts, it is not recorded that they made a profession of faith. Cf. ii. 41; xvi. 33.

Again, how much underlies the terms in which the angel of God gave his commission to Philip, to leave a scene of bustling, active work and go forth on a road which was a desert. It has a most salutary lesson both for clergy and laity. What a disappointment it is to a priest, who is alive to the crying needs of our populous towns, to find himself placed in some obscure village, where he says that there is little material to work upon, and that, as it seems to him, of the most unpromising kind! What could have been more disheartening than the message that came to Philip in Samaria! What waste of time and energy to take a three days' journey on a road that scarcely any one travelled by! But he knew that God's ways are not our ways, and he answered the call.

It is the same with lay people; that call, "Arise, and go towards the south," comes to men whenever a duty is put before them which is not patent in its obligation, and can easily be explained away. Experience teaches that what looks at first likely to be wholly unproductive of good, is often found to yield the richest fruit. If the call comes to us, "This is the way, walk ye in it," that, we may be sure, is the path of duty; and if, like Philip, we enter upon it, our labour will not be in vain in the Lord.

## XXVI.

### The Conversion of Saul, the Persecutor.

#### THE ACTS IX. 1-6.

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2. 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 Jerusalem. 3. 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, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou 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.

THE martyrdom of S. Stephen was immediately followed by a general persecution of the Christians. The chief instigator and agent was Saul, whose thirst for the blood of the saints nothing could satiate. Threatening and slaughter became, in the historian's graphic description, the very breath of his life. He instituted an inquisitorial search in every suspected quarter ; not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judæa and Samaria, he devastated and made havoc of the churches : and more cruel even

than the murderers of Christ, who at least left the devout women undisturbed at the foot of the cross, he ruthlessly dragged them before the Sanhedrim; and, whatever the sex or age of his prisoners, whenever they were put on their trial for their lives, his vote was given for the extremity of judgment.

Acts xxvi. 10.

It did not satisfy him to have well-nigh exterminated the Christians at home; a fresh field for persecution presented itself in the populous city of Damascus. Proud Pharisee as he was, he laid aside his deep-rooted antipathy, and became a suppliant to the Sadducean high priest<sup>1</sup> for authority to carry out his purpose.

Do we wonder why the credentials of a Jewish high priest should have force with the ruling powers in Damascus? History confirms the somewhat peculiar circumstances. For the narrow space of some twenty years, from 37 A.D. to the reign of Nero, Damascus passed out of the dominion of Rome, and came under the government of Aretas, an Arabian Emir, who had strong reasons for ingratiating himself with the Jewish people.<sup>2</sup>

Joseph.  
Antiq.  
xvi. xi. 9.

<sup>1</sup> Most probably Theophilus, who succeeded Jonathan in A.D. 37. Joseph. *Antiq.* xviii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See an illustration of it in his co-operation with the Jews against S. Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 32.

Do we wonder, again, why he should ask for leave to bring his victims to Jerusalem? The synagogue at Damascus might imprison, or even flog them, but there was only one tribunal which could pass the sentence of death, and that was the supreme court in the capital of the nation.

Now there were three routes by which "the Apostle" (for such was the exact title he bore as the legate of the high priest) might travel from Jerusalem to Damascus. The most frequented was the great commercial road along the western coast, by which all the Egyptian traffic was conducted, skirting and overhanging the sea not unlike the Italian Corniche, passing the famous strongholds of Ekron, Ashdod, Askelon,<sup>1</sup> Ptolemais, and turning westward at Tyre across the huge chain of the Anti-Libanus by many heathen temples of Pan and Baal, and entering Damascus on the west. It is the road "by which alone," Stanley does not hesitate to say, "Damascus should be approached"; and it was on this that, tradition tells us, the Prophet of Mecca halted within sight of the city, entranced with the vision of beauty spread out before him, and then tore himself from the spot with the memorable utterance :

Sinai and  
Palestine,  
p. 409.

<sup>1</sup> These all lay on the highway, but a traveller from Jerusalem would probably go straight to Cæsarea.

Maundrell,  
Early Travellers, 485.  
Stanley,  
Sermons in  
the East.

“Man can have but one paradise: my paradise is fixed above.”<sup>1</sup>

The second route, eastward from Jerusalem, crosses the Jordan near Jericho, and then turns northwards through a tract of country little known to modern travellers, but said to have been singularly diversified with beautiful scenery.

The third lies through the very heart of Palestine, a Roman road straight to Shechem in Samaria, after which it inclines to the east, running direct to Damascus, and entering the city, like the second, on the south.

There can hardly be a doubt that this was the road which Saul selected. He was burning to reach the poor Christians at Damascus, and no considerations of architectural interest or picturesque attractions would have a feather's weight in determining his course. It has been shown that there are indications that he was not insensible to the charms of natural scenery, but they would be subordinated at once to the pressing purpose of his journey; and we feel perfectly certain that he would take the shortest route that lay open to him. If any evidence of his

<sup>1</sup> He was then only a camel-driver from Mecca. The spot is close to the heights of Salihyeh, “consecrated by the caverns and tombs of a thousand Mussulman saints.”

impatience is needed, we have it in the fact that he was hurrying on his way beneath the burning heat of a noonday Syrian sun. The Eastern traveller makes it an invariable habit to run no risk, but to rest under the shade of his tent or seek shelter in a wayside khan, all through the midday hours. If we are right in our conjecture, we can fix almost with certainty the exact spot where Saul was arrested by the supernatural vision. It was at the village of Caucab, on the high table-land, where the city first bursts upon the sight in all its splendour with the luxuriant plain and fertile fields in the foreground, and the snowy heights of Hermon rising behind it.

“As he came near to Damascus” God suddenly interposed to stay his hand from the execution of his wicked purpose; it is often only at the eleventh hour that His people are delivered. So it was with the children of Israel, when Pharaoh was overwhelmed close upon their heels in hot pursuit; it was so with the inhabitants of Jerusalem, when the angel of God smote the Assyrians almost in the moment of its capture; and Haman’s wicked design was only frustrated when the gallows was already set up for the execution of his enemy; and the Jews at Shushan seemed to be in the very

jaws of death.<sup>1</sup> "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

Eichhorn,  
Rosenmüller,  
Ewald,  
Renan.

"And suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven." No such lightning-flash as that which precedes the thunder; "no inexpressibly vivid gleam of electric flame;" it was nothing less than a blaze of the Transfiguration glory, streaming forth from the Presence of the Lord, and, as in the garden of Gethsemane, striking the beholders prostrate to the ground. And out of the præternatural brightness a voice was heard, speaking in the Hebrew tongue, "Shaul, Shaul,<sup>2</sup> why persecutest thou Me?" and the stricken, blinded "Apostle" asked in bewilderment, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And the Lord revealed Himself to him, "I am Jesus (of Nazareth<sup>3</sup>) Whom thou persecutest."

He tells him first how He identifies Himself with His people; how the bond of union is so close that

<sup>1</sup> Barrow, iv. 218, has given many more illustrations of this method of God's providential dealings.

<sup>2</sup> It is the Hebrew form, not the Greek *Σαῦλος*, which is always found, except in connection with this vision. In xxvi. 14, when he was speaking in Greek, he adds that these words were spoken to him "in the Hebrew dialect."

<sup>3</sup> This designation has no place in the brief account of S. Luke, but is taken from S. Paul's own description of what took place. I have thought it more convenient to combine in this place the two other descriptions from xxii. and xxvi., and deal with the event once for all,

the sufferings, which they endure for His sake, are endured also by Him; how to persecute them, is to persecute Him. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." S. Matt. xxv. 40.

We should have expected that the Speaker would have described Himself by some title of honour and glory, as God, or the Son of God, and not by one of shame and humiliation; but Saul knew nothing of the Divinity of Jesus Christ; he knew Him only as the despised Nazarene, whom he had compelled men to blaspheme, and His very claim to this title must have convinced him that He was none other than the Being Whom he had been persecuting.

"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Pindar, Pyth. ii. 173.  
 We gain from this some insight into S. Paul's Æsch. Agam. 1633.  
 life before his conversion. "To kick against the goad," or sharp-pointed stick, as the oxen did while ploughing, was a proverbial expression for unavailing resistance to a superior force. Jesus knew how often it had been illustrated in Saul's life; how many misgivings he had felt in his persecution of the poor saints. There is no difficulty in conjecturing the reasons for some of them. We read all through this narrative of his thirst for blood, but he was not by nature a cruel man; indeed, it has been

asserted that he was the very opposite. S. Chrysostom has said that he was so sympathetic and tender in his affections, that he had "the heart of the world." No doubt much is to be attributed to his conversion, but not all. It cannot be that all that marvellous tenderness which bursts out in his Epistles, which made him weep and die with his converts in their afflictions and sufferings, had no root in his natural disposition—developed, no doubt, and intensified under the teaching of Christ, but, at least in germ, inherent in his being as an inborn characteristic.

With such a nature, every pang that he inflicted must have smitten his conscience; and, when the passion and fury had subsided, have made him feel that he was wrong. Then there was a further witness from without. The angel-face of Stephen, the martyr's dying prayer, the daily spectacle of weak men and women ready to bear anything rather than deny their Lord—they must have acted like a goad for his reproachful conscience. And when we read that he was "exceedingly mad" against the Christians, it seems to bespeak a desperate attempt to crush by violence the misgivings which agitated him. Persecution, it has been found, "is never so passionate, fanaticism never so fierce, as when it is

most impressed with the goodness and innocence of its victim." All the time he was trying to stifle conscience, bringing upon himself a ruin which a merciful God wished to avert. Happily for Saul, he did not, as many do, resist unto the end, but asked in fear and trembling, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" and in that simple inquiry he surrendered his own passionate will to the overpowering love and mercy of God ; and that supreme surrender changed, by the most wonderful conversion on record, Saul, the persecutor of the saints, into Paul, the bond-slave of Jesus and the Apostle of the Gentiles ; and, as the Collect says, may we, having that ever-memorable event in grateful remembrance, "show forth our thankfulness by following the holy doctrine which he taught."

## XXVII.

### Apparent Discrepancies in the Different Records.

#### THE ACTS IX. 7.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

IT is well known how many attempts have been made, and what ingenuity has been shown, in divesting the story of Saul's conversion of its miraculous character, and discrediting the accounts which we have received of it, by pressing to the utmost the apparent discrepancies between them.

All may be explained, it is said, by supposing that the "light from heaven above the brightness of the sun," and the voice that spake to him, were both subjective merely, *i.e.* existent only in the imagination in his own soul; they were not objective, *i.e.* existent as supernatural phenomena apart from and outside of himself.

But there is overwhelming evidence that the phenomena were objective and real. Ananias spoke

Eichhorn,  
Wittig,  
Ammon.  
Henrichs.

Acts  
ix. 17, 27.

of an actual appearance of Jesus to Saul in the way that he came; Barnabas declared unto the Apostles that "he had seen the Lord in the way"; and S. Paul himself again and again appealed to the vision as an undoubted fact. It was one of the marks of Apostleship to have seen the Lord, and he did not hesitate to claim his share in the privilege: "Am I not an Apostle? . . . Have I not seen Jesus Christ, our Lord?" Again he places the appearance to himself in the same category with the manifestation of the Risen Jesus to His followers during the great Forty days, concluding the enumeration with the direct assertion, "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." 1 Cor. ix. 1. 1 Cor. xv. 8.

Now, we know more about S. Paul than almost any other of the early Christians. We know what his education was, what his prejudices were, how great was the strength of his character, how intense his zeal against the cause of Christ; and, knowing all this, we should account it the height of presumption to say that such a man was a likely subject to be imposed upon or carried away by subjective fancies, to believe that he had seen what he had not seen, or to mistake a peal of thunder for the articulate voice of Jesus Christ, or a flash of lightning for the glory and brightness of the Divine Presence.

Lyttelton,  
Conversion  
and Apostle-  
ship of  
S. Paul.

Whatever men may say, it is impossible to explain away the reality of the whole transaction; the great incontestable fact remains: S. Paul was a man, above all others we can think of, possessed of qualifications calculated to secure him against deception; and he confesses, not once only but again and again, under most varying conditions, that he had been struck down in the very height of his madness, that the voice and vision of the Lord had almost in an instant changed the whole current of his life—that in that supreme moment he had experienced such a conversion that he who before hated the Name of Jesus, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against all who professed it, was ready henceforth to bear anything—shame, reproach, bonds, and imprisonment—and to traverse the world, carrying his life in his hand, to teach mankind that there was none other Name under heaven through which they might be saved. If, then, S. Paul was not deceived, what evidence this history supplies is proof that Christianity is a Divine revelation!

Now, let us turn to the apparent discrepancies in the different accounts given by S. Luke and by S. Paul himself. Two will suffice, associated with the part that his companions took in the transaction. S. Luke writes, “And the men which journeyed

Acts xxii. 21;

xxvi. 17, 18.

Gal. i. 15, 16.

2 Cor. iv. 6.

1 Cor.

xv. 8-10.

with him stood speechless, hearing a voice (the voice in R.V.) but seeing no man"; but S. Paul, in his speech before Agrippa, says, after mentioning "them that journeyed with" him, "And when we were Acts xxvi. 4. all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Again, speaking on the steps of the castle of Antonia, he said, "And they Acts xxii. 9. that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." At first sight there is a manifest contradiction between "all were fallen to the earth" and they "stood speechless," and also between "hearing the voice" and "they heard not the voice"; but a reconciliation is not far to seek. We will consider them separately. Standing is not necessarily opposed to sitting or falling, but sometimes to movement and progress;<sup>1</sup> it may indicate motionless continuance where they were, in whatever posture; and "stood speechless" would find its explanation, if those who had been struck to the ground remained where they were, rooted to the spot in blank amazement; or again, the two expressions may refer to different instants of time; they

Cornelius  
Lapide.

<sup>1</sup> For *σῆναι* in the sense of to halt, cf. viii. 38; S. Luke vii. 14, viii. 44.

might fall prostrate, struck down by the suddenness of the occurrence, and afterwards rise, not to flee away, but only to stand in speechless terror. The former incident—the sudden prostration—impressed itself most on the memory of S. Paul; while the latter—their total inability to escape—seemed to S. Luke more worthy of record.

The second apparent discrepancy arises out of what is said about Saul's fellow-travellers hearing the voice; and, though more stress has been laid upon this than upon the former, it admits of an even easier explanation. To hear, alike in English and Greek and Hebrew, has a twofold sense; it may mean simply to have the sense of hearing exercised, or it may be so to hear as to understand what is heard. An illustration of the latter, perhaps less common, usage is ready to hand; when our Lord appealed to His Father to glorify His Name, there came a voice from heaven with a clear and definite answer; and, though it is said that the people who stood by "heard," it is shown by their own confession that they did not "understand," for some "said that it thundered, others said that an angel spake to Him." The sound was audible, but the apprehension of the meaning beyond their capacity. So it was with the light,—they saw the supernatural brightness, but they

S. John  
xii. 28, 29.

Ammonius,  
Catena,  
p. 361.

did not see Him Whose Glory it was. Enough was revealed to them in both cases to enable them to testify to the præternatural character of the occurrence, and to account for the wonderful conversion in all the Apostle's plans, but no more. They both heard and saw something which must have filled them with bewildering perplexity ; but to him the vision was unmistakably nothing less than the unveiled Presence of the Son of Man, and the sound articulate and distinct, an actual message for himself alone. It is worthy of notice that S. Paul testifies that it was spoken "in the Hebrew tongue," which of itself would make it unintelligible to men of no education, such as the officers of the Court who attended upon his mission.

It is no mere conjecture that the word to hear was used in its twofold sense in the passages before us. Normally the Greek word, when implying to hear with the ears merely, is followed by the genitive case; when to hear and understand, by the accusative. There are no doubt abundant exceptions to the rule, but S. Luke made the distinction in what he wrote himself and in what he reported S. Paul to have said ; and this of itself shows that in his mind at least there was no inconsistency.

To an unsuspecting and reverent mind such

varieties of detail in the narrative will be a help rather than a hindrance; for they show that the descriptions of the sacred writers are natural and independent, not carefully studied, so as to make them servile copies from each other. Nothing could have been easier for S. Luke, had he thought it desirable or necessary, than to make the accounts which he compiled tally with an exact verbal harmony and correspondence, but he preferred to exercise his independence, giving his own version according to the dictates of his own judgment, confident in the force of its substantive truth, and relying on the promised guidance of the Spirit of God. A forger would have exercised more deliberate circumspection, careful to reconcile statement with statement, and running no risk from a possible or even seeming contradiction.

## XXVIII.

### Saul restored to Sight.

THE ACTS IX. 8-19.

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* into Damascus. 9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink. 10. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, *I am here*, Lord. 11. 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 Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, 12. and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight. 13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; 14. and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. 15. 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 shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. 17. 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 way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. 18. 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.

A GREAT crisis had overtaken "the Apostle of persecution"; he had been suddenly arrested in mid career, the arrow of conviction had pierced him to the very heart; but much remained to be

done before the current of his life could be turned into a new channel. Conviction was instantaneous and complete in its effect; but the conversion that followed was gradual and progressive, requiring time and thought and prayer and sacrament to make it perfect.

The first step towards the attainment of this was entire separation from the associations of the past, with no distraction of the world to efface the impression or weaken the touch of the Divine Hand; and God Himself made the task easier by the forcible exclusion of all material sights; He smote him with blindness, so that all his thoughts might be concentrated and thrown in upon himself and his sin. For three days he led a purely spiritual existence; all the ordinary outward conditions of life were suspended, and he was so absorbed in communion with God that he had no time, no desire, to satisfy the cravings of his lower nature; "he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink."

It may be—we are not expressly told it—that it was during this period that God vouchsafed to him some of those præternatural visions and revelations, of which he speaks to the Corinthians, to fortify him for his work and the endurance of his predicted

sufferings. The veil of mystery remains untaken away, and we dare only speculate in awe and reverence. But the hour of testing is now closed. Saul had entered the gate of Damascus, not as he had intended, the fierce persecutor, armed with authority to "hale men and women," "holden with pride and overwhelmed with cruelty," but a humble penitent, crushed and abased, and tractable as a little child, dependent on others even for his personal safety, and glad to stretch forth his blood-stained hands for another to guide him.

Then, when in silence and humiliation and affliction, God, as He is wont to do, had laid the foundation of a sanctified life, He began the work of restoration, and, acting according to the counsel of His own inscrutable law, He did it by the hands of others, by human agents and material means. He first chose out a man—it may be compassionately chosen to inspire confidence by his very name—for Ananias means "the Lord has been gracious," and appearing to him in vision bade him go to the help of the penitent sinner. It is no matter of surprise to us that Ananias should have thought that he had misunderstood the revelation; it could not be a fact—it was too good to be true—that one whose name was the dread of every Chris-

tian, who had shut up Christ's saints<sup>1</sup> in prison and imbrued his hands with blood, could have passed through such a mighty transformation as the message implied. There is something intensely human in such misgivings so candidly uttered; and there is something, too, most touching and tender in the way which the Master deals with them. No complaint, no condemnation of his doubts passed His lips, nothing but the simple bidding which he could not resist, "Go thy way"; with the added reason, which must have more than satisfied him, for what seemed at first so unintelligible, "for he is a chosen vessel unto Me," literally "an instrument of selection," set apart in the Divine counsels to spread the message of salvation to heathen lands, to be the "tool"<sup>2</sup> by which living stones shall be shaped and chiselled in every part of the world for My spiritual Temple.

Ananias obeyed the command, and went without delay to the house of Judas, where Saul was lodged.

One of the greatest disappointments which travellers experience in the Holy Land is to find how

<sup>1</sup> This is the first time Christians received this title, so often given to them afterwards in S. Paul's Epistles.

<sup>2</sup> *σκεῦος* is often used in N. T. like כְּלִי in O. T. as a tool or weapon, or instrument of whatever kind.

much difficulty there is in identifying the scenes and places, whose names have been made familiar to them in the Sacred History. Even in Jerusalem itself, the site of the Holy Sepulchre is keenly contested, and two Gethsemanes have their rival claims pressed upon the attention. It is hardly to be wondered at when we learn how many times the city has been besieged and laid in ruins; indeed, the Jerusalem, whose streets were trodden by the feet of our Blessed Lord, lies buried far beneath the present town. It is no little relief, then, to turn to Damascus, where the hand of the spoiler has wrought no such destruction; for it enjoys the almost unique prerogative of never having been destroyed during the Christian era.<sup>1</sup> The ancient topography of Damascus admits, in part at least, of easy identification. The main thoroughfare in S. Paul's time was a street called "Straight"; it has been encroached upon, it is true, largely in the lapse of years, so that it has now become a narrow lane; but there it is, running the whole length of the city, from east to west, in a direct line. "In this," says Stanley, "have been recently discovered the remains

Porter's  
Five Years  
in Damascus.  
Sinai and  
Palestine,  
p. 412.

<sup>1</sup> Damascus was said to be one of the oldest cities in the world. Joseph. *Antiq.* i. 6; Shakespeare, 1 *King Henry VI.* i. 3. It was destroyed once in the time of Rezin, but at no other time.

of the only authentic locality mentioned in the history of S. Paul's stay at Damascus. Fragments of pavement and broken columns have been excavated, showing the course of 'the Straight Street.' . . . A few steps out of 'the Street of Bazaars' (the modern name of the above), in an open space, called 'the Sheykh's Place,' is the so-called 'House of Judas': . . . in another quarter is shown 'the House of Ananias.'"

It was in "the House of Judas" that Saul was restored to sight, and filled with the Holy Ghost.

The first act was the opening of his eyes, and it was effected by the touch of a human agent præternaturally endowed with healing virtue. It is a silent witness to the reality of the event and the force of the insufferable light, that his organs of sight bore visible marks of its scorching rays. S. Paul himself, in speaking of the restoration, merely says that when Ananias came to him, "in the same hour I looked up upon him"; but in this earlier narrative we are told that "immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales." It testifies to the medical knowledge of the writer—an undesigned evidence of S. Luke's authorship—that the circumstance is described in

Acts xxii. 13.

Tobit xi. 13.

terms which a physician would have chosen had he wished to be technically accurate.<sup>1</sup>

Galen  
Hippocrates,  
Dioscorides.

As soon as Saul's bodily cure was complete, his spiritual regeneration followed; for "he arose and was baptized." It illustrates the futility of the argument so often on the lips of those who depreciate Baptismal Grace, that there is no need of the external ordinance for one who has within himself the witness of the Holy Spirit or of a certain acceptance by Jesus Christ. No man, I suppose, could ever claim to have had so many proofs of the Divine favour as S. Paul; yet, notwithstanding his conversion and personal intercourse with His Lord, one thing was still wanting, viz. the application of God's appointed means in "the laver of regeneration," and to this he immediately betook himself, and in all human probability was baptized in the waters of Abana or Pharpar, sanctified by the benediction of Ananias for the "mystical washing away of sins."

Before this section is closed, there is a deeply interesting question which calls for some solution. Is there any connection between "the thorn in the flesh," of which the Apostle so often spoke, and the

<sup>1</sup> *λεπίς* is the technical word for the scaly substance from an inflamed surface; and is used by Hippocrates for "the scab caused by burning in a medical operation upon the eyelid." Cf. Hobart's *Medical Lang. of S. Luke*. p. 39.

blindness with which he was struck on the way to Damascus? He tells us that it was "a thorn in the flesh" sent to humble him, as a correction to spiritual pride, lest he should be unduly exalted by the greatness or "abundance of the revelations"; but no exact description of it has been given anywhere in his writings. There can hardly be a doubt that it was some physical disease or infirmity,<sup>1</sup> though it has been interpreted otherwise. "A messenger of Satan" is not inconsistent with this, for we are expressly told that Satan smote Job with sore boils, that he bound a woman for eighteen years with a bodily affliction,<sup>2</sup> and that S. Paul ordered the incestuous Corinthian to be delivered over to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh."

SS. Chry-  
stom, Hilary,  
Augustine.

Job ii. 7.

S. Luke  
xiii. 16.

1 Cor. v. 5.

There are moreover many indications that he suffered from some painful disease of the eyes, such as acute ophthalmia, which in the East is intermittent and most loathsome to look upon, both unquestionably characteristics of the Apostle's affliction. He was subjected to a very severe attack in Galatia, and it was the source of much annoyance to him that his converts could not escape the

Gal. iv. 13-15.

<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot has written an essay on it in his *Comm. on the Ep. to Gal.*, upholding the theory that it was of the nature of an epileptic seizure, such as King Alfred was subject to.

<sup>2</sup> Medically regarded as a case of "spinal curvature."

trial of witnessing anything so repulsive, especially as their sympathy with him was so touchingly shown. They were ready, he said, to pluck out their eyes and place them at his service. Such an expression is no mere hyperbole to heighten his sense of their attachment and devotion to him—to pluck out their eyes for him would have sufficed to indicate that;—but when he adds that, if they could, they “would have given them” to him, it points to their eagerness to supply something which he lacked, and to the fact that his eyes were the seat of his infirmity. It is no contradiction to the statement that he recovered his sight from the touch of Ananias; and it is quite possible to discover a reason of an evidential nature why the traces of his blindness should not be wholly effaced.

Often, no doubt, in after-times, as he told the story of his journey to Damascus and his meeting with his Lord in that blaze of ineffable brightness, the people must have been incredulous of his words, and cried out, “Paul, thou art beside thyself.” Then, it may be, he would point to the scars in his disfigured sight as a sign of the supernatural vision, and perhaps carry conviction to some doubter’s heart.

We remember, too, how he spoke of bearing in his body “the marks of the Lord Jesus.” They were Gal. vi. 17.

*Horæ Sub-*  
*secivæ*, by  
J. Brown.

the *stigmata*, the brands that were burnt into the flesh of a slave to denote the master's ownership. How natural it would seem for the Apostle to speak of his impaired organs of sight as the stamp which the Great Master had placed upon him, when he was arrested on the road to Damascus, and enlisted for ever in the service of the Cross!

## XXIX.

### S. Paul in Retreat prepared for his Work.

THE ACTS IX. 19-31.

19. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. 20. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. 21. 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 the chief priests? 22. 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 counsel to kill him: 24. but their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him. 25. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket. 26. 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 disciple. 27. 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 had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. 28. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. 29. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him. 30. *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 Judæa 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.

SAUL soon realised that he could not remain where he was. It may be that he saw the danger

of being arrested as soon as the Jews should have recovered from the first shock of surprise, but it is more probable that a higher and more imperious motive determined his speedy departure; at all events, we are told that he withdrew into the desert.

Gal. i. 17.

There is only an indirect allusion to this retirement in S. Luke's narrative, in the notice that about this time there was an interval of "many days" before he went back to Jerusalem; but in his Letter to the Galatians, S. Paul describes how, immediately after he had been called by the grace, of God, he "went away into Arabia." When we think of the tumult through which he had passed, he would have been more than human if he had not longed for rest and time for reflection. It has been beautifully said of this crisis in his life: "Just as an eagle which has been drenched and battered by some fierce storm will alight to plume its ruffled wings, so when a great soul has passed through fire and water, it needs some safe and quiet place in which to rest."<sup>1</sup> Surely this was the purpose that hurried him into the wilds of Arabia, and not, as S. Chrysostom and others would have us believe, to manifest "the fervour of his soul, eager

Theodore  
Mopsuest.  
Hilary.

<sup>1</sup> Farrar's *Life and Work of S. Paul*, i. 207.

to occupy lands yet untilled, and to attack a barbarous and savage people." It was "a mysterious pause, a moment of suspense," in which by silent and secret communing with God, in severest awe and contemplation of the future, the whole tenor of his after-life and work might be directed and shaped.

Lightfoot's  
Ep. to Gal.  
81.

It would be a spot of irresistible attraction to the traveller if only the scene could be identified; and many a pilgrim would have sought in the same surroundings a like consecration for his work in life; but a veil of uncertainty is drawn over its locality. Perhaps it was not far distant from Damascus in the desert of El Belka, which stretches north and east of the Dead Sea; but circumstances point rather to the peninsula of Sinai, the Petræan Arabia. Possibly he remained for a time in the former, and found himself ultimately drawn by an irresistible attraction to the latter. There is at any rate a peculiar fitness in the supposition that he would betake himself to the wilderness of Sinai to prepare for his mission. There had been two dispensations before this, the Law and the Prophets, and God was setting apart S. Paul to be the great herald of a third to preach the Gospel to all the world.

Just. Mart.  
Dial. c.  
Tryph. 305.  
Test. adv.  
Marc. iii. 13.

Was it not when withdrawn for forty days from all human contact in the solitude of this very scene that God had appeared to Moses and intrusted him with the Tables of the Law, amid fire and tempest and thick darkness? Was it not in the midst of the same granite cliffs that, after the wind and the fire and the earthquake and the still small voice, Elijah was, if not prepared for his first Prophetic work, yet nerved and strengthened to go on his way through good report and evil report, and keep the sacred flame ablaze, though all the world should combine for its extinction? What more natural, then, than that in anticipation of a Divine revelation "the greatest preacher of Him, of Whom both the Law and the Prophets spoke," should seek in the same solitude a like inspiration for his coming work?

But at length the voice of God came to him with the same message that it had given to Elijah: "Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus"; and having learnt at the mouth of God the mysteries of the kingdom, and being fully equipped for the ministry, he hastened back to the city of his baptism, and began to preach in the Synagogues that Jesus, Whom they had crucified, was the Son of God. Day by day he repeated his message, arguing from the pages of prophecy and from ancient types,

Exod.  
xix. 18.

1 Kings  
xix. 11.

1 Kings  
xix. 15.

and proving by a combination and comparison of passages<sup>1</sup> His incontestable claim to the Messiahship. The Jewish doctors were perplexed and confounded by his arguments, and came to realise that "their craft was in danger to be set at nought," unless his mouth could be stopped. At last in despair they held a council, and decided that the only possible course for them to take under the circumstances was "to kill him." Sentinels were<sup>2</sup> Cor. xi. 32. posted at the gates, and a strict watch was ordered by the chief magistrate of the city to keep guard by day and night to prevent his escape; but all their precautions were thwarted, for God delivered him out of their hands.

Had Damascus been at this time under the government of Rome, S. Paul would, no doubt, have appealed to his citizenship as a claim for protection from the civil authority, but the city was then under the control and government of an Arabian Emir, who was practically absolute and independent. There was good reason, moreover, to induce him to conciliate the Jews,<sup>2</sup> and this he did by furthering their designs upon the Apostle's life.

<sup>1</sup> This is the full force of *συνβιβάζων*, lit. joining things together.

<sup>2</sup> He had made himself obnoxious to Tiberius, and Vitellius, the Governor of Syria, was preparing to march against him; the support of the Jewish population would be eagerly sought. Josephus, *Antiq.* xviii. vi. 1.

In this perilous crisis, S. Paul's friends devised a way of escape without risking an attempt to pass through any of the gates. In the East, houses are built upon the walls, and through a window in one of these, as in ancient history the spies escaped from Rahab's house, he was let down by a cord in a basket,<sup>1</sup> and escaped. If the traditional place be correct, and the drawings made by travellers have not been exaggerated, the descent must have been attended with considerable danger; and we can easily understand how S. Paul should have remembered it in after-life, as one of the great perils from which he felt that he had been delivered by the good Providence of God.

Obliged to fly from Damascus, he determined to go to Jerusalem. Even if no other motive had influenced him,<sup>2</sup> he would naturally wish to revisit a place so closely associated with his Lord and Master. He expected, no doubt, that the fame of his wonderful conversion would have reached it

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps from its etymology a "rope-basket" or species of net. It is the same word that is used in the Feeding of the Four Thousand, *σπίρις* not *κόφινος*.

<sup>2</sup> He told the Galatians that he was anxious to have an interview with S. Peter. It is sometimes said that S. Luke's account in connection with the apostles at Jerusalem does not tally with his own, but Lightfoot has shown that it arises from the different usages of the term Apostle. Gal. i. 19.

Josh. ii. 15.  
1 Sam.  
xix. 12.

2 Cor. xi. 33.

long ago, and that the interest and curiosity of hearing his story would afford him an opportunity of advancing the cause of Christ. His journey must have filled him with excitement, for he would be almost certain to return by the road which he had traversed before, and to halt at the spot where the whole current of his life had been miraculously changed, and to pray for strength to carry out his work.

And then, as he drew near to Jerusalem, what strange feelings he must have experienced ! Three years before he had passed through the Damascus Gate of the city, the Apostle of the Sanhedrim, with a stately retinue, bearing a commission to extirpate the Christian heresy, and now he was entering it alone and unbefriended, with one message on his lips, that apart from the Name, which he then blasphemed, there was none other under heaven by which men could possibly be saved.

But he was disappointed in one thing : the fame of his conversion had not preceded his coming ; or if it had reached the Sanhedrim, whose servant he was, they had either suppressed or explained it away. The disciples, too, would have nothing to say to him ; they fancied, perhaps, that he was a spy, seeking to get information which he might use

against them, and "they were all afraid of him," and refused to believe everything that he said. Had it not been for the timely interposition of Barnabas, his visit to Jerusalem would have been nothing but disappointment and failure. What it was that led Barnabas to befriend him at this crisis we can only conjecture. Probably they were old acquaintances. Saul was a native of Tarsus, and Barnabas of the neighbouring island of Cyprus; and there was a famous university at the former place, so that they might have been fellow-students; and further, while it is certain that Saul had sat at the feet of Gamaliel, it is traditionally asserted also of Barnabas. What a touching episode, if it be true! While the rest of the Christians utterly refused to have any communication whatever with the new convert, and discredited his story from beginning to end, the confidence of an old and once trusted friend was suddenly revived; and, believing every word that he said, Barnabas vouched for his veracity, and at a most critical time showed himself in deed as well as in name "a son of consolation."

But Jerusalem was not to be the scene of the Apostle's ministrations. As he was praying in the Temple he fell into a trance and heard the Lord calling him to depart: "Make haste, and get thee

Acts xxi. 39.

Acts  
xxii. 17, 18.

quickly out of Jerusalem; for they will not receive thy testimony concerning Me." Whereupon the brethren took him to Cæsarea,<sup>1</sup> where he embarked on board ship, but shortly after he was again on land, passing through Syria on foot. It may have been that he changed his purpose; or possibly one of those shipwrecks, of which he spoke, befell him; and, after escaping to the shore, he made his way through Syria and Cilicia to his native Tarsus.

Gal. i. 21.  
Lewin's  
S. Paul,  
i. 77.

And then, after all this tale of peril and danger, of persecution and conspiracy, of storm and fury, "God rebuked the wind, and there was a great calm"; and we are told with no little significance: "Then had the churches rest . . . and were edified." It is in critical times that men's consciences are awakened and converts made; but it is in quiet times that they are edified and built up in faith and spirituality. The mission of the Baptist may startle men out of their sleep and make them realise their danger; but it is the still small voice of the Comforter, when the excitement has passed, that guides them into the way of peace and safety.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Turris Stratonis, the well-known harbour, called Cæsarea by Herod the Great in honour of Augustus.

## XXX.

### Miracles wrought by S. Peter at Lydda and Joppa.

THE ACTS IX. 32-43.

32. And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all *quarters*, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. 33. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. 34. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. 35. And all that dwelt at 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 almsdeeds which she did. 37. 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. 38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that

Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them. 39. 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 shewing 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, presented her alive. 42. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord. 43. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

THE parenthesis in which S. Paul is introduced to our notice is closed, and the historian reverts to

the life of S. Peter, who occupies all our attention for three chapters, and then leaves the great Apostle of the Gentiles in full possession of the field. Two miracles were wrought by S. Peter's hands in the neighbouring towns of Lydda and Joppa. Both places have eventful histories: Lydda, the Lud of the Old Testament, situated as it was on the highway from Jerusalem to the coast, was often attacked and destroyed, and in the second century of the present era a Roman emperor tried to efface its Jewish and Christian history by rebuilding it under a new and heathen name, Diospolis, the city of Jupiter. But the attempt to efface its Christianity altogether failed, for it shortly afterwards became an important see in the Syrian Church, and its Bishop was one of the 318<sup>1</sup> who signed the Canons of the famous Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325.

Joseph.  
Antiq.  
xiv. xi. 2.  
Wars,  
ii. xix. 1.

Joppa, the scene of the second miracle, is one of the most interesting of the ancient Palestinian cities. It had a profane as well as sacred history. The most memorable event in the former is the mythological tale of the chaining of the virgin

Pliny, Nat.  
Hist. v. 14.

<sup>1</sup> The authority for the actual numbers attending is not certain: Eusebius (*Vit. Con.*) gives 250, Athanasius (*ad Afric.*) 318, and he is followed by Socrates, Sozomen, and others. The Bishop of Diospolis was Aetius. During the Crusades its name was changed to S. George, the patron saint of England, who was believed to have been buried there.

Joseph.  
Wars,  
iii. ix. 3.

Andromeda, and her deliverance by Perseus, under which, as in so many of the heathen fables, is symbolised a real truth.

<sup>2</sup>Chron.ii.16.  
<sup>1</sup>Kings v. 9.  
Ezra iii. 7.  
Jon. i. 3.

To the Biblical student it was the harbour where the cedars of Lebanon were floated down for the building of the first and second Temples; the port where Jonah took ship to escape from the presence of his Maker; and the place where, as we shall see in the next chapter, S. Peter had his "vision of tolerance, and went forth like a second Perseus, but from the East, to emancipate from still worse thralldom the virgin daughter of the West."

The persons upon whom the miracles of healing were performed were Æneas and Tabitha. Of the former nothing is known, and we are left to conjecture from his name that he was a Hellenist, a Gentile convert to Judaism. Tabitha or Dorcas,<sup>1</sup> signifying a gazelle or antelope, the type of beauty among animals as the lily was among flowers, has by a life of good works perpetuated her name in connection with that kind of charity which consists in making garments for the poor and destitute. She

<sup>1</sup> Among the Greeks it was a title of affection and endearment. Lucretius, iv. 1154. In LXX. Deut. xii. 15, 22; Prov. vi. 5, it is the translation of צִבְיָה, a roebuck, which both Hebrews and Arabs regarded as the type of beauty. The word is often used simply for splendour, beauty.

must have been a person of wealth, otherwise she could hardly have been described as "full of almsdeeds"; they were doubtless considerable to have gained such notice. She deserves our admiration, because, with the means of purchasing all that she needed, she preferred to give her time and personal labour to the work. Perhaps she remembered her Lord's commendation, "I was naked and ye clothed me," and thought that, if it was true that in clothing the poor she clothed Christ, she would do it with no other hands but her own, for it might be that, like the Cæsarean lady,<sup>1</sup> she would, in spirit at least, S. Mark v. 25. draw virtue from the hem of His garments while she made them. It was promised in God's word: "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord Ps. xli. 1, 2, 3. will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive. . . . The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing"; and the promise was fulfilled in the sick-chamber at Joppa when Dorcas died. Her surviving friends, as soon as they had performed the last offices in preparation for her burial, were overwhelmed with grief for the loss of their benefactress; and hearing a report that S. Peter was at Lydda and had lately

<sup>1</sup> For her connection with Cæsarea and with the legend of S. Veronica, cf. *Footprints of the Son of Man*, ch. xxv.

restored a paralysed man to health and strength, they determined to see whether he would come and help them also in their distress. No doubt they realised that healing the sick and raising the dead were widely different things, and had their misgivings in consequence; but even if he failed to bring back their friend to life, his presence would be an unspeakable comfort; and so they sent to him the urgent entreaty, "Pray,<sup>1</sup> do not delay to come on to us." And he went; and there is something very touching and graphic in the scene, as they appealed to him in the very presence of the dead, pointing to the clothes they were wearing<sup>2</sup> as pledges of her unselfish love.

S. Peter had no hesitation what to do. He was satisfied that it was just one of those cases where he could rely upon a supernatural interposition for the glory of God and the advancement of His Church, but not by his own unaided agency. He knew that he was but the delegate of Another, Whose co-operation it was necessary for him first to seek in prayer; and so he put them all out of the chamber, that he might gather up the concentrated energies of his soul, undistracted by the tears

<sup>1</sup> The imperative is the reading of all the best mss., and it certainly adds to the urgency of the invitation.

<sup>2</sup> This is implied by the participle being in the middle voice.

and lamentations of the bystanders, for an urgent petition that God would grant his request. It brings out very markedly the distinction between Christ's mode of working miracles and that of His Apostles; no instantaneous command: "Young man, I say unto thee, arise," or "Lazarus, come forth," but first the prayer, and then the conviction that it would be answered, and not till then the bidding, "Tabitha, arise." It is not quite the same as when he healed the paralytic Æneas, but the different circumstances fully explain the reason. In the former case he was working a miracle in the presence of unbelievers; for it is said that it was in consequence of what they saw that multitudes "turned to the Lord." It was necessary, therefore, that they should hear that it was not by his own power or holiness that he made the man walk, and so he fixes the mind of all upon the actual source of the healing virtue, and says, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole; arise, and make thy bed." But here in the death-chamber of Dorcas, in an atmosphere of faith and devotion, there was no danger of misunderstanding, and the very fact of his kneeling down to pray was more eloquent than words of his own insufficiency.

S. Peter's prayer was answered, and Dorcas was

restored to her grateful and loving friends. What her after-life was, we are not told; but there can be little doubt that she took up the thread of her unselfish and charitable deeds, and consecrated her whole being with an intensified devotion to the service of her Lord. And among the praises which she gave to God for all His goodness, we are sure she did not forget to thank Him for having made her death and resurrection instrumental for the good of others, for it is said, that "many believed in the Lord" when they heard what was done.

END OF VOL. I.





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