

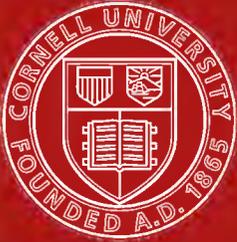
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THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

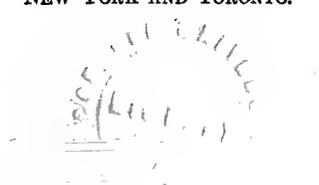
WITH

INTRODUCTIONS

BY THE

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FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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VICAR AND RURAL DEAN OF ST. PANCRAS, AND EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD
BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

AND BY THE

REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Exposition and Homiletics:

THE RIGHT HON. AND RIGHT REV.
LORD A. C. HERVEY, D.D.,

LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS.

Homilies by Various Authors:

REV. PROF. P. C. BARKER, M.A.

REV. PROF. E. JOHNSON, M.A.

REV. PROF. R. A. REDFORD, M.A.

REV. R. TUCK, B.A.

REV. W. CLARKSON, B.A.

VOL. I.

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
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LVS

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. OBJECT AND PLAN OF THE BOOK.

THE most ancient title of the book, as given in the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Bezae—*Πράξεις Ἀποστόλων*;¹ and properly rendered, both in the Authorized and the Revised Versions, “The Acts of the Apostles”—though probably not given to it by the author, sufficiently expresses its general object, viz. to give a faithful and authentic record of the doings of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, after he had ascended into heaven, leaving them as his responsible agents to carry on the building of his Church on earth. It is obvious that, if the authoritative Christian documents had ended with the Gospels, we should have been left without any sufficient guidance in regard to a multitude of important questions of the utmost moment to the Church in all ages. We should have had, indeed, the record of the life and death, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus; but as to how the holy Catholic Church, of which he was the Divine Founder, was to be compacted together, how the Lord Jesus would carry on from heaven the work which he had begun on earth, what should be the functions of the Holy Ghost, how the city of God was to be ruled, how the evangelization of the world was to be carried on from age to age,—we should have known almost nothing. This second “treatise,” therefore, which in St. Luke’s design was a following up of his own Gospel, but in the design of the Holy Ghost was the sequel of the four Gospels, was a most necessary supplement to the histories of the life of Christ.

But beyond this general object, a closer inspection of the book reveals a more particular purpose, in which the mind of the author and the purpose of the Holy Ghost seem to coincide.

The true way to judge of the purpose of any book is to see what the book

¹ Other titles are *Πράξεις τῶν Ἀποστόλων*, T.R., or *τῶν ἁγίων Ἀποστόλων*, E.T.

actually tells us, as it is to be presumed that the execution corresponds with the design. Now, "The Acts of the Apostles" gives us the history of the apostles, generally, to a very limited extent. After the first chapters, which relate with such power the founding of the Church at Jerusalem, it tells us very little of the work of further evangelization among the Jews; it tells us very little of the history of the mother Church of Jerusalem. After the first chapter, the only apostles named at all are Peter, James, John, and James the Less.¹ And of their work, after those first chapters, we learn only so much as bears upon the admission of Gentiles into the Church of Christ. Peter and John go to Samaria to confirm the converts made there. Peter is sent from Joppa to the house of Cornelius the centurion, to preach the gospel to the Gentiles; and afterwards declares to the assembled Church the mission which he had received, which led to the assent of the brethren in Judæa, expressed in the words, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (ch. xi. 18). The apostles and elders come together to consider the question of the circumcision of Gentile converts, and Peter and James take a prominent part in the discussion and in the decision of the question. The preaching of the gospel by Philip to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian eunuch, and the conversion of a great number of Greeks at Antioch, are other incidents recorded in the early part of the book, which bear directly upon the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ. And when it is remembered how very brief these early chapters are, and what an extremely small portion of the actions of Peter and James the Less, compared with their whole apostolic work, these incidents must have made up, it already becomes manifest that the history of Gentile Christianity was the main object which St. Luke had in view. But the history of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and their admission into the Church as fellow-heirs with Israel, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ, through the preaching of the great apostle of the Gentiles, is avowedly the subject of the last sixteen chapters of the book. From Antioch the capital of the East, to Rome the capital of the West, the writer traces in these chapters the wonderful history of Gentile Christianity through about twenty years of the eventful life of St. Paul, during the last eleven or twelve of which he was himself his companion. Here, then, we have a confirmation of what even the first part of the Acts disclosed as to the writer's purpose; and we are able to frame a theory consistent in itself and with the known facts as to the object of the book. Assuming the authorship of St. Luke and his Gentile birth (see below, § 2), we have an author to whom the progress of Gentile Christianity would be a matter of supreme interest. This interest, no doubt, attached him, when an opportunity presented itself, to the mission of the apostle to the Gentiles. Being a man of education and of cultivated mind, the idea of recording what he had seen of St. Paul's work would naturally occur to him; and this again would connect itself

¹ If indeed James was one of the twelve.

with his general interest in the progress of the gospel among the nations of the earth; while, having already written a history of the life and death of Jesus, in which his special interest in the Gentiles is very apparent (Luke ii. 32; xiii. 29; xiv. 23; xv. 11; xx. 16), he would, as a matter of course, connect his new work with the former one.

But assuming that his object was to write the history of Gentile Christianity, it is obvious that the history of the first preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem was necessary, both to connect his second work with the first, and also because in point of fact the mission to the Gentiles sprang from the mother Church at Jerusalem. The existence and establishment of the Jewish Church was the root from which the Gentile Churches grew; and the Gentile Churches had a common interest with the Jewish in those first great events—the election of an apostle in the place of Judas, the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the preaching of Peter and John, the appointment of deacons, and the martyrdom of Stephen, at which last event the great figure of St. Paul first came upon the stage.

So that, in assuming St. Luke's purpose in writing the Acts to be to give the history of Gentile Christianity, we are supported both by the actual features of the book before us, and by the probability that his own position as a Gentile Christian, as the companion of St. Paul, and as the friend of Theophilus, would give birth to such a design.

It is no less apparent how the hand of Divine providence and inspiration moved him to this choice. St. Luke could not possibly know of himself that the Church of the circumcision would come to an end within a few years of the time at which he was writing, but that the Church of the uncircumcision would go on growing and spreading and increasing through more than eighteen centuries. But God did know it. And therefore it came to pass that this record of evangelical work in heathen countries has been preserved to us, while the work of the apostle of the circumcision and of his brethren has been suffered to fade from remembrance.

§ 2. AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.

We have, in the preceding section, assumed St. Luke to be the author of the Acts of the Apostles; but we must now justify the assumption, though the fact that there is no reasonable doubt about the matter, and that there is a general consent of modern critics on the point, will make it unnecessary to enter into any lengthened disquisition.

The identity of authorship of the Gospel of St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles is manifest from the dedication of both to Theophilus (Luke i. 3; ch. i. 1), and from the reference by the writer of ch. i. 1 to the Gospel written by him. The details in ch. i. 1—9 agree closely with Luke xxiv. 28—51; and there is a striking resemblance of style, phrases, the use of particular words, arrangement of matter, and turn of thought in the two

books, which is generally recognized by critics of all schools, and which supports the unanimous testimony of the early Church, that they are both the work of one author. And this resemblance has been lately brought out with remarkable force in one particular, viz. the frequent use of medical terms, both in the Gospel and in the Acts—terms which in very many instances are found nowhere else in the New Testament (Hobart's 'Medical Language of St. Luke:' Longmans).

If, then, the Gospel was the work of St. Luke, the Acts of the Apostles was so likewise. That the Gospel was the work of St. Luke is the unanimous testimony of antiquity; and the internal evidence agrees with all that we know of St. Luke—that he was not of the circumcision (Col. iv. 10—14); that he was a physician (Col. iv. 14), and consequently a man of liberal education. Indeed, even modern hypercriticism generally admits St. Luke's authorship.¹ It may be added that the internal evidence of the Acts of the Apostles is also strongly in favour of it. His companionship of St. Paul, who styles him "the beloved physician" (Col. iv. 14); his presence with St. Paul at Rome (2 Tim. iv. 17), compared with the fact that the writer of the Acts sailed with St. Paul from Cæsarea to Italy (ch. xxvii. 1) and arrived at Rome (ch. xxviii. 16), and the utter failure of the attempts to identify the author with Timothy (see especially ch. xx. 4, 5) or Silas, or any other of St. Paul's companions; are of themselves strong if not decisive testimonies in favour of Luke's authorship. Taken in conjunction with the other arguments, they leave the question, as Renan says, "beyond doubt." (See below, § 6.)

§ 3. DATE OF COMPOSITION.

Here, again, the inquiry presents no difficulty. The obvious *primâ facie* inference from the abrupt termination of the narrative with the notice of St. Paul's two years' abode at Rome is undoubtedly the true one. St. Luke composed his history at Rome, with the help of St. Paul, and completed it early in the year A.D. 63. He may, no doubt, have prepared notes and memoranda and abstracts of speeches which he heard delivered, for several years before, while he was St. Paul's companion. But the composition of the book is due to the comparative leisure of himself and his great master during the two years' imprisonment at Rome. It could not, of course, have been completed earlier, because the narrative comes down without a break, in one continuous flow, to the time of the imprisonment. It could not possibly have been written later, because the termination of the book marks as plainly as is possible that the writer was writing at the very standpoint to which he had brought down his narrative. We may affirm, without any fear of being wrong, that St. Paul's trial before Nero, and his acquittal and

¹ Renan ('Les Apôtres') says, "It is beyond doubt that the Acts and the third Gospel are by the same author;" and adds a little later, "This author is in very deed Luke, the disciple of Paul."

his journey into Spain (if, indeed, he went to Spain)¹ and his second trial and martyrdom, had not taken place when St. Luke finished his history, because it is utterly inconceivable that, if they had, he should not have mentioned them. But it is highly probable that incidents connected with St. Paul's first trial, and consequent immediate departure from Rome, put a stop at the moment to all literary work, and that, if St. Luke designed continuing his history, his purpose was frustrated by circumstances of which we have no certain knowledge. It may have been his employment in missionary work; it may have been other hindrances; it may have been his death; for we have really no knowledge whatever of St. Luke's life subsequent to the close of the Acts of the Apostles, except the mention of him as being still with St. Paul at the time of the writing of his Second Epistle to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 11). If this Epistle were written from Rome during St. Paul's second imprisonment, this would bring down our knowledge of St. Luke two years later than the close of the Acts. But it is easy to conceive that even in this case many causes may have hindered his continuing his history.

It should be added that the fact of the Gospel of St. Luke having been written before the Acts (ch. i. 1) presents no difficulty in the way of the above date for the composition of the Acts, as St. Paul's two years of enforced leisure at Cæsarea while St. Luke was with him afforded as convenient and appropriate a time for the composition of the Gospel with St. Paul's help, as the two years at Rome did for the composition of the Acts. Meyer's reason ('Introd. to Acts') for placing the composition of the Gospel and consequently of the Acts much later, viz. because the destruction of Jerusalem is referred to in our Lord's prophetic discourse in Luke xxi. 20, is not worthy of the consideration of a Christian. If the reason is a sound one, the Gospel ceases to be of any value, since the writer of it fabricated falsehoods.

§ 4. SOURCES.

The inquiry into the sources from which St. Luke derived his knowledge of the facts which he relates is one the fitness of which St. Luke himself assures us of when he is at pains to satisfy us of the sufficiency of his own sources of information in respect to the narrative contained in his Gospel² (Luke i. 1—4; comp. too ch. i. 21; x. 39—42). It is, then, most satisfactory to know that in St. Luke we have not only an author in whom the historical instinct was most strong and clear, and in whom a calm judicial spirit and a lucid perception of truth were conspicuous qualities, but one who had also

¹ Dr. Farrar ('Life and Work of St. Paul,' vol. ii. ch. liii.) argues against the journey into Spain. But the main strength of the argument rests upon the hypothesis that the Epistles to Timothy were written during his last imprisonment at Rome.

² See Chrysostom's remarks on St. Luke's care "to intimate how strictly he may be depended upon" in his account of things which he received from others, and of things which he saw and heard himself, in his first homily on the Acts of the Apostles.

unrivalled opportunities of knowing the certainty of those things which form the subject of his history. The intimate friend and constant companion of St. Paul, sharing his missionary labours, bound to him by ties of mutual affection, and, especially, passing two several periods of two years with him in the quiet and leisure of his confinement as a state prisoner,—he must have known all that St. Paul knew on that subject of absorbing interest to them both, the progress of the gospel of Christ. Of at least twelve years of St. Paul's life he was himself a close observer. Of the time that preceded his own acquaintance with him he could learn all the particulars from the apostle's own lips. The characters and actions of all the great pillars of the Church were familiar to him, partly from personal intercourse and partly from the copious information which he would receive from Paul and other contemporaries. Peter, John, James, Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Titus, Apollos, Aquila, Priscilla, and many others were all known by him, either personally or through those who were intimately acquainted with them. And as his history was composed while he was with St. Paul at Rome, he had the means at hand of verifying every statement and receiving correction on every doubtful point. It is impossible to conceive any one better qualified by position than St. Luke was to be the first Church historian. And his simple, clear, and often graphic and copious, narrative exactly corresponds with such situation.

As regards the earlier chapters and the episode from ch. ix. 32 to ch. xii. 20, in which St. Peter occupies so prominent a place, and in which his speeches and actions are so fully described, we cannot say certainly from what source St. Luke derived his knowledge. Many things suggest the thought that he may have learnt them from St. Peter himself; or possibly that there may have been extant some one or more narratives by an eye-witness, whose materials St. Luke incorporated in his own work. These, however, are matters of uncertain conjecture, though the internal evidence of full and accurate information is unmistakable. But from the moment that Paul appears upon the stage, we cannot doubt that he was the chief source of St. Luke's information as regards all those transactions which occurred before he joined him or at such times as he was separated from him. His own observation supplied the rest, with the help of the friends above enumerated.

It is interesting to remember, further, that St. Luke must have seen many of the secular personages whom he introduces in his narrative: possibly Herod Agrippa, and presumably his son King Agrippa, Felix, Porcius Festus, Ananias the high priest, Publius, and others. At Rome it is likely that he would see Nero and some of the principal persons of his court.

There is no evidence, either in the Gospel or in the Acts, that St. Luke ever saw our Lord. The assertion of Epiphanius and of Adamantius (pseudo-Origen), that he was one of the seventy, carries no weight with it. It is inconsistent with St. Luke's own statement (Luke i. 2), and with other traditions, which make him a native of Antioch and one of St. Paul's converts. This, however, by the way.

St. Luke's historical and geographical¹ accuracy has been frequently observed as an evidence of his acquaintance with secular as well as sacred writings. He appears to have been well read in the Septuagint, including the apocryphal writings.

§ 5. PLACE IN THE CANON.

Eusebius places in the forefront of his list of books generally acknowledged as portions of Holy Scripture (*ὁμολογούμεναι θεία γραφαί*), the four Gospels and "the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (*ἡ τῶν πράξεων τῶν Ἀποστόλων γραφή*);" and again he says, "Luke has left us a proof of his skill in spiritual healing in two inspired books—his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles" ('Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 11, 25). It was probably from ch. xxi. 8, 9, that Papias derived his knowledge of the daughters of Philip; and from ch. i. 23 that he knew of "Justus surnamed Barsabas," though he may, of course, have known of both from tradition (Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' iii. 39). The passage in Clement's First Epistle—"What shall we say of David, so highly testified of? to whom God said, I have found a man after my own heart, *David the son of Jesse*"—if compared with ch. xiii. 22 (especially as regards the words in italics), will be seen to be certainly taken from it. The words *τῷ μαρτυρημένῳ*, compared with the *μαρτυρήσας* of ch. xiii. 22, and the *τὸν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ* with the same phrase found in the Acts but not found in Ps. lxxix. 20, are very strong evidences of Clement's acquaintance with the Acts. And this evidence is confirmed by another distinct verbal quotation from ch. xx. 35: "Ye were all of you humble-minded, more *willingly giving than receiving*"² (St. Clement, ch. ii. and xviii. See also i. 34, *ἡμεῖς ὁμονοία ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ συναχθέντες*, compared with ch. ii. 1). There is a less certain reference to ch. v. 41 in Hermas ('Simil.,' iv. sect. 28); but Ignatius's saying in the Epistle to the Smyrneans (iii.), that Christ, "after his resurrection, did eat and drink with them," is an evident quotation from ch. x. 41. So also his saying in the Epistle to the Magnesians (v.), "Every man must go to his own place," must be taken from ch. i. 25; and the phrase *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ*, coupled as it is with *μία προσευχή μία δέησις*, and with the description of Church unity in the same Epistle (sect. vii.), must be taken from ch. i. 15; ii. 1, 44; as also that of Polycarp, that the apostles "are gone to their own place (*εἰς τὸν ὀφειλόμενον αὐτοῖς τόπον*)." There is also another verbal quotation in Polycarp (sect. i.), "Ὁν ἤγειρεν ὁ Θεὸς λύσας τὰς ὀδύνας τοῦ Ἄδου, from ch. ii. 24, where the substitution of Ἄδου for *θανάτου* is probably caused by *θανάτου* having immediately preceded. Dean Alford was of opinion that there are not "any references in Justin Martyr which, fairly considered, belong to this book" ('Proleg.,' ch. i. sect. v.); but there is such a close similarity

¹ See Dean Howson's 'Evidential Value of the Acts of the Apostles,' lect. iv.

² "Bishop Lightfoot" and "all commentators, Bishop Jacobson, Harnack, etc., recognize this as a distinct allusion to the passage in the Acts" (Introduction to Acts in 'Speaker's Commentary,' p. 333).

of thought and expression in the passage in ch. vii. 20, 22, Ἐν ᾧ καιρῷ ἐγεννήθη Μωσῆς . . . ἐκτεθέντα δὲ αὐτὸν ἀνείλατο αὐτὸν ἡ θυγάτηρ Φαραὸν, καὶ ἀνεθρέψατο αὐτὸν ἑαυτῇ εἰς ἕξιν' καὶ ἐπαιδεύθη . . . ἐν πάσῃ σοφίᾳ Αἰγυπτίων' ἣν δὲ δυνατὸς ἐν λόγοις καὶ ἐν ἔργοις αὐτοῦ, and that in the treatise of Justin, 'Ad Græcos Cohortatio : ' Παρ' οἷς οὐκ ἐτέχθη Μωσῆς μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης τῶν Αἰγυπτίων παιδευσέως μετασχεῖν ἤξιώθη διὰ τὸ ὑπὸ θυγατρὸς βασιλέως εἰς παιδὸς ἠκειώσθαι χώραν . . . ὡς ἱστοροῦσιν οἱ σοφώτατοι τῶν ἱστοριογράφων οἱ τὸν βίον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὰς πράξεις . . . ἀναγράψασθαι προελόμενοι, as could hardly arise from two independent minds. The sequence of thought, the birth, the adoption, the education, the mighty works, are identical in both writers. The same may be said of the two other passages adduced by Lardner from Justin ; one from the 'First Apology' compared with ch. xiii. 27, and the other from the 'Dialogue' compared with ch. xxvi. 22, 23. Here, again, this identity of thought and expression in both passages (τοῦτον ἀγνοήσαντες compared with ἠγνόησαν, and παθητὸς ὁ Χριστὸς compared with παθητὸς γενησόμενος ὁ Χριστὸς) could not be accidental, and can only be accounted for by Justin being familiar with the Acts of the Apostles.

Between the times of Justin and Eusebius there is an abundance of direct quotations from the Acts. The first is in the Epistle of the Churches of Lyons and Vienna, given by Eusebius, 'Hist. Eccl.,' bk. v. ch. 2, where the martyrdom and prayer of Stephen are expressly referred to ; and there are many also in Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Julius Africanus, Origen, and others, which may be found in Westcott's 'Hist. of the Canon,' and in Lardner's 'Credibility of the Gospel History.' The Book of the Acts is contained in the Muratorian Canon in the West, ascribed to about A.D. 170 ; and also in the Peshito Canon in the East, of about the same date ; in the fifty-ninth canon of the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 363), the list in which, however, is considered spurious ; in the thirty-ninth canon of the Council of Carthage (A.D. 397) ; in the seventy-sixth of the Apostolical Canons ; in the list of Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 386), of Epiphanius of Cyprus (A.D. 403), of Athanasius, of Jerome, and thenceforth in the Canon as received by the whole Eastern and Western Churches.

It is curious to add that though, as we have seen from the testimony of Eusebius, the Acts of the Apostles was reckoned among the uncontested books of Holy Scripture, it was a book scarcely known at Constantinople in the days of Chrysostom. The passage with which he opens his homilies on the Acts has been often quoted : "To many persons this book is so little known, both it and its author, that they are not even aware that there is such a book in existence." And what seems yet more strange, even at Antioch (St. Luke's reported birthplace), Chrysostom tells us it was "strange : " "Strange, and not strange, for it belongs to the order of Holy Scripture ; and yet strange, because peradventure your ears are not accustomed to such a subject. Certainly there are many to whom this book is not even known" ('Hom. in Princip. Act.,' preached at Antioch).¹

¹ See 'Library of the Fathers,' vol. xxxiii. p. 1, note 6.

On the other hand, St. Augustine speaks of the book as "well known from being very frequently read in the Church."¹ The Book of the Acts was, by long-established custom (in the time of Chrysostom), read in the Churches (as e.g. at Antioch and in Africa) from Easter to Pentecost ('Library of the Fathers,' vol. xxxiii. p. 1, note).

§ 6. MODERN CRITICISM.

An Introduction to the Acts would hardly be complete without a brief reference to the views of modern criticism. It is observable, then, that a certain number of critics, who seem to think that the main function of criticism is to disregard all external evidence, and all internal evidence also which chances to agree with the external, deny the authenticity of the book. With a strange kind of *ὑστερον πρότερον* logic, instead of inferring the truth of the narrative from the overwhelming evidence that it is the narrative of an eye-witness and a contemporary, they conclude that it is not the narrative of a contemporary because it contains statements which they are indisposed to admit as true. The account of the ascension of our Lord and of the day of Pentecost in ch. iii., of the miracles of Peter and John in the following chapters, and of other supernatural events occurring throughout the book, are by the light of nature incredible; and therefore the book that contains them cannot be, what the Acts of the Apostles claims to be, and what all the evidence proves it to be, the work of a companion of St. Paul. It *must* be the work of a later age, say the second century, when a legendary history had cropped up, and the mists of time already obscured the clear reality of events.

In addition to this general reason for assigning the work to the second century, a further one is found in an hypothesis based upon the imagination of the inventor of it (F. C. Baur), viz. that the purpose of the writer of the Acts was to afford an historical basis for the reunion of two discordant sections of the Church, viz. the followers of St. Peter and the followers of St. Paul. The different doctrines preached by the two apostles having issued in a strong antagonism between their respective followers, some unknown author of the second century wrote this book in order to reconcile them, by showing an agreement between their two leaders. The writer, by the use of the word "we" (so at least say some of the critics), assumed the character of a companion of St. Paul, in order to give greater weight to his history; or, as others say, incorporated a bit of contemporary writing in his book without being at the pains to alter the "we." The great ability and learning and ingenuity with which F. C. Baur supported his hypothesis attracted great attention, and some adhesion to it in Germany. But common sense and the laws of evidence seem to be resuming their legitimate power. We have seen above how Renan, certainly one of the ablest of the freethink-

¹ 'De Prædest. Sanot.,' § 4, quoted in Introduction to Acts in 'Speaker's Commentary,' p. 349, note 3.

ing school, expresses his unhesitating belief that Luke is the author of the Acts.

Another theory (Mayerhoff, etc.) makes Timothy the author of the Acts of the Apostles; and yet another (that of Schleiermacher, De Wette, and Bleek) makes Timothy and not Luke to have been the companion of Paul who speaks in the first person (we), and Luke to have inserted these portions without alteration from Timothy's journal (see Alford's 'Prolegom.'). Both these wanton and gratuitous conjectures are contradicted by the plain words of ch. xx. 4, 5, where the companions of Paul, of whom Timothy was one, are distinctly stated to have *gone before*, while the writer remained with Paul (see above, § 2).

Another theory (Schwanbeck, etc.) makes Silas the author of the book, or section of the book; and yet another at the same time identifies Silas with Luke, supposing the names Silas = Silvanus, and Lukas, derived from *lucus*, a grove, to be mere variations of the same name, like Cephas and Peter, or Thomas and Didymus. But, besides that this is quite unsupported by external evidence, it is inconsistent with ch. xv. 22, 34, 40; xvi.; xvii.; xviii. (*passim*); where the "we" ought to have been introduced if the writer was one of the actors. It is most unlikely too that Silas should have described himself as being one of the "chief men among the brethren" (ch. xv. 22). It may be added that the failure of all other hypotheses is an additional argument in favour of the authorship of St. Luke.

The grounds of the adverse criticisms of De Wette, F. C. Baur, Schwegler, Zeller, Köstlin, Helgenfeld, and others, are thus summed up by Meyer (Introduction, p. 6): Alleged contradictions with the Pauline Epistles (ch. ix. 19, 23, 25—28; xi. 30 compared with Gal. i. 17—19 and ii. 1; ch. xvii. 16, *et sqq.*; xviii. 22, *et seq.*; xxviii. 30, *et seq.*); inadequate accounts (ch. xvi. 6; xviii. 22, *et seq.*; xxviii. 30, 31); omission of facts (1 Cor. xv. 32; 2 Cor. i. 8; xi. 25; Rom. xv. 19; xvii. 3, 4); the partially unhistoric character of the first portion of the book; un-Pauline miracles, speeches, and actions (ch. xxviii. 7—10; xxi. 20, *et seq.*; xxiii. 6, *et sqq.*; xx.; xxvi.; approval of apostolic decree, xv.).

Meyer (*ibid.*, p. 14, note 1) adds, "According to Schwanbeck, the *redacteur* of the book has used the four following documents:—(1) A biography of Peter; (2) a rhetorical work on the death of Stephen; (3) a biography of Barnabas; (4) a memoir of Silas.

The effect of these mutually destructive criticisms, the distinct failures in each case to get over the difficulties which oppose themselves to the conclusion attempted to be established, and the thoroughly arbitrary and *will-kürlich* nature of the objections made to St. Luke's authorship, and of the assumptions on which opposing hypotheses are grounded,—all this leaves the conclusions to which we came in sections 1 and 2 immovably confirmed.

§ 7. LITERATURE OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

To those who desire to study seriously this charming and invaluable history, it may be useful to indicate a few books which will assist them to do so. Paley's 'Horæ Paulinæ' still holds its ground as an original argument, ingeniously worked out, and capable of constant extension, by which the Epistles of St. Paul and the Acts of the Apostles are shown to confirm each other, and are made to shed light each upon the other in a way to disarm suspicion of collusion, and to stamp both with an unmistakable stamp of truth. The great work of Conybeare and Howson ('Life and Epistles of St. Paul'); the contemporary work of Mr. Lewin, bearing the same title; Canon Farrar's 'Life and Work of St. Paul;' Renan's 'Les Apôtres,' and his 'St. Paul;' give in different ways all that can be desired in the way of historical and geographical illustration to bring out into full light the work, the character, the times, of the apostle, and to display the veracity, the accuracy, and the simplicity, of his biographer. For direct commentaries, it may be sufficient to name those of St. Chrysostom, of Dr. John Lightfoot, of Kuinoel (in Latin), of Meyer (translated from the German), of Olshausen and Lange (also translated into English), of Bishop Wordsworth and Dean Alford, of Dean Plumptre (in the 'New Testament Commentary for English Readers,' edited by the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol), of Bishop Jacobson (in the 'Speaker's Commentary'), of Canon Cook; to which, of course, very many more might be added.

Much additional information bearing upon the Acts may also be gathered from commentaries on St. Paul's Epistles, among which may be mentioned those of Bishop Ellicott and those of Bishop Lightfoot. And, again, such smaller works as Dean Howson's 'Bohlen Lectures,' Smith of Jordanhill on 'The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul,' Hobart's 'Medical Language of St. Luke,' elucidate particular portions or particular aspects of the book. Those who desire to know all that can be said by hostile criticism against the credibility or authenticity of the Acts, and the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the author, may search the writings of Baur, Schrader, Schwegler, Credner, Overbeck, Zeller, and many others.

§ 8. CHRONOLOGY.

"The chronology of the Acts is involved in great difficulties," says Canon Cook (Introduction, p. xxxi.); and the different conclusions which men of equal learning and capacity have arrived at is a sufficient evidence of these difficulties. There are, however, two or three fixed points which restrain the intermediate divergences within comparatively narrow limits, and several other coincidences of persons and things which fix the time of the narrative within the compass of three or four years at most. But, on the other hand, we have no certainty as to the year in which our history begins.

The exact date of the Crucifixion, in spite of the careful statement of Luke iii. 1, 2, is uncertain to the extent of four or five years. Some place the Feast of Pentecost mentioned in ch. ii. in the year A.D. 28; some A.D. 30; and some again A.D. 33. And this is necessarily a cause of uncertainty as to the date of subsequent events, till we come to A.D. 44.¹ In that year Herod Agrippa died, soon after the death of James (ch. xii.), and in the same year we know that Saul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem with the alms of the Antiochian Church for the relief of the poor Jews suffering from the famine (ch. xi. 30; xii. 25).

Those who think that this visit of St. Paul is the one alluded to in Gal. ii. 1, naturally reckon back fourteen years from A.D. 44, and so get A.D. 30 as the year of St. Paul's conversion; and throw back the Pentecost of Acts ii. to the earliest possible date, viz. A.D. 28. But those who think the visit to Jerusalem spoken of in Gal. ii. 1 is that which is related in ch. xv., are not so hampered. Allowing five or six, or even seven years for St. Paul's ministry at Antioch after his return from Jerusalem, for his first missionary journey, and his long abode at Antioch after his return (ch. xiv. 28), they place the visit to Jerusalem in A.D. 49, 50, 51, or 52, and so get from the year A.D. 35 to A.D. 38 for the visit of Gal. i. 18, 19; and from A.D. 32 to A.D. 35 as the year of Saul's conversion; thus leaving three or four years for the events recorded in the first six or seven chapters of the Acts, even if the year A.D. 30 or 31 is adopted for the Pentecost which followed the Ascension. There is, however, yet another doubt as to the reckoning of the fourteen years. It is not at all clear whether they are to be counted from the conversion mentioned in Gal. i. 15, 16, or from the visit to Peter which took place three years after the conversion; in other words, whether we are to reckon *fourteen* years or *seventeen* backwards from A.D. 44 to find the date of St. Paul's conversion. Nor, again, is there absolute certainty that the visit to Jerusalem of ch. xv. and that of Gal. ii. 1 are one and the same. Lewin, for instance, identifies the visit just glanced at in ch. xviii. 22 with that of Gal. ii. 1 (vol. i. 302). Others, as we have seen, identify with it the visit recorded in ch. xi. 30 and xii. 25. So that there is uncertainty on every side.

The next date on which we may, though with less certainty, rely is that of St. Paul's first visit to Corinth (ch. xviii.), which followed closely on the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius. This latter event took place (almost certainly) in A.D. 52, and, therefore, St. Paul's arrival at Corinth happened either in the same year or A.D. 53.

The arrival of Festus at Cæsarea as Procurator of Judæa, again, is by nearly universal consent of modern chronologists, placed in A.D. 60, whence we gather, with certainty, the time of St. Paul's removal to Rome and of his two years' imprisonment as from A.D. 61 to A.D. 63.

Less exact indications of time may be gathered from the presence of Gamaliel in the Sanhedrim (ch. v. 34); from the mention of 'Aretas the

¹ "La seule date fixe des Actes des Apôtres" (Renan, 'Les Apôtres,' p. xxxiii.).

king" as being in possession of Damascus at the time of St. Paul's escape (2 Cor. xi. 32), which is thought to indicate the beginning of the reign of Caligula, A.D. 37; the famine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar (ch. xi. 28), who began to reign A.D. 41; the proconsulate of Sergius Paulus (ch. xiii. 7), who is quoted by Pliny about twenty years after St. Paul's visit to Cyprus; the proconsulate of Gallio (ch. xviii. 12), indicating the reign of Claudius, by whom Achaia was given back to the senate, and therefore governed by a proconsul; and lastly, the high priesthood of Ananias (ch. xxiii. 2) and the procuratorship of Felix (ch. xxiii. 24), pointing, by their coincidence, to about A.D. 58. These indications, though not sufficient for the construction of an exact chronology, yet clearly mark a true historical sequence of events occurring in their proper place and order, and capable of being arranged accurately if ever the events of secular history to which they are tied are reduced by further light to an exact chronology.

The only apparent anachronism in the Acts is the mention of Theudas in the speech of Gamaliel given in ch. v. 36. The reader is referred to the note on that passage, where it is attempted to show that the mistake is Josephus's, not St. Luke's.

It is not the purpose of this Introduction to give a scheme of exact chronology. The materials for it, and the difficulties of constructing such a scheme, have been pointed out. Those who desire to enter fully into this intricate subject, are referred to Lewin's 'Fasti Sacri,' or to the great works of Anger,¹ Wieseler,² and others; or, if they merely wish to know the principal views of chronologists, to the Synoptic Table in the appendix to the second volume of Farrar's 'Life and Works of St. Paul;' to Dean Alford's 'Prolegomena to the Acts;' to Bishop Wordsworth's Chronological Synopsis, appended to his Introduction to the Acts; to the Chronological Table with annotations at the end of vol. ii. of Conybeare and Howson's 'St. Paul;' and also to the able note at pp. 244—252 of vol. i.; to the Chronological Summary in Meyer's Introduction (pp. 17—26); or to the Chronological Table at the end of Dean Plumptre's 'Commentary on the Acts.'³

§ 9. PLAN OF THIS COMMENTARY.

The Revised Version of the New Testament (A.D. 1881) has been taken as the text on which this Commentary is founded. Whenever the Revised Version differs from the Authorized Version of A.D. 1611, the words of the Authorized Version are appended for comparison. By this means every change made by the Revisers is brought to the notice of the reader, whose

¹ 'De Temporum in Actis Apostolorum Ratio.'

² 'Chronologie des Apostolischen Zeitalters.'

³ The writer did not become acquainted with this work until he was writing the chronological section of this Introduction, and the first twenty-two chapters were gone to press and the twenty-third wholly written.

judgment is thus directed to the reason or expediency of the change. The writer has not thought it necessary in general to express any opinion on the changes made but has done so occasionally in terms of agreement or disagreement, as the case may be. To discover and elucidate the exact meaning of the original; to illustrate the events narrated by all the helps he could get from other writers; to help the student to note the peculiarities of the diction of the inspired author, as clues to his education, his reading, his profession, his genuineness, his age, his fitness for his task; to mark the historical and geographical and general accuracy of the author as evidences of the time when he lived, and of his perfect trustworthiness as to all that he relates; and then, both in the Exposition and in the Homiletical remarks, to try and make the text so elucidated profitable for correction and instruction in righteousness;—has been the writer's aim, however imperfectly it has been attained. The labour it has cost him has been considerable, amidst constant interruptions and unnumbered hindrances, but it has been a sweet and pleasant labour, full of interest and reward and growing delight, as the blessed Book yielded up its treasures of wisdom and truth, and the mind and hand of God became more and more visible amidst the words and works of man.

In the notes R.V. denotes Revised Version; A.V. denotes Authorized Version; T.R. Textus Receptus, *i.e.* the Greek Text from which the Authorized Version was made; and R.T. Revised Text, *i.e.* the Greek Text from which the Revised Version was made. Whenever the R.V. differs from the A.V. in consequence of the R.T. differing from the T.R., this is shown by appending to the words of the Authorized Version quoted in the note the letters A.V. and T.R. In some few cases where the difference in the Greek Text makes no difference in the version, the variation in the R.T. is not noted. Mere differences of punctuation, or in the use of capitals or italics, or *vice versa*, in the R.V. as compared with the A.V., are not noted either.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

Ver. 1.—*I made for have I made, A.V.; concerning for of, A.V.; to teach for teach, A.V.* The former treatise; literally, *the first history, narrative, or discourse.* The form of the Greek, τὸν μὲν πρῶτον, shows that the writer had in his mind at the time to contrast the *second history*, which he was just beginning, and that naturally τὸν δὲ δεύτερον, or τοῦτον δὲ τὸν λόγον, ought, both grammatically and logically, to have followed. But the mention of “the apostles whom he had chosen” drew him, as it were, into the stream of his history before he was able to describe it. O Theophilus. The omission of the title “most excellent,” given to Theophilus in the Gospel (Luke i. 3), is one among other indications that the publication of the Acts followed very closely upon that of the Gospel. Began both to do and to teach. Some take the phrase as equivalent to *did and taught*; others supply the sense *and continued* until the day, etc.; or, which is the same thing, supply the *terminus a quo*, making the whole sense equivalent to “all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day,” etc.; others again, as Bishop Wordsworth, gather St. Luke’s meaning to be that in the Acts he is about to narrate the *continuance* by our Lord in heaven of the work which he only *began* on earth. Meyer thinks that, by the insertion of the word “began,” the thing said or done “is in a vivid and graphic manner denoted according to its moment of commencement;” so that our Lord is represented as at one time actively beginning to heal, then to teach, then to walk on the sea, and so on. But the words “began” and “until the day” certainly suggest the beginning and the ending of our Lord’s ministry, or rather the whole ministry from its beginning to its end, so that the meaning would be “of all that

Jesus did and taught from first to last.” *To do and to teach.* So the disciples on the way to Emmaus speak of Jesus as “a Prophet mighty in deed and word” (Luke xxiv. 19). Compare the stress laid upon the works of Christ in ch. x. 38, 39.

Ver. 2.—*Received for taken, A.V.; commandment for commandments, A.V.; after that he had given commandment through the Holy Ghost for after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments, A.V.* The commandment or directions given by our Lord to the apostles between the Resurrection and the Ascension are recorded partly in Luke xxiv. 44—49; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15—18; John xxi.; and yet more fully in vers. 3—8 of this chapter. Through the Holy Ghost. The sense is certain. Jesus gave his charge to his apostles *through the Holy Ghost*. It was by the Holy Ghost abiding in him that he spake to the apostles. This is the repeated declaration of Holy Scripture. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me” (Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18; oh. x. 38. See also Luke iv. 1; Matt. xii. 28; Heb. ix. 14; and for the construction, ch. xi. 28; xxi. 4). Received up (ἀνελήθη); the same word as is used in the Septuagint of Elijah (2 Kings ii. 10, 11). In Luke xxiv. 5 it is *carried up* (ἀνεφέρετο).

Ver. 3.—*Proofs for infallible proofs, A.V.; appearing unto them for seen of, A.V.; concerning for pertaining to, A.V.* The addition of the words by many proofs makes it necessary to understand the words showed himself (παρέστηεν ἑαυτῶν) in the sense which it bears both in classic and Scriptural Greek, of *proved or demonstrated*: “To whom he gave distinct proofs of his being alive after his passion;” the proofs follow—being “seen of them” for forty days at intervals, talking with them, and (ver. 9) “being taken up while they were looking.” Doubtless, too, he had in

his mind those other proofs which he records in ch. x. 41, and those referred to by St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 5—8). For this sense of *παριστῆμι*, see ch. xxiv. 13, "to prove;" and Lysias's 'Oration against Eratosthenes' (p. 125), where the almost identical phrase occurs which we have here, "Ἀμφότερα ταῦτα πολλοῖς τεκμήριοις παραστήσω, "I will prove both these things by many certain proofs." The A.V. rendering, "infallible proofs," was quite justified. Stephanus says, "De certo et indubitato signo dicitur apud Rhetoricos" ('Thesaurus,' 9216); and the technical meaning of *τεκμήριον* in Aristotle is a "demonstrative proof," as opposed to a *σημείον*, which leaves room for doubt; and in medical writers, which is important as regards St. Luke, the *τεκμήριον* is the "infallible symptom." St. Luke, by the use of the word here, undoubtedly meant to express the *certainly* of the conclusion based on those proofs. Appearing unto them. The Greek *ὄπτανόμενος*, corresponding to the *φανερωθεὶς* of the Epistle of Barnabas, cap. xv., only occurs in the New Testament in this place. In the Septuagint of 1 Kings viii. 8 it is used of the staves of the ark within the veil, which "were not seen without." The idea intended to be conveyed, both by the use of this verb and by the use of *διὰ* (by the space of), is that our Lord was not with the apostles always, as he was before the Resurrection, but that he came and again disappeared (St. Chrysostom). They were ficting appearances spread over forty days. The nearly related substantive, *ὄπτασις*, means "a vision," and is frequently used by St. Luke i. 22; xxiv. 23; xxvi. 19. It is also found in 2 Cor. xii. 1. Concerning the kingdom of God; a subject which had deeply engaged their thoughts (Luke xix. 11), and on which it was most needful that they should now be fully instructed, that they might teach others (ch. xx. 25).

Ver. 4.—*He charged them not to depart for commanded them that they should not depart, A.V.; to wait for wait, A.V.; said he for saith he, A.V.; from me for of me, A.V.* Being assembled, etc. (R.T. omits *μετ' αὐτῶν*); more exactly, *as he was assembling with them* (Field, in 'Otium Norvicense'). Not to depart from Jerusalem. (See Luke xxiv. 49.) It was necessary, according to the prophecy, Micah iv. 2; Isa. ii. 3, that the gospel should go forth *from Jerusalem*. Wait for the promise. (See Luke xxiv. 49.) The promise of the Father formed the subject of our Lord's discourse to the apostles on the last night of his earthly life, as recorded in John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—14. He doubtless here refers to that conversation, though not, of course, to the record of it in the Gospel of St. John.

Ver. 5.—*Indeed for truly, A.V.* Ye shall be baptized, etc. (Comp. Matt. iii. 11;

Luke iii. 16; John i. 33.) St. Peter refers to this saying of the Lord's in his address to the Church of Jerusalem (ch. xi. 16), and the record of it here may be an indication that St. Luke derived his information of these early events from Peter. A curious question arises as to the baptism of the apostles themselves. When were they baptized, and by whom? Chrysostom says, "They were baptized by John." But it is evident, from John iii. 22; iv. 1, 2, that converts were baptized with Christian, as distinct from John's, baptism in our Lord's lifetime, and hence it may seem probable, especially considering that St. Paul was baptized, that the apostles may have been baptized by Christ (Bishop Wordsworth on John iv. 2). If so, the baptism with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was the complement of that baptism, not the substitute for it. "In our case," says Chrysostom, "both (the baptism of water and of the Spirit) take place under one act, but then they were divided."

Ver. 6.—*They therefore, when for when they therefore, A.V.; him for of him, A.V.; dost thou for wilt thou, A.V.; restores for restore again, A.V.* Dost thou at this time, etc.? It appears from Luke xix. 11 and xxiv. 21, as well as from other passages, that the apostles expected the kingdom of Christ to come immediately. It was most natural, therefore, that, after the temporary extinction of this hope by the Crucifixion, it should revive with new force when they saw the Lord alive after his passion. They had doubtless too been thinking over the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit "not many days hence." Restors. (Comp. *restitutio*, ch. iii. 21; and see Matt. xvii. 11.)

Ver. 7.—*Times or seasons for the times or the seasons, A.V.; set within his own authority for put in his own power, A.V.* It is not for you to know, etc. The time of the end is always spoken of as hidden (so Matt. xxiv. 36; Mark xiii. 32; 1 Thess. v. 1, 2; 2 Pet. iii. 10, etc.). Times or seasons. *Times* with reference to duration, *seasons* with reference to fitness or opportunity. Which the Father. The distinctive use of the word "Father" here agrees with our Lord's saying in Mark xiii. 32, "Neither the Son, but the Father." Hath set within his own authority (*ἐξουσία*). "Hath reserved under his own authority" ('Speaker's Commentary'); "Has established by means of his own plenitude of power" (Meyer); "Hath put or kept in his own power" (A.V., and so Alford). This last seems the best.

Ver. 8.—*When for after that, A.V.; my witnesses for witnesses unto me, A.V. and T.R.; Samaria for in Samaria, A.V.* Ye shall receive power (*δύναμις*); a word specially used of the power of the Holy Spirit

(see ch. vi. 8). "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit" (Luke iv. 14; see too xxiv. 49); "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" (ch. x. 38); "Through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xv. 13); "The demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. ii. 4); "Strengthened with might (*δυνάμει*) by his Spirit" (Eph. iii. 16); "The powers of the world to come" (Heb. vi. 6). My witnesses. This function of the apostles, to be witnesses of Christ, is one much insisted upon in Scripture. So we read in ver. 22, "Of these must one become [be ordained, A.V.] a witness with us of his resurrection." So again in ch. x. 40—42, "God . . . showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us. . . . And he commanded us to testify," etc. (see also vers. 39 and 42 of the same chapter; ch. xiii. 31; Luke xxiv. 48; ch. iv. 33; xiii. 31; xxii. 15, 18, 20; xxvi. 16; 1 Pet. v. 1; 1 John 1—3, etc.).

Ver. 9.—*Said for spoken, A.V.; as they were looking for while they beheld, A.V.* They were to be *αὐτόματα*, eye-witnesses, of the Lord's ascension, and so it is particularly noted that he was taken as they were looking. He did not disappear from their sight till he reached the cloud which enveloped him.

Ver. 10.—*Were looking for looked, A.V.; into for toward, A.V.; went for went up, A.V.* Two men. St. Luke describes them according to their appearance. They were really angels. In like manner, in Josh. v. 13 we read, "There stood a man over against him;" and in Gen. xviii. 2, 16; xix. 10, 12, 16, we read of "the men;" and in Judg. xiii. 6, 8, 10, 11, of "the man of God;" the persons spoken of in all these cases being angels (comp. Dan. iii. 25; viii. 15, 16; ix. 21, etc.; Zech. i. 8, 10; Mark. xvi. 5; Luke xxiv. 4). Gabriel, too, means "man of God." In white apparel, typical of perfect holiness, and of the glory which belongs to the inhabitants of heaven (comp. Dan. x. 5, 6; Matt. xvii. 2; xxviii. 3; Mark ix. 3; xvi. 5; Luke xxiv. 4; Rev. vii. 9, 13; iii. 5, 18; iv. 4; vi. 11; xix. 8, etc.).

Ver. 11.—*Looking for gazing up, A.V.; this for this same, A.V.; was received for is taken, A.V.; beheld him going for have seen him go, A.V.* In like manner; *i.e.* in a cloud. The description of our Lord's second advent constantly makes mention of clouds. "Behold, he cometh with clouds" (Rev. i. 7). "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" (Dan. vii. 13; and so Matt. xxvi. 64; Luke xxi. 27, etc.). We are reminded of the grand imagery of Ps. civ. 3, "Who maketh the clouds his chariot,

who walketh upon the wings of the wind." It may be remarked that the above is by far the fullest account we have of the ascension of our Lord. St. Luke appears to have learnt some further particulars concerning it in the interval between writing his Gospel (Luke xxiv. 50—52) and writing the Acts. But allusions to the Ascension are frequent (Mark. xvi. 19; John vi. 62; xx. 17; Rom. viii. 34; Eph. iv. 8, 9; Phil. ii. 9; Col. iii. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 22, etc.). With reference to Zeller's assertion, that in St. Luke's Gospel the Ascension is represented as taking place on the day of the Resurrection, it may freely be admitted that the narrative in the Gospel does not mark distinctly the interval of time between the different appearances and discourses of our Lord from the day of the Resurrection to that of the Ascension. It seems to group them according to their logical connection rather than according to their chronological sequence, and to be a general account of what Jesus said between the Resurrection and the Ascension. But there is nothing whatever in the text of St. Luke to indicate that what is related in the section xxiv. 44—49 took place at the same time as the things related in the preceding verses. And when we compare with that section what is contained in ch. i. 4, 5, it becomes clear that it did not. Because the words "assembling together with them," in ver. 4, clearly indicate a different occasion from the apparitions on the day of the Resurrection; and as the words in Luke xxiv. 44—49 correspond with those in ch. i. 4, 5, it must have been also on a different occasion that they were spoken. Again, the narrative of St. John, both in the twentieth and the twenty-first chapters, as well as that of Matt. xxviii. 10, 16; Mark xvi. 7, precludes the possibility of the Ascension having taken place, or having been thought to have taken place, on the day of the Resurrection, or for many days after, so that to force a meaning upon the last chapter of St. Luke's Gospel which it does not necessarily bear, and which places it at variance with St. Luke's own account in the Acts (i. 3; xiii. 31), and with the Church traditions as preserved by St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. John, is a violent and wilful transaction.

Ver. 12.—*Nigh unto for from, A.V.; journey off for journey, A.V.* Olivet, from the Vulgate *Olivetum*. The particular Greek form *Ἐλαιῶν*, *Elwōn*, occurs in the New Testament only here. In Luke xix. 29; xxi. 37, according to the T.R., and that followed in the R.V., it is *Ἐλαιῶν*, of Olives. But as St. Luke usually has *τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν* when he speaks of it as "the Mount of Olives" (Luke xix. 37; xxii. 39), and as here he calls it *Elwōn*, which is its name in

Josephus ('Jud. Ant.,' vii. 9, 2; see too xx. 8, 6), it seems probable that in Luke. xix. 29; xxi. 27, we ought to read, with Lachmann and Tischendorf (see Meyer on Luke xix. 29), 'Ελαιῶν, *Elæon, Olivet*. In the Old Testament, in 2 Sam. xv. 30, it is "the ascent of the Olives" (A.V., "the ascent of Mount Olivet"); in Zech. xiv. 4, "the Mount of Olives." A sabbath day's journey off; i.e. six, or according to Schleusner, seven and a half furlongs (or two thousand cubits). Josephus ('Jud. Ant.,' xx. 8, 6) calls it "five furlongs," but he only measured to the foot of the hill, whereas St. Luke gives the distance from the spot whence Christ ascended. Bethany itself, according to John xi. 18, was fifteen furlongs from Jerusalem.

Ver. 13.—*The upper chamber for an upper room, A.V.; where they were abiding for where abode, A.V.; son of James for brother of James, A.V. The upper chamber; perhaps the same room where they had eaten the Passover with Christ (Luke xxii. 12); but this is very uncertain, though affirmed by Epiphanius, and by Nicephorus, who further relates that the very house in which the upper chamber was built into the back part of the temple which the Empress Helena erected on Mount Sion. The word here is ὑπερφῶν, there it is ἀνώγειον. The ὑπερφῶν (Hebrew חֲרָץ, 2 Kings iv. 10, 11) was the room immediately under the roof; the ἀνώγειον was synonymous. Where they were abiding. A slight change in the order of the words, as adopted in the text of the*

R.V., makes Peter and the other apostles the nominative case to the verb "went up," instead of, as in the A.V., to "abode." In regard to the list of the apostles which follows, it may be noticed first, that it is identical with that of Luke vi. 14—16, except in the omission of Judas Iscariot and the order in which the apostles are named. The order in Luke seems to have followed that of natural birth and association. The brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, are classed together; Philip and Bartholomew, or Nathanael, go together, and so on. But in this list John follows Peter, his close companion in missionary work (ch. iii. 1, etc.; iv. 12; viii. 14); James follows instead of preceding John; and others are classed somewhat differently, for reasons probably analogous, but which we know not. Of the other lists that in Mark iii. 16—19 agrees most nearly with that before us. In all, Simon Peter stands first. The Jude of Luke vi. 16 (comp. Jude 1) and ch. i. 13 is called *Thaddæus* in Matt. x. 3 ("Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddæus," A.V.) and in Mark iii. 18; but no doubt the persons are the same. In all the lists Philip stands fifth. In three Bartholomew is sixth, while in the list in Acts his being named after Thomas makes him seventh. In all the lists James the son of Alphæus is ninth, and Judas Iscariot the last, except in the Acts, where he is not named, being already dead. The underwritten columns give the four lists in one view:—

Matt. x. 2—5.	Mark iii. 16—19.	Luke vi. 14—16.	Acts i. 13.
1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter	1. Simon Peter
2. Andrew	2. James	2. Andrew	2. John
3. James	3. John	3. James	3. James
4. John	4. Andrew	4. John	4. Andrew
5. Philip	5. Philip	5. Philip	5. Philip
6. Bartholomew	6. Bartholomew	6. Bartholomew	6. Thomas
7. Thomas	7. Matthew	7. Matthew	7. Bartholomew
8. Matthew	8. Thomas	8. Thomas	8. Matthew
9. James son of Alphæus	9. James son of Alphæus	9. James son of Alphæus	9. James son of Alphæus
10. Thaddæus	10. Thaddæus	10. Simon the Zealot	10. Simon the Zealot
11. Simon the Cananean	11. Simon the Cananean	11. Judas, the son, or brother, of James	11. Jude, the son, or brother, of James
12. Judas Iscariot	12. Judas Iscariot	12. Judas Iscariot	

Ver. 14.—*With one accord continued steadfastly for continued with one accord, A.V.; prayer for prayer and supplication, A.V. and T.R. The women. St. Luke, in his Gospel, makes frequent mention of the women who followed our Lord, and generally of things that happened to women (see Luke xxiii. 27, 49, 55; xxiv. 10, 22, etc. See also Luke vii. 37, etc.; viii. 23; x. 38, 45; etc.). We notice the same tendency in the Acts, here, and in ch. ii. 17, 18; v.*

14; ix. 36; xii. 13; xvi. 14, 16; xvii. 4, 34; xviii. 26; xxi. 9; xxiv. 24; xxv. 23; etc. Mary the mother of Jesus appears here not as an object of worship, but as humbly joining in the prayers of the Church. And with his brethren. The Lord's brethren are spoken of by name in Matt. xiii. 55 as "James, and Josus ['Joseph,' R.V.], and Simon, and Judas." So also Mark vi. 3 (see too ch. iv. 31—35). "James the Lord's brother" is mentioned by St. Paul

(Gal. i. 19); "the brethren of the Lord" are mentioned 1 Cor. ix. 5; and again in John vii. 3, 5, 10, "the brethren of Jesus" are spoken of. This is not the place to enter upon the difficult question of their parentage. But it may suffice to say that if James and Judas are the two apostles of that name (which Alford, however, thinks they certainly were not, referring to John vii. 5, compared with vi. 67), then the brethren here spoken of as distinct from the apostles would be James and Simon.

Ver. 15.—*These for those, A.V.; brethren for disciples, A.V. and T.R.; and there was a multitude of persons gathered together for the number of names together were, A.V.; a for an, A.V.* Peter justifies his primacy by taking the lead in the first onward movement of the Church. Names is a common Hebraism for "persons" (see Rev. iii. 4; Num. i. 2). Gathered together; *i.e.* to one place and at one time (see the same phrase, ch. ii. 1, 44). Wordsworth quotes Ignat., 'Ad Magnes' vii., and Clem. Rom. i. 4, where the same phrase, ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ, indicative of Church unity occurs.

Ver. 16.—*Brethren, it was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled for men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, A.V.; spake before by the mouth of David for by the mouth of David spake before, A.V.* It was needful, etc. So our Lord declared, "The Scriptures cannot be broken" (John x. 35); and "All things must be fulfilled which were written," etc. (Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—46). It is most important to our Christian integrity that we should view the Scriptures in the same light as our Lord and his apostles did, as containing real prophecies, spoken by the Holy Ghost. (Compare the manner in which the sixty-ninth psalm is here quoted with that of Heb. iii. 7.) So the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, . . . who spake by the prophets" (comp. ch. iv. 25; xxviii. 25). Who was guide, etc. If St. Peter had only been addressing his brother apostles, who were well acquainted with the treachery of Judas, it would scarcely have been natural to introduce these words; they would have seemed rather to be explanatory words added by the historian. But the circumstances might be very imperfectly known to many of the hundred and twenty brethren assembled on this occasion; and if so, the reference to Judas's treachery would not be out of place in St. Peter's mouth.

Ver. 17.—*Among for with, A.V.; received his portion in for had obtained part of, A.V.* For he was numbered, etc. This is said in order to show that the passage in the Psalms applied strictly to Judas, seeing he had held his portion in the ministry and office of an apostle (see John vi. 71). His portion; literally, *his lot*; *i.e.* the portion which fell to

him by lot. The language is taken from the Old Testament (see *e.g.* Josh. xviii. 10, 11; xix. 1, 10, etc.). Those who received such a portion (κληρον) were clergy.

Ver. 18.—*Obtained for purchased, A.V., an unnecessary change; his iniquity for iniquity, A.V.* It is obvious that this verse and ver. 19, which are placed in a parenthesis in the R.V., are not part of St. Peter's discourse, but are explanatory words inserted by St. Luke for the instruction of Theophilus and his other readers. Falling headlong; *i.e.* from the tree or gallows on which he hung himself (see Matt. xxvii. 3—8). The only apparent discrepancies in the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Luke in regard to the purchase of the field, and the name given to it, are that, according to St. Matthew's more detailed account, it was the chief priests who actually purchased the field with Judas's money, whereas St. Luke says, less accurately, that Judas purchased it. Again, St. Matthew explains the name *Ahel-dama* as being given to the field because it was the price of the "innocent blood" of Jesus betrayed by Judas, whereas St. Luke's account rather suggests that it was Judas's own blood shed in his fall which gave the name. But both accounts of the name might be true, some understanding the name in one sense and some in the other. (Compare the different accounts of the name of Beer-sheba in Gen. xxi. 31 and xxvi. 32, 33; of the origin of the proverb, "Is Saul among the prophets?" 1 Sam. x. 11, 12 and xx. 24; and other similar cases.) Though, however, there is no serious discrepancy between St. Luke and St. Matthew, it is probable, from the variations above named, that St. Luke had not seen St. Matthew's account.

Ver. 19.—*Became known for was known, A.V.; that in their language that field was called Aheldama for as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 20.—*Made desolate for desolate, A.V.; office (as in margin) for bishopric, A.V.* The book of Psalms, one of the recognized divisions of the canonical Scriptures, as we find Luke xxiv. 44, "The law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms," the last standing for the Hagiographa, of which it was the first and principal book. Here, however, as in Luke xx. 42, it may rather mean the Book of Psalms proper. (For similar quotations from the Psalms, see ch. xiii. 33—35; Heb. i., ii., iii., iv., v., x., etc.) His office let another take. *Bishop* being the English transliteration of ἐπίσκοπος, *bishopric* is, of course, the literal rendering of ἐπισκοπή; if taken in its wider and more general sense, as in the well-known work of Archdeacon Evans, "the bishopric of souls." This same office is called a *διακονία* (a deaconship), and ἀποστολή (an apostleship) in vers. 17 and

25. So St. Paul calls himself *διδάκωνος* (a minister) in Eph. iii. 7; Col. i. 23, 25, etc. So the presbyters of the Church are called bishops (ch. xx. 17, 28; 1 Tim. i. 1, 2, etc.). The ecclesiastical names for the different offices in the Church only acquired their distinctive use later, and by the gradual growth of custom. In the Septuagint, *ἐπισκοπή* answers to the Hebrew *רִבְרָא*, A.V., "oversight" (Numb. iii. 32; iv. 16, etc.).

Ver. 21.—*Of the men therefore for wherefore of these men, A.V.; went out for out, A.V.*

Ver. 22.—*The day for that same day, A.V.; received for taken, A.V.; of these must one become for must one be ordained to be, A.V.* Beginning belongs to the Lord Jesus. He began to go in and out among his apostles from the time that John baptized, and continued to do so till his ascension, the day that he was received up ("taken up," A.V.), as in ver. 11. This definition of the time of our Lord's public ministry exactly agrees with Matt. iv. 12—25; Mark i.; Luke iii., iv.; John i. 29—51. Must one become a witness, etc. The resurrection of Christ from the dead thus appears to be a cardinal doctrine of the gospel. The whole truth of Christ's mission, the acceptance of his sacrifice, the consequent forgiveness of sins, and all man's hopes of eternal life, turn upon it. All the sermons of the apostles recorded in the Acts and the Epistles also agree with this (see ch. ii., iii., iv.; v. 31, 32; vi. 56, 59; x. 39—41; xiii. 30, etc.; Rom. i. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 4; 2 Cor. i. 9, etc.; 1 Pet. i. 3; iii. 21, 22; Rev. i. 5, etc.). The great care taken to secure competent witnesses is very remarkable. A disciple who had recently joined the company might be mistaken; one who had been the daily companion of Jesus Christ for three years and a half, and knew every feature and every feature of the Master with perfect certainty, could not be mistaken.

Ver. 23.—*Put forward for appointed, A.V.; Barsabbas for Barsabas, A.V. and T.R.* Joseph called Barsabbas (or Barsabas). Nothing more is really known of him. His work for Christ has no earthly record, except that Papias (Eusab., 'H. E.,' iii. 39) says that, having drunk some deadly poison, by the grace of God he sustained no harm. Eusebius elsewhere (i. 12) says that he and Matthias were reported to be of the seventy, which is not improbable. The derivation

of the name Barsabas, or Barsabbas, is unknown; it seems to be a patronymic (son of Sabas, or Sabbas), like Bar-Tholomew, Bar-Jonas, Bar-Jesus, etc. But it might also be descriptive of his qualities, like Bar-nabas, Son of Consolation (ch. iv. 36), in which case one would expect it to mean the same as Justus, as in the case of "Thomas called Didymus" (John xx. 4; where *Thomas* and *Didymus* both mean "a twin"); but no Aramean word of this signification is forthcoming. The surname Justus, with its derivatives Justinus and Justinianus, was not an uncommon Roman name. It was also borne by a Jewish historian contemporary with Josephus, Justus of Tiberias, the son of Piatas (see 'Life of Josephus,' §§ 35, 65) and was the surname of James the Less. Matthias, not otherwise known, but said by Nicephorus to have preached and suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia. Eusebius ('H. E.,' iii. 24) mentions apurios Gospels "of Peter, Thomas, Matthias, and others," as quoted by heretics. A work called 'The Traditions of Matthias' is referred to by Clemens Alexandrinus ('Strom.,' ii. 163).

Ver. 24.—*Of these two the one whom for whether of these two, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 25.—*To take the place in this for that he may take part of this, A.V. and T.R.; fell away for by transgression fell, A.V. (παρέβη).* The use of *παρβαίω* in an intransitive sense for "to transgress, fall away from, turn aside from," and the like, is frequent in the LXX. (Exod. xxxii. 8; Deut. xvii. 20, etc.). To his own place. An awful phrase, showing that every man has the place in eternity which he has made for himself in time. If the reading *place*, in the beginning of the verse, is adopted instead of the *part* (*κλήρον*) of the A.V., then there is a contrast between the blessed place of apostleship, which Judas forfeited, and that of *traitorship*, which he acquired.

Ver. 26.—*They gave lots for them for they gave forth their lots, A.V. and T.R. (αὐτοῖς for αὐτῶν);* but the T.R. gives the easiest sense. The exact mode of taking the lot does not appear. Some think the name of each candidate was written on a tablet, and that the first name which fell out of the urn after it had been shaken was the one chosen. Some think the lot was taken by dice. But however the taking of the lot was managed, the effect was to leave the choice to God in answer to prayer.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11 — *The recapitulation.* St. Luke is like a traveller, who, having gained a certain summit, before he proceeds on his journey through the new country which is opening upon his view, stops and looks back upon the scene which he has traversed, but which he is now about to lose sight of. He marks the sites which had attracted

his attention as he journeyed—the rising knoll, the conspicuous wood, the sheet of water, the open plain. But as he looks he spies out other objects which he had not noticed before—an ivy-mantled tower, a dwelling-house, a village, a clump of trees, which add richness and diversity to the scene; and so he adds them to his journal or to his sketch. In like manner our sacred historian, being about to quit the blessed scenes of the life of Jesus Christ which had engaged his pen in the Gospel, and to enter upon the history of the Apostolic Church, casts a lingering look upon the closing days of our Lord's sojourn upon earth, marks again what he had before narrated, recapitulates the history of the days which connect the Gospel with the Acts, but withal adds some striking incidents, throws in some additional words from the lips of the Divine Master, and by a few touches of his master-pen heightens the beauty of the scene, which was the last parting of Jesus from his Church on earth. The Resurrection itself, and the many proofs thereof given to the sight, the hearing, and the handling of the apostles; the commandments to the apostles; the walk to Bethany; the parting blessing; the ascension into heaven; the return of the apostles to Jerusalem; the continual prayers and praises of the disciples while they waited there for the promise of the Father;—these had all been duly noted in the closing chapter of the Gospel. But St. Luke wished, before entering upon his new ground, to mark more distinctly that mysterious border-land between the pre-resurrection and the post-resurrection Church; that strange period which belonged neither to the life of Jesus Christ on earth nor to the history of his Church, properly speaking—the forty days that intervened between the Resurrection and the Ascension. It was important to mark more distinctly than he had done in the Gospel that those manifestations of himself to his apostles, and that converse in the course of which he had instructed them in the duties of the apostolate, were extended over a period of forty days. It was important to do this both as strengthening the other proofs of the Resurrection, and also as showing how full a commission the apostles had received for the future ordering and governing of the Church. Hence the distinct mention of the forty days, and the somewhat fuller report of the conversations between the Lord and his apostles. But the act of the Ascension also was to receive some further light. In the Gospel St. Luke had mentioned the touching fact that it was while in the very act of blessing them that Jesus was parted from them. But now he adds, his mind apparently being full of the importance of proofs of the things narrated by him, that he was taken up “as they were looking,” and that they did not lose sight of him till he was enveloped in a cloud. He adds also another remarkable circumstance, of which he may not have been previously aware, that two angels had appeared to the apostles, as they stood looking with fixed gaze into heaven, and announced to them his sure return. And thus, in this recapitulation and expansion of his briefer narrative in the Gospel, he closes with the announcement of that crowning glory of the Son of man which has been the hope and joy and strength of the Church amidst all her sufferings, the second advent of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.

Vers. 12—14.—*The grain of mustard seed.* Let us contrast for a moment the account here given with the present condition of Christianity in the world. Christianity has taken possession of the whole civilized world. The thrones, the laws, the institutions of those nations which hold sway in the earth are all based upon the gospel. The arts, the sciences, the literature of civilized men are more or less impregnated with the doctrine of the New Testament. Take the cathedrals of Europe; what an expenditure of thought and skill and wealth they represent! They are among the most imposing monuments of human thought and human labour. Look at the mass of Christian literature—in poetry, in philosophy, in science, in theology, in sacred oratory, in general literature. What countless Christian writers have elevated the human intellect, enlarged the borders of knowledge, added dignity to man, and happiness to mankind! What vast influences, of all sorts, permeating the civilized world, we can now trace up to the gospel! What multitudes of individual men and women in all ages since Christ, and all over the world, have learnt what the true view of human life is, and have found their whole end of living, and their chief enjoyment of life, and their only consolation and support, in the truths which the gospel teaches! How has the world been filled with fruits of righteousness, altering the whole aspect of human

society, of which the gospel alone was the first seed! Now turn to the beginnings of the gospel as here exhibited. One upper chamber at Jerusalem, a city in the last days of its troubled existence, contained the whole number of those who acknowledged Christ as their Master. Measured by any worldly standard, anything feebler or more absolutely insignificant than that company cannot be imagined. But the grain of mustard seed was to become a tree in which the birds of the air should make their nests; the little leaven was to leaven the whole lump; the stone was to become a great mountain which should fill the whole earth. And so it has come to pass that the upper chamber at Jerusalem has grown into the Church Catholic, the mother of all the saints that are, or have been, or are to be hereafter. What an infinite encouragement to our faith is this! What a ground for adoration of him whose grace and power and faithfulness work such marvellous effects! What a ground of sure and certain hope that he who has carried his work thus far will finish it, to his own glory, and the exceeding joy of the Church which he has redeemed with his precious blood!

Vers. 15—26.—*The rewards of iniquity.* The physical laws by which the material world is governed are not more fixed and certain than the moral laws which secure to iniquity its just reward. Nor has the patient and honest inquirer more difficulty in ascertaining those laws than the physicist has in ascertaining the laws of nature by observation and experiment. Neither is it peculiar to Holy Scripture to set forth the sequences of cause and effect which occur under those moral laws; the history of the world and our own daily experience do so likewise. Holy Scripture does but record and exhibit typical and striking instances by which our own observation and experience are confirmed. Now, there is one feature common to a great many, perhaps more or less to all, acts of iniquity, viz. that they have, so to speak, a double reward. There is the reward which the worker contemplated as the fruit of his misdoing; and there is the reward which he lost sight of, but which followed by an inevitable necessity of the moral Law of God. Both are clearly exhibited in the awful case of Judas. The reward which he looked for, and for the sake of which he betrayed the innocent blood, was the possession of thirty pieces of silver. We know the poverty of the Son of man, and that he had no silver or gold, no houses or lands, with which to reward his followers. We know how days of toil succeeded one the other during which the gains were indeed immense—souls nourished, enlightened, instructed in the Word of God, prepared for the kingdom of heaven, weaned from sin, won to righteousness—but not such gains as would please the worldly mind. And we know the mind of Judas, that it was very covetous and greedy of lucre. We know with what eyes he looked upon Mary's costly offering of love, and how he was wont to rob the bag which contained the alms for the poor. We can well believe, therefore, that to a mind so constituted and so depraved the possession of thirty pieces of silver appeared no mean reward. It would be some consolation for the loss of the portion of the three hundred pence which he might have abstracted from the bag had the ointment been sold and the price given to the poor. Perhaps he had set his heart upon that very field which was bought with the price of blood, and which was to become the strangers' burial-ground. Anyhow, he got his reward. He did the deed and he got the money, "the reward of iniquity"—the reward which he looked for as the fruit of his sin. And sinners very often do get their expected reward. Adam and Eve became "as gods, knowing good and evil;" Gehazi obtained his two talents of silver and his two changes of garments; Ahab got possession of the coveted vineyard; Zimri gained a throne by the slaughter of the house of Baasha; the men of Gibeah slaked their lust on the Levite's concubine; hatred, revenge, ambition, continually by iniquity obtain their reward, and the pages of Scripture and of profane history, as well as our own experience, teem with examples of the reward of successful wickedness. But now let us look at the other reward of iniquity; that which comes in due season as the inevitable fruit of the just judgment of God; that of which Horace, heathen as he was, spoke, when he said—

"Raro antecedentem scelustum
Deseruit pede pœna claudo."

Judas has got his money. Perhaps he has concluded his bargain for the field. He is no longer a poor man like his Master. The former gains of robbery have been swelled

by the price of treachery. But he had forgotten his manhood. He had forgotten that man has a conscience, and that a guilty conscience is like the raging sea, which cannot be stilled. He had shut his eyes to everything but the reward he coveted. But now the storm is rising. Remorse begins her terrible work. Vain regret, agonizing fear, terrible self-reproach, unbearable shame,—all rush upon his soul, and distract and tear it. The remembrance, perhaps, of the Lord's goodness; some distinct impressions of his wonderful love; the recollections, maybe, of some true happiness in his service before the curse of covetousness lit upon him; flashes of the hope once entertained of the kingdom of heaven, but now turned into despair;—these move his heart only to make it capable of feeling more bitterly what he now was, and what he must be for ever. His whole existence a curse by his own exceeding wickedness! "Good were it for me if I had not been born! I have no place to hide in from the terrors of God—the terrors of God's goodness! I am, and must be for ever. And God is, and must be for ever! But I cannot abide God's presence! I cannot abide my own consciousness!" Such were the maddening thoughts of the son of perdition—of him whose iniquity had gained its reward. He tries to rush from consciousness, to escape from himself and from God. He flings from him the accursed silver; but he cannot fling away the guilt of blood. And so he takes a halter and hangs himself, and goes to his own place. But let us reckon up his gains and losses. He had gained thirty pieces of silver—the reward of his iniquity. But he had lost his apostleship, the highest office on earth; his throne, the highest place of man in heaven, under Jesus Christ; his peace of mind, his self-respect, his power of enjoying life, the esteem of all good men; any place among men save that of shame, and ignominy, and disgrace, and abhorrence. He had lost his own soul—his life; all the pleasures of time, all the joys of eternity. This was "the reward of iniquity," which came upon him by the inevitable justice of God. And this is written for our learning, that we may ponder it and be wise. And we are led to the same conclusion by following up in any other case, and comparing, the twofold rewards of iniquity. The conclusion to which we are inevitably led is—

I. That the three things which are necessary to a man's happiness are: 1. The approval of his own conscience. 2. The sense of being approved by God. 3. The esteem of his fellow-men, and of all God's rational creatures.

II. That by iniquity all these three are forfeited, and that the gains or reward of iniquity are as inadequate a compensation for such loss as Esau's mess of pottage was for the loss of his birthright. The gains, the pleasures, the temporal rewards of iniquity, come and go like a dream, like a tale, like a flash of lightning. The eternal reward of iniquity abides; terrible in its undiscovered vastness, awful in its unknown horrors, and in its fixity of tenure: fixity written in the phrase which tells us of Judas that he went "to his own place."

III. We learn that every man has the place in eternity which he made his own in time. A man's own place in the eternal world is that which falls to him by the unchanging laws of God, according to his choice of good or evil in this world. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ has, indeed, opened a way of righteousness to those who had seemed to have lost it for ever; but to those who obstinately love darkness rather than light, and cling to iniquity in the very face of mercy, there remains in the nature of things no other end than that, like Judas, they go each one "to his own place."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—Christ's mission and ours. The introduction to this narrative of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" suggests to us truths concerning the mission of our Divine Lord and also concerning our own.

I. **THE MISSION OF CHRIST.** We gather from the opening words of Luke that this was fourfold, and may be included under these heads: 1. *Miraculous works.* He "began to do" (ver. 1). The "mighty works" of Jesus were far from being mere "wonders;" they were (1) deeds of pure beneficence, (2) acts called for by the circumstances of the hour, making an irresistible appeal to the heart of love and the hand of power, (3) illustrations of the Divine principles which he came to establish, as well as

(4) incidental proofs of heavenly origin and almighty power. 2. *Teaching*. He began "both to do and teach" (ver. 1). The teaching of Christ covered all the ground on which we most urgently need enlightenment. He taught us all that we want to know concerning (1) the nature and disposition of God, including his attitude toward guilty souls; (2) the real nature of man, his true heritage and the way by which he could return to God; (3) what constitutes moral excellency in God's sight: how man can do and be that which is due to himself and to all by whom he is surrounded; (4) the truth respecting the future world. 3. *Endurance*. The story of "his passion" (ver. 3) is the story of his life. In the case of all other of the children of men, the narrative of the last hours is felt to be but the necessary closing of the chapter. In his case alone the relation of the Passion is felt by us all to be the supreme and culminating point, the one indispensable feature of his whole career; that to which everything led up, for which everything prepared, compared with which everything else was unimportant. Never, at any period of his ministry, did the Son of God so truly and so largely fulfil the mission on which he came, as when he was "putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself," as when he was betrayed and smitten and reviled, as when he was "lifted up" on the cross and "poured out his soul unto death." 4. *Life*. He came to be the holy, loving, patient, truthful, reverent One he was. The historian does not speak here of this his exemplary life before his Passion, but we may have it in our mind as a complementary thought; he does, however, refer to his life after the Passion (ver. 3). This is divisible into two parts. (1) The forty days on earth. Then he bore witness to the reality of his work and the genuineness of his mission: he "showed himself alive . . . by many infallible proofs." (2) Everlasting life in heaven. He is now doing the work of administration. "Jesus began both to do and to teach" when he was below; he continues now the great work he then began. As he arrested Paul on his way to Damascus and charged him to enter his service, as he inspired and directed his servants so that the "acts of the apostles" are *his acts through them*; so now he is administering the affairs of his blessed kingdom by enlightening, inspiring, governing his Church by his Spirit (see ver. 2).

II. OUR MISSION. We have here indications of the kind and method of service which it belongs to us to render. We are: 1. *To look expectantly*. We too are to "wait for the promise of the Father" (ver. 4); often in our Christian life, from its very beginning to its very end, asking and *waiting*. We are to ask, to seek, to knock—if need be, again and again; not impatient to receive, but remembering that God knows when as well as how to bestow. 2. *To receive gratefully*. We too "shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (ver. 5, and see ver. 8). God will come to us in rich effusion if only we ask earnestly and wait patiently; then we shall receive joyfully, and our hearts will fill with sacred and happy gratitude. 3. *To submit cheerfully*. Our Lord ofttimes says to us, "It is not for you to know" (ver. 7). We long to know many things not revealed, and this is his reply to our vain curiosity. Or we long to effect impossible things, and then he says to us, "It is not for you to do." He imposes limits to our action as well as to our knowledge, and within these bounds we must be content to move, rejoicing that we are permitted to know anything of him and do anything for him; rejoicing, also, to believe that soon the circle of understanding and accomplishment will be immeasurably enlarged. 4. *To testify faithfully*. "Ye shall be witnesses unto me" (ver. 8). It was a far higher function for the apostles to bear witness to Christ—to the greatness of his person, the beauty and tenderness of his spirit, the fulness and joy of his salvation—than to be the depositaries of heavenly secrets as to dates and places. There is nothing we should so earnestly aspire and so strenuously strive to become, as faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ. We cannot conceive of a nobler work than to be, by life and lip, bearing testimony to him, constraining our fellow-men to realize his readiness to receive, his willingness to forgive, and his power to bless and to ennoble them.—C.

Vers. 9—14.—*Wisdom in bereavement*. We learn from these verses—

I. THAT THE CULMINATION OF HOPE IN ONE MAY PROVE THE DEPTH OF PRIVATION TO ANOTHER. For the joy that was set before him Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii. 2). Into that joy he now entered. As the "cloud received him out of their sight" (ver. 9), and he returned unto the Father, he took possession of the

glorious inheritance for which he had paid so costly a price. But the time of his exaltation was the hour of his disciples' sorrow. By his departure they lost sight of their dearest Friend, their wise Counsellor, their great Teacher, their honoured Lord. So must it be with us. The upright Christian statesman passes to a still larger sphere of usefulness and honour, and the nation mourns; the gifted and devoted pastor is called to a celestial ministry, and the Church is bereaved; the beloved parent is translated to the skies, and the family hearth is desolate.

II. THAT THE ATTITUDE OF HELPLESSNESS IS ONE FROM WHICH WE MUST SOON BE AROUSED. (Vers. 10, 11.) It was natural and right enough that, when the Saviour was taken up and disappeared from sight, the disciples should continue to "look steadfastly toward heaven;" their eyes may well have been riveted to the spot in inexpressible awe and wonder. Doubtless all thought was swallowed up in simple surprise and consternation; they stood in helpless, bewildering astonishment. This might last for some minutes, but it could not continue longer. The angels broke in upon it, not with the language of reproach, but with the voice of arousing. A kindly voice is this. When disposed to give way to helpless awe, or fruitless grief, or inanimate prostration of soul, we may thank the minister of God, in whatever form he may come, who says to us, "Why stand ye gazing? Arouse ye! All is not lost. The past is past, but the future is in front of you."

III. THAT TIME, WITH PATIENCE, WILL BRING HEAVENLY COMPENSATIONS. (Ver. 11, latter part.) Though the Master was taken, he would come again; and when he returned it would, indeed, be "in like manner," etc., but in more glorious form and with more splendid surroundings (1 Thess. iv. 16; 2 Thess. i. 7; Jude 14; Rev. i. 7). Moreover, he would come again in *unlike* manner, but in a way as gracious and, perhaps, even more needful, viz. in the enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit (ver. 5). Heaven was taking away their Strength and their Joy; but let them wait in holy trustfulness, and Heaven would soon give them ample and blessed compensation. God takes from us—from the community and from the individual heart—those that are very dear, things that are very precious to us; then we faint and are grievously distressed; we may be almost paralyzed with our sense of loss and desolation. But there is blessing on its way—Divine comfort, solace, strength. The hand that takes our treasures has large compensations in reserve.

IV. THAT BEREAVEMENT FINDS A PURE AND WISE RELIEF IN COMMUNION WITH GOD AND IN FELLOWSHIP WITH MAN. (Vers. 12—14.) The apostles, roused by the angels' speech, "returned unto Jerusalem" and went into the upper room, where they would meet their best friends—those who had the deepest sympathy with them—that they might commune with them and that they might "continue in prayer and supplication." In the time of bereavement and woe we may be tempted to shut ourselves in to our own chamber and nurse our grief. Nothing can be more unwise. Let sorrow, indeed, have its own chosen loneliness in its first dark hours; leave it alone with God, with the pitiful, patient Saviour. Then let it come forth; let it go into the "upper room," where it can hold fellowship with human friends; let it go into the sanctuary, where, with the people of God, it can pour out its heart in prayer and supplication; it will not be long before it finds itself joining with them in the accents of praise.—C.

Vers. 15—26.—*The path of sin and the way of the righteous.* The passage treats of the miserable end of the traitor apostle and of the elevation of Matthias to the office from which "Judas by transgression fell." We are reminded of—

I. THE PATH OF SIN. (Vers. 16—20.) This is a gradual descent. "No one ever became most vile all at once," wrote the Roman; and he was right. Some men descend much more rapidly than others the path of folly and of sin, but no one leaps at once from the summit to the foot. We do not suppose that one day Judas was devoted to Christ and the next day began to think how he should betray him. Probably his evil course was this: first, surprise at the Lord's slower and more quiet method of ministering; then impatience and even positive dissatisfaction with him; then growing doubt of his claims; then cupidity; then treachery; then remorseful despair; then suicide, and the "going to his own place" (ver. 25). Those who from being virtuous become vicious men, fall in the same way, *i.e.* by degrees; more or less slowly: first, the harbouring of one evil thought and another; then laxity in word;

then carelessness and looseness of action; then occasional transgression; then habitual vice; and then the miserable end. Similarly the passage from godliness to absorbing worldliness is through weakening of a sense of obligation; decline of sacred joy; relaxation of holy habits; growing abandonment of devotional exercises; losing the soul in temporal anxieties and passing pleasures. In all such cases as that of Judas there is: 1. A gradual withdrawal of the soul from sympathy and intercourse with its Lord. 2. Acts which pain and injure him. 3. A disastrous end—death; the reprobation of the good and true, the retribution of the righteous Judge.

II. THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS. (Vers. 21—26.) In the course of Peter, Matthias, and the other ten apostles, there were three things exceptional and peculiar to their position. 1. Bodily attendance on the Lord Jesus Christ (ver. 21). 2. Consequent witness-bearing to the facts of his life and his resurrection (ver. 22). 3. Appointment by direct Divine selection: in the case of the eleven by the Lord himself at the commencement of his work, and in the case of Matthias by appeal to supernatural guidance (vers. 23—26). But though these features were not meant to be perpetual, there are those of which they are suggestive which ought to characterize all true and earnest followers of Christ. (1) Intimate association with him; the intimacy which is not “after the flesh” (see John xx. 17), but that which is “after a spiritual and heavenly manner.” (2) Bearing witness to Christ; not only to the facts of his life and of his victory over death, but to the graciousness of his character, the tenderness of his spirit, the excellency of his service, the joy of his friendship. (3) Continual resort to the throne of grace for Divine guidance. We do not now use “the lot,” but none the less do we seek, and gain by patient, trustful inquiry, the guidance of our God and Saviour as we walk the path of life and as we labour in the field of holy usefulness.—C.

Vers. 1—5.—The forty days after the Passion. **I. JESUS’ PREPARATIONS FOR DEPARTURE.** In the work of God all is continuous. As in nature there is no pause, but in autumn we find the new *petiole* or leaf-stalk already formed when the old leaf is detached, so in the kingdom of God. There were ages of preparation for Christ’s coming; and when he came, his life-work was a making ready to go. Full of blessing was the ministry of his visible presence; fuller still was to be that of the invisible Spirit. He must go that the Spirit may come (John xvi. 7). The progress is ever from the visible and finite form to the eternal and infinite spiritual content. 1. *Preparation by special instruction.* (John xiv. 15; xv. 12—17.) These parting commands were charged with the holiest unction; were breathed forth in spiritual power, with the deep earnestness and tenderness of a Divine farewell. All his commands are summed up in the great word “love.” They were issued to a select band, and ever remain in the select keeping of the true Church. Obedience to Christ is, in one word, the unfolding of love in all life-relations. Christian duties and graces are but the various forms which Divine love would stamp on conduct. 2. *By manifestations of a risen life.* His appearances were *firmly accredited* as real, says St. Luke, using a word not elsewhere found in the New Testament denoting valid proof (cf. Luke xxiv. 31, 39, 43). This firm persuasion of the reality of the Lord’s risen life is the inspiration of the early Church; it cannot be explained away without raising more difficult problems. The appearances were accompanied by *appropriate activity*. He discoursed on these occasions, and on the supreme theme, on religion, on the kingdom of God. Christianity is not sensation—wonder for wonder’s sake; its principle is intelligence; its method is teaching. “*Go and teach*” is the great word of the risen One. 3. *By a particular direction.* The apostles were to remain in Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 49). Here were all the conditions of unity provided for: place and time and a common attitude of soul. Spiritual force must be collected in centres, that it may be diffused through the body of the world.

II. THE CHURCH IN THE ATTITUDE OF WAITING. 1. It was for something *definite*—the fulfilment of a Divine promise. Promise attends all obedience; and perhaps the highest blessings belong to the patient attitude of the soul, the unhaste of perfect confidence in God. It was the promise of a blessing foreshadowed in past experiences. A baptism, therefore a revival and refreshing from above like John Baptist’s ministry; yet unlike that in that it was to be more excellent. 2. There was something *indefinite*, therefore, in the promise. A good not yet tasted, and so not yet conceivable,

So is it with all coming good. We know something of that to be expected from past experiences of Divine grace; but the "half has not been told us." The future is ideal, and never exactly imitates the past; while it rests upon the past and elicits its meaning. Obey, trust, wait: this is a grand lesson of the Christian life which comes back to us from this page.—J.

Vers. 6—8.—*Last words.* I. **WISTFULNESS ABOUT THE FUTURE.** A curiosity mingled of fear and hope stirs in the disciples' minds. The present oppresses; we seek escape into dreams of a happy past or future. There is an element of truth and of illusion in these cravings.

II. **ILLUSORY THOUGHTS OF THE FUTURE.** The cherished dream of Israel for five centuries had been the restoration of the temporal power of David's throne. It was a fixed idea, and here reappears. So have we all our fixed ideas, and cannot conceive a happy future out of their sphere. But God's unfolding realities prove better than our sensuous dreams.

III. **DIVINE EVASION OF HUMAN QUESTIONINGS ABOUT THE FUTURE.** 1. *No fixed knowledge of the future, its changes, and those epochs, can be ours.* With all our science we cannot touch the beginnings, therefore not the issues, of things. History is a Divine poem, and God does not permit us to guess at the *dénouement* or catastrophe of events. The unexpected happens, and Providence is full of surprises. Enough for us to read the unrolling page from day to day, and subdue our wishes to the actual, rather than measure the actual by our wishes. 2. *Strength for the future is enough, and this may be ours.* Power, inner power, spiritual power, in other words, a full and vigorous life-consciousness, is what we need. This is promised. But not if we are seeking sensual and selfish ends. Power is imparted for God's ends. Only on condition that we are given up to God's will can we work for God's ends, or enjoy the power thereto. The laws of the kingdom are as strict as any we learn from nature. The narrowing of Divine thoughts to our own petty notions of advantage means desertion and weakness; the inclusion of our purposes within the infinite purpose means strength. All true life-acting may be regarded as witness. Each man stands for some principle, expresses some leading thought in his action. What do we represent? What tale does our life tell from day to day? What negative or what positive is it that our individual life makes clear in the scheme of things? The pessimism of unbelief or the optimism of profound faith in the laws of God's world? To witness for the eternal Truth and Love gives joy and zest to existence; to have no report or message to bring to others of aught felt or tasted of the good of life is vacancy and sadness. The Christian witness is above all of the life of which mere words are a poor transcript. If in some way or other our life clearly affirms the goodness of God by reflecting him, this is witness for him. And the ways of witness are manifold as the glory of the stars, the colours and forms of the flowers. There are special testimonies to special facts or truths which have their place and season and no other; but in all places and times the whole life-witness silently tells. The "living epistle" is intelligible in every tongue and to all orders of minds.—J.

Vers. 9—11.—*The uplifting of Jesus.* The evangelist employs two different words, both meaning "he was taken or lifted up" (vers. 2, 9).

I. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UPLIFTING.** The human is raised into the Divine. The body of humiliation is translated into a form of glory. Exaltation crowns self-abasement. The self-emptied One for love's sake becomes the depository for all time of the Divine fullness. For our sake the descent from heaven, and the return thither still for our sake. Heaven woos earth in the Incarnation, and in the Ascension earth is wedded to heaven for ever. It is the pledge of permanent intercourse and special occasional visitations from God to man. "The Ascension—that pole-star of our night!" (E. Irving).

II. **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CLOUD.** It was ever a symbol of God. It veils, yet reveals; hides, yet manifests him. The definite ever passes into the indefinite; the visible form into the fainter symbol. Men may ask, "Where is he who came and loved our clay?" The answer is in the cloud-symbol. As in its beauty we see it float between heaven and earth half-dense and half-transparent with the solar glory we have

the image of the vanished Jesus in the world of pious thought. He is the indefinable link between the world of sense and the supersensual. We cannot analyze the truth. We see it, we feel it, by the spiritual æsthesis; and this is better than all definition.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ANGELS' WORDS. We gaze into the mysterious Divine beyond of our life. Our limited horizon melts into the Infinite. What was more knowable than the living and loving Jesus of Nazareth? Here at last the spell of Divine silence seemed to have been broken, and the unutterable One had uttered himself in an articulate voice, and the undefinable and inimitable in form had clothed himself in a form recognizable by all. Yet now this form melts again into the undefinable; this voice ceases in a hush of mystery restored. Well may we stand gazing into the ether. Was the whole an illusion? Not so; but what God has once revealed remains a spiritual possession for all time. And more; it is the pledge that God will repeat the revelation. Christ will come again; the cloud will reappear; out of the mystery voices will again be heard, the express Image will again stand clear for recognition. Here is a Divine process; out of the indefinable into the definable, back to the undefinable again. Christ appears to disappear, again to reappear; and so

"That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows;
Becomes our universe that feels and knows!"

Let us think that "every cloud that veileth love itself is love." In those alternate revealings and hidings of God from us lies the trial of faith, more precious than gold.—J.

Vers. 12—26.—*The interval between the Ascension and Pentecost.* I. THE SCENE IN THE UPPER ROOM. Obedient to the Lord's command, the disciples return to Jerusalem. A certain upper chamber, probably in a private dwelling, became the first Christian Church. Epiphanius says that when Hadrian came to Jerusalem, he found the temple desolate and but few houses standing. This "little church of God," however, remained; and Nicephorus says that the Empress Helena enclosed it in her larger church. It was probably the room in which the Supper had been celebrated, and was to be associated with the power of the risen, as it had been with the suffering of the humiliated, Christ. 1. *The assembly.* It represented all varieties of character, gifts, and graces. Peter the eager, John the mystic, James the practical, Thomas the sceptical, and others. The feminine element, destined to play so large a part in the life of the Church, was also represented. 2. *Its employment.* It was engaged in the highest exercise of the spirit. Prayer is action; as action may be itself a prayer. And there are times of waiting for all, when prayer is the only possible action. The transactions between the spirit and God are the most real of all, and are ever followed by significant results. It was social prayer. True prayer requires both solitude at times and at times society. We need the help of one another in the pursuit of truth. Plato spoke of the "joint striving of souls" in philosophy. Common prayer is the joint striving of souls to lay hold upon the strength of God. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It was persevering, continuous prayer, as all exertion of the spirit must be to attain worthy ends. Thus was the mind of the Church calmed, and its intelligence cleared for insight into the business of the kingdom.

II. THE DISCOURSE OF PETER. 1. *It rests on the past.* He begins by pointing to a fulfilment of Scripture. The present event is thus constantly identified in apostolic thought with some word from the past. Nothing befalls except by Divine law. And in the words of poets and prophets of the past, whatever their original meaning, hints of other meanings are to be found. All language is indeed fossil poetry; and as in the earth's strata plants are found to which living organisms correspond, so in the realm of moral law past and present are in inner and profound connection. To the traitor sketched in Ps. lxi. (also cix. and lv.) the features of the unhappy Judas closely corresponded. False and wicked relations of conduct repeat themselves in history, and incur the like doom foreshadowed by the prophetic consciousness. 2. *It finds hints for present duty in the past.* The fragment of a verse from a psalmist ran, "His office let another take." Conduct must run on the line of precedents. Often an old proverb or example may give us our clue. A memory for the old sayings of Scripture and other ancient lore may guide the judgment, or serve as a finger-post to the will.

This might run into superstition; as when men in the Middle Ages turned over Virgil's pages for a clue to decision in cases of perplexity. But in the case of the apostles there is no reason to believe (but the contrary) that their habit, in common with all the devout, of falling back on old sayings checked the full and free exercise of their independent judgment.

III. THE SELECTION OF A FRESH WITNESS of the Resurrection. 1. "Witnesses for Christ" is perhaps the largest designation of the "office" to be filled. An "apostle" is one sent—a man with a mission; and the mission is to *witness*. Of what? Above all of the Resurrection; for it is this which made the gospel a power in the world. "Assurance is given to all men" that Jesus was the Son of God with power, and possesses all the functions of majesty, by the resurrection from the dead. We can hardly conceive how the gospel should have spread without this testimony. Hence the importance of the present business. 2. *The mode of selection.* It blends human intelligence with the recognition of Divine determination. The call to any function proceeds from God, and is contained in the gift or capacity. Yet God requires us to co-operate with him through all the sphere of freedom. The use of means towards a decision does not exclude the Divine wisdom, but reposes upon it. The junction of the Divine and the human will in such solemn acts is real, though impossible to explain. First, then, there is an exercise of human judgment, and two distinguished brethren are selected. Here the human choice already recognizes the Divine indication in the existence of observed gifts and graces. Next there is prayer, sacramentally sealing the union of Divine with human thought, and seeking a fruitful result. Lastly, there is the casting of lots, in which the human intelligence confesses its inability for the last decision, and surrenders itself utterly to the guidance of God. The lot falls on Matthias; and he is "voted into" the company of the eleven. Two extremes are to be avoided in the crises of affairs. One, to passively "leave everything to God," which really means to excuse one's self from the trouble of thought. The other, to take the whole burden of responsibility on ourselves, which means to move from our point of support. Thus we topple over into weakness and deeper uncertainty. Let faith be at the root of all our thinking; the scales of judgment stand firmly on the Wisdom that works through and in the activity of finite minds.—J.

Vers. 1—5.—*The dawn of the gospel day.* These verses form an introduction to the whole book. The risen Christ is the chief Object in view. The light which has been a lowly light upon the earth, is now about to ascend and take its place as the *Sun of Righteousness* in the heavens. From thence he will shine upon the earth—first upon that part of the earth immediately below the point of his ascent; and from that, as a starting-place, from country to country, till the whole earth is enlightened. The Acts begins its narrative at *Jerusalem*, the metropolis of Palestine, and ends it at *Rome*, the metropolis of the world. Again, we recognize the divinely chosen *method, the appointment of apostolic witnesses and representatives*, who heard the things which Jesus "spake concerning the kingdom of God," and received from him "the commandment," or commission, to preach and labour for the spread of the glad tidings of the kingdom. And then, *further*, in these verses, the vital distinction is set prominently forth between the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world—the *indwelling presence and operation of the Holy Ghost*, which is represented as first in Jesus himself, speaking in him, working in him, promised by him, and then as bestowed upon the messengers of the kingdom according to "the promise of the Father," repeated by the Son. Thus the great fundamental lines of the Book of the Acts are laid down; the kingdom of the risen and glorified Christ proclaimed and spread through the world; chosen and consecrated men the representatives and ministers of the kingdom; baptism of the Holy Ghost the prerequisite for Christian work and achievement, without which it must not be attempted and cannot be accomplished.—R.

Ver. 1.—"*Alpha and Omega.*" "Concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach." This opening sentence of the Acts, full of significance, as pointing at once to the past years of Christ's earthly ministry and to the future work of his people, in his Name and by his power, and connecting them together. He himself is the

Alpha of the kingdom, and he is the *Omega*. His *doing* and his *teaching* really one; in matter and in manner, Divine; the standard for apostles and all others; the Acts of the Apostles a continuation of the acts of their Master. He only *began* to do and to teach in his ministry; he *went on* to manifest himself by the Spirit, according to his promise, "He [the Father] shall give you another Comforter [Helper], that he *may* be with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). Consider, then—

I. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF JESUS. A *spiritual* pre-eminence. The short period of his life and ministry; yet containing *deeds* and *words* which have created the world afresh. Not the bare history of miracles, or record of religious discourses, but the manifestation to the world of the Divine Spirit through a human history, character, and speech.

II. A PRE-EMINENCE ACKNOWLEDGED IN HEAVEN. "The day when he was received up" is distinctly declared to be the consummation of the gospel story; the "doing and teaching" were not only before men, but before God, on behalf of men. Hence the distinction between Christ's ministry and that of all merely human "doers and teachers." God accepts his pre-eminence, is well-pleased in his testimony—a testimony which was wrought out both in active efforts and patient suffering. His pre-eminence is prophetic, priestly, kingly. The necessity, especially in our times, of following Christ in thought to the right hand of God. He is not merely the highest of the philanthropists and the wisest of the sages. He is the Heir of all things, "received up" to heaven, that "in all things he might have the pre-eminence."

III. THE PRE-EMINENCE OF JESUS IS GRACIOUS. His own ministry is followed by the ministry of his apostles. The Acts only the first volume of an endless record of gracious ministration, of which Jesus is the Source and his people the instruments. Hence the value of the Acts. It helps us to see what a Christ-like ministry is; how it overcomes the world, how it reveals the Spirit. Yet compare the Acts and the Gospels, and we are taught how much the servants fall below their Lord. Instances of infirmity and sin in apostles. Encouragement in the great lesson, our life linked on to Christ's. "*Acts*" a continuation. Keep close to the doing and teaching of Jesus, in its essential features and ruling spirit.—R.

Ver. 3.—*The risen Jesus*. "To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God."

I. THE WITNESSES. 1. *Prepared* and *trained* for the work. Not shown to all, but to those who could look at the miracle in its spiritual aspect, who could see the fulfilment of God's Word. 2. The certain knowledge of Christ's resurrection a solemn *responsibility* which all were not able to bear. "Nothing secret but that it may come abroad." Not to the wise of this world, who know not how to use Divine secrets, but to the babes in disposition, simple, humble, self-forgetful, waiting on God. 3. The *main work* of Christ's servants is *witnessing*, not theorizing; not building up ecclesiastical structures; not seeking dominion over the faith of others; but "showing forth" the great *facts*. Our preaching should be of the nature of witnessing. "Add to our seal that God is true." Although apostles had distinct duties as leaders and founders of the visible Church, they share with all the Lord's people the office of witnesses. "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord." See to it that we speak as those who "know the certainty of the things."

II. THE PROOFS. The Resurrection must be *proved* infallibly (*τεμπνολως*); that is, beyond all reasonable doubt. We must build on a foundation of fact and testimony. Our first teachers must be those who could say that they had tasted, handled, felt of the Word of Life (1 John i. 1—4). Now the proofs were: 1. *Appearances* of the risen Jesus, thirteen in number, in various circumstances, to different kinds of witnesses, and with amply sufficient tests of reality. 2. *Coincidence* of the facts with the words of our Lord himself and the promises of the Old Testament. 3. *Distinction* of the signs and proofs of the Resurrection from any other facts; from the possible misapprehensions or illusions of disciples. It was unexpected; proved against unbelief; with growing assurance; and with concurrence of many sincere and faithful men who knew their responsibility as witnesses. 4. *Jesus showed himself alive after his resurrection*. The fact to which apostles testified was not the mystery of the Resur-

rection itself, but the simple fact that Jesus was alive. No one saw him *rise*, but they saw him *after* he was risen. They might mistake what occurred at the sepulchre; they could make no mistake in talking with a living man, handling him, eating with him, and that for forty days and on many occasions, in one another's presence. Necessity that we should set the proof of the Resurrection and risen life of Jesus first and foremost in our defence of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch.

III. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST. The *forty days* and their influence on the first disciples, and through them on all future ages. 1. The *personal presence* of Jesus lifted up into a more glorious fact. The infirmities gone. The fact of his victory shining in his face. The influence of his condescension; the risen Jesus still the Friend and Companion of his people. The expectation of his return to heaven: "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John xx. 17). The effect on Thomas: "My Lord and my God!" The necessity that disciples should cease to "know Christ after the flesh." Henceforth they felt his presence spiritually. 2. Forty days of special instruction "concerning the kingdom of God." The history which follows corrects the view sometimes put forward that the risen Saviour imparted to his apostles any body of ecclesiastical laws. Had they received them they would certainly have referred to them. He spoke of the kingdom itself, which is not meat and drink, not external ordinances and regulations, not creeds and shibboleths; but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." He called to remembrance what he had preached. He opened their understandings to the meaning of the Old Testament. He corrected their worldly views. He showed them the relation of the gospel facts to the kingdom; that is, that he could reign by the power of these facts. "The Messiah ought to suffer, and to enter into his glory." He led them back to Calvary with new faith before he took them to Olivet. Jesus was a Teacher to the last. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life.—R.

Ver. 4.—*The Divine equipment.* "Wait for the promise of the Father." The great Head of the Church addressing its leaders. The Son of God speaking to those who themselves should receive power to become the sons of God, and to lift up the world into a Divine household. In the infancy of the Church all depended on simple obedience to orders. Immense evil from not waiting for God's time and preparation. Here are the two guiding lights—the *promise* unfolding the prospect, the *commandment* marking out the way.

I. THE UNFOLDED PROSPECT. 1. The extent of it. "*The Father's promise*;" infinite as his love. Though faith was demanded, because sight of the future withheld, still the voice was the voice of infinite assurance. 2. The *nature* of the expectation. "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The gift already tasted, known by experience. We cannot be without "the earnest of the Spirit" if Christ's. We yet must look for a fuller baptism, especially as meeting responsibilities and trials, anti-cipating work and fruits.

II. THE WORD OF COMMAND. "*Wait.*" 1. With the word of promise in mind, *expecting* the fulfilment, "not many days hence." 2. *In fellowship* with one another and in prayer, that the heart may be open to the gifts, that they may be poured out upon all. 3. *At Jerusalem*, where the two dispensations meet, where the main action against the kingdom of darkness can best commence, where the facts of the gospel have already preceded you, and you can build on the foundation laid in Zion. 4. In self-renunciation and faithfulness, not in slothful indifference or depression. While we make the best of present opportunities, the larger open to us. *Do the work of the day in the day*, and so wait for the promise of the Father. *Individually*, here is encouragement—grain of mustard seed will grow. Our Father must desire growth in us. *Collectively*, many applications—prospects of the Church and of the world. The true method of gathering in the masses, not by departing for Jerusalem before the time, but waiting till we are able to send out into the unconverted world the energy bestowed upon us.—B.

Vers. 6—11.—*The Ascension. Heaven and earth visibly united.* Chief points—

I. THE CONTRAST between the *earthly*, as represented in the disciples, with their

Jewish prejudice and thought of "times and seasons," and the *heavenly*, in the Lord Jesus himself.

II. THE PROSPECT. Separation for a season. Cloud concealing the glory. Promise of return.

III. THE FELLOWSHIP of the disciples with the Master. The mingling together of heaven and earth. The witnesses appointed, that to the uttermost part of the earth the glory of the risen dawn might be seen, and so a new heaven be revealed over a new earth. (Cf. the promise made to Nathanael (John i. 51) and Jacob's dream.)—I.

Ver. 8.—*Witnessing for Christ*. "Ye shall be my witnesses."

I. The world through its whole extent NEEDS SUCH A TESTIMONY. The facts which can be testified without the power of God's Spirit cannot speak the whole of the Father's mind concerning man.

II. WITNESSING FOR CHRIST THE MISSION OF ALL CHRISTIANS. Apostles only first because nearest to Jesus himself; chosen by him, not because above others in merits. Witnessing must be as universal in the character and life as the work of the Spirit. All speaks of the same Divine fountain from which all flows. The hope of the Church and of the world is in the waking up of the witnessing spirit. "*Martyrs*" we should all be in heart, if not in suffering. "*Apostolic*" in the best sense—"sent out."

III. OUR LIFE-WORK SHOULD BE THE OUTCOME OF DIVINE GRACE. "Ye shall receive power." "The Holy Ghost shall come upon you;" then, being so endued from on high, "ye shall be my witnesses." Spiritual life the foundation of all other life. We should be able to know that the time is come for great work, for we should be conscious of the gifts of God. By no mere conventional forms let us be led away. "*Power*" the great want of the Church—spiritual power; not wealth, or organization, or external attractions, but that which "*comes upon us*" from above. Are we working without it? Is our witnessing unto condemnation?—R.

Ver. 9.—*The Ascension*. Probably the only direct statement of the fact of the Ascension is by St. Luke. Other evangelists point to the same consummation, but do not describe it, for Mark (xvi. 19, 20) probably a later addition. As an event, corresponds with the miraculous commencement of the Saviour's life, and his many announcements of return to heaven, especially as recorded by St. John. The important place of the fact in the Acts, and its manner of relation, show that it is not a mere halo of disciple-worship round the head of the Master, but the true beginning of the Church's history. Yet, like many other essential facts, only partly presented to the eyes of men. There is a *cloud* of mystery, a veil over the secret depths of glory. Regard the Ascension—

I. IN ITS RELATION TO THE SAVIOUR HIMSELF. 1. As *glorification*, and so lifting up of the earthly facts into the higher sphere; sealing of authority; hiding of infirmity; manifestation of kingly power; connecting of the three offices of Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King, with the one centre of his personal existence, his heavenly throne. 2. As the commencement of the wider ministry of the Spirit. Before his ascension Jesus was almost entirely a minister to the Jews; from henceforth he was, through his messengers by the Holy Ghost, the Saviour of the world.

II. IN RELATION TO DISCIPLES. 1. As the completion of their faith. 2. As the correction of their errors, and the help to a more spiritual apprehension of Jesus. 3. As the embodiment of the promise of the Spirit, for the High Priest had thus visibly gone into the holiest place, and would return with the blessing. 4. As the discipline which would draw them together, and help them to realize the fact of their Church life as the life of the world.

III. IN RELATION TO THE WORLD AT LARGE. 1. Proclamation of the kingdom of heaven. 2. The setting on high of the gospel facts as a sun in the sky from which the light should pour down over *all* the earth. The Nazarene speaks from heaven. The Crucified is the Glorified. 3. The help of men's faith to lay hold of the invisible and eternal. He who has so gone, shall so return. "I go to prepare a place for you." The end of the world is in that ascension of the world's highest to heaven.—R.

Ver. 10, 11.—*The angels' message*. I. A REMONSTRANCE. "Why stand ye looking

into heaven?" 1. Against the misuse of signs and appearances. Get at the substance of the fact, and waste no time and strength on the mere form. 2. Against prying into forbidden secrets. Indulgence of fancy in religion. Following the track of sense beyond its reach. 3. Spiritual depression and reaction. Christ is still the same. Be not afraid or perplexed, but set to work and prepare for his return.

II. AN ANNOUNCEMENT. "This Jesus shall so come." 1. A personal advent, but not necessarily pre-millennial. The chief meaning of the promise is that this world is to be prepared for the return of Christ, therefore is to be made his kingdom, so the expectation is practical. 2. The similarity of circumstances is helpful to faith. "*Out of sight*," "*a cloud*," "*taken up*,"—such terms remind us that we must not look for mere sensible indications of the Saviour's descent from heaven; but in like manner as he went away, so mysteriously that his disciples scarcely knew whether he was gone and still gazed after him, so he will appear again "*with clouds*," and only imperfectly seen, until his presence shall be hailed with the shout of the archangel and the trump of God. 3. The assurance of the second advent of the Lord should be the summons to work, and the comfort of all that feel their loneliness and want in this scene of separation from their Saviour's visible presence. "Till Jesus comes." The promise speaks peace to us.—R.

Vers. 12—14.—*The first roll-call of the Church.* Notice—

THE GATHERING-PLACE. 1. *Jerusalem*, with Olivet in the background. Henceforth a *new Jerusalem*. The descent from the Mount of the Saviour's glory, a sabbath day's journey off; return to the duties of life, to new responsibilities, but with a vivid remembrance of the parting interview with Jesus. 2. *Upper chamber*. The grain of mustard seed must be sown in the common ground of humanity. Yet the commencement of Church life must recognize *separation* from the world as the law of the new kingdom, *fellowship* as the condition of union, *subordination* and *order* as helpful to activity. 3. The society composed of *mingled elements*—men and women, apostles and disciples, old and young, those attached to Jesus by spiritual bonds alone; and those who were his fleshly kindred, able to minister with special familiarity of personal knowledge. "Mary" and "his brethren." 4. Their *first mutual occupation*. "With one accord they continued steadfastly in prayer." Not as excluding exhortation and other forms of fellowship, but as indicating the pre-eminently devout and believing attitude of their minds.—R.

Ver. 14.—*The Church's first prayer-meeting.* I. THE PLACE IT OCCUPIES. 1. *Under the cloud* of a great trial. The separation from Jesus; the attitude of the Jews of the metropolis; the dependence of a company of poor and persecuted people; the sense of ignorance and feebleness. What could they do but pray, especially as they felt that the power had not as yet come? 2. *At the threshold* of the Church's history. We know what grew out of that first meeting. All great religious movements have commenced in prayer. Little the actors have foreseen of the future. Luther nailing up his theses. Early meetings of the Wesleys. Modern revivals. The "Acts" a commentary upon that spiritual germination of a new life at Jerusalem. Developments of the individual characters represented by the names. Providence works with grace. They that put themselves by prayer into the hands of God are led on by his hand. 3. In the history of the world, a *new social fact* which is destined to enlarge until it embraces all human interests and associations within itself. A missionary prayer-meeting it was, though as yet the herald-spirit had not taken full possession of the brethren. They knew that they were sent by Jesus to the uttermost parts of the earth. It was a prayer for the baptism which should make all alike messengers of the new life. The success of all evangelistic efforts depends on their following this example of prayerfulness.

II. THE LESSONS IT TEACHES. 1. The spirituality of the kingdom of Christ. 2. The equality of Christians in the Church. 3. The dependence of Divine gifts on our preparation for them, in heart and life. An outpouring of the Spirit in answer to prayer is a bestowment of grace, on those who are ready to employ it when it comes. 4. Mutual recognition in the Divine presence the prerequisite to individual callings and separate work. The spirit of prayer the preservative against division.—R.

Vers. 15—26.—*The Church's first corporate action.* I. A GLIMPSE INTO PRIMITIVE CHURCH LIFE, showing: 1. Its *purity and simplicity.* No pomp, no complicated organization, appeal to the body of the Church. 2. Its *separation from the world.* "The names" were recorded in some way, and numbered; probably a written record kept from this time in the upper room. They were all regarded as "brethren." 3. Its *reverence for Scripture.* The quotation of the Apostle Peter is not either exactly from the Hebrew nor from the Septuagint, but the manner of it denotes entire subjection to scriptural guidance and study of the Messianic prophecies. 4. *Obedience to the law of Christ.* In the acknowledged leadership of Peter. In the desire to complete and maintain the apostleship. In the strict condition of apostolic testimony recognized, the knowledge of the facts from the baptism of John to the Ascension. 5. *Realization of the presence and guidance of the Divine Spirit.* In the appeal by lot; preceded by prayer and thoughtful action in selection of two, and acquiesced in without a difference.

II. THE SOLID FOUNDATIONS ON WHICH CHRISTIANITY RESTS. Care taken that the witnesses be divinely appointed. The treachery and punishment of Judas thus conspicuously mentioned, that the solemnity of the apostolic office may be there impressively seen. The whole tone of the transaction is that of men feeling their responsibility, not of fanatics carried away with the dream of power, certainly not of impostors "cunningly devising" a statement to take the world captive. The reference to Scripture shows that the apostles and their brethren would follow the track of the Old Testament in their testimony. The publicity of the gospel facts is proclaimed and appealed to. "Known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem."

III. JUDGMENT BEGINNING AT THE HOUSE OF GOD. (Ver. 16 or 25).—R.

Vers. 17—19.—*The history, character, and end of Judas Iscariot.* I. An instance of SELF-DECEPTION, its power and fruits. 1. The possibility that only gradually Judas fell away—original basis of narrow-mindedness and self-indulgence leading to love of money and dishonesty. 2. The light turned into darkness. Near to Jesus, but the conscience, once perverted, becoming rapidly its own tempter, kicking against convictions, till convictions themselves become impossible, and the Master, once revered, is hated. 3. The higher the elevation of privilege, the deeper the fall. When remorse lays hold of such a mind it devours all hope, and casts down headlong. Warning against the beginning of evil. Appeal to those who have still opportunity of repentance to listen to the voice of remonstrance. Jesus gave Judas many times the clear note of pitiful admonition, which was rejected.

II. A GREAT LESSON ON THE DUTY OF GOD'S PEOPLE IN THEIR RELATION TO CHURCH DISCIPLINE. The supreme principle must be, not that the Church punishes, but that it solemnly recognizes the Divine jurisdiction. Judas was in God's hands, and God dealt with him. The place was left vacant, to be filled up in dependence on Divine guidance. We can cut off a name and fill up an office, but we must not lay our hand on persons. The great error which has worked so fatally in Christendom has been the Church's usurping the Divine office of punishment, and calling in the secular arm to do its evil will. We should deal with backsliders in the tenderest spirit. At the same time, this conspicuous instance serves to keep us in mind that the kingdom of Christ is a real reign of sovereign power, and that the events of men's lives, their happiness or misery, and what the world calls their *fate*, all are appointed in harmony with the Divine purpose which is being fulfilled in the Church. The appeal to God by lot was a recognition of the same truth. Though an old Jewish custom, it was sanctioned by God as helping his people to remember the universality of his rule. It was not a blind appeal to chance, but was accompanied with believing prayer and an exercise of human wisdom so far as it went. As at the beginning, so still and always, the Church can be purged of its evil only by God, not by man. We must expect a mingled state, while we aim at purity and maintain a spiritual oversight and watchful discipline in the Church itself. There are two extremes to be avoided: (1) the latitudinarian indifference which says, "Let the world and the Church intermingle without attempt at distinction;" (2) the Pharisaical censoriousness which would be constantly pulling up tares, and wheat with them, and so tends to disintegrate the Church by endless divisions and separations. Let God be the Judge; for he has said, "Vengeance is mine." Let the prevailing spirit be the charity which "hopeth all things."—R.

Ver. 3.—*The world's supreme question to the front.* "Speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." We hold in our hands, in these words, the key, not of a brief section of this chapter and this book alone, but rather of a very long stretch of time, and an immensely important and absorbingly interesting stretch of the world's history. Matters of the deepest and most touching individual interest, like all the charming incident of the four Gospels, must yield, we are here tacitly reminded—yield both in time and in high equity also—to those of collective, of national, of universal interest. All the capacity of Old Testament history, abounding in monographs of thrilling human import, long led the way onward to this development. And now it might be said the crisis had arrived. All that even Jesus himself had done and taught before "his passion" is to be called only a *beginning*. He had *done*, indeed, unnumbered benefits to unnumbered persons. He had *taught* unnumbered lessons of wisdom and goodness to unnumbered persons. And he had been a light, a wonder, a glory, to a nation. But now, after his passion and resurrection, on to his ascension, his work shows as though cast in larger mould. Its character speaks comprehension beyond what it formerly did. And this is its simple, grand motto—"the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." We have here—

I. THE MANIFEST INSTALLATION, LONG AWAITED, OF THE ONE ROYAL INSTITUTION OF THE WORLD. Henceforth the question that shall be to the front for the whole world is "the kingdom of God." The kingdom of God and the Church of Christ are not, indeed, identities. But they stand in most real correlation. The just analogy of the relation that holds between them is that of the perfect type, the original model to the faithful copy—a copy ever realizing greater faithfulness of resemblance. For this supreme installation, now come with so little of ceremony, at so unexpected a time, in so unexpected and modest a way, the world had waited thousands of years, while "kings and prophets" had been on the watch-tower. These had died with "hope deferred," but in many cases with faith never stronger than in that dying hour. But further, during the last thirty-three years, since in strangest consent a heavenly band of angels, and certain shepherds, and certain "wise men of the East," and a certain very-unwise king, Herod, struck to the heart cowardly, had seemed to set them going, wave after wave of excited expectation and of suspense had swayed to and fro the hearts of multitudes. The expectation and the suspense were just now put to rest, and it should be a satisfied rest, for "this time," to be soon superseded by an untold period of hard work and severe conflict. During the past thirty-three years, this kingdom had been foreshadowed, among a thousand things "done" and "taught" that seemed of nearer import, by: 1. The distinct preaching of John the Baptist (Matt. iii. 1) and of Jesus Christ himself (Matt. iv. 17). 2. The introduction of it into the model prayer taught by Jesus to his disciples, "Thy kingdom come. . . . Thine is the kingdom." 3. The many parables of Jesus, of which "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven" was the subject. 4. The missionary tours of the twelve disciples (Matt. x. 7, 8) and of the seventy (Lufie x. 9). 5. The detached observations made by Jesus, having "the kingdom" as their subject (Luke xvii. 20; John xviii. 33—37). But *now*, during so special a period as *the forty days*, this subject—"the things pertaining to the kingdom of God"—is spoken of as the characteristic and discriminating theme of Christ's discourse and instruction to the apostles. The inference is plain.

II. THE INDICATIONS OF THE AUGUST CRISIS, WHEN THE MOST ARDUOUS WORK, MOST ENNOBLING PRIVILEGE, MOST TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY, WERE DEVOLVED ON HUMAN AGENTS. And two things are specially to be noted at this amazing juncture. 1. The carrying on of the work of Christ on earth, in the establishing and propagating of the kingdom of God, is *given into the hands of men*. We know nothing like all which Jesus said to his apostles during these "forty days." Probably we do not know even all the occasions on which he appeared to them and instructed them. But there can be no doubt that there was one reason, and only one chief reason, why the theme of Christ's conversation or discourse was what we are here told it was. The reason *this*, that the apostles should now be prepared, both in heart and hand, to undertake the lead of the great work, as they had never before been prepared, probably not even to the conceiving of such a thing. 2. The carrying on of that work, now *devolved* or about immediately to be devolved on the servants by the Master, is—for so we are irresistibly led to conclude—not prescribed too closely, is not provided for in anything

approaching literal detail. Christ spoke of "*the things pertaining to*" the kingdom of God. One inevitably imagines that under this description *principles* were imparted—possibly enough information savouring of the character of *revelation*. These would be lighted up and warmed by the presence of gracious promise and stirring glimpses of the above and of the future. Yet, all as inevitably, one is impressed with the conviction that even that poor earthly judgment of those poor earthly men, who had so often slipped and failed even under the eye of the Master, was not fettered, hampered, overpowered by the severity of binding detail. We seem to see Jesus doing at that germinal time what the history of the Church clearly enough shows he ever has done since, throwing himself and his own expensive work and grand sacrifice alike on the love and the judgment of his servants! It is a marvellous thought of work and honour devolved on men! Nor could it be easy to find either a more stirring or inspiring stimulus both of love and of wisdom's best efforts. The conjunction of the trust Christ offers to repose practically, not on our hearts' love alone, but even on our fallible discretion, illustrates the height of his surpassing grace to us, in the very *gracefulness* of the grace.

III. THE SUGGESTIONS OF THE SOURCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM THAT UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE REQUIRED. He who "spake" to loving disciples, friends, servants, and who instructed them now, would by the very act, often repeated before "his passion," but now (it is impossible to refrain from the word) with increased *sanctity* after his resurrection, ensure their memory, and their grateful memory, of himself. These he would make his own—more surely than the child hallows more and more the memory of the father; more surely than the pupil never conquers, nor wishes nor tries to conquer, the reverence he used to feel to a teacher, whom he once pictured as possessed of all knowledge. To him who gives the grace of conversion, we look instinctively for that of sanctification; as to those who give us life, we instinctively, unconsciously look for the support and rearing of that life. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," were words, we may rest assured, not heard exactly for the first time in the rapt moments of the literal Ascension! We are also immediately informed that Christ emphatically directed his disciples, now hanging on his lips, to look for and wait for the Holy Spirit, one of whose main offices was and ever is *to bring to remembrance* the things already spoken by Christ. Until, then, "God is all in all," and the mediatorial reign of Christ is resigned, he is our one Hope and Trust. He is the Giver of light, knowledge, love. He is the one only Head of his Church. He the Saviour and the King of men, who now so condescendingly "showed himself alive" to the apostles, "after his passion, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of *the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*"—B.

Ver. 4.—*The supreme promise to the Church.* "Comanded them that they should . . . wait for the promise of the Father." The exact designation here employed to describe the gift, and the special gift, of the Holy Ghost—namely, "the promise of the Father"—is confined to the writing of St. Luke; as it were, the outcome of his assiduous memory. In the Gospel (xxiv. 49) he remembers it to quote it, in its completest precision: "Behold, I send the promise of *my* Father upon you." These are the two occasions of the occurrence of this expression in Scripture. Other portions of Scripture, however, concerned with the same grand subject, are quite in harmony with these two picked expressions. They may possibly all date in the first instance from the words of the Prophet Joel (ii. 28, 29). But we most thankfully accept the reminding words of Jesus, as here distinctly quoted, "which ye have heard of me," as good for asserting the independent choice of the designation by an original authority. When thus viewed, it will exceed in value the words of the prophet, though treasured long, if not in grateful, yet in hopeful memory. We have here—

I. THE MENTION OF THE DESCENT, THE SPECIAL DESCENT, OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, UNDER THE TITLE OF "THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER." 1. This title maintains consistently the strict fidelity of revelation. The uniform representation of Scripture sets forth everything good as originating with the Father. He is *the* Source. He is *the* Beginning. Whatsoever comes even nearest of all to him, is still but "*in the beginning with him.*" He is the "Giver of every good and perfect gift"—of the glorious array of gift that ranks

the brightest among its treasures, beyond comparison the brightest, Jesus Christ, "the Son of the Father" and the Saviour of the world, and the Holy Spirit, "the promise of the Father," and the Regenerator and Sanctifier of human hearts. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," the fit refrain of ten thousand songs—songs of life, of light, of warmth, of love, of reason, of memory, of imagination, of hope, of beauty, of joy—is nevertheless heard, first of all, in its fullest tones, in its richest strains, as the refrain of those songs, that celebrate the gift of Jesus to a once prostrate world, and the "promise of the Father" to that same world just begun to lift its head, and gasp for pure air, and to beg for a *little* light, and a *little* love and hope. To that doubting prayer of a world crushed under sin and darkness so long, and wrung from it by the bitterness of its effectual woe, how large the answer that came down wrapt in the "promise of the Father"! And within the narrower limits of Christ's own testimony respecting the Holy Spirit, this title preserves the harmony of Scripture. "The Father . . . shall give you another Comforter" (John xiv. 16); "The Father will send . . . the Comforter, the Holy Ghost" (John xiv. 26); "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father" (John xv. 26). We may notice these testimonies of Christ the more observantly, because they grow up lovingly tangled among allusions to his own relations to the Spirit, and to the "sending" of him. Of which more follows immediately. 2. The title is one that specially honours the Father. Taking into account the exact juncture, it may perhaps be viewed as intentionally an almost final act for the days of Christ's tarrying on earth, of honour, of obedience, of the reverent love of a true, sublime Sonship on the part of Christ toward God the Father. Only the day before his crucifixion had Christ spoken with some fulness and in some detail of *his own* relation to the Spirit. That relation must be a very close one, to answer correctly to the things which Jesus then said and implied as well. For instance: "*I will* pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter" (John xiv. 16); "The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send *in my Name*" (John xv. 26); "The Comforter . . . whom *I will* send unto you from the Father" (John xv. 26); "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . But if I depart, *I will* send him unto you" (John xvi. 7); "The Spirit of truth . . . shall glorify *me*; for he shall receive of *mine*, and shall show it unto you" (John xvi. 13, 14). Not in the whole body of these sayings of Christ is there, indeed, anything that trenches upon the rights of the Father; yet now the great original Promiser is justly brought, and is as it were finally left by Christ in the place of first majesty and prominence. 3. The title offers, for all devout and reverent thought, to link together that present, which ever seems so prosaic, so unmemorable with hallowed antiquity, with the sacredness of the past, with the legitimate enchantment of distance. The promise reminds (and in this case most plainly) of the *Promiser*. And this Promiser of ages past, long waited for, not seldom distrusted, sometimes despaired of, is now in a moment or two going to be manifested—the *faithful* Promiser. He is none other than the Father everlasting! Promise adds preciousness to bestowment in several ways—in the very *tension* of the moral nature which it challenges, in the mutual keeping hold of hands (all the while that the promise subsists), of promiser and *promiser*, in the educatory processes of varied sort that are sure to be transpiring during all the same interval, and, in a word, in the preparation of the receiver for the thing prepared for him, as well as in his final supreme gratification on receiving it. But come this time, the "forecasting of the years" past, "the reaching of the hand through time to catch the far-off interest of tears" over, and the blank days that have been yielded to the dawn of radiance itself. So sang Moses, when now at last he saw *the land*, "the promise of the Father"—

"My Father's hope! my childhood's dream!
The promise from on high!
Long waited for! its glories beam
Now when my death is nigh.

"My death is come, but not decay;
Nor eye nor mind is dim;
The keenness of youth's vigorous day
Thrills in each nerve and limb.

"Blest scene! thrice welcome after toll—
 If no deceit I view;
 Oh, might my lips but press the soil,
 And prove the vision true!"

(J. H. Newman.)

And so, in higher strain, chants the apostle: "Faithful is he who hath promised, *who also will do it.*" 4. The title offers in a fresh form, to the sensitive, impressible disposition of true discipleship, a pathetic suggestion of the nearness and the continuing purpose and the *watching* grace of the Father. 'Tis all covered by the word *promise*. For a promise must be of something welcome and wished for. A promise has no part nor lot with a *threat*. The only question that lies at the door of promise is the anxious one, as to faithfulness; that assured, the prospect must be a grateful one. So one chosen word, an opportune name, a kindly expression, becomes a *suggestion*, fruitful and full of fruitfulness. "The *promise* of the Father" must ever be the "Comforter" of the Church.

11. THE COMMAND TO AWAIT TOGETHER AT JERUSALEM THAT DESCENT, OR "BAPTISM," OF THE HOLY GHOST WHICH WOULD CONSTITUTE THE FULFILMENT OF PROMISE. It is not necessary to linger over the fact that Jerusalem was to be the scene of the "baptism with the Holy Ghost," and the geographical point of departure for the new heralds of "the kingdom of God." It was the metropolis of the land; it was the shrine in a shrine. It had been the ecclesiastical gathering-place of the elect people for centuries upon centuries, and divinely appointed such. But now, if ever work was to date from place, the work of Christ might well begin from the place where he suffered, and the glory of the dispensation of his Spirit be manifested where had been first the manifestation of his soul's sore "trouble," and his humiliation unto death! This, the first crown after the cross! But other suggestions, of more intrinsic importance, arise out of this command. 1. The command, by preventing the separation and dispersion of the apostles, prepared the way for a manifestation which, if viewed *merely* as a phenomenon, must have been unsurpassed in the experience of the people, whether those who saw it or those who felt it as well. No amount of depth of conviction, no amount of consequent *real stir*, could be wondered at after such a scene, or the credible report of it only. The impression and the effect must have been justly tremendous then and there. Could we give ourselves leave to imagine for one moment a reproduction of that scene in the modern world's metropolis, we know that, taking into consideration the scale of modern thought, the character and variety and tenacity of modern scepticism, and the wonderfully advanced means of modern communication, nothing short of the genuine turning upside down of "the world" might be expected to be the result. The atheist, the rationalist, the materialist, the mere scientist, would have a hard task before them, and would have hard work to escape the administration prompt of lynch law, as it were! There were, of course, the greatest ends to be secured by that extraordinary demonstration proportionate to the time of day, and guarded from effects that would be absolutely appalling through their forcibleness. (1) That demonstration of the Spirit would be for ever memorable in the thought and religious life of each individual who experienced it. (2) Also its value would be greatly enhanced in the *mutual* witness, which was so striking a feature of it. No hour, no moment, was wasted (as after the Resurrection) by any attempt called for on the part of one disciple to persuade or to inform another. All saw, felt, believed, and were divinely elated. (3) It irresistibly secured a wide, varied, distant circulation, at a time when this was a thing difficult to attain. 2. The command prevented apostles and disciples separating and dispersing to attempt in an *individual, fitful* manner their great Master's work. They are to await one united baptism—to have one distinct, inpartial impression made upon them and commission entrusted to them. From the first a very needed idea was offered to them, that they were not to air their individualities, but to lose self in one glorious congregation. 3. The command secured, on the very merits of the case, the *proper* preparation of the apostles for their work. Not only will they now not go forth in their own individual strength and pride, but not in human strength and pride at all. They are all to be baptized, *and with such a force* as the Holy Spirit! His life, his light, his love, his *tongue*, are to be theirs. As with Jesus' spoken charge to "the twelve," and again to "the seventy," under each permanent or temporary item of direction lay this one

principle, that they were to go forth in the strength of a Stronger than man, so in this *acted* charge, this marvel of a demonstration of the Spirit, the same root-principle is conveyed, be it said, with a thousandfold impressiveness. Not one atom of Christ's work must they touch in their own strength, nor begin it presumptuously before they are sufficiently equipped—*panoplied* by the Word and the Spirit. That lesson has gone, is going, must go down through all time, and all succeeding generations and portions of the Church. Nor is it the least of important lessons being at this very time taught us, by methods often most painful, most humiliating but most healthful, that the work of Christ prospers with the man, with the Church, with the age, which is most thoroughly characterized by a profound trust, and effectual, fervent invocation of the Holy Spirit.—B.

Vers. 6—8.—*Craving for forbidden knowledge—its alternative, enlarged, practical trust.* "They asked of him saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time . . . the earth?" The question of the apostles of which St. Luke here tells us we do not find either in his Gospel or in that of any of the other evangelists, one among many indications of the probability that during "the forty days" much may have transpired between Christ and his apostles not left on record. It may nevertheless be noted, in passing, that the incident happens to be in interesting analogy with such another as that of which we read in John xxi. 20—23. And except for the fact that it is *not* put down to the account of Peter, we might probably be pardoned for surmising that it was *he* again who was the prime mover in it. We have here—

I. THE SIGNS OF EVEN APOSTOLIC CRAVING AFTER FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE. 1. Whoever may have promoted the question, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" most eagerly, we can feel no difficulty in admitting its very natural character. Nor is it at all necessary to affix too mean a construction to the motive of the apostles. Let it be granted only that their mind was not thoroughly delivered from the idea of a "kingdom of Israel" *on* earth, and we need not straightway therefore conclude that their chief thought or wish was to a "kingdom of Israel" *of* earth, rather than "of heaven" or "of God." 2. And as the question was not an unnatural one in itself, so also it *was* one that bears the traces of that deeper impression which had been most legitimately made on the apostles by the marvels of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Whatever might be in store or might not be in store for them in this matter of the long-cherished hope of a kingdom, *their* conviction was stronger and stronger grown that Jesus was One who *could* do this thing, who could be the Founder of such a kingdom, and establish it on no doubtful, hazardous, merely adventurous sort of footing, but worthily, strongly, and for ever. If other miracles were for a sign of his authority, and for a grand moral witness of him, *this* yet more than all else whatsoever: his own death issuing in resurrection! The space of one moment may have awakened again and ripened the impulse to dwell with a fascinated interest on this subject—the moment that in which "these sayings sank down into their ears," namely, that "they should not depart from Jerusalem," that they "should wait for the promise of the Father," and that they should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (1) Nevertheless the *issue*, if nothing else, convicts the question of being the *wrong* one. How often the things that are abundantly natural, and to which the warmest impulses seem made to lead us on, are for all that *the forbidden*—forbidden, perhaps, by Divine word of mouth even, otherwise by deeper sense in our own self and life! Christ apprizes his interrogators that on the *merits* of the case, not on any mere ceremony, the subject was one "too high" for them—"they cannot attain to it." It is for us to remember at the present time that nothing that we knew is plainer than the some things we do not know, in matters of religious thought and speculation, that these "some" things which we do not know are often of the intensest speculative interest, are at the same time things *not* in the position of the not clearly "revealed," but of the clearly *not* "revealed," and that the more than likely reason for this is, that they are too high for human reason at present, and are kept for "yet the little while" of earth, "in the Father's power." Let it, however, be granted that there may be other things left unrevealed, which rightly and designly keep awake the *intense speculative thought* of the whole Church. They challenge not the presumptuousness, but the reverent diligence, of the Church's intellectual life. (2) At a moment of

confessed intense *practical* significance, the question of the disciples was the suggestion of a departure to an inopportune subject. In instances of far inferior magnitude how certain it is that we should remark upon the untimeliness of the interruption that broke in upon some supreme crisis of one kind with matter possibly quite foreign to it! (3) Any way, the question *looked* too much in the direction of the old oft-reproved thing—of hankering for the form, the show, the handling of dignity and superiority and authority, not of the intrinsic but of the *unreal* kind. (4) The condescending familiarity of the Saviour should not have hidden for so much as a moment from the apostles' reverence, or from their quickened apprehensions as to the nature of their Master, the interval that was between him and themselves. There can be no doubt that they had *learned* this, that the seed of conviction and godly impression had not fallen on trodden, impracticable soil, and that their opportunity of intelligent appreciation of Christ had been increased a thousandfold. Therefore the time—all the time—was what courted the attitude of adoring waiting and most heedful listening, rather than of suggesting the course in which such a Master's instructions, such a Lord's vouchsafings, should go. The language of a prophet better suited it: "The Lord is in his holy temple: let all . . . keep silence before him!"

II. THE DISTINCT DENIAL ON THE PART OF CHRIST OF THE KNOWLEDGE CRAVED. Christ at once replies in language that we in modern times, at all events, would feel to be very emphatic: "It is not for you to know times and seasons, which the Father hath placed in his own power." Notice: 1. The freedom of this direct denial from asperity. If positive, it is not arbitrary; if severe in its *strictness*, it is not harsh; if decisive, it is not uncourteous or ungracious. 2. The loftiness, on the contrary, of the reason implicitly contained in the denial. The knowledge begged is not withheld as so much punishment or rebuke. It is withheld in this light, that it is not a thing of man, but of the Father—possibly Christ might still mean of the Father *alone* (Mark xiii. 32). But we cannot affirm this with any strong conviction, as he now speaks subsequently to his resurrection. Now, not the most sensitive disciple-temperament could have need to feel wounded at not sharing knowledge affirmed to belong either exclusively or all but *exclusively* to the supreme Father.

III. THE SUBSTITUTE IMMEDIATELY PROMISED. How often this is the method of Divine wisdom and kindness! How often the analogy of providence illustrates it, in the individual life! So rooted is it in the spirit of Christ's encouraging and bracing doctrine, "Ask, and ye shall have," that even when we ask amiss we very often do have *something*, and have something that we might have missed of had we not asked at all. So much does heavenly care appraise a hungering nature, an open mind, a craving heart, if it be anything at all within the compass of a right outlook that our desires go forth. And while the new gift is not what we asked, how sure it is to prove itself very superior in kind, and in its being the *correctly* adapted gift! 1. The substitute now proffered to the anticipation of the interrogators consists in an early and immense accession of *power*. (1) It is *real* power. (2) It is power guaranteeing at one and the same time holiness to self and usefulness to others. 2. The substitute both illustrated and was the outcome of very noteworthy principles. (1) The principle of diverting mere speculative thought, or sentimental thought, or brooding, disheartened thought, by the bracing activity of work—work arduous and beneficent. Wonderful is the effectiveness of this corrective. It is an alternative safe, healthful, sure of compassing the desired end. Nor a whit less so in the light of one of the axioms of Jesus, "He that *doeth*, . . . shall *know*." (2) The principle that the servants of Christ are *witnesses*, not prophets. They are "hercunte called," to *witness* to the world's ends, and world without end. They are to be quite abased, if, being faithful witnesses, they refrain from trying the wings of prophecy. In all directions, those of philosophy and of science, as well as of Christianity, human duty, human strength, human advance, lie rather in meditating and digesting the material of memory than in attempting the horoscope; in interpreting the past for the edification and helpful guidance of the present, than in forecasting and hazarding prediction. These last tendencies nourish dogmatism, for they bring forth what may not be able to be *disproved*, though it cannot be proved. And they nourish "lofty imaginations," and "high thoughts," and luxurious idleness, that consume the very time, when every heart should be humility and every hand should be industry. Thanks to Jesus, still Master, Teacher, Friend—fresh thanks to him from his modern

disciples, who, when earth and air vibrate again with the shock and the clash of discordant theological polemics, still keeps his own band faithful to the memory of his own commission, that they should be "*witnesses unto*" him throughout all the world!—B.

Vers. 9—11.—*Heavenward gazing recalled to earthward watching.* "While they beheld, he was taken up . . . as ye have seen him go into heaven." The exact aspect of the glories of the Ascension depicted here is not found in any of the accounts of the evangelists. Happy for us that second thoughts were brought to St. Luke, and that they were not left without the beautiful and valuable suggestions that arise from these verses! The resurrection of Jesus Christ stamped the stamp of undeniable royalty upon his brow; round his brow the Ascension flung royalty's own golden crown—a crown of unsurpassed worth and lustre and unfadingness. Well may we pause and ponder the brief recital of that marvel of glorification. Let us notice—

I. THE ASCENSION ITSELF—what is recorded of it. Nothing whatever is said of it in the Gospel by St. John. In that by St. Matthew the matter leads up to it, and abruptly stops, omitting all description of the great event itself. The language of St. Mark is, "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." The invisible world was for one moment opened to the inspired vision of St. Mark, it would seem, as afterwards to that of Stephen. And the account of St. Luke in his "former treatise" is, "And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, *he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.*" There are a detail and an added touch, however, in the passage before us very grateful to read: "When he had spoken these things, *while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.* And . . . they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up." In the event itself, its unadorned majesty is the characteristic. In the description, the own dignity of brevity is pronounced. There is reason, as well as sublimity of effect, in both the one and the other of these things. Simplicity and brevity obviate distraction, and attention is fixed on the essentials. So we see again the scene with no bodily eye, it is true; men to the end of time shall see again and again the scene, it is true, with no bodily eye, but with a spiritual distinctness and a vividness that may leave nothing more to be asked for that could, in the nature of things, be given. Jesus does not *die* away on mortal view, but he soars away from mortal view, while the accents of his voice are still in the ear, "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," and repeating the "promise of the Father" in the gift of the Holy Ghost. And for what is seen it is this: he is borne in an *unusual* direction—*upward*, clear in the eye of sense, till "a cloud received him;" and beyond that cloud, only clear where the eye of faith pierces, he is seen "received up into heaven, and . . . on the right hand of God." In this ascension, therefore, notice: 1. The visibleness of it, as compared, for instance, with the departures, whatever they were, of Enoch and of Moses. 2. The deliberateness of it, as compared, for instance, with the departure in blaze and speed of Elijah. So much to the contrary the *manner* of ascent of Jesus, that in the all-brief description before us there are nevertheless contained as many as four verbal indications of the *distinctness* of the amazing phenomenon; e.g. "*while they beheld . . . out of their sight . . . while they looked steadfastly as he went up . . . in like manner as ye have seen him go.*" 3. The number of witnesses present to see whatever was to be seen. 4. Not a figment of an *earthly* trace of Jesus after ascension alleged by foe, not a fancy of it alleged by friend, as compared, for instance, with such things as we read in 1 Kings xviii. 12; Luke iv. 1, and as might have been conceivable.

II. THE FASCINATION OF THE SIGHT FOR THE APOSTLES. One thing betrays it and describes it—their rapt upward gaze. Beneath this one thing what wealth of suggestion may lie! It is probable that the apostles were forewarned of the coming ascension of their Master; of his departure, certainly. At all events prophecy (Ps. xxiv. 7—10; lxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8), with which it is likely that they were on their own account acquainted, likelier that Jesus had made them acquainted, had advised them that the departure would be of the nature of an ascension. Yet, judging from the analogy of other forewarnings, mercifully vouchsafed but little improved (Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—46; John xxi. 4—6), it is conceivable that the moment found them now off their guard,

and little prepared for the consummate event. Again, of the exact methods of Christ's departure from his apostles and the women, and others to whom he graciously revealed his presence during the forty days, we are not distinctly informed in each several case. But in some we are told simply that he "vanished" out of their sight. Let it be supposed that this was the method of his going in *each* case, and we may guide ourselves to the conclusion that at most the apostles imagined that some one of the occasions of their being blessed with the sight and the voice of him would inevitably prove the *last*. But what a vision this prepared for them! What a transcendent "gift" even of itself! His "speaking" suddenly but quietly ends. And while all eyes are calmly, attentively, lovingly turned upon the grace of his countenance, "he was taken up." And so their eyes also are lifted up, and thoughts and affections. "A cloud" which receives him "out of their sight" arrests their vision, but not their thoughts and affections. They still look "steadfastly toward heaven," and seem lost in wonder and in meditation. What is it they are seeing, or, so far as they retain the power to think, what is it they think they see? What is it they are experiencing while they gaze? 1. This upward gaze was their last earthly beholding of Jesus. One wonders not it was prolonged as much as possible. That last long look, judging from analogies of inferior matter, how was wreathed all the way up with richest remembrances most vividly revived! Well it indeed might it be so now, at all events. How fragrant crowd the flowers of memory, that nevertheless somehow seem to mock our grief! They accord so ill, yet are so spontaneous; again seem to feed it, but fail not at length to help sanctify it, when our last earthly look has been taken of the companion we have so well loved and long time so cherished. But now, men's eyes were being robbed of the welcomed beholding of a Friend of matchless power, and matchless wisdom, and matchless loving-kindness! That riveted gaze—who could have wondered had it drunk out for ever the light of earthly eyes? 2. This upward gaze was one that found elements of most impressive contrast with much of the apostles' former knowledge of Christ. There is a great difference between the thoroughest persuasion as to the intrinsic quality of some one whom we trust and love, who nevertheless is left lifelong in the cold shade of obscurity, and the cheerful light and satisfaction that make us proud sharers of the public success and the popularity and the *manifestation* of our idol. This latter portion Jesus had never sought. That he had never done so, nor shown the slightest disposition to do so, had been occasionally subject of remark and of petulance to some of even his faithful adherents. The disciples of Christ had, as the overwhelming rule, seen his *humiliation*; and what of his intrinsic, most real glory they had been privileged to see, was nevertheless veiled with the garments of humiliation. They had seen his modest subjection, his calm, obedient observance of what was due to custom and religious rite, as in his baptism. They had seen his great works, his wise words, his holy life, his undeniable innocence, all flouted times without number, and yet no remedy, no fire from heaven, no thunderbolt, no conspicuous avenger, came to view. Then they had seen the garden struggle, the trial, the Crucifixion. And though they had seen the Transfiguration and the Resurrection, yet up to this present time what *became* even of these? He seems to take no visible, practical benefit from them. But what their eyes now see opens indeed their eyes! One could imagine that volumes of mist, dark masses of cloud, roll away; the obscurities and conflicting perplexities of some years "vanish," and count themselves all for nothing. The steps of Jesus are no longer on the level, no longer down to submission more submitting; depression is no longer the rule. He rises! *Upward* is the word! Glory and the realms of air and light are his, and his mode of entrance upon these, in its very uniqueness, awakens fresh impulses of unfeigned adoration. It is an illustration of how those who wait—wait even unto the end—shall be "satisfied." 3. This upward gaze was a silent giving of themselves away at last. It made a willing weaning for them. Now have they done with "the things that are seen," and with self; and they have done with doubt and uncertainty; and they have done with the shadows that are felt, in favour of the momentous realities of which faith is henceforth the trusted and sufficient custodian. So it was no unfruitful gaze. It was not a flash, to leave no permanent effect. It left much more behind it than a mere "glory on the soul." It was convincing evidence, irremovable conviction; it was the kindling of genuine adoration, and a perennial spring of devotion.

III. AN APPARENTLY UNCHARITABLE CHALLENGE OF THE ATTITUDE OF THE APOSTLES.

AND AN APPARENTLY INCONCLUSIVE REASON FOR IT, ON THE PART OF TWO MEN, "WHO APPEARED IN WHITE APPAREL." The "two men in white apparel" were neither phantoms, creatures of the brain, nor spectres, creatures of the air and heavens. The expression, no doubt, designates *angels*; it is likely enough such as had once been "men," such as Moses and Elijah, or two "of the prophets." Their interruption, one must imagine, must have been at first unwelcome to the apostles. It seems so at first to ourselves. We would have liked to know what close the apostles would have themselves put to their rapt gazing heavenward. Nor is the necessity or the expediency of the interruption visible upon the surface. Yet we may remark that: 1. We are, as it happens, in ignorance of what *might have been* the effect upon the spectators of the glorious scene of the Ascension, but for this interruption—the strickenness of a trance, for instance. 2. Intently excited states of mind often answer to the corrective of the mere sound of the human voice, calmly addressed to them. Marvellous instances of this fact are furnished in the history of *mental disease*. 3. Genuinely exalted feeling may "exalt above measure" (2 Cor. xii. 7), and may need a prompt simple treatment, to obviate the necessity of future much more painful treatment. The simple treatment now was interruption, but with the comforting assurance that the separation was not absolute and for ever, but distinctly the contrary. 4. Very vivid experiences of joy, of grief, or of an intricately mingled character, while on the one hand very prone to absorb undue attention for the present, are at the same time the very soil that abundantly rewards the introduction of the seeds of great aspects of the future. Nor could there easily be found a more certain example of this than in what is now before us. It was of first-rate importance that in the heart and mind of the first teachers and preachers of Christianity the second coming of Christ should be closely linked with his ascension. The Christian individual and the Christian Church may never linger too long in the past. It is a silent, wonderful testimony to the vitality of Christ's truth, and its spirit of progress, wide as the world and lasting as the world, that a tremendous future career and consummation are ever marked for prominence. Side by side with the Ascension must the *second descent* of Christ be kept. Therefore side by side were these great facts (so to say) *sown*, in the apostolic heart. Further, that the descending Christ would be the *same*—i.e. one of glorified human body, as the cloud bore him a minute or two ago out of human sight—was a fact to be deeply impressed upon the Church of all time. And therefore, *ab initio*, it is so impressed on the apostolic heart, while *nothing* has yet occurred to efface from them the conviction of studied precision and emphasis. "*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." We can be left in no doubt that the interruption was neither reckless nor heartless. It was not to spoil the infinite serenity, infinite solemnity, infinite charm of moments, that with the eye raised heart and soul to heaven. Momentous doctrinal truth was to be safely sealed and impressed upon the Church's mind. And the choicest of Heaven's seasons must be ungrudgingly given and unchurlishly accepted—a tribute to the importance of that truth; a token, also, of another noteworthy thing, that the Church was infinitely dear to the heart of her Lord at all time; nor that even the purest joy of a few first apostles shall be permitted to stand in the light of the whole Church. In this case there is not the atom of a reason to think those apostles would have asked it. They breathe no murmur that their delicious reverie was disturbed. 5. Last of all, under any circumstances, heavenward gaze, contemplation, seraphic vision, must be exchanged a while for earth's *duty*. That word is sacred, that call is sovereign. We must come down from the mount, whether it be the Mount of Beatitudes, or of Transfiguration, or of Olivet. Prayer, praise, and those acts of meditation and devotion that may be of sublimest significance, are the aliment of Christian life. It is in "the strength of such meat" that we must live the present life, and do the work of the present days, and teach the "truth as it is in Jesus," by living, humble example as well as by word. And we must ourselves "wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ," "comforting and edifying one another" (1 Thess. v. 11) with the words of the "two men in white apparel."—B.

Vers. 12—14.—*A second interval of thrilling expectation hushing itself in prayer.*

“Then returned they unto Jerusalem . . . the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” We have here—

I. THE RECORD OF ANOTHER PERIOD OF WAITING, CHARGED WITH THRILLING EXPECTATION. It may be held that a period of just six weeks had elapsed since the very same persons as are here spoken of had passed through a much briefer interval than the ten days they are now passing through, marked, however, very largely by the same characteristic of thrilling expectation. Perhaps we may say, in the light of such language as that of our Lord himself (Luke xxiv. 25, 26), that it was entirely to be set down to the fault of these disciples and women that on that occasion their experience was not altogether one of expectation, instead of being so dreadfully dashed by gloom, by fear, sometimes by a very near approach to despair. That interval of a very short three days may probably have dragged its hours along with fearful slowness. It was, however, the time, if faith had apprehended it, which should have been brilliant with the light and hope of a rising, and therefore finally vindicated and manifestly triumphant, Master—of One who had long time patiently stooped to suffering, humiliation, insult, it is true, and who had at last bowed his head to death, but whose task and subjection were now done, and come the time of “rest from his labours,” and of glory in his victory. But we know credibly that the interval was not thus brightened. Memory was faint, and faith faint-hearted. And the impressions of sense that came of Gethsemane, and of the brutal scenes of the judgment hall, and of the fierce sufferings of the cross, and the darkness of death, overmastered the pleading suggestings of faith, and overruled the whispering memories of the vanished Friend’s own words. It was *natural*, indeed, because to be wrong is, alas! the very thing that is so natural with us all; but we may say that never were three days so wrested of their rights. For confident, joyful, ardent expectation were substituted fear, gloom, and only the timidest of hopes. And yet there can be no doubt that the beating pulse of *expectation*, though the low-beating, would be our correctest diagnosis of that period. And it was *now* a pulse of expectation, too, but a healthier one by far. Faith had had a little rest, a little occasional change to sight these forty days past, and was the better, stronger, more willing for it. What an inversion had mercifully occurred to them of their ignorance, doubt, fear, in certain cardinal directions—of their estimates of impossibility, or at least incredibility! So, after a few enchanting visions and audiences of their great Lord, they find themselves “left” again! But they are not left “comfortless.” They do remember now his words. They return to Jerusalem; they wait. They learn a fresh lesson in *waiting*. Their waiting rests on memories that now glow with glory, on a few words of direct command, on other few words of *express* promise, and on one incomparable *fact*—the *Ascension*. Things noteworthy in the *nature* of this period of expectation are as follows:—1. It was waiting for their life-work, which they are implicitly forbidden to anticipate. Yet who could call it wasted waiting? The hasty, the uncertain, and those who may have other motive inferior to the most *real* motive, sometimes decry a delay, in which they ought to recognize a great meaning and a positive use. 2. It was waiting for even liberty to leave a certain place or separate from a certain circle of companions or associates. The final reason of this became apparent. The startling developments of Pentecost would have been shorn of half their intended value, apart from the *solidarity* of the apostles and disciples. The conditions of our earthly life, and our sphere of Christian ministry and service, often seem both tying and trying. Yet there must be valuable consideration for these, and sometimes time does at last surprisingly justify them. 3. It was waiting for a promised marvellous endowment, not of anything so vulgar as outward wealth, not of anything so enviable but dangerous as mere intellectual superhuman illumination, but of the undefined, the mysterious, the awful power of the Holy Ghost. With what anxious outlook we do sometimes wait! With what mistaken, ill-judged longings! Nay, but sometimes *past* these, with what pardonably trembling, shrinking, fainting, hovering fancy we wait! But oh, if these disciples and women could have gauged beforehand something of that awful gift of the Holy Ghost, what of character, quality, colour, would it not have given to their expectation! So men have now and again trembled before the mystery of their own conversion—before some deep change in their spiritual self, and before that supreme exchange of grace and trial here for glory and perpetual security above. And so also, for infinite reason, God veils just a while light, beauty, the blaze of knowledge, even the finish of holiness, from his own.

II. A PERIOD OF WAITING AND OF RICH EXPECTATION, UNDEFINED AS TO ITS DURATION. The tension of the disciples on the occasion of the Crucifixion and entombment was relieved, and might have been much more relieved for them. They had been not only expressly forewarned of what was to be, but of the time also. And Old Testament type and temple parable had offered to deepen the impression on the minds of the disciples, of the women, and of the mother herself. Jonah's "three days and three nights," and the "three days" rebuilding of the demolished temple, spoke the duration of the trial, darkness, sorrow. But now all that is known, all that has been said, is, "not many days hence." And to this, no doubt, the quickened intelligence of the apostles and their associates would have most naturally argued that the delay *could* not be really long. Christ would never, in the nature of things, keep his disciples long in an inactivity that might degenerate, if prolonged, into indifference or idleness. This exact crisis abounds in aspects and questions of interest. That the apostles should at all be relegated to a period of this kind at such a moment inspiring above all others; that the interval should need to be one of some ten days; that this length of time was not specified to them; and what the ascended Lord's transactions were in that interval above,—are suggestions of questions to which none but conjectural and alternative response can be offered. But these things may be said about them: 1. They bring events and experiences of our own individual life, of our combined religions work, of our own entrance and of the Church's entrance upon the fruition of the immortal hope, into close and grateful analogy with things that passed and that were ordained directly under the eye of our Founder and Lord himself. 2. They are in manifest consonance with the objects and moral advantages of very much of our appointed waiting. Once ascertain and announce *time*, and it is manifest that a whole range of moral advantage in our education would be swept away, and a vast range of disaster would tyrannously usurp its sacred place. 3. They help comfort every reverent mind, every humble heart, that instead of its first impression being true, that arbitrary is the hard bondage under which we live, *this* is the very last thing that *can* be true. And they help to convince of the greatness of him who, with all the deep counsel of his own purposes, neither forgets nor is baffled in securing the advantage of his own children.

III. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE PERIOD OF WAITING. 1. It is spent "in prayer." Not in an ill-concoiled, graceless return to ordinary work, and which might at any other time have possibly been sacred duty, but which was *not* so now. Times, the honest *work* of which is prayer, may well belong to every good life. That of Jesus owned to them. And this was just such a time. 2. It is spent in *united* prayer. "With one accord." Persons, voices, hearts, hopes,—all were accordant. What an augury, what an example, what a type! 3. It is spent in *persevering*, united prayer. They "continued." No sense of weariness crept over them; no dulness, no monotony, struck them in this their worship and liturgy. 4. To the company and unanimity of the apostles were added "the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren." (1) There is no priesthood here, nor any proxy of Divine worship and service. Round the apostles are gathered various others, whose worship, prayer, and thoughts are all the same. (2) There is here no exaltation of man and depreciation of woman. 'Twas a happy augury, this little early incident before Christianity was fully planted, of the place that it would give woman; and a happy earnest of the fact that nowhere does woman rank so high as where Christ and his pure truth have the fairer sway at all events, if not yet the perfect sway. (3) Mary, the genuine mother of Jesus, acknowledges his Deity. She joins "in prayer;" and "his brethren" do the same. What quiet telling witness to Jesus, and to our "faith and hope toward" him, this may justly be felt! (4) As Jesus began his earthly career from the stable, so the compacted body of his Church begin theirs from "the upper room." It is not the temple, it is not even the tabernacle, it is not a consecrated place heretofore. The company, the prayer, the o'erhovering Spirit, "*waiting*" to alight,—*these* consecrate. The grandness and sacredness of temple and of church all had and *have* their meaning and their use. But there is truth of so much greater and deeper force in Christ and his people, that wherever they are, *that* is "the house of God and the gate of heaven," *that* is the really grand temple, that the sacred Church. Happy, threefold happy, this early picture of Christ's "little flock." "Who shall harm them? What shall move?" And though but some six weeks had passed since they were seen plunged in the faith.

less gloom of the three days, this has travelled far into the past. It is no wonder. A little time suffices for dawn to drive away the darkness. How differently this present interval of ten days is passing! So when darkness, storm, and fear are vanishing, all is hushed in peaceful prayer, and the Church "waits" with a just and blissful expectancy!—B.

Vers. 16—20, 25.—*Judas, his opportunity and his treatment of it.* "Concerning Judas, which was guide . . . might go to his own place." The treason of Judas is related by every one of the evangelists; but his subsequent history no one of them as such even alludes to, except St. Matthew. The Evangelist St. Luke, however, here gives it, in his capacity of historian of the "Acts of the Apostles." What he reports St. Peter as saying is not in verbal harmony with what St. Matthew says. But there is not the slightest difficulty in seeing the way to a real and perfect harmony. The only difficulty is in declaring absolutely that one way and not another is the authoritative harmony. That Judas "fell headlong and hurst asunder" is a very easy sequel to his "hanging himself." And that the chief priests took counsel, and determined to buy with the abandoned thirty pieces of silver the potter's field, and to devote it to the burial of strangers, is also a very conceivable sequel. It may be it was but the carrying into effect of a bargain which the covetousness of Judas had contemplated and had arranged for—all but the transfer of the money and the thereby "completion of purchase." The chief priests hear of this, and in their perplexity and desire to get rid of the accursed thirty pieces of silver, they close at once with the proposing vendor, whoever he was; but while they devote their purchase to an object the same, the purpose was very different from that which Judas had grown in a covetous mind. We may be tolerably sure he bought for some sort of further gain. They *adapt (admit omen)* to a burial-ground. Once, such an end to such a career, of a professed disciple of the Lord, was unique, and then, for that reason, it would fascinate study. It not long remained so, alas! and for that reason, that practical, alarming reason, it has been suggesting for centuries, and still to this day it suggests—ay, it demands—solemn, heart-searching study. Let us get beneath our eye—

I. WHAT INFORMATION WE HAVE TO REST UPON IN FORMING A JUDGMENT RESPECTING JUDAS AND HIS CHARACTER. 1. He was called in the same way as, at all events, a majority of the whole number of the twelve disciples were called. So far as we know, there was nothing special or emphatic in the circumstances that accompanied his call (Matt. x. 2—4; Mark iii. 13—19; Luke vi. 12—19). St. John says nothing whatever of the call of Judas; but that he knew something about it is evident from his allusion to Christ's foreknowledge (John vi. 64, 70, 71). Why Christ, with his admitted perfect foreknowledge, did call Judas to be an immediate attendant upon him, is a question that cannot be answered, perhaps. But three things may be remarked upon it: (1) That Christ certainly did not do Judas harm, but gave him the grandest possible opportunity of help towards subduing whatever may have been his master-sin, by permitting his special and constant association with him and his other disciples. (2) That at all events Christ did not, in calling Judas to the circle of his disciples, call one who would betray *another*, and have favourable opportunity of betraying *another* thereby, but only himself. Jesus bore all the pain and suffered all the loss of what he did himself; he did not scatter harm in the path of others. (3) That after all, in deep principle, Jesus did nothing different from what has ever since been transpiring under his Name, wherever his Name is known. His Church now—and his Church is his representative—admits within its most really hallowed enclosure many a traitor. It is true, *not* with foreknowledge; it is true, pleading ever, as its apology when discovered, its own confessed *fallibility*; and, let it be true also, that it is this which strikes us as constituting the difference. But is it to be so regarded? Without leaving out of sight for one moment Christ's foreknowledge and infallibility of foreknowledge, we must bring into sight the fact that this is traversed by another most evident principle and practice on the part of Jesus, which reveal him *ever* beforehand *sharing* the lot of his Church, and intending to share it in disappointment, in deception on the part of others, in woe as in weal. On much the same principle that Jesus did not take advantage of his ability to command stones into bread, so he does not take certain kinds of advantage from his foreknowledge. And what we have under consideration is

exactly one of these *kinds*. There are ample and significant indications that the one expression, Jesus called unto him "whom he would" (Mark iii. 13), and our own willing estimate of his superlative *knowledge*, are to be balanced with other considerations, both such as arise from *disciples'* choice and disciples' *volunteering* (John i. 37—42), and from the essential facts of human nature. At all events, we do not know that Judas was *not* a volunteer. He may have been an ardent, enthusiastic volunteer; he *may* have been a financial expert of his rank and day, who seems to sacrifice bright business prospects in following Jesus, who takes credit, too, for it, and who by general consent becomes designated *treasurer* so soon as a treasurer was wanted (Luke viii. 3, and elsewhere). Do we not know something to-day of the busy and clever and ready-tongued volunteer, and of his entrance within the pale of the Church visible? It may, in passing, just be noted that in the three parallel Gospels the name of Judas always stands last, and is attended by the evangelistic remark, merely posthumous, that he was the traitor of his Master. 2. From the announcement of the call of the twelve disciples up to now, the closing days of Christ's life, not a syllable is to be read of Judas, except the damnable remark of John vi. 71. The question of Jesus preceding that running comment belonged, of course, strictly to the occasion, but the running comment itself is merely historic. But the closing days are now come. And they bring this man to the fore. (1) He finds fault (or otherwise leads the fault-finding of himself and some others) with the loving devotion of a woman who, for priceless mercy received, brings the only present she knows to bring—a present, no doubt, of what was costliest in her treasures, and admitted by all to be both precious and costly—ointment with which to anoint the head and feet of Jesus. And Judas says, "It's waste." And Judas asks, "Why was it not sold, and the hard cash put into the Master's bag for the poor, which I carry?" Yes, and the Evangelist St. John adds, probably in the light of after developments, *from* which he carried too, *i.e.* from which he stole. And Judas incurred the silencing and reproof of the Master, and he does not forget that reproof. This was late as the fourth day of the fatal week. (2) At the end, or immediately after the end of the very next day (equivalent to *the evening* which led in the *sixth* day), Judas also asks, "Is it I?" when the question was—Who among those twelve there was the traitor? and he is pronounced, by the lip and the hand of Jesus, the traitor; and he withdraws from the solemn, sacred, pathetic Supper scene! And again he goes with a word of the Master in his hearing, nor forgets it either. (3) Now but a few hours of night-time pass, when Judas reappears. It is into the Garden of Gethsemane—a place he knew, because he had been there often with a Master who loved to go there often—that he enters, no longer, for ever no longer, the disciple of Jesus, but now the leader of a band, who lighted a way, that surely much needed light, "with lanterns and torches," and who bore "swords and staves" (Matt. xxvi. 47—56; Mark xiv. 43—52; Luke xxii. 47—53; John xviii. 2—12). With a word and a kiss Judas betrays his recent Master, who asks him one gentle question, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" And like a shadow Judas vanishes again from our sight. (4) Once more, and once more only, does Judas come himself before us. He comes to show a certain violent repenting, an attempt at some sort of restitution and unreserved confession of his own individual sin; and for these the treatment that he gets from "the chief priests and elders" seems to ripen remorse and madden despair, and, witness against himself, and jury, and judge, he becomes his own swift executioner also, all four in one terrible demonstration! It stands a witness to the end of time (and there cannot in this instance be a doubt that eternity looks on) of the avenging force that couches in ambush, in the being in whom God has implanted a moral constitution, when that constitution is keenly affronted, wounded to the quick repeatedly, and in aggravated form sinned against! Woe is to that being; it had been better for him that he had never been born! And now we have exhausted all the actual information recorded for us respecting the career of Judas. Let us ask—

II. WHAT DEDUCTIONS REGARDING THE REAL CHARACTER OF JUDAS WE MAY BE WARRANTED TO DRAW FROM THESE MATERIALS. It has been often thought that the key to the opening of his character is held out to us in the one word *covetousness*. This impression must be supposed to have been derived from the two facts—that he filched from "the bag," and that he asked money for the iniquitous volunteered enterprise of being "guide to them that took Jesus." The foundation is perhaps something slender

for what is built upon it. Likely enough **his** tendencies may have looked this way. He may have known a shade too well the **use** and "the love of money;" but evidence there is none that he loved money as a miser loves it. Nor did it **seem** to stick to **his** fingers as it does to those of an essentially covetous man—not, for instance, when he threw it down on the temple floor at the priests' feet. May not other causes, that moved in deeper groove, and mined their unsuspected approaches in darker and more tortuous channel, have determined this monstrous deformity of growth? We believe that we have before us, in the unenviable, unwelcome riddle of this character 1. A man to whom *ambition* (very probably *native* to him) was the misguiding, the fatuous, the disastrous light. *This* covetousness was in him; it had been looking out for its own food; it had comparatively long time looked in vain. But now, in what the history of two thousand years, perhaps rather of four thousand years, has shown to be the most dangerous direction of all, the opportunity seemed to open itself within the ecclesiastical sphere. He sees and snatches at the opportunity. Here is a manifest novelty—Jesus! His pretensions are great, and are far from lacking probability. The mighty works he does are supported by significant indications, though not so popular, by mighty words, and deeper still by the framework of cherished prophecies not unknown to Judas, and with which just now the very air, natural, political, religious, is rife. The thought enters his mind to become a disciple—it is not *altogether* business, for his heart owns to a gentle upheaving of enthusiasm towards Jesus. He *essays* to become a disciple, puts himself in the way, keeps near and in the right company, and finds himself "called" in the sacred circle. Adventure, religiousness, and a practical good chance seemed all combined. 2. A man with an immense power of self-deception. No form of deception is more aggravated in its character and in its effects than *self*-deception. The victimizer is the same with the victim. The deadliest harm suffered from another may have, even in the supreme moment, *some* possible compensation for the sufferer, in high moral feeling, in the exercise of high moral grace, such as forgiveness, or patience under unmerited, uncaused suffering, nay, in the bare thought that one is suffering *through* another. For now, at all events, the *vicariousness* of suffering, in a wide range of degree, has a charm of real glory. But to have the very faculty of self-deception is to have one of the worst of enemies while character grows, one of the most vengeful of enemies when the day of settlement comes. And Judas, whether in aiming to become a disciple or in only consenting to it, had little idea of *the amount* of his unfittedness for it. And so the months that flew on increased the unfittedness *and* the ignorance by equal strides. 3. A man of amazing power of veiling his real self behind an impassive exterior, when he gradually came to know that real self, and of keeping his own secret. (1) Was it not getting time for conscience to show itself in the cheek for Judas, when Jesus said, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" (2) Was ever more perilous stuff pent up in the breast, and yet not a sign of it on the countenance, nor even in a faltering tone of voice, when, that Last Supper evening, Judas found himself compelled to join the inquirers, and brought his lips also to say, "Lord, is it I?" (3) Was it not the very incarnation of the own devil's deliberateness and of matchless coolness when Judas not only headed the cowed procession, armed with swords and staves, and lighted with lanterns and torches, into the garden, but that, when he "fell to the ground," he had nerve enough so soon to find his feet, and to go on with his work as though he had *not* fallen, and surpassed himself in then stepping forth to the very *van* of the troop, who had hitherto covered him in part—to say "Hail" to the Master, no longer *his*, and to "kiss" him? The very highest moral efforts have been sometimes accomplished just so much the more effectively because they have been accompanied by a certain force of moral nervous exertion. On this occasion the very highest *immoral* effort bore witness to a destitution of nervous sensibility hitherto incredible. Surely to the end of the world Judas will hold all his own the first place for secretiveness and deliberateness and unperturbedness, both in darkest design and in execution of it. His calm, balanced, impassive bearing serves him with every one, except with him "who knows the hearts of all men." 4. A man who, finding that he is playing a losing game, or thinking so, dares to attempt to retrieve what he counts his error, by heading a dark and desperate scheme, and by providing himself (for this was the probable reason of his occasional "thefts," and of his asking payment for the betrayal) with something in *compensation* of

the "all he had left," together with the other disciples, when he first "followed" Jesus. However, now he stakes "all" on one cast—the event too clearly demonstrates it. He shows himself not the man to bear disappointment and loss, especially when riled, as he probably now felt, by a conviction of having suffered under some delusion. He is not of the temper to brook a practical affront, let it have come whence or how it may! He refuses to remain partners with inward discontent one unnecessary, one avoidable hour! And not the first man of the *kind*, though the undoubted first of the solemn pitch of enormity, he miscalculates—awfully miscalculates—the hour, and in another hour is falling into the lowest Tophet, under the name of "the son of perdition"! So fell the selfish and typical gambler of this world and time. 5. A man—emphatically *not* "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," but—whose branded heart and seared conscience were *stricken of God*, being restored for one moment to their maximum vitality, that moment their very last! It is impossible to account for the previous phenomena of the history of Judas as recorded, and for this fierce end of his career, without believing that he had long been hardening—heart and conscience grievously and dreadfully injured. *Nemo fit repente turpissimus*. And Peter, the thrice-denier, stands close by Judas, the betrayer, to point with Heaven's own method of distinctness the difference. The death-struggle not unfrequently has witnessed to the measure of life that body and mind together can claim. And supineness has suddenly snatched and for a moment wielded the weapons of preternatural, if not supernatural, force. And it must be that this was the philosophy of Judas doing these three things at once—"repenting himself," "confessing his sin," and "hanging himself." The third of this series interprets for us the former two. The man who breaks *thus*, breaks because he is intrinsically weak. The keenest potency of feeling, the fullest, simplest confession of sin, the unequivocal renunciation of his unholy gain, and this all in the *right arena*, in face of the priests and on the temple floor—and yet these *not* followed by mercy and forgiveness, but blackened to sight by a self-inflicted dog's death—*must* proclaim a man strengthless, hopeless, for ever *the disinherited* "son of perdition." Let us ask—

III. WHAT IMPLICATIONS MAY BE INVOLVED IN THE STRANOE AND REMARKABLY STRONG EXPRESSION HERE APPLIED TO JUDAS, AS DESCRIPTIVE OF THE END OF HIS EARTHLY CAREER. St. Peter says that Judas "fell by transgression" from his apostleship, "that he might go to his own place." It can scarcely be that Peter, who rose to speak thus in the midst of his "brethren," should entirely forget how near he himself had been to falling from his apostleship; and yet there are essential considerations so differencing the two cases that we could imagine it possible that, in real fact, he never connected them for so much as a moment in his own mind. *This* the difference—not that, having strayed, Peter so soon and with so genuine a penitence came back, and not that he had been perfectly sincere and was so sound at heart still, but—that, though he undoubtedly fell suddenly by transgression (as Judas fell suddenly), he did *not* fall "that he might go to his own place." He fell that he might get more estranged from "his own place," and, regaining his footing, might find himself nearer "placed" to his Master, and safer far than before. It is very noticeable that St. Peter does not say that Judas went "to his own place" because he "fell by transgression," but that his fall, come at by distinct and flagrant transgression such as admitted neither defence nor palliation, made his own way to his own place. Some make a bridge of escape, and some cut off from their enemies or for higher reasons from themselves a bridge of escape, but Judas, "by transgression," actually bridges a way of destruction for himself; yes, "by transgression" so pronounced, so aggravated, so enormous, but which drew its greatest, its most distinctive peculiarities from what was antecedent to it. Its long roots lay in a long past. From these it was nourished till it became monstrous. Harder than it is to "pluck a rooted sorrow from the memory" did Judas find it, arrived at a certain point, to pluck himself from "his own" destruction. The disease will now have its course. The road leads to a visible precipice, but Judas cannot stop his driving. The stream bears irresistibly to the gulf. To what do these things point? What were the antecedent peculiarities? 1. *Very strong individuality of character ungoverned*. Such may make very fine character. But it needs very skilful management, very strict observation; a very firm hand must be kept upon it. Let it be ever remembered that it is not likely to be and is not on side issues that the battle of character, of life, of destiny, is fought. And it is not on side issues that any

man's "own place" is determined. And this is the reason why human judgments of self or of others are so often wrong, because they are so prone to be arrested by the glitter or else the glare of what may be a most minor point, a mere detail, a really side issue, instead of being of the very web and woof. A man's "own place" is neither determined nor ascertained by the side issues, which are so often all that lie visible. But there are some *potencies* of character that do, or otherwise undo, the work. A certain strong *persistence* of some force—a thought, a taste, a wish, a passion. And when a man has a character of this sort, his best friend has one gospel to preach to him—this, that his work lies clear as noonday before him; he has an option of trembling significance before him; he is set to master or to be mastered, to guide and rule and rise high as the angels, or—to be lured, drawn, dragged, driven, all the appalling way down to "his own place"! 2. *Splendid opportunities grossly neglected.* The same phenomena and facts of character and of growth to the very end, may and naturally must be true anywhere, any time. But as the "own place" of Judas was different from what *could* be the "own place" of vast numbers to whom for instance the very name of Christ is unknown, so it is fair to take into account the fact that his opportunities were, for his time of day and for every time of day to which they could apply, literally splendid. The principle will be very rarely unobservable, that in proportion as opportunity was good, gross neglect of it made the surest ill end, yet surer. And make whatever deductions possible, the opportunities of any one of the twelve disciples were splendid—then certainly none more splendid than they. To see, to hear, to watch such excellence, the excellence of naturalness, of simplicity, of perfect truth, of tenderest human kindness, of superhuman holiness,—was it not splendid opportunity? To have the personal inspection, occasional correction, deep-sighted suggestions, and high warnings, not unmingled with gracious encouragement that never bore a tint of flattery,—was it not splendid time of opportunity? To root confidence in such a Worker, not of gaping wonders but of majestic beneficence,—was it not splendid opportunity? In brief, to witness *that* activity, to hear *that* teaching, to study *that* Model, was a mass of opportunity that all the world beside could not give, and that all the world beside ought not to have been able to take away. But Judas let the world, or a small portion of the world, take it away—nay, he pitched it away himself. And he did this to get on to "his own place." 3. *The fearful irritation* (working sometimes underneath even the calmest exterior) of an *unreal* religious profession. The horrors of a false position must be counted to be in good truth multiplied infinitely when the false position lies within the domain of religion, and when it consists in the unreality of the *person*, rather than in merely a temporary unsuitableness to him of the place or the niche in which he has got fixed. In the recesses of a lowly spirit, in the calm retreat and silent shade of religious meditation, in the all-sacred shrine of deepest self-surrender and self-consecration, what music of angels, what whisperings of the Spirit, what tones of Jesus himself, are heard, and what peace that passeth understanding steals blissfully in! But of the vacant hollows of religious unreality, mocking echoes are the tenants habitual, and winds of the most dismal wail wander endless in them! The heart of Judas was not in his work these three years. His concealed irritation must often have been severe. His thoughts were neither where his hands or lips were, and chagrin was often his meat day and night together. His life was joyless; and as the sun ripens all good fruits and many a bad fruit too, so as surely, though strangely, does the sunlessness of joylessness ripen with fearful rapidity and effect the ill fruits of the hypocrite and of religious unreality. And, beyond any doubt, it had been so now with Judas. Irritation, inside and unseen, brings, in bodily disease, many an unhealthy humour to the surface, and out of these forms the loathsome tumour, not unfrequently fatal. It is so with the humours and the tumours of a religious profession; career, and office, destitute of reality. In no other directions do disease and inward injury *rankle* to so deadly effect. Judas is a great Scripture typical warning against the profession, the work, the ministry, and the dignity of religion assumed for whatsoever reason, and by whomsoever, without reality. This is *par excellence* the usurpation that finds "its own" fall, while the usurper falls by some "transgression," little matter what, to find "his own place." 4. *The suffering to drift along a huge moral wrong in character and life.* Judas was guilty, certainly, of such moral wrong. He was guilty of it in three directions—as it affected his professed Master,

as it affected his so-called fellow-disciples, and of necessity most of all as it concerned his own soul. If a man lets any serious wrong in his earthly affairs drift, it is not long before he finds it out, for it finds him out. Business rarely indeed drifts right of itself. But wrong never drifts right. Least of all does that highest fashion of moral wrong ever drift right, when the question lies in the domain that brings into contact that which is or ought to be highest in ourselves with that which is indisputably highest out of ourselves. All here is matter of consciousness, of real life, of spirit. It is past us altogether to say, what we almost irresistibly imagine, that Judas was often on the point of making a clean breast of it; but it is not past us to say that during those three years conscience must have often urged him to confess his mistake, to resign the livery he wore, to quit the Master's shammed service, and the disciples' shamed society. In that event there would have been "room for repentance;" there would have been room for help; there would have been room to remonstrate, to rebuke, to revive some spark of grace, to recover yet a soul alive. From some loving brother he might have heard anticipated the words, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" and again, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened . . . if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." And the falling away might have been at the last averted. But not Judas has no mercy on his own soul, because he will not be faithful even to it. The betrayer of his Master is the man to be the betrayer of himself. At every turn the career of Judas is fraught with solemn lessons for every one to whom the grace of discipleship to the Lord Jesus is offered. The character of the test ordained for him is scarcely less plainly or less concisely written than that ordained for our first parents. Yet, nevertheless, thousands of years have not passed away morally in vain in the world's history. And in place of the test of an humble, practical obedience to one individual and merely physical command, the probation for Judas, and for every one of ourselves, is self-consecration to Jesus, Master and Saviour, without one reservation, and personal holiness the sequel.—B.

Ver. 26.—*The earnest of zeal and fidelity exhibited by the Church expectant.* "And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles." The events with which the passage has to do belong to that brief but remarkable interval of some eight to ten days during which the eleven apostles were bidden to remain in Jerusalem, and were, in a sense, left alone, their Master and Saviour having ascended, and the Spirit, the promised Comforter, not having yet descended. The brief interval invites not a little conjecture, but so much the more than it otherwise might have done, because of the silence broken in this very passage. Had the concord of the eleven, and their united worship and services of prayer and praise in company with the large circle of the hundred and twenty brethren (as given vers. 12—14), been our only record of the period, there would have been less stir of conjecture. But, as it is, we are led to wonder whether, while Jesus spoke to the eleven apostles of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," he had possibly warranted them to add one to their number. We can only doubtfully answer "No." For while, on the one hand, it would seem strange, if Christ had done so, that Peter should not quote the fact to the general assembly, on the other hand it does seem very strange that Peter should take upon himself to assert the necessity of such a step at such a time of unsettledness as regards the constitution of the Church. Again, beyond the fact that the two, Joseph and Matthias, had been companions of Christ and of the disciples from the time of the baptism of John (John i. 26) to the time of the Resurrection, we know nothing of them. We do not know on what principle the two were selected first of all from any others who might have answered to the same qualifications of having "compared with" the disciples; we do not know how the casting of lots was managed; we do not know whether Matthias ever really ranked with the apostles to any practical purpose, though he was "voted in;" nor do we know one authentic syllable of his succeeding work or of his death. To conjecture is as unsatisfying as it is easy. Setting aside any detail of mere curiosity, we should certainly have liked to know whether the transaction of this election was authorized; if it were not, whether nevertheless it was legitimate, or whether it was possibly a fresh illustration of the ready zeal, without authority, of Peter. It need scarcely be said, however, that in the absence of any evidence or of any strong reason to believe the latter, we assume the legitimacy of the whole proceeding. And on this showing we notice—

I. THE DEVOTED ZEAL OF PETER. He is a born leader. He had often shown a forward zeal. In the *fort* of many, many characters lurks also their weakness. Purified from this, the strength becomes apparent again, and the advantage becomes real. It is he who now takes the lead, and says, "*It behoves*" to fill up the perfect number.

II. THE DISCERNING ZEAL OF PETER. He enthrones this great historic fact of the resurrection of Jesus in its proper seat in the Church for all time. The "eleven," to be now strengthened by one more, are to accept *this* as their chiefest mission and commission, to be "witnesses of the Resurrection."

III. THE CORRECTLY PROPHEPIC ZEAL OF PETER. He takes it that part of the work and of the organizing of the work of Christ is to devolve upon man, and upon those who were the already "chosen" apostles, together with the body of his people and disciples. He calls upon all to join, and arranges for all to join in this proposed election.

IV. THE PRAYERFUL AND DEPENDENT ZEAL OF PETER. Still the wisdom and the choice and the *appointment* are to rest with him whom we call the Head of the Church. It may not be certain that, so far as the terms of Peter's prayer go, he means it to be addressed exclusively to the risen Lord, yet even this is most probable; and all the more so from his likely recalling of the words of Jesus himself (John xv. 16; vi. 70; xxi. 17).—B.

Ver. 1.—*The apparent incompleteness of our Lord's life.* It was but a *beginning*. The word "began" is as characteristic of St. Luke as "straightway" is of St. Mark; it occurs thirty-one times in his Gospel. The idea of Christ's life on earth as being a "beginning" fits well into the Pauline theology, which sets in such prominence the present and continuous working of the risen, glorified, living Saviour. To the apostles' first view our Lord's earthly life must have seemed a failure; they could not know how it was to be continued and completed. From our enlarged knowledge we can apprehend it as being the necessary introduction to his present and permanent *spiritual* work. Illustrations of apparent incompleteness of earthly life may be found in the story of *Moses*, who did not cross the Jordan; and *David*, who did not build the temple. A man's life is never incomplete if he *does well his appointed piece*.

I. THE BREVITY OF OUR LORD'S LIFE-WORK. At the longest computation it extended only over three years, and many think the time was even shorter than this. Thirty years were spent in secluded preparations; and we may well ask—What great work could any man accomplish in three brief years? And yet some of the most powerful and permanent influences recorded in human history have come from men whose lives were short. Illustrations are found in every department of life; and the common observation has gained expression in the proverb, "Those whom the gods love die young." Life may be very short, and yet very full of power and impulse for good. "He liveth *long* who liveth *well*."

II. THE SUDDEN STOPPAGE OF IT. Taken away by a violent death, our Lord could not make it what men would call "complete," "rounded off." On his last day he had to admit that it must remain, to men's view, seemingly imperfect. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." So with many human lives, the close comes suddenly, and we wish we could tarry to get things completed. But we must leave them, as Christ did; and we may be restfully assured that, if our work has been *good*, God will find for it *completeness* by finding its *fitting* into his great plan.

III. THE INTRODUCTORY CHARACTER OF IT. It was a "beginning," a "preface," a "threshold," an "ante-chamber," an outward earthly show to help us in realizing a continuous spiritual reality. The remembrance of what *was* is to aid us in realizing what *is*. And, in a yet fuller sense, that brief human life was to lay the intellectual, moral, and religious *bases* on which the Divine relations with men were from that time to rest. "It behoved Christ thus to suffer, and to enter into his glory."

IV. THE CONTINUANCE OF IT. Of that "continuance" we have several distinct forms of conception; such as: 1. The work of the Holy Spirit. 2. The actual presence of Christ in his Church. 3. The permanent office of Christ as the one human Mediator, Intercessor, and High Priest. The relation of the "continuing" work to the "introductory" is shown in our Lord's statement concerning the Holy Spirit: "He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." So far as the continuance of Christ's *earthly*

life and influence is concerned, we find it in the *holy living* of his Church, and the *teachings* of apostles and ministers.

In application, it may be urged that a work so graciously *introduced* in our Lord's life on earth, and so graciously *continued* in his present working in his Church, must have its completion some day. Such completion is reached in the believer's "full sanctification;" and, for the Church, in that day when the "kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," and the "Church" shall be the redeemed world.—R. T.

Ver. 1.—*The origin of the Gospel records.* Luke reminds Theophilus of his having written his Gospel, and of the circumstances which called for his labours (comp. Luke i. 1—4). Incidentally we are assured that the *historical figure of Christ* is the essential foundation of the Christian system; and, therefore, such extreme care was necessary in securing authentic records of his words and works. The trustworthiness of our Gospels may be efficiently impressed by the illustration and enforcement of the following points, which are suggestive enough to be presented without elaboration:—

I. SHOW THE LEADING POINTS OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING AND TEACHING. They were *facts*, of Christ's coming, teaching, *personnel*, miracles, crucifixion, and resurrection.

II. IN DECLARING THESE, THE APOSTLES INVITED COMPARISON WITH THE OLDER SCRIPTURES. They appealed to existing and recognized inspired writings.

III. THEIR FACTS NEEDED TO BE SET IN DEFINITE WRITTEN FORM. If comparisons were to be efficiently made, the precise facts must be assured. As preached, there would be *variety* in the statement of the incidents and expressions of our Lord's life, and no suitable basis for faith.

IV. THE MATERIALS FOR SUCH WRITING MUST BE GATHERED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. Each disciple remembered some special thing. Our Lord's mother could tell what nobody else could know. Other women had special narratives to give Peter, James, and John were on several occasions of importance alone with Christ.

V. SUCH MATERIALS REQUIRED THE EDITING OF SOME COMPETENT MEN. Illustrate Luke's fitness—as *educated*, as *Paul's companion*, as evidencing a *careful, critical habit*, and as having access to the *best information*.

Show that, of the many Gospels, and parts of Gospels, that may have been written, there was a Divine selection of *four*. The wisdom of the selection may be pointed out and impressed; and also the special bearing of Luke's two treatises on the basis-facts of the Pauline theology. Luke's *facts* underlie Paul's *doctrines*.—R. T.

Ver. 1.—*The threefold aspect of our Lord's human life.* The aspects that need to be so carefully recorded. Two are stated in the text—to *do*, and to *teach*; the third we gather from the Gospel itself—to *suffer*.

I. OUR LORD CAME TO DO. It has been said that "conduct is three-fourths of life;" and upon our Lord's daily life and doings we, first of all, reverently fix our gaze. 1. He came to *live*; to express in pure, beautiful character, and in sweet, self-denying, helpful intercourse with men, the example of the holy life. Show how this became *inspiration* for all sincere hearts, and *conviction* for all self-servers and time-servers. 2. He came to *work mighty works*. In miracles, of healing and of power, revealing to men the true God and Father, in whom we "live, and move, and have our being;" and making trust in the "living God the Saviour" possible for man.

II. OUR LORD CAME TO TEACH. And the teaching was in full harmony with the *life*, and unfolded the gracious design and mission of the *works*. 1. *He taught the people*. As in the sermon on the mount, by his parables, and in the temple porch at Jerusalem. 2. *He taught the disciples*. By explanation of parable and miracle, by private instructions, by trial missions, and in his modes of dealing with them. 3. *He taught his enemies*. By severe warnings and denunciations, seeking to arouse the sense of sin, in which alone lies the hope of salvation.

III. OUR LORD CAME TO SUFFER. He could not but suffer *personally*, in carrying out such a mission; but he, further, suffered *mediately* and *vicariously*, as "bearing our sins." *For us* it "pleased the Lord to bruise him."

Conclude by working out the harmony of this threefold aspect, in the light of Christ's perfect and complete *obedience* to his heavenly Father's will. He did, he taught,

he suffered, *all that will*. And also in the light of our Redeemer's Mission as the *Saviour* of the world. He is therein shown to be the *perfect Saviour*.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—The Holy Ghost in Christ. The statement in this verse is that our Lord spake, and gave his parting injunctions to his disciples, as one who was "filled with the Holy Ghost." Christ's Divine nature is set before us in varying forms; and we should take care lest the demands of Christian doctrine so absorb us as to prevent our receiving the *whole* scriptural impression. Especially difficult it is to connect the divinity of Christ with the revelation of the Divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost. The difficulty is in part occasioned by our failing to associate the Spirit, in the apostles and in the older prophets, with the Holy Ghost in Christ. The *differences* need to be carefully marked, but the *samenesses* also need to be brought to light. We do not fully realize that *God can be in man*; but precisely *this* is brought home to us by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in Christ, the man; and the representation that his human words and laws come to us with the perfection and authority stamped by the indwelling Holy Ghost. Scripture gives us three distinct representations of the relations of the Holy Spirit to *Christ himself*, to *his miracles*, and to *his teachings*.

I. THE SPIRIT IS REPRESENTED AS COMING TO CHRIST. Recall the scene of his baptism. The symbolic "dove" brooded over him, or settled on him, and the Spirit of God "came upon him." This took place at the very entrance upon his ministry, so that throughout his ministry we are to conceive of him as specially endowed, as one in whom dwelt the Spirit "above measure" (see Luke iv. 1; John iii. 34). The sense in which the Spirit *came* to Christ needs careful treatment. From his birth the Divine Spirit was *his Spirit*; and in this lies the deep mystery of his Godhead. The Spirit that *came* to him at his baptism was the specific Divine endowment for the ministry to which he was called, and so it and the descent of the Holy Ghost on the disciples at Pentecost help to explain each other; and they show that the Spirit may still be with us in a twofold sense. As "born again," he is our very life; as called to any work, he *comes* to us as a specific endowment for that work. It is, therefore, right to realize the Spirit's permanent *dwelling* in the believer, and at the same time right to pray that he may *come* to us for special needs.

II. THE SPIRIT IS REPRESENTED AS WORKING THROUGH CHRIST. This was our Lord's teaching concerning his miracles, and it lies at the basis of his solemn warning to the blaspheming Pharisees. The "sin against the Holy Ghost" is shown to be precisely this—declaring the miracles of Christ, which manifested the presence and power of the Holy Ghost, to have been wrought by devilish agencies. So vital is it to the Christian faith and life that we should recognize the Holy Ghost in Christ's mighty works, that the sin of the Pharisees is declared to be "beyond forgiveness." In measure the same is true of the witness and work of Christ's Church now. It is wrought in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is mighty only as this conviction dwells in the *workers*, and opens the hearts of those who receive the witness and are the subjects of the work. The one thing that Christ's Church needs is to be lifted up to the solemn and inspiring conviction—the *Holy Ghost is with us*.

III. THE SPIRIT IS REPRESENTED AS SPEAKING THROUGH CHRIST. This is set forth separately because, though, in Christ, miracle and teaching went together, teaching, speaking, preaching is the one great agency of his Church, and therefore we do well to see the truth in precise relation to it. To this point our Lord directed the attention of the disciples in the "upper chamber." All he had spoken to them had been "given him to speak," and just so they might be assured that the Divine Spirit would give them right and fitting words. And in our text the last injunctions and counsels and commands are directly traced to the Holy Ghost. But, properly regarded, the sphere of the Spirit's operation is the *human will*—the real source and spring of all activity, the centre of the human vitality. From the teaching of what the Spirit was, *beyond measure*, in Christ, we may learn what the Holy Ghost can be, *within measure*, in man; what he may be to apostles and to us.

In conclusion, show, practically, that the necessary condition of the abiding of the Holy Ghost in Christ was his perfect *openness* and entire *submission* to the Spirit's lead; and that this *Christ-like openness* is still the one condition of the Spirit's abiding and working in us. Impress the warnings of the apostles against the danger of *resisting*, *quenching*, and *grieving* the Holy Ghost.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*Sensible proofs of Christ's resurrection.* The resurrection of our Lord is declared to have been a *literal and historical fact*, of which satisfactory proofs could be given—such proofs as men are accustomed to accept. Here it is stated that our Lord “showed himself alive;” that he “appeared unto the disciples” (see Revised Version); that the proofs he offered of his restored life were “infallible,” as well as “numerous;” i.e. they were not merely “probable,” or “circumstantial,” they were such as naturally and properly carried conviction. The disciples were not deluded or deceived; they acted as reasonable men, and accepted the fact of the Resurrection because convinced by adequate proofs. But when the historical fact is thus fully assured, we must be prepared to receive the further fact which our Lord's ascension declares, viz. that his resurrection was essentially a *spiritual* resurrection. We have in it the assurance that he himself, the spiritual person, Jesus, lived; we have but the *formal* part of the truth before us when we say that *his body* was restored to life. The bodily manifestations during the forty days were necessary, in order to give the disciples and us such proofs as they and we can apprehend, of the real continuance of the life of Jesus himself; through these *sensible proofs* our minds grasp the fact that “*he ever liveth.*” The “spiritual” cannot be apprehended by us save by the help of figure, body, and form; and our Lord's whole life on the earth is a gracious bringing home to our carnal minds of spiritual truths and realities by sensible appearances and deeds and words. Luke briefly declares the sufficiency of the proofs of the Resurrection. Each point may be illustrated and enforced by the facts detailed in the Gospels, and by the summary given in 1 Cor. xv.

I. THE TIME COVERED BY THE PROOFS WAS PROLONGED. It was forty days. Any sudden and passing manifestation of Christ might be explained as a mental delusion or a ghostly vision. The *time*, in this case, gave sufficient opportunity for testing the veritableness of Christ's restored life. Spirit-manifestations never remain for forty days.

II. THE OCCASIONS ON WHICH THE PROOFS WERE GIVEN WERE MANY. For them see Paul's summary (1 Cor. xv.). Some were given at Jerusalem; others in Galilee; others, again, at Olivet. Some on the shore; others on the mountain; others, again, in the house. Some with the sound of voice which all recognized; others with the showing of the crucifixion marks; others with the sharing of bodily food; and yet others with the signs of the old miraculous power. Impress the force that lies in *cumulative* evidence.

III. THE WITNESSES WHO TESTIFY TO THE PROOFS WERE VARIOUS. Individual men may be selected, such as the sceptical Thomas, or the questioning Philip, and the value of their testimony may be shown. But equally important is the witness of Peter's intensity and John's insight. Add the evidence of the women, and that of “five hundred” disciples, to the majority of whom personal appeal could be made when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Show what a stream of witnesses. They “crowd the court.” Was ever any fact more adequately assured by sober testimony and sensible proofs, such as ought to carry conviction?

IV. THE SUBJECT OF CHRIST'S TEACHING IN THE FORTY DAYS WAS THE SAME. The importance of this continuity needs to be carefully shown. Jesus resumed his work, carried it on from the point where he left off, completing his personal instructions to his disciples, with precise adaptation to *his new relations* as the risen and ascending Lord, and to *their new duty* as the preachers of his gospel to the world. Really in this lies the best proof of the Resurrection.

Impress the security of the foundation fact on which the gospel rests. Christ “is risen,” and our preaching is “not vain.”—R. T.

Vers. 4, 5.—“*The promise of the Father.*” It was a characteristic feature of our Lord's teaching, and more especially of the closing portions of it, that he sought to set his Father, not himself, prominently before the minds of his disciples: e.g. “The Father that is in me, he doeth the works;” “I do the will of him who sent me,” etc. So, when speaking of the gift of the Spirit to the Church, our Lord impresses on the disciples that they must think of that Spirit as his *Father's gift*, made to them *for his sake*. We are to regard the bestowment of the Spirit in different ways. 1. He is the very Spirit given as Divine endowment for the fulfilling of the old prophets' missions;

given as Divine endowment for the mission of the apostles and of the Church. 2. He is the fulfilment of the assurance that Christ would "come again," to abide ever with his Church. 3. He is sent by the Son. 4. He is the gift of the Father. 5. He is sent by the *Father and the Son*. Allusion may be made to the disputes and separation of the Eastern and Western Churches on the subject of the "procession of the Holy Ghost;" and the importance of accepting the "many-sidedness" of Divine revelation should be urged, even if intellectually we find ourselves unable to fit the varied aspects into a satisfactory harmony. Our Lord would glorify the *Father* to our thought, by assuring us that the unspeakably precious gift of the Holy Ghost is his gift to us, the abiding sign and pledge of his "so great love," and the fulfilment of his own "promise" to us. This point we take for enlargement and enforcement.

I. BY WHOM WAS THE PROMISE MADE? 1. By God, but by God conceived as the "Father;" so we may find in it signs of the fatherly wisdom, tender consideration, and gracious adaptation to our need. Impress how the preciousness of the Spirit to us is enhanced by this assurance—he is our Father's gift. His "Great-heart guide" for his pilgrim sons. 2. By God, but *through Christ*, who conveys to us our Father's promise. See the special occasions (John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xv. 26; xvi. 7—15, etc.). Show how the messenger, through whom the Father's promise is made, enhances the value of the promise. An element of tender feeling and sympathy is added to it.

II. WHAT DOES THE PROMISE CONCERN? Set out its *first form*, the coming of the Holy Ghost, under sensible figures, as a Divine ordination and endowment of the apostles and early Church for their mission. This ordination may be compared with that of Christ after his baptism, and the figures under which the Spirit came in the two cases should be compared. For Christ, a symbolic *dove*; for apostles, symbolic *wind* and *fire*. Set out its *permanent form*—the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the *believer*, as his *seal, earnest*, and assurance of the culture of the spiritual life; and the abiding of the Holy Ghost in the *Church*, as its inspiration to the fulfilment of its mission.

III. WHY WAS SUCH A PROMISE MADE? 1. Because of the dependency of the disciples on Divine aid. Then and now disciples are not "sufficient of themselves;" "without Christ we can do nothing." 2. Because in carrying out the Divine purpose of redemption the *bodily presence* of Christ had to be removed, and so a sense of loneliness and helplessness would oppress the disciples. 3. Because God is ever wanting to help us on from carnal and bodily to *spiritual* conceptions of himself and his work, both *in us* and *by us*.

Conclude by showing how the promise gains character by being called the *Father's*. It is evidently a promise made to *sons*. Then practically and forcibly impress that our Father will only keep his promise if we keep the spirit and temper, the openness and obedience, of loving and trusting *sonship*.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*Carnal conceptions of Christ's kingdom*. With these our Lord had to do battle all through his ministry. These so filled the minds of his disciples that they were unable to receive aright much of his spiritual teachings. Many of our Lord's sayings can be explained as being designed to correct this mistake, remove this prejudice, and adequately assure his disciples and us of the spiritual nature of the kingdom he came to set up. Though not in precisely the same way, yet quite as truly, the visibility and outward circumstance of Christ's Church may, in our day, occupy our thought rather than its *spiritual* character and work, and therefore our Lord's cautions to his apostles may be applicable to us. The dream of an "outward and visible" kingdom has not yet altogether faded, and given place to the sober reality of the existing "inward and spiritual" one. Christ is a King, but he is King of truth-seekers; he is "Lord of lambs the lowly, King of saints the holy." Show what the carnal conceptions were that the apostles cherished: the breaking off of the Roman yoke; the restoration of Israelite independence; the resumption of the Davidic kingdom under the Messiah. Show—

I. WHENCE THESE CONCEPTIONS SPRANG. Distinguish between the tone of prophecy and Messianic allusion before and after the "Captivity." Tendency of national circumstances to set prominently the promise of a *Deliverer* and *King*, and to set aside the figure of Messiah as a crushed *Sufferer*. Then show the influence exerted by the Messianic conception of *Daniel*, and yet that the Jews did not take it in its entirety.

Further point out how the *Maccabean princes* became Messianic models, and the idea cherished was that Messiah would prove to be a national Hero and Saviour, accomplishing the work permanently which Judas Maccabeus had only achieved temporarily. The merely *national* idea of Messiah cannot be based on a full treatment of the Messianic representations of Holy Scripture.

II. HOW WERE THESE CONCEPTIONS NOURISHED? Partly by the national condition in our Lord's time. Patriotic feeling was crushed down by the strong Roman rule; but patriotism, though it may be crushed *down*, cannot be crushed *out*, and indeed only becomes more dangerous to oppressors by being silenced. Partly by the hopeless condition of religion, which called for a great reformer; and, in the later monarchy, the reformers had been *kings*. Partly by the personal ambitions of the disciples, as illustrated by the request of the sons of Zebedee for the first places in the new court. To be faithful to the truth has often required resistance to surrounding sentiments and circumstances. Such resistance is only made by high-minded men.

III. HOW THESE CONCEPTIONS WERE OPPOSED BY CHRIST. Take: 1. The general tone of his teaching, as illustrated in the sermon on the mount. 2. The prominence in which he set his *sufferings*, especially after the Transfiguration. 3. The rebuke of those who would use carnal weapons for his defence, as to Peter outside the Garden of Gethsemane. 4. The distinct explanation of the nature of his kingship, as stated to Pilate. In spite of all his efforts with his disciples, we find the carnal notions of Messiah lingering in them (see Luke xix. 11; xxiv. 21); and they seem to have been revived by that very resurrection which should have finally removed them. This is indicated in the text. Our Lord's last effort to destroy them is full of wisdom and gentleness. He says in effect, "Don't think about it; bend your whole mind and heart to two things—(1) your great life-work, and (2) the Divine presence that will be with you for its fulfilment" (ver. 8). The true corrective for *intellectual error* is still that which our Lord commands, viz. Christian *work*.—R. T.

Ver. 9.—*The Ascension as the visible sign of the acceptance of the Redeemer.* If the secret of the Redeemer's life on the earth be this—that he was working out for us a man's obedience to God in a human body and human spheres, then the closing scenes of the record of that life may be thus represented. In the struggle of *Gethsemane* our Redeemer's *soul* won a full triumph of trust, submission, and obedience. This inward soul-triumph was tested and proved, and came off perfectly and triumphantly victorious, in the bodily shame and suffering, and even in the death-agony, of *Calvary*. As a "man," his spirit and purpose of obedience, and his actually doing and bearing in obedience, were thus *perfectly tested and proved*. What remained necessary to constitute him a perfect and all-sufficient burnt offering, to be presented to God for us? Manifestly this alone, that God himself should give some *adequate and visible sign* to us that with Christ he was infinitely well pleased, and that he would *accept* him as our Sacrifice. And just this we have in the *Resurrection* and *Ascension*. God raised him from the dead. God received him to his own right hand in the heavenly places. Disciples saw him go up to God; and if *Enoch* was manifestly accepted of God because of his translation; and if *Elijah* was declared to be God's prophet by his wondrous fire-journey into the unseen world; much more was the Lord Jesus declared to be the "Son of God," and the accepted Sacrifice, by that breaking of grave-bonds, and passing, to mortal vision, up within the clouds. Our Redeemer's work may be said to lack completeness until his soul-triumph of trust and submission, and his bodily act of obedience, in enduring the cross, as God's will for him, have manifestly and in some open way gained the acknowledgment and acceptance of God. The Ascension properly completes the Resurrection, and both together are the Divine acceptance of the perfect Son, and the acceptance, be it remembered, of *humanity* in him who was *its Head* and *Representative*. Then two thoughts may be unfolded and illustrated—

I. THE RESURRECTION IS THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF MAN'S VICTORY. That is of Christ, as man, for man; of man in Christ. It is his victory over *self*, the evil power; and over *sin*, the evil consequence. Christ mastered self, and obeyed perfectly, as a Son. Christ broke the bonds of death; for the penalties of transgression cannot lie on **One who is** infinitely acceptable. Now, in Christ, self is no unbeaten foe; and "**death**

hath no more dominion over us." We have *hope* in the struggle with self. We have *security* against the penalties of sin. In Christ death cannot hold us.

II. THE ASCENSION IS THE BEGINNING OF GIVING THE VICTOR THE VICTOR'S PLACE AND HONOUR. He is "highly exalted, and given a name above every name." He is "glorified with more than the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." Exalted to position of highest honour, to a place of power and authority; entrusted with the "bringing on of sons to glory;" empowered to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins; set on God's right hand, our one Mediator and Intercessor; and "Head over all things to his Church." In heaven we may not conceive him as dissociated from the place, relation, and work of earth, but occupying these still in relation to us, only in altogether higher, more efficient, and spiritual modes. He is the "Captain, or Author, of salvation." Able *now*, as the ascended Lord, "to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him."—R. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*Christ's coming again.* The scene needs sympathetic description. Effort should be made to realize the state of mind of the disciples on thus a second time losing their Master, and this time losing him in so strange and surprising a manner. It would seem that they had been prepared for the Ascension by the singularity of our Lord's movements during the forty days. Again and again he seems to have closed a time of communion with them by "vanishing out of their sight." On this occasion he not only "vanished," but "ascended," went up from them heavenward. As the disciples gazed upwards they may have expected an immediate reappearance out of the cloud; it seemed to them some surprising display of their Lord's power and glory. And so the truth must be gently broken to them, that they had now *finally lost their Lord* out of *visible and sensible apprehension*. This was the mission of the angels, who may be identified with the two who attended our Lord on his resurrection morning (Luke xxiv. 4—7). The point of their message is, "Your Lord will come again some day, but not now. He will come in suddenness and in unexpected ways, 'in like manner' as ye have seen him go away; and, until he comes, your duty is not 'gazing,' but carrying out, in simple and loving obedience, the commands he has left." Evidently the angels, while assuring the fact of Christ's "coming again," design to correct the mistaken thought of that coming which was in the minds of the disciples. The parts of their message may be thus set forth.

I. THE SAVIOUR WAS, FOR THE PRESENT, GONE OUT OF THE SPHERE OF THE SENSES. For three years the disciples had enjoyed sensible fellowship with their Lord. All that time he had been trying to teach them the deeper truth concerning himself and his relations with them. For forty days after his resurrection the sensible fellowship had been renewed, but under conditions which should have prepared the disciples for their Lord's spiritual presence without the aid of sensible manifestations. At the Ascension they were plainly taught that the sensible helps were removed; for them there was no more "Christ in the flesh." Show how this bore on the culture and training of the disciples; and how it recalled the Saviour's own words, "It is expedient for you that I go away." In all training, and not in least religious training, it is well for crutches and helps to be presently removed, that we may try our own feet. Illustrate how this is still done for us in the ordering of Providence, as for the disciples in the Ascension. "Looking," "gazing," "expecting" visible appearances of Christ out of the clouds, is declared by the angels not to be the appropriate duty of the hour.

II. THE SAVIOUR HAD MADE EVERY PROVISION FOR THEM IN HIS BODILY ABSENCE. They are recalled to consider the commands he had left. An *immediate duty* was before them—to wait together at Jerusalem for the gift of the Spirit. A *great work* was entrusted to their charge: they were to be Christ's witnesses through the whole world. An *all-sufficing promise* had been made them—they should "receive power" for the efficient carrying out of their work, in the energy of the Holy Ghost.

III. THE SAVIOUR WOULD NOW COME TO THEM, BUT IN A TRANSCENDENT AND SPIRITUAL WAY. This is really the meaning of the angels' words "in like manner," "in a like glorious and surprising manner," not "in a like bodily manner." And, according to Christ's own promise, he did at once come again spiritually, to abide in his people; to be "with them always." No conceptions of future *sensible* manifestations of

the Son of God should be permitted to weaken our conviction that Christ is *now with us*. He has come, he "makes his abode with us." And the present spiritual Christ is a present sanctifying power. The coming of Christ again to his Church in some sensible form is intended to be a secondary thought; bearing relation to Christian culture as holding out before us a high and ennobling object of hope. But it is properly to be regarded as "the sweet light away yonder" which cheers us while we set heartily to the doing of Christ's work in the world, under the daily inspirations and leadings of Christ's spiritual presence.—R. T.

Vers. 12—14.—*New associations with the upper chamber.* In the Revised Version "an upper room" is translated "the upper chamber," which permits us to identify the place of the "tarrying of the disciples" with the chamber in which Christ's last words were spoken, and the Lord's Supper was instituted. Show what indications there are that some of the disciples had private dwellings in Jerusalem. John took the mother of our Lord to *his own home*; Mary, the mother of Mark, had a house to which Peter went; Nicodemus, as a ruler, would have a large house; and if Joseph of Arimathæa had a private garden and tomb outside the city, we may be sure that he had a mansion inside. Recall the suggestions and associations of this "upper chamber." How full it would be of the presence of their Master! How solemn with the recollection of his words, and the sufferings through which he had passed! It was a "holy place." Set out the individuality of the company—the apostles, the women, the disciples. Need not think that *all* the disciples made by our Lord were assembled here. The hundred and twenty names only represented those in Jerusalem, and those from the country who were attending the feast. Fixing attention on the attitude and occupations of this company, we see illustrated—

I. THE UNION OF BELIEVERS. "One accord." The basis of the accordance was their common faith in Christ. It is the only basis of unity for the Church still. One in Christ. *Brothers* because *sons*.

II. THE WAITING OF OBEDIENT TRUST. They did not know what was coming. They could not have explained their Lord's promise. They did not *understand* or *know*, but they could *trust*, and show the trust by simple *obedience*.

III. THE OCCUPATION OF WAITING BELIEVERS. They "continue in prayer." Prayer, which is "the Christian's vital breath," is the Church's "atmosphere." And they who are sincerely waiting for God will be found constantly and earnestly waiting on him. For even the fulfilment of his promises God loves "to be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."—R. T.

Vers. 16—19.—*Judas, an apostle.* That Judas should have been selected by Christ has occasioned much difficulty to Bible-readers. It is assumed that our Divine Lord, by his omniscient power, must have known what Judas really was, and what Judas would ultimately do. But it is so difficult for us to realize that, in gracious condescension, God put himself, in Christ, within the limitations and conditions of manhood; and as our Lord would not use his miraculous powers to provide for his own necessities, so he would not use his own miraculous knowledge to secure himself against the changes and possible crimes of his disciples. Keeping our thought of our Lord's divinity back in our minds, we are to see that, in the selection of Judas, our Lord acted as a good and wise teacher might to-day. He estimated the qualities of Judas, and his fitness for the apostolic office, and on the ground of these he called him. That Judas had some special fitnesses, which others than Christ could recognize, is shown in the fact that all agreed to his having the trust of the money (John xiii. 29). Possibly for his *practical business abilities* he was chosen. Our Lord was condescendingly pleased to order his human life on the earth by his ordinary intellectual abilities as a man, and not by his Divine omniscience. And in this lies the great marvel of his humiliation and limitation. Nothing is said, on the occasion of the call of the apostles, to mark Judas off in any way. He is, indeed, named last, but this may have been due to the subsequent feeling of his brethren against him. That Jesus did absolutely know the character of the betrayer is indicated in John vi. 64, 70, 71; but his allusions to him were not at the time understood by the apostles. The evil side of his character comes to view in John xii. 6. His plot for the betrayal of Jesus may

be given in detail. The idea that he deluded himself to suppose that his action would bring matters to a crisis, and lead Christ to declare himself and set up his kingdom, seems hardly tenable. If such was his thought, his money-loving gaze was set on securing the chief place of trust in the new kingdom. His vice was *covetousness*. These remarks indicate so fully the line of thought respecting the *office* and the *character* of Judas, that we need give little more than the main topics needing treatment. The effort should be made to show that a *root of evil* lay in the very disposition of Judas; the circumstances in which he was placed ought to have checked its growth, and even turned it from evil to good. Instead of this, the circumstances were *misused*—made to foster the evil into strength; and at last there came blossom and fruitage at which Judas himself, a little while before, would have shuddered. In this there is a solemn lesson for all time. We want to keep and cherish such a daily *openness to God*, that his grace shall sanctify all surrounding circumstances and influences to our *good culture*.

I. THE EARLY PROMISE. "Once fair for the celestial city." Singularly privileged in call to apostleship. Early sincerity without depth. Usefulness for business qualities.

II. THE FATAL TESTINGS. Privilege was too great. Trust of money tested his one great weakness—money-loving. Opportunity of peculation became too great a temptation. Life finds scenes that surely test what *we really are*.

III. THE AWFUL CRIME. The utter baseness of Judas's action should be fully shown. Intense moral indignation against all betrayers of trusts or of friends is perfectly right. The infinite tenderness and long-suffering of the Lord Jesus make *this* betrayal the worst ever known on earth. Is it possible that men *nowadays* may commit Judas's crime? If so, how?

IV. THE MISERABLE END. Remorse came. It is ever bitter and hopeless. It drove to suicide. Judas hanged himself in the very field bought with the rewards of his iniquity; and, being heavy, when they cut him down his body was miserably broken in its fall. The story adds the uttermost shame to the worst of crimes.

Learn that *one evil disposition*, if unchecked, may poison a whole life; and that this is peculiarly true if the evil disposition be *covetousness*.—R. T.

Vers. 16—20.—*Jewish Christian reading of the Old Testament*. The Jews set an extraordinary value on their ancient Scriptures. They edited them with the utmost care; counted letters and words to ensure that no changes were made; read in them with regularity and order at synagogue-worship; and made elaborate commentaries on them. Of all these things details may be given. We notice—

I. THAT REFERENCES TO MESSIAH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT WERE FULLY RECOGNIZED BY THE JEWS. Apart altogether from the question—In whom do we find the Messianic promise realized? it is well for us distinctly to see that the Jews always did, and do still, clearly recognize the Messianic feature of their ancient Scriptures. Christians do not import this element into them. So Christians and Jews have a common standing-ground and basis of argument. And from this common standpoint the apostles make their appeals. With an *open Bible* they plead for Christ's claim to fulfil the predictions concerning Messiah. But we can hardly say that the Jewish modes of reading and translating the ancient Scriptures are altogether satisfactory to us as Christians in these days. The intense national feeling concerning Messiah made them *over-keen* to discover Messianic allusions, and they had ways of *allegorizing* and spiritualizing which we are unable to appreciate. Some of the so-called proofs, from Old Testament Scriptures, given by the apostles appear to us to be *illustrations* rather than argumentative *proofs*. We cannot find any designed reference to Judas Iscariot in the passage here taken from the Psalms, only an appropriateness in the historical allusion to one who, though righteous, was a victim of treachery. The psalmist presents a *parallel case* to that of Judas; but to recognize this suffices for us, and we need not see a definite prophecy of the betrayer. Urge the essential unity and harmony of God's Word in its *great principles*, which find repetition in every age. Show that we endeavour first fully to apprehend the *original, local, and historical* reference of a passage, and from it gather the *principle* which may be of permanent application. Further point out that distinct Messianic references, many and various in form, can be traced; but caution is necessary, lest we force these unduly, and add to them upon insufficient grounds. We

recognize two senses of Scripture, which may be called (1) *the literal and historical*, and (2) *the moral and mystical*. For the first we need *culture*, for the second *spiritual insight and sympathy*. Then—if we have these fitnesses—to us the Bible seems to be full of Christ, because of the *truths* he came to declare, and the *life* he came on earth to live—the life of believing and obedient sonship to God.

II. TO THESE MESSIANIC REFERENCES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THE APOSTLES HAD A QUICKENED VISION. They knew well the life-story of the Lord Jesus. They fully believed him to be the Messiah. With this in their minds, the Old Testament seemed to them to be full of him. But there was some danger of extravagance. They were liable to bring the Messiahship into passages, rather than to find him in them. The Divine Spirit in them needed to be fully followed, as "leading them into all truth." At the time of Peter's speech the special gift of the Spirit had not come to the apostles; so we have only Peter's opinion, and must take it for what it may be worth. Impress our duty to God's sacred Word. The reverence with which it should ever be treated; the anxiety we should cherish lest, to any portion of it, we should give a private and self-willed interpretation; the need for constant openness to the leadings of the Holy Spirit; and the certainty that he will help us to find Christ everywhere, the "Alpha and Omega" of the Book.—R. T.

Vers. 21—26.—*First signs of order in the early Church.* In introducing this subject, notice may be taken of the idea that the apostolic body must number twelve. It was a purely Jewish conception, based on the fact that the tribes composing the nation were twelve. But it was a notion suited to the formality of the age, which made so much of numbers, and washings, and ordinances, and ceremonies. It does not appear that our Lord made any sacredness attach to the number; nor did he, after his resurrection, make any suggestions as to the filling up of the betrayer's office. It may further be shown that the conditions of apostleship laid down by Peter are not otherwise indicated. He seems to have gained the idea by dwelling on the fact that the apostles were to be Christ's witnesses; but our Lord's call to witness was made to disciples as well as to apostles. It would rather seem that the one thing essential to apostleship was direct appointment to office by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. In this view we can fully understand the claim St. Paul makes to the rights, standing, and authority of an apostle. The Revised Version makes a suggestive change in ver. 23, reading "they put forward," for "they appointed;" intimating that candidates were first selected by the apostles, and then "put forward" before the entire body of disciples, who made the definite choice. Regarded as the first effort to secure system and order among the Christian disciples, we may find indications of the early recognition of five great practical principles—the five which have been variously powerful in shaping the order of the various Christian communities as one or the other of them has gained prominence. We do little more than state the principles, leaving the questions of their relative values, their adaptations to present religious life, and their influence on the formation of different ecclesiastical organizations.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE NEED FOR OFFICES IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. This is universally recognized. The offices are arranged with more or less precise copying of the early Church models, and with varying sense of the elasticity of the principle. One thing needs to be carefully impressed, viz. that all offices are for use—for the order and edification of the Church.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITY. All being believers, having the new life and the indwelling Spirit,—all may and should take part in the proposed election. This principle is recognized in all Churches, but is less prominent in some than in others. Prudence provides limitations of the claims which it might inspire.

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE EXECUTIVE RIGHTS OF CHRIST. He is the living and present Head and Ruler of the Church, and must be thought of as actually presiding; not only having given us laws, but actually presiding over their execution. All officials in a Church are Christ's ministers and agents, simply carrying out his will.

IV. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RIGHT OF JUDICIOUS SELECTION. A large number of people cannot make wise and united selection of suitable men for suitable offices. This is a very practical principle, which prudence would have established if for it there had been no early Church precedent. It is found useful in all societies and associations of men.

V. THE PRINCIPLE OF ELECTION BY THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. All the Church joined in the act of choosing one of the two selected ones. It may be impressed that these simple and practical principles lie at the very foundation of Church order, and that the healthy working of Church systems depends upon the wise applications made of them, relative to the circumstances of national and social surroundings, and the "genius" of the community so ordered.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

Ver. 1.—*Was now come for was fully come, A.V.; all together for with one accord, A.V. and T.R.* When the day of Pentecost was now come; literally, *when the day of Pentecost—i.e. of the fiftieth day—was in the course of being completed.* The fiftieth day (reckoned from the end of the 16th of Nisan, on which Jesus was crucified) was actually come, but was not ended (comp. Luke ix. 11). All together; *ἑμῶν* for *ἑμθυμαδόν*: but *ἑμθυμαδόν*—a favourite word in the Acts (ch. iv. 24, note)—seems preferable to *ἑμῶν*, which occurs only in St. John. In one place (see ch. i. 15, note). The purpose, doubtless, of their coming together was for prayer, as in ch. i. 14; and the third hour (9 a.m., ver. 15), the hour of offering the morning sacrifice, was close at hand (comp. ch. iii. 1 and Luke i. 10).

Ver. 2.—*From heaven a sound for a sound from heaven, A.V.; as of the rushing of a for as of a rushing, A.V.* All the house; showing that it was in a private dwelling, not in the temple (as in ch. iii. 1) that they were assembled (see ch. ii. 46). Perhaps the word "church" (*ἡ κυριακὸς οἶκος*) derives its use from these early meetings of the disciples in a house, as distinguished from the temple (*τὸ ἱερόν*).

Ver. 3.—*Tongues parting asunder for cloven tongues, A.V.; each one for each, A.V.* There appeared. They had heard the sound, now they see the tongues of fire, and then they feel the Spirit working in them (see ver. 34). Tongues parting asunder. The idea of the cloven tongue, i.e. a tongue parted into two, which is thought to have been the origin of the mitre, is not suggested either by the Greek or by the circumstances, and is clearly a mistaken one. *Διαμερίζμενα* means *distributing themselves or being distributed.* From the central apparition, or rather place of sound, they saw issuing forth many several tongues, looking like small flames of fire, and one such tongue sat upon each one of the brethren or disciples present. Each one. That Chrysostom is right ('Hom.' iv.) in interpreting the *each one* of this verse of the hundred and twenty, and not of the twelve, and the *all* in ver. 4 of all present besides the

apostles, may be demonstrated. For not only must the *all* of ver. 1 refer to the same company as was described in the preceding chapter (vers. 15—26), but it is quite clear in ver. 15 of this chapter that Peter and the eleven (ver. 14), standing up separate from the body of the disciples, say of them, "These are not drunken, as ye suppose;" which is a demonstration that those of whom they thus spoke had been speaking with tongues (see also ch. x. 44). St. Augustine, too, says that the hundred and twenty all received the Holy Spirit. To the same effect Meyer, Wordsworth, Alford (who adds, "Not the hundred and twenty only, but all the believers in Christ then congregated at Jerusalem:" so also Lange). Farrar well remarks, "It was the consecration of a whole Church, . . . to be all of them a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people" ('Life of St. Paul,' ch. v.). Lange says, "Not only the apostles, but all the disciples, were filled with the Holy Ghost. . . . There is a universal priesthood of all believers, and the Holy Ghost is the anointing which consecrates and qualifies for this priesthood" ('On the Acts,' Clark's edit., p. 67).

Ver. 4.—*Spirit for Ghost, A.V.* Other tongues (1 Cor. xiv. 21; Isa. xxviii. 11); the same as the "new tongues" of Mark xvi. 17. St. Paul speaks of them as "the tongues of men and of angels" (1 Cor. xiii. 1), and as "kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 10). His habitual phrase is "speaking in [or with] a tongue [or tongues]" (1 Cor. xiv. 2, 4—6, etc.), and the verb is always *λαλεῖν*, as here. What these tongues were on this occasion we are explicitly informed in vers. 6, 8, and 11. They were the tongues of the various nationalities present at the feast—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Egyptians, Phrygians, Arabians, etc. This is so clearly and so distinctly stated that it is astonishing that any one should deny it who accepts St. Luke's account as historical. The only room for doubt is whether the speakers spoke in these divers languages, or the hearers heard in them though the speakers spoke in only one tongue. But not to mention that this is far more difficult to imagine, and transfers the miracle from those who had the Holy Spirit to

those who had it not, it is against the plain language of the text, which tells us that "they began to speak with other tongues," and that "every man heard them speaking in his own language." "Speaking," said they, "in our own tongues the mighty works of God." There *may*, indeed, have been something ecstatic besides in these utterances, but there is no reference to such made either by St. Luke or by the audience whose words he reports. The narrative before us does not hint at any after use of the gift of tongues for missionary purposes. In *ch. x. 46; xi. 15—17; xix. 6*, as well as in the passages above referred to in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, the speaking with tongues is always spoken of—often in connection with prophecy—simply as a gift and a manifestation (1 Cor. xii. 7) of the power of the Holy Spirit. In this case and in *ch. x. 46* the subject-matter of the utterance is the greatness of God's works; τὰ μεγαλεῖα τοῦ Θεοῦ μεγαλυνόντων τὴν Θεοῦ. In 1 Cor. xiv. 2 it is "mysteries;" in ver. 15, "prayers and psalms;" in ver. 16 it is "blessing" and "thanksgiving" (εὐλογία and εὐχαριστία). But nowhere, either in Holy Scripture or in the Fathers of the three first centuries, is the gift of tongues spoken of in connection with preaching to foreign nations (see Alford's just remarks). Farrar ('Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. pp. 98—101) takes the same view, but is much less distinct in his conception of what is meant here by speaking with tongues. He adheres to the view of Sohneckeburger, that "the tongue was, from its own force and significance, intelligible equally to all who heard it;" he agrees with the dictum of Neander that "any foreign languages which were spoken on this occasion were only something accidental, and not the essential element of the language of the Spirit." He says, "The voice they uttered was awful in its range, in its tones, in its modulations, in its startling, penetrating, almost appalling power; the words they spoke were exalted, intense, passionate, full of mystic significance; the language they used was not their ordinary and familiar tongue, but was Hebrew, or Greek, or Latin, or Aramaic, or Persian, or Arabic, as some overpowering and unconscious impulse of the moment might direct, . . . and among these strange sounds . . . there were some which none could interpret, which rang on the air like the voice of barbarous languages, and which . . . conveyed no definite significance beyond the fact that they were reverberations of one and the same ecstasy." The writer seems to suggest that when any real language was spoken it was one more or less known previously by the speaker, and that in other cases it was

no language at all, only thrilling emotional sounds. Renan's view of the day of Pentecost is a curious specimen of rationalistic interpretation. "One day when the brethren were come together there was a tempest. A violent wind burst open the windows, and the sky was one sheet of fire. In that climate tempests are often accompanied by an extraordinary amount of electric light. The atmosphere is on all sides furrowed with jets of flame. On this occasion, whether the electric fluid actually passed through the room, or whether the faces of all present were suddenly lit up by an extremely bright flash of lightning, all were convinced that the Holy Spirit had entered their assembly, and had sat upon the head of each in the shape of a tongue of fire. . . . In these moments of ecstasy, the disciple possessed by the Spirit uttered sounds inarticulate and incoherent, which the hearers fancied were the words of a strange language, and in their simplicity tried to interpret. . . . They listened eagerly to the medley of sounds, and explained them by their own extemporaneous thoughts. Each of them had recourse to his own native *patois* to supply some meaning to the unintelligible accents, and generally succeeded in affixing to them the thoughts that were uppermost in his own mind" ('Les Apôtres,' pp. 66—68). Elsewhere (pp. 64, 65) he suggests that the whole conception of *speaking with tongues* arose from the anticipation on the part of the apostles that great difficulty would arise in propagating the gospel from the impossibility of learning to speak the necessary languages. The solution with some was that, under the ecstasy caused by the Holy Spirit, the hearers would be able to translate what they heard into their own tongue; others rather thought that by the same power the apostles would be able to speak any dialect they pleased at the moment. Hence the conception of the day of Pentecost as described by St. Luke! Meyer, again, fully admits, as "beyond all doubt," that St. Luke intended to narrate that the persons possessed by the Spirit spoke in foreign languages previously unknown by them; but adds that "the sudden communication of a facility of speaking foreign languages is neither logically possible nor psychologically and morally conceivable" (a pretty bold assertion); and therefore he sets down St. Luke's account of what occurred as "a later legendary formation," based upon the existing γλωσσολαλία. Zeller, travelling a little further on the same road, comes to the conclusion that "the narrative before us is not based on any definite fact" (p. 205). Leaving, however, these fanciful varieties of incredulous criticism, and interpreting the statements of

this chapter by the later spiritual gifts as seen in the Church of Corinth, we conclude that the "tongues" were sometimes "tongues of men," foreign languages unknown to the speakers, and of course unintelligible to the hearers unless any were present, as was the case on the day of Pentecost, who knew the language; and sometimes languages not of earth but of heaven, "tongues of angels." But there is no evidence whatever of their being mere gibberish as distinct from *language*, or being *language* coined at the moment by the Holy Ghost. All that St. Paul says to the Corinthians is fully applicable to any language spoken when there were none present who understood it. The significance of the miracle seems to be that it points to the time when all shall be one in Christ, and shall all speak and understand the same speech; and not only all men, but men and angels, "the whole family in heaven and earth," "things in the heavens and things upon the earth" all gathered together in one in Christ. It may also not improbably have been used occasionally, as it was on the day of Pentecost, to convey doctrine, knowledge, or exhortation, to foreign people; but there is no distinct evidence that this was the case.

Ver. 5.—*Now for and, A.V.*; *from for out of, A.V.* Dwelling; either Jews came up for the feast, or perhaps rather domiciled at Jerusalem from motives of piety.

Ver. 6.—*And when this sound (φωνή) was heard for now when this was noised abroad, A.V.*, which the words cannot mean; *speaking for speak, A.V.* This sound. The question still remains whether the sound (φωνή) refers to the sound (ἤχος) of the rushing mighty wind mentioned in ver. 2, or to the voices of those who spake with tongues. If the last, we should rather have expected *sounds* or *voices* in the plural; and it is further in favour of the former that γενομένης τῆς φωνῆς ταύτης seems to take up the ἐγένετο ἤχος of ver. 2. The word φωνή is applied to πνεῦμα in John iii. 8. Nor is it likely, at first sight, that the disciples in the house where they were sitting should have spoken loud enough to attract the notice of people outside. Whereas the sound of a rushing mighty wind, sufficient (as in ch. iii. 31) to shake the house, would naturally be heard by passers-by. On the other hand, however, φωνή seems to point decisively to the human voice (see its use, 1 Cor. xiv. 7—10).

Ver. 7.—*Saying for saying one to another, A.V.* and T.R. Amazed (ἐξίσταστο; see ch. viii. 9, note). Galileans; describing merely their nationality. The Galilean accent was peculiar and well known (see Mark xiv. 70; Luke xxii. 59; Matt. xxvi. 73).

Ver. 8.—*Language for tongue, A.V.* Language (διαλέκτω, as in ch. i. 19). It only occurs in the New Testament in the Acts, and may mean either *language* or *dialect*. Here it is properly rendered *language*, and is synonymous with γλώσσαις in ver. 11.

Ver. 9.—*In Judæa for and in Judæa, A.V.* Parthians and Medes and Elamites. These would be the Israelites of the first dispersion, the descendants of those of the ten tribes who were deported by the Assyrians, and of whom the Afghans are perhaps a remnant, and of the first Babylonian captivity. Mesopotamia and Babylon were at this time in possession of the Parthians. Babylon was a great Jewish colony, the seat of "the princes of the Captivity," and of one of the great rabbinical schools. Judæa. The mention of Judæa here is very odd, and can scarcely be right, both from its situation between Mesopotamia and Cappadocia, and because Jews (Judæans) are mentioned again in ver. 10 (where, however, see note). India, which seems to have been in Chrysostom's Codex ('Hom.' iv., end of [3]), Idumæa, Bithynia, and Armenia, have all been suggested as conjectural emendations. One might have expected Galatia, with its different Celtic dialect, and which goes with Pontus, Cappadocia, and Asia in 1 Pet. i. 1; a passage, by the way, which shows that there were many Jews in those provinces: Aquila, too, was a Jew from Pontus (ch. xviii. 2). ΑΤΑΙΑ, Lydia, would be very like ΙΟΥΔΑΙΑ; but all manuscripts read Judæa.

Ver. 10.—*In Phrygia for Phrygia, A.V.*; *the parts for in the parts, A.V.*; *sojourners for for strangers of, A.V.*; *both Jews for Jews, A.V.* Asia; i.e. "the western coast region of Asia Minor, including Caria, Lydia, and Mysia" (Meyer). "Ionia and Lydia, of which Ephesus was the capital, called Proconanlar Asia" (Wordsworth and 'Speaker's Commentary.' See ch. xx. 16, 18; Rev. i. 4, etc.). Egypt, etc. These represent the third great dispersion, that effected by Ptolemy Lagus. Some of this part of the dispersion are mentioned as very hostile to Stephen (ch. vi. 9). "Two-fifths of the population of Alexandria were Jews." "Jews formed one quarter of the population of Cyrene" ('Speaker's Commentary.') See Matt. xxvii. 32 and ch. xiii. 1). And sojourners from Rome, both Jews and proselytes. The copula and couples the οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι with the οἱ κατακοῦντες τὴν Μεσοποταμίαν, etc., of ver. 9. It is literally, *those of us who are Roman sojourners at Jerusalem, whether Jews by race or proselytes. They were equally Roman sojourners, whether they were Jews whose home was at Rome or whether they were proselytes; and it is an interesting fact that there were*

such proselytes in the great capital of the heathen world. *Sojourners*, as in ch. xvii. 21, *the strangers sojourning* at Athens. Many good commentators—Alford, Meyer, Lechler (in Lange, 'Bibel. Werke'), etc.—take the words "Jews and proselytes" as applying to the whole preceding list, not to the Roman sojourners only; but in that case one would not expect *Cretans and Arabians* to follow.

Ver. 11.—*Cretans for Cretes, A.V.; speaking for speak, A.V.; mighty for wonderful, A.V. (τὰ μεγαλεῖα).*

Ver. 12.—*Perplexed for in doubt, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 13.—*But others for others, A.V.; they are filled with for these men are full of, A.V. New wine; more literally, sweet wine.* These mockers, men incapable of serious and devout appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit, attributed the tension of feeling which they saw, and the unintelligible words which they heard, to the effect of wine. So Festus said, "Paul, thou art mad." So the unbelieving Jews of Pontus and Asia thought it strange that the Christians should live holly, and spake evil of them in consequence (1 Pet. iv. 4, 14). So Ishmael mocked Isaac (Gen. xxi. 9); and so in all times "they that are born after the flesh do persecute them that are born after the Spirit" (Gal. iv. 29).

Vers. 14—16.—*Spake forth for said, A.V.; give ear unto for hearken to, A.V.; hath been spoken for was spoken, A.V.* But Peter, etc. Peter stands up before the eleven as their primatè, foremost in the authority of action as in precedence of place; and the apostles stand up before the multitude of believers, as those to whom Christ committed the government of his Church (see ch. i. 15). Spake forth (*ἀπεφθέγγασθαι*, the same word as in ver. 4, "utterance"); implying the utterance of a loud and grave oration. In 1 Chron. xxvi. it is the phrase of the LXX. for those who *prophesied* with harps. From it is derived the word *apophthegm*, "a remarkable saying" (Johnson's Dictionary). Ye that dwell at Jerusalem; the same as those described in ver. 5. They were foreign Jews who, either for the feast or for other causes, had taken up their abode at Jerusalem, and are distinguished from the *men of Judæa*, the Jews who were natives of Judæa. Give ear (*ἐνωτιζέσθε*); found only here in the New Testament, but frequent in the LXX. as the rendering of the Hebrew *שמעו* (Gen. iv. 23; Job xxxiii. 1; Isa. i. 2). It is not classical Greek, and seems to have been coined by the LXX., as the equivalent of the above-named Hebrew word. It seems to be a rhetorical phrase. The thing to be known unto them was that they saw the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy in what had

happened; for it was quite a mistake to attribute it to drunkenness. By the prophet (*σὺ, not ἔγώ*); spoken by God through the prophet. The full phrase occurs in Matt. i. 22; ii. 5, 15. And so it is added in ver. 17, "saith God."

Ver. 17.—*Be for come to pass, A.V.; pour forth for pour out, A.V.* In the last days. This does not agree with either the Hebrew or the LXX. in the existing texts, where we read merely *afterwards* (*אַחֲרָיָם; μετὰ ταῦτα*). The phrase, "in the last days," which occurs in Isa. ii. 2 and elsewhere, denotes the days of Messiah. St. Peter is perhaps expounding the passage as relating to the days of Messiah; or *יְמֵי הַמָּשִׁיחַ* may have been another reading. Saith God is no part of Joel's prophecy, but Peter's words. Your young men shall see visions, etc. The order of this and the following clause is inverted. In the Hebrew and LXX. the *old men* are mentioned first.

Ver. 18.—*Yea and for and, A.V.; pour forth for pour out, A.V.; in those days will I pour for I will pour . . . in those days, A.V.* And they shall prophesy. These words are not found in the Hebrew or the LXX. The LXX. differ from the Hebrew in the addition of *μου* after *δοῦλους* and *δούλας*. The Hebrew has merely "the servants and the handmaids," men and women of servile condition.

Ver. 19.—*The heaven for heaven, A.V.; on for in, A.V. I will show (δώσω, as in Matt. xxiv. 24). This follows the Hebrew and the Codex Alexandrinus. The Vatican Codex has, They will show or give (δώσασιν). In the heavens above, . . . on the earth beneath. Above and beneath are not in the Hebrew or the LXX. With these exceptions, the text of the LXX. is followed.*

Ver. 20.—*The day of the Lord come, that great and notable day for that great and notable day of the Lord come, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 21.—*Be for come to pass, A.V.*

Ver. 22.—*Unto you for among you, A.V.; mighty works for miracles, A.V.; even as ye yourselves know for as ye yourselves also know, A.V.* Ye men of Israel. This title includes both the Jews of Judæa and all those of the dispersion, to whatever tribe they belonged. Approved of God. Observe the distinct reference to the miracles of Christ, as the proofs that he came from God, the authenticating evidences of his Divine mission. So St. Peter again, in his address to Cornelius, declares how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (ch. x. 38). The miracles of the gospel are, and were intended to be, a demonstration of the

truth of Christianity, and it is at their peril that Christians allow themselves to give up this argument at the bidding of the sceptic. Mighty works and wonders and signs. *Δυναμῆς* are *powers*, acts of healing and such like, done by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit (see the above reference to ch. x. 38); *τέρατα* are *wonders* or *portents*, such as are spoken of by the Prophet Joel, "wonders in heaven above," the darkening of the sun, the discoloration of the moon, or any other wonder considered only with reference to its portentous character; *σημεῖα* are *signs*, not necessarily miraculous, but things which are proofs, either by their miraculous character or from the time or mode of their occurrence, of the truth of the things spoken. "Miracles, wonders, and signs" occur together in 2 Cor. xii. 12. The three seem to include every kind of miracle, or, as Meyer says, miracles viewed (1) according to their *nature*, (2) according to their *appearance*, (3) according to their *destination* or proposed end. Which God did by him. So we read Heb. i. 2, "Through [or 'by'] whom also he made the worlds." And so our Lord said of himself, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" and "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do" (John v. 17, 19; comp. Matt. xxviii. 18). On the other hand, our Lord often speaks of his own power, as John ii. 19; x. 18 (comp. John ii. 11). As Mediator, Christ did all things by his Father's appointment, and for his Father's glory. Even as ye yourselves know. Mark the confidence with which Peter appeals to their personal knowledge of the miracles of Christ. This was a fitting preparation for the announcement of that mighty power, wonder, and sign which he was now about to proclaim to them—the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead.

Ver. 23.—*Delivered up for delivered, A.V.; by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay for have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain, A.V. and T.R.* The determinate counsel. God's counsel. that Christ should suffer for sins, was not a vague, indistinct purpose, leaving much to accident and the fluctuating will of man; it was determinate and defined in respect of time and manner and the instruments used for carrying it out. Foreknowledge is coupled with *counsel* or *will*, perhaps in order to show us that the counsel or will of God, as far as it comprehends the action of free agents, is indissolubly connected with his foreknowledge, and does not involve any force put upon the will of man. (Compare, with Chrysostom, the saying of Joseph to his brethren, "Be not angry with yourselves, that ye sold me

hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Gen. xlv. 5); also Judg. xiv. 4; 1 Kings xii. 15, etc., *Delivered up* (ἐκδοτον, only found here) is by many understood of the action of Judas in betraying Jesus into the hands of his enemies (John xix. 11)—ἐκδοτον being taken as equivalent to what προδοτον would mean if it were in use. But it may with equal propriety be applied to the action of the chief priests and elders in delivering Jesus to Pontius Pilate (Matt. xxvii. 2) to be crucified (Matt. xxvii. 26). Our Lord himself alludes to Pilate's power as circumscribed by the will of God (John xix. 11, ὁ παραδιδούς με σοι: comp. Matt. xxvi. 45). By the hand of lawless men. "By the hand of" is the common Hebrew phrase יָד, by means of, through the agency of. The Jewish nation (ἐθνὴς Ἰουδαίου) had crucified the Lord of glory by the hand of the heathen Romans. *Lawless*, equivalent to the *sinner*s of Matt. xxvi. 45 (comp., for the special application of the term to the heathen, Gal. ii. 15; 1 Cor. ix. 21).

Ver. 24.—*Raised for hath raised, A.V.; pangs for pains, A.V.* Pangs. St. Luke follows the LXX., who render the פָּקַדוֹת קָוָה or פָּקַדוֹת of Ps. xviii. 5, 6; cxvi. 3, by ὀδίνες θανάτου, as if the Hebrew word were פָּקַד, the *pains* or *pangs* of a woman in childbirth, whereas it really is פָּקַד, a cord, as it is rendered in the margin of Ps. xviii. 5, meaning the *snare* of the fowler. The variation is very similar to that of the "*fruit of our lips*" in Heb. xiii. 15, compared with the "*calves of our lips*" of Hos. xiv. 2. It is manifest that "*loosed*" applies better to *cords* than to *pangs*. It was not possible. Why, *not possible*? 1. Because of the union of the Godhead and manhood in the one Person of Christ. 2. Because of God's character, which makes it impossible that one who trusts in him should be forsaken, or that God's Holy One should see corruption. 3. Because the Scripture, which cannot be broken, declared the resurrection of Christ.

Ver. 25.—*Saith for speaketh, A.V.; beheld for foresaw, A.V.* The sixteenth psalm is ascribed to David in the title prefixed to it in the Hebrew and the LXX. Without pronouncing the titles to be infallible, we must confess that they carry great weight with them in the absence of any strong internal evidence against them. Meyer speaks of the psalm as "certainly later than David," and Ewald and others ascribe it to the time of the Captivity; but Hitzig thinks the internal evidence is in favour of its belonging to the time before David ascended the throne ('Speaker's Commentary'). We may safely rest on the authority of St. Peter here and St. Paul (oh. xiii. 35, 36), and be

satisfied that it is really David's. The manner in which it is quoted by the two apostles is also very strong evidence that by the Jews of that day it was generally admitted to be a Messianic psalm. The following quotation is verbatim from the LXX.

Ver. 26.—*My heart was glad for did my heart rejoice, A.V.; rejoiced for was glad, A.V.; my flesh also for also my flesh, A.V.; dwell for rest, A.V.*

Ver. 27.—*Hades for hell, A.V.; give thy Holy One for suffer thine Holy One, A.V., surely not so good a rendering. Hades. 'The "hell" of the A. V. is the exact English representative of ἄδης. The article in the Creed, "He descended into hell," is based upon this text especially, the other two alleged in support of it (Eph. iv. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19) being less conclusive (see Pearson on the Creed, art. v.). It is a pity to lose the word "hell" in its true meaning. Corruption; Greek διαφθόραν, Hebrew חרשׁ. The Hebrew word always means a pit (from חרשׁ); but the LXX. here render it διαφθορά, as if from חרשׁ (in Pihel, to destroy, waste; in Hophal and Niphal, to be corrupted, spoilt, to rot). In the A.V. it is rendered corruption, here and in Job xvii. 14, where it answers to "the worms," in the parallel clause. It is very probable that the LXX. are right. Nothing is more common than for Hebrew verbs to take the meaning of verbs with similar radicals. Holy One. So the LXX. and the Keri of the Hebrew text. But the Cethib has *Holy Ones* in the plural. It is obvious that the singular, *Holy One*, agrees far better with the singulars which precede and follow it—*my heart, my glory, my flesh, my soul, thou wilt show me*—than the plural, which is entirely out of place. The two clauses taken together show the full liberation of Christ from the dominion of death—that of his human soul from hell, and that of his body from the grave before it saw corruption (comp. ch. xiii. 34—37).*

Ver. 28.—*Madest for hast made, A.V.; unto for to, A.V.; gladness for joy, A.V.*

Ver. 29.—*Brethren for men and brethren, A.V.; I may say unto you freely for let me freely speak unto you, A.V.; both died and was buried for is both dead and buried, A.V.; tomb for sepulchre, A.V. Brsthren; literally, men who are my brethren. Observe how gentle and conciliatory the apostle's language is; how exactly in accordance with his own precept (1 Pet. iii. 8, 9), "Not rendering railing for railing," etc. In addressing them as brethren, he silently claims the good will and fairness due to one who was a brother in blood and in the faith of the God of Israel. The patriarch David. The term patriarch is elsewhere in Scripture applied*

only to Abraham and the twelve sons of Jacob (Heb. vii. 4; ch. vii. 8, 9). It is a title of dignity, signifying the head of a house. It seems to be here applied to David, because he is spoken of as head of the family from which Christ sprang. Abraham was the head of the whole Hebrew race; "Abraham our father." The twelve patriarchs were the heads of their respective tribes. The LXX. use the word πατριάρχης as the rendering of ראשׁ תבואת, "chief of the fathers' houses" (1 Chron. xxiv. 31; 2 Chron. xix. 8; xxvi. 12); which they elsewhere render by ἄρχων, or ἀρχὴ πατριᾶς (Exod. vi. 25, etc.). In common parlance, the term is also applied to those chief persons who lived before the time of Moses, and have their record in his books. His tomb is with us, etc. Josephus speaks of David's tomb (calling it, as St. Peter here does, his μνήμα) as consisting of several chambers, and relates how one of these chambers was opened by the high priest Hyrcanus, who took from it three thousand talents of gold to give to Antiochus Pius, who was at that time laying siege to Jerusalem. He adds that another chamber was opened later by King Herod, who abstracted a great quantity of golden ornaments from it; but that neither of them penetrated to the vaults where the bodies of David and Solomon were deposited, because the entrance to them was so carefully concealed. He further mentions that Herod, having been terrified by the bursting out of flames, which stopped his further progress, built a most costly marble monument at the entrance of the tomb ('Jud. Ant.,' vii. xv. 3; xiii. viii. 4; xvi. vii. 1). For the sense, supply "and therefore he could not be speaking of himself." The explanation follows that he was a prophet, etc.

Ver. 30.—*Being therefore for therefore being, A.V.; that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon for that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh he would raise up Christ to sit on, A.V. and T.R. Had sworn, etc. The first record of God's promise to David is in 2 Sam. vii. 11—16: "The Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And . . . I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and will establish his kingdom. . . Thy throne shall be established for ever;" and in ver. 28, David speaks of it as God's promise: "Thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant." But there is no mention there of an oath. But in Ps. lxxxix. great stress is laid upon God having sworn to David: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations" (vers. 3, 4); and again, ver. 35, "Once have I sworn by*

my holiness that I will not lie unto David" 1 Sam. vii. and Ps. lxxxix. should be read through carefully (comp. also Isa. lv. 3; ch. xiii. 23). (For the phrase, "I have sworn by my holiness," see Amos iv. 2.)

Ver. 31.—*Foreseeing this for seeing this before, A.V.; neither was he left in Hades for his soul was not left in hell, A.V. and T.R.; nor did his flesh for neither his flesh did, A.V.*

Ver. 32.—*Did God raise up for hath God raised up, A.V. Are witnesses (see ch. i. 22, note).*

Ver. 33.—*Being therefore for therefore being, A.V.; poured for shed, A.V.; see for now see, A.V. By the right hand, etc. Some render it, "Being exalted to the right hand," etc.; or, "Being at the right hand of God exalted." It is very questionable whether the Greek will bear the first rendering; and it would have been more natural to express the second by εἰς τὴν δεξιάν. It is best, therefore, to take it as the A.V. and the R.V. do. The phrase is equivalent to that in Ps. xxviii. 1, "His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory," and numerous other passages. The promise of the Holy Ghost (see ch. i. 4, note).*

Ver. 34.—*Ascended not for is not ascended, A.V. For David, etc. The ascension of Christ is inferred from the previous prophecy, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life," etc.; and is there distinctly proved from Ps. cx. 1, which Peter (remembering, probably, our Lord's application of it as recorded in Matt. xxii. 42—45, which he had doubtless heard) shows could not apply to David himself, but only to David's Lord.*

Ver. 35.—*Till for until, A.V.; thine enemies for thy foes, A.V.; the footstool of thy feet for thy footstool, A.V.*

Ver. 36.—*Let all the house of Israel therefore for therefore let all the house of Israel, A.V.; him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified for that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ, A.V., a change very much for the worse, inasmuch as the R.V. is not an English phrase, and adds nothing to the sense.*

Ver. 37.—*The rest for to the rest, A.V.; brethren for men and brethren, A.V. Pricked in their heart (καρτερίνησαν). The LXX. rendering of Pa. cix. 16 (15, Prayer-book), "broken," or "vexed at the heart." Gen. xxxiv. 7 it is rendered "grieved." Unto Peter and the rest of the apostles. It is important to note from the beginning the relative position of Peter and the other apostles; a certain primacy and precedence, both in place and in action, he has undoubtedly. He is always named first, and he acts first, in preaching both to Jews and Gentiles. The keys are in his hands, and the door is first opened as he turns the*

lock. But it is equally clear that he is but one of the apostles; he is not set over them, but acts with them; he is not their superior, but their fellow; they are not eclipsed by his presence, but only animated by his example; inquirers after salvation do not ask at his mouth only, but of the whole college of the apostles. Brethren (see ver. 29). The Jews and Israelites new hold out the right hand of brotherhood to these whom before they reviled (ver. 13). What shall we do? It is a sign of the working of God's Spirit in the heart, renewing it to repentance, when men feel the need of changing their old course of thought and action, and inquire anxiously what they must do to inherit eternal life (comp. Mark x. 17; ch. ix. 6; xvi. 30).

Ver. 38.—*And for then, A.V.; said (in italics) for said, A.V. and T.R.; repent ye for repent, A.V.; unto for for, A.V.; your sins for sins, A.V. Repent, etc. We have in this short verse the summary of Christian doctrine as regards man and God. Repentance and faith on the part of man; forgiveness of sins, or justification, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, or sanctification, on the part of God. And both these are expressed in the sacrament of baptism, which as it were ties the act of man to the promise of God. For the sacrament expresses man's faith and repentance on one side, and God's forgiveness and gift on the other.*

Ver. 39.—*To you is the promise for the promise is unto you, A.V.; shall call unto him for shall call. To you is the promise (see ch. i. 4; ii. 33). There is also a reference to the prophecy in Joel, quoted in ver. 17^a—21. To all that are afar off; i.e. the Gentiles, as appears clearly from Eph. ii. 17, where the same phrase is applied to the Ephesian Christians, and the Jewish Christians are spoken of as "these that were nigh." The fulfilment to the Gentiles is specially recorded (ch. x. 45; xi. 15, 18, etc.). Shall call unto him (comp. Rom. i. 6; viii. 28, 30; ix. 24; 1 Cor. i. 2; Gal. i. 6, etc.), which confirm the application of the "afar off" to the Gentiles.*

Ver. 40.—*He testified, and exhorted for did he testify and exhort, A.V.; crooked for untoward, A.V. Save yourselves, etc. The idea is that the crooked generation which denied and crucified the Lord is hurrying on to their destruction. These who would not perish with them must come out from amongst them and be separate from them (2 Cor. vi. 19), and seek safety in the ark of Christ's Church (1 Pet. iii. 21), as Noah did in the ark, and as Lot did in Zoar. So the jailer at Philippi, seeking to be saved, was baptized straightway (ch. xvi. 30—33). This was the drift and end of all St. Peter's exhortations.*

Ver. 41.—*They then for then they, A.V.; received for gladly received, A.V. and T.R.; there were added unto them in that day for the same day there were added unto them, A.V. Gladly received.* The best manuscripts omit ἀσμενος, which, indeed, is superfluous, as the word ἀποδέχομαι contains in itself the idea of a kind reception—a welcome (Luke viii. 40; ch. xv. 4; xxiv. 3).

Ver. 42.—*Teaching for doctrine, A.V.; in the breaking for and in breaking, A.V. and T.R.; the prayers for in prayer, A.V. And fellowship; better, as in the margin, in fellowship; not meaning the apostles' fellowship, but the fellowship of the Church—that common life of close brotherhood in which all that they did was done in common, and all that they possessed was possessed in common, so that there seemed to be but one heart and one mind amongst them all. Breaking of bread; in the Holy Eucharist (see Matt. xxvi. 26; Mark xiv. 22; Luke xxii. 19; xxiv. 30; 1 Cor. xi. 24; x. 16; ch. xx. 7). The prayers; the common prayers of the Church.*

Ver. 43.—*Fear came, etc.* This seems to be spoken of the awe which fell upon the whole people, and restrained them from interfering with the disciples. Just as at the first settlement of Israel in the land of Canaan God laid the fear of them and the dread of them upon all the land (Deut. xi. 25), so now the fear engendered by the events on the day of Pentecost, by the signs and wonders which followed and by the wonderful unity and holiness of the newborn Church, so wrought upon every soul at Jerusalem that all enmity was paralyzed, and the disciples had time to multiply and to consolidate and establish themselves before the storm of persecution fell upon them.

Ver. 44.—*Were together (ἐπι τὸ αὐτό; see ch. i. 15, note, and above, ver. 42). Had all things common.* Just as the Transfiguration gave a passing glimpse of the state of glory, so here we have a specimen of what Christian love and unity in its perfection, and unchecked by contact with the world without, would, and perhaps some day will, produce. But even at Jerusalem this bright vision of a paradise on earth was soon troubled by the earthly dissensions recorded in ch. vi.; and the Christian community received a timely lesson that things good in themselves are not always practicable in an evil world, where sluggish virtues require the stimulants of bodily wants to draw them out and strengthen them, and where hypocrisy often claims the kindly offices which are due only to disciples indeed.

Ver. 45.—*They sold for sold, A.V.; all for all men, A.V.; according as any for as every, A.V.*

Ver. 46.—*Day by day continuing steadily for they continuing daily, A.V.; at home for from house to house, A.V.; they did take their food for did eat their meat, A.V. In the temple.* It is very remarkable that at this early age of the Church's existence Christians did not deem themselves separated from their Jewish brethren, or from the Old Testament institutions. Christianity was but Judaism perfected; the gospel the full blossoming of the Law. The first Christian Jews, therefore, did not conceive of themselves as quitting the religion of their fathers, but rather hoped that their whole nation would in a short time acknowledge Jesus to be the Christ. Christian institutions, therefore—the prayers, the breaking of bread, the prophesyings and speaking with tongues, and the apostolic teachings—were supplemental to the temple service, not antagonistic to it; and the church took the place rather of the synagogue than of the temple (see 'Dict. of Bible,' "Synagogue"). At home. This version hardly represents the true idea of the original; κατ' οἶκον represents the private Christian place of meeting, as contrasted with the temple. The meaning is not that every disciple broke bread in his own house, but that they broke bread at the house where the Christian assemblies were held, whether one or more. We have already seen the Church gathered together "in an upper room" (ch. i. 13), in "one place," in "a house" (ch. ii. 1, 2), and "together" (ver. 44; see too ch. iv. 31); and we know that as the synagogue was called בית התורה, house of prayer, or בית התפלה, the house of assemblage, so the Christian place of meeting was called ὁ Κυριακὸς οἶκος, the Lord's house, whence the word "church." (For breaking bread, see above, ver. 42.) They did take their food. The link of connection is the ἀγάπη or love-feast, which formed an important part of the κοινωνία, or common life, of the early Christians. The whole description is a beautiful picture of Christian unity, piety, love, and joy.

Ver. 47.—*To them day by day for the Church daily, A.V. and T.R.; those that were being saved for such as should be saved, A.V. Added to them day by day.* The R.T. has instead of τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ the words ἐπι τὸ αὐτό, which in ch. ii. 1 are properly rendered "in one place," but do not seem to be rendered at all in the R.V. of this verse. In fact, they have no sense unless you construe them with τοὺς σωζόμενους, "those who escaped to the same place," &c. to the Church. But it seems most probable that the words ἐπι τὸ αὐτό do really belong to ch. iii. 1, where they are found in the T.R. If τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ does not properly belong to

the text (it is wanting in A, B, C, N, and many versions), then *προσετίθει* must be taken absolutely, as *προσετέθησαν* is in ver. 41, the Church, or the disciples, being understood. Those that were being saved. The exhortation in ver. 40 was "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Those

who were added to the Church were those who complied with the exhortation, and escaped from complicity with their unbelieving countrymen. They were the remnant that escaped. (See the use of *οὐκ ὄντες* in the LXX. (2 Chron. xx. 25, etc.), and see Mark xvi. 16.)

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The unity of the Spirit.* If, with the idea of unity in our minds, we read this description of the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church, we cannot but be struck with the manner in which that great idea is exhibited and illustrated.

I. There is first **THE LOCAL UNITY OF THE CHURCH.** They were all together in one place. Many in number, but all of that many come together; drawn by one common impulse to merge their separate existences, their various pursuits, their divergent vocations, their several movements, their independent actions, in one common action, and by that action to come together to one place. All the different reasons and motives which would have kept them separate, and which would have attracted them to different places, were overcome by the common reason and motive which drew them to one place. Nor must we overlook some of the aspects of this local unity. It reveals to us that there was something in the heart of each one of the assembly which felt the need of contact with the others, because there was known to be in those others a like nature and a like spirit and a like yearning to their own. No one felt himself sufficient to himself; there was an outlook in each breast for that which should make up the complement of its own wants, and that complement could only be found in the love of the brethren. It reveals also that sense which each had of mutual support and encouragement, that expectation of strength and countenance to be derived from the presence and the communion of the rest. The Christian instinct told each one, "It is not good to be alone;" faith, love, courage, holy enthusiasm, heavenly zeal, power to act for Christ and his kingdom, wisdom to know, and boldness to execute, counsel before the time of action comes, and decision when it is come,—all are increased and perfected "by that which every joint supplieth." And then, again, this local unity had its immense importance considered in regard to its outward aspect—the aspect which it presented to the world. The individual Simon, or John, or James, might be thrust aside with contempt as an ignorant enthusiast or an eccentric fanatic; but the compact body of the twelve, with the hundred and twenty firmly attached to them, already presented a front to the world imposing from its compactness and the close coherence of all its parts. And, in like manner, a little thought will reveal other aspects of this local unity. The one temple at Jerusalem had contributed not a little to the unity of the twelve tribes, who looked upon it as their common centre, and who met together periodically at that one centre for the offices of their common faith. And so this local unity of the Church, to whom the upper chamber—consecrated, perhaps, by the Lord's presence at the Paschal feast, and endeared by the hours of prayer and waiting passed in it between Easter and Pentecost—was the common place of meeting, was a material prop and buttress to that spiritual unity of which the Lord Jesus Christ was the true Centre.

II. But mark next what we may call **THE OBJECTIVE UNITY OF THE CHURCH** as contemplated by the Holy Ghost. It is not only that the disciples felt their unity, and displayed it in the local unity of which we have spoken, but God the Holy Ghost looked upon them as one, and treated them as one. We read in ver. 3 that "it sat upon each one of them;" not upon the apostles only, not upon certain favoured persons, but upon each one of the assembled saints. It was the one Spirit filling the one body (see Exposition, ver. 3). It is added with emphasis, "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here, then, we have clearly and most impressively set before us the unity of the Church in the sight of God; its unity in respect of privilege and covenanted possession. It is an exposition to practice of St. Paul's saying, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of

his" (Rom. viii. 9), which is here laid before us. It is the baptism with the Holy Ghost, promised by Christ to all his disciples. Here there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female. Sons and daughters alike, bond and free, apostles and children, are all partakers of that one Spirit, because all have been baptized into one body. The invisible bands which tie together in one bundle of spiritual life each particular member of the mystical Body of Christ are discerned by the Holy Ghost.

III. But thirdly, what we may call **THE WILFUL UNITY OF THE CHURCH** stands out prominently in the passage before us: the unity *i.e.* of will and purpose, resulting from the common possession and indwelling of one and the same Spirit, and the fixed desire to act together. Their voices were many, but their theme was one—"the mighty works of God." Their voices were many, but they had one end and aim—to proclaim God's glory, to praise God's works, and to draw all men, however diverse, to his blessed worship and service. The grand design of uniting all mankind in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, of bringing men of all creeds and all colours, of all nations and all languages, into one close unity and fellowship, was present to all their minds and influenced their common action. It was the work they had to do together. The end was dear to each single heart among them, but it was to be accomplished by united effort. And what wonders can be accomplished by united effort! Where one spirit runs through and moves many wills in one direction with an unbroken movement, and those many wills run willingly, harmoniously, and unitedly in their onward course, realizing their union with the Divine will, and rejoicing in the harmony of their own several wills,—what can withstand them? It is the waste of force in the antagonistic movement of the several wills which hinders and checks progress; when one thwarts another, and subtracts his own motive power from that of his brother, instead of adding it thereto. Hence the slow progress of Christianity in our own day compared with that of the apostolic age; hence the weakness of the Church, its feeble victories over sin, its almost defeats by the spirit of infidelity, its apparent inability to cope with the powers of this world. Surely the contemplation of the unity of the Spirit, as seen on the day of Pentecost, should kindle in every Christian breast a longing for a like unity among ourselves.

IV. We may notice lastly, **THE PROSPECTIVE UNITY OF THE CHURCH in its completeness.** The long list of nationalities detailed by the historian, when he enumerates Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and so many other nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa, as all hearing in their own several languages the mighty works of God; the striking narrative of the Holy Spirit of God lighting upon the heads of the Galilean disciples, and, by enabling them to speak with other tongues, removing the barrier of separation between man and man caused by the confusion of tongues; the exhibition of Jerusalem as the Christian metropolis, the birthplace of so many sons and daughters, the centre of union between the apostles of the Lord and believers "out of every nation under heaven" (ver. 6);—all this was surely intended to lead our thoughts and our hopes forward to that blessed day, seen by St. John in vision, when "the great multitude, which no man can number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice and saying, Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." It is to this blessed consummation, when all things shall be gathered together into one in Christ, that every weary heart should look forward. It is a vision of glory to keep before the mind amidst the strife and discord, the divisions and separations, of the existing age. It is light which, seen even at the end of the long perspective of this world's troublous way, should reflect back a softening cheering ray upon each step of our wearisome path, and encourage us to press forward with unflinching purpose till we reach Mount Zion, and behold the Church in her glory. Then shall the brightness of the Pentecostal day pale before the beauty of that day of Christ, and God's purpose will be accomplished in the perfect unity of heart and voice, of will and purpose, of thought and speech, of work and habitation, of the whole multitude whom Christ has redeemed and made kings and priests, that they may reign for ever in the new Jerusalem of God.

Vers. 14—36.—The homily. The first preached sermon was a great event in the history of the Church. When we recollect the enormous influence that preaching has had amongst mankind—the preaching of Peter and John, the preaching of St. Paul, the

preaching of the Augustines, Chrysostoms, Basils of the Church; the preaching of the great monks, St. Bernard, St. Francis, Peter the Hermit, and the preaching friars; the preaching of the Reformers, Wycliffe, Luther, Tyndale, Latimer; the preaching of the Puritans, Knox, Calamy, Baxter; the preaching of the Methodists, Wesley, Whitefield, Fletcher; the preaching of the Evangelicals, Newton, Cecil, Simeon, Scott; the preaching of the Huguenots, Camisards, Lollards, Vaudois; the preaching of the great divines in the Church of England, and of the great pulpit orators outside her pale—we cannot but feel that a peculiar interest attaches to the first sermon preached in the Christian Church. It was a great occasion, and there was a great preacher raised up to profit by it. It will be interesting, as well as instructive, to mark some of the chief features of this primary discourse of the Church's inspired primate.

I. The first thing that strikes one is THE INTENSELY PERSONAL CHARACTER OF THIS SERMON: I mean its direct, pointed, personal application. The apostle is not reading an essay for the use of men in general; he is not beating the air with philosophical speculations or rhetorical flourishes; he is aiming a shaft straight at the mind and conscience of his hearers. He is speaking with impassioned fervour, albeit also with clear intelligence and logical precision, to the men who stand before him; speaking to them of things which concerned them specially and individually; speaking to them with a view to influence their conduct decisively, and to affect their condition presently and eternally. Almost everything in his sermon draws its propriety and its pungency from its close relation to the circumstances, the actions, the belief, the knowledge, the education, the whole character and condition, of those to whom he speaks. The sermon could not have been addressed to any other congregation than that to which it was addressed. Spoken to the Church of Ephesus, or Corinth, or Rome, it would have been out of place and without point. Spoken to the men of Judæa and those that dwelt at Jerusalem in those eventful days; to the men of Israel, who were his own brethren in the flesh and in the common hope of redemption; spoken to those who knew the voices of the prophets and gloried in David their king, who were expecting the advent of Messiah, and yet were partners in the guilt of crucifying the Lord of glory;—the sermon was a sharp arrow, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and discerning the thoughts and intents of their hearts. This feature in St. Peter's sermon ought to be noted and imitated by all whose office it is to "preach the Word." Thus much as to the manner of the sermon. But if we turn to the matter of it, we notice—

II. THAT ALL THE PARTS OF THE SERMON LEAD UP TO JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED, RISEN, AND ASCENDED. The statement of facts, the reasonings, the quotations from Scripture, the arguments, the reproofs, the exhortations,—all point to one central object, which is Jesus Christ the Lord. Without Christ as the subject-matter and end of the preaching, the sermon would go out in darkness. But in the apostle's skilful though simple treatment, the Lord Jesus stands out to the soul's view with great distinctness and with vivid delineations of his office and work. He appeals to the miracles done by Christ in the presence of his hearers, as proofs of his Divine mission. He points to his betrayal and passion; he proves his resurrection from the dead, from the united testimony of the jury of twelve whom they saw standing up before them, from the witness of their own prophets, and from the marvellous signs and sounds which they had just seen and heard. And then he brings home to them the awful guilt of his crucifixion, that, their hearts being pricked and pierced with penitential sorrow, they may turn to him for forgiveness of their sins and for the reception of his Holy Spirit. In this respect also St. Peter is to be imitated by every evangelist and preacher of the Word.

III. Another observable feature in St. Peter's sermon is THE DEEP ACQUAINTANCE WITH HOLY SCRIPTURE DISPLAYED IN IT. The descent of the Holy Ghost, the death of Jesus, his descent into hell, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension to the right hand of God, his office as Christ and Lord, his succession to the throne of his father David, are all proved and illustrated by infallible warrants of Holy Scripture. The hidden meanings of the Word of God, its prophetic wisdom, its most blessed revelations, are all brought forth from the treasury of the preacher's mind, to enrich his discourse and to give depth and solidity to his utterance; teaching us that a thorough knowledge of Holy Scripture is a necessary qualification of every successful preacher of the gospel of Christ. If we add to these the boldness and straightforwardness, the sincerity and

the courtesy, with which the whole discourse was uttered, and the absence of the least appearance of egotism or vain-glory in the whole style of his preaching, we shall feel that we have indeed a good model in this primary sermon for us to copy, and that in proportion as we frame our own sermons upon this great example we may hope to be like St. Peter in the abundance and fulness of our success.

IV. AND HOW WONDERFUL IN THEIR QUALITY AND IN THEIR ABUNDANCE WERE THE FRUITS OF THAT PROTO-PREDICATION OF THE GOSPEL. The hearts of stone turned to hearts of flesh, and pricked to the quick with the stinging sense of sin; the blood-stained crucifiers of the Lord hastening to wash away their sins in the mystical waters of holy baptism; the bold deniers and blasphemers of the Lord confessing him to be both Lord and Christ; the scoffers who had said, "These men are full of new wine," now acknowledging them as brethren, and inquiring of them, "What shall we do?" and in one hour three thousand souls added to the company of the disciples. From that moment the Church stood out before the world as a house built upon an imperishable rock. It took its form and shape among men as a building of God, the habitation of his Spirit, never to be taken down. And it has stood ever since, defying the power of weather and of time; and it will stand through all the fluctuations of human opinion and the convulsions of human institutions, till he whom St. Peter proclaimed as Lord and Christ shall appear in his glory, and his Church shall be glorified with him. O Lord, add to thy Church daily, through the power of thy preached Word, such as shall be saved!

Vers. 37—47.—*Holy baptism.* As the sermon preached by St. Peter on the day of Pentecost was the first sermon preached in the Church of God, so the baptism of which we have here an account was the first ministration of that sacrament. Our Lord's last command to his apostles was, "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 16; ch. i. 5), and now for the first time that command was carried out. A few points of special interest and importance are brought out in the narrative of this first Christian baptism.

I. ITS CLOSE CONNECTION WITH PREACHING. Here St. Peter preaches the Word with power, the hearers are pricked in their heart, and by his direction they are baptized, and so put in possession of the promised salvation. In like manner, in Mark xvi. 16, faith comes by hearing the gospel preached, and baptism is the complement of faith. The first baptism of Gentile believers—that recorded in ch. x. 48—was the fruit of St. Peter's sermon to the house of Cornelius.

II. ITS DISTINCTIVE FEATURE as the "one baptism for the remission of sins." So Ananias said to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins" (ch. xxii. 16). And St. Paul teaches that we are baptized into the death of Christ, and so are freed from sin. And so in the Baptismal Service we pray that the water may be sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin, and that those who come to it may receive remission of their sins; and St. Peter speaks of those who turn away from the holy commandment delivered unto them as having forgotten that they were "purged from their old sins" (2 Pet. i. 9). The element of water points distinctly to this characteristic feature of the sacrament of baptism, as appears in the prophecy of Ezekiel, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25).

III. THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE AND FAITH ON THE PART OF THE BAPTIZED, as it is written, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ," where repentance is expressly named, and faith is necessarily implied in the phrase, being baptized "in the Name of Jesus Christ." And this is exactly the teaching of the Church in the Catechism, where the answer to the question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" is, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament."

IV. THE GREAT GIFT PROMISED TO THOSE WHO, HAVING TRULY REPENTED AND BELIEVED THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM, HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST, viz. the gift of the Holy Ghost. "Repent, and be baptized . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Upon this promise we

shall all do well to fix our thoughts, and to put in our own individual claim to its fulfilment. To have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us is our birthright, as we are Christ's. Our common likeness to Christ as the Head of the Christian family depends upon our possession of the portion of the one Spirit which is given to all that are Christ's. He is the Fountain of all true wisdom, holiness, and love in man; and the great Christian rite of baptism is manifestly incomplete unless we actually possess the great gift which is promised to us in that sacrament. We shall have read in vain the inspired history of the first Christian baptism on the day of Pentecost, when the gift of the Holy Ghost to the newly baptized was surrounded with such striking incidents, and its connection with holy baptism was made so visible and apparent, if we disconnect in our own thoughts the grace of baptism with such an actual indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as shall make us holy in thought, word, and deed. Rather this striking and, one may say, awful narrative should fall upon the ear of the whole Church as a message to urge us who are "afar off" to be at one with those who were "near," in surrendering ourselves to the Holy Ghost to dwell among us and in us as in the holy temple of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The coming of God in power.* The ascended Saviour was about to come in mighty power to the disciples. They were in Jerusalem, "waiting for the promise of the Father;" doubtless they had no anticipation of the way in which that promise would be fulfilled, and must have been struck with the utmost awe and wonder when they found themselves wrought upon with such Divine energies. Our thought is directed to—

I. THE MANIFESTED PRESENCE OF GOD. God revealed his presence through the media of air and fire; the one in unusual, indeed supernatural agitation; the other in unkindled, lambent flame. Both air and fire are fitting elements for the vehicle of Divine manifestation; their ubiquity, their beneficence, the secret and indeed mysterious powers which reside in them, the mighty and even awful forces which slumber in them, and which, when aroused or kindled, work such terrible results ("Our God is a consuming fire"),—these qualities make them suitable agencies to signify the presence of the Divine. But while our God is in the elemental forces of nature, both when they render their kind and constant ministry to mankind and when they are in unusual and quite exceptional activity—though he *is* in the soft airs and the life-giving heats which breathe and brighten round us, and though he *is* in the storm and in the fire which rage above and about us—yet *the way* in which he manifests himself in answer to our earnest prayer and reverent waiting is not thus. Our Lord comes now to us in (1) illumination of the mind, (2) enlargement of the heart, (3) multiplication of spiritual faculty and force, (4) renewal of the will and the whole spiritual nature—we are "filled with the Holy Ghost."

II. HIS CHOSEN TIME. Christ came again to his disciples when they were "all of one accord in one place" (ver. 1). When acting together, praying together, feeling together, hoping and expecting together, *then* he appeared in glorious manifestation. If we who "wait for his appearing" really desire his coming and would do our best to bring him, we must act in the same way; we must be united in thought, in feeling, in prayer, in expectation, in activity.

III. THE DIVINE END IN SPECIAL MANIFESTATION. It was not only to "sound a bell" calling attention to the birth of a new dispensation that Christ thus came in power. It was to convey redeeming truth to many minds and many peoples (vera. 5—11). "Devout men out of every nation" heard "the wonderful works of God," and carried back with them, whithersoever they returned, the knowledge of the great things God had wrought for the children of men. When men say to us "See here!" or "Lo there!" "Behold these strange phenomena, these supernatural appearances, these remarkable displays of Divine power," etc., let us dismiss them with incredulity unless they are working to the Divine end, the spiritual enlightenment and moral elevation of mankind. By their fruits we shall know them. If they "work not the righteous-

ness of God," they are not of him; if they do, they are. So shall we "try the spirits whether they are of him."

IV. OUR HUMAN RESPONSE. (Vers. 12, 13.) The manifestation of Divine power on this occasion excited amazement and incredulity. Of these the former is wholly insufficient and the latter altogether wrong. Only too often this is the result in our case. 1. We are surprised when we ought to be simply grateful; it ought to be a surprise to us when, in response to our prayer and holy expectation, God does *not* come to us in renewing, fertilizing power. When the Son of man does come, does he find the expectancy of faith or the astonishment of unbelief (Luke xviii. 8)? 2. We are incredulous, and perhaps derisive, when we ought to be congratulatory. Some Christian men can account for Divine energy and agency on any principle but the one which should be readiest to their mind, viz. that God is with us, willing to appear on our behalf, prepared to outpour his Spirit in rich effluence on our souls and on our labours. By our incredulity we (1) displease him, (2) hinder the cause we should help, (3) make impossible any blessed share for ourselves in the shouts of victory.—C.

Vers. 14—36.—*Truths from Peter's sermon.* A more glorious opportunity than that now presented no man could desire. Peter was the last man in the world likely to let it go unused. He instantly and, no doubt, eagerly appropriated it. In an animated and forcible address he repelled the idea that the apostles were acting under lower excitements, and showed that a new era had dawned upon the race, of which they should hasten to avail themselves. We gather from his words—

I. THAT THE SOURCE OF HUMAN INSPIRATION MAY BE VERY MUCH HIGHER, AS IT MAY BE VERY MUCH LOWER, THAN IS SUPPOSED. (Vers. 15—17.) It is true enough that what passes for Divine inspiration is often nothing more or better than earth-born excitement, mental or moral heats which are kindled by man and not by God—of the flesh, fleshly. This is abundantly proved by the test of time, and, in these cases, the last state is usually worse than the first. But, on the other hand, it sometimes happens that what is ignorantly mistaken for human passion is nothing less than a Divine afflatus. So here: these men "were not drunken;" God was "pouring out his Spirit" upon them. So has it been in the history of the Christian Church. Men that God has raised up and inspired to do his work have been either contemptuously disregarded, or cruelly decied, or systematically persecuted. Such facts as these should make us wait, examine, inquire, before we dismiss as worthless, or denounce as evil, those who profess to speak for Christ in ways other than our own.

II. THAT THE WHOLE HISTORY OF OUR RACE IS OUTSPREAD BEFORE GOD, AND THAT HIS HAND IS LAID UPON IT. (Vers. 17—20.) The Prophet Joel tells us what God will do. His words are necessarily obscure, for only the facts when they have occurred can make clear and plain their full significance. But we perceive that it was God's purpose, looking on to the future of the world, to pour down at one epoch a very rich effusion of his Spirit on the race, and to "show wonders" of the most extraordinary kind before the end of the dispensation. Everything is foreseen, arranged; the eye of God looks on, and all is before him; his hand, too, is stretched out, and at various points he makes his almighty power to be felt.

III. THAT AMID ALL THE ROCKINGS OF REVOLUTION THERE IS ONE PLACE OF UNFAILING SAFETY. (Ver. 21.) "Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved." Whatever visions are seen, or dreams are dreamed, or prophesyings are uttered on earth; whatever wonders may be wrought in heaven,—the man that makes God his Refuge has no need to fear; he shall be hidden in the everlasting arms of strength and love.

IV. THAT DIVINE PURPOSE IS CO-OPERATIVE WITH HUMAN FREEDOM. (Ver. 23.) Christ Jesus was "delivered by the determinate counsel," etc.; yet he was not so delivered but that they were "wicked hands" that crucified and slew him. The providence of God makes all things possible to us—the noblest achievements and also the darkest crimes; it is our faithfulness which makes us the agents of the one, and our sin which makes us the perpetrators of the other.

V. THAT GOD HAS MADE HIS ETERNAL SON TO OCCUPY THE THRONE OF THE HUMAN WORLD. (Vers. 24—36.) Peter showed: 1. That David had predicted the resurrection of Christ (vers. 25—31). 2. That they could bear positive testimony that he had risen

from the dead (ver. 32). 3. That prophecy pointed him out as One reigning in power, awaiting the final and complete overthrow of all his enemies (vers. 34, 35). Wherefore let every knee bow to him, every heart be subject to his sway; for (1) all power as well as all authority is his; (2) on his side, we are sure of victory and blessedness; (3) ranged against him, we shall be overcome, with terrible disaster to ourselves.—C.

Vers. 37—40.—*The gospel according to Peter.* That which followed immediately on the preaching of Peter's sermon brought out the truths of the gospel quite as fully and forcibly as the discourse itself. We learn from these verses—

I. THE RANGE OF DIVINE LOVE. (Ver. 39.) Peter declared, at this the outset of the new dispensation, that the range of God's redeeming love would be "exceeding broad." 1. It was to go from generation to generation: "to you and to your children." 2. It was to extend to remotest regions: "to all that are afar off." 3. It was to embrace every one whom the summons of the inviting Lord should reach: "as many as the Lord our God shall call." Thus, at the beginning, the apostles gave a true idea of the fulness of that "kingdom of God" of which their Master had spoken so much, and which he lived and died to establish.

II. THE FIRST RESULT OF DIVINE TRUTH. (Ver. 37.) This was (and is): 1. Spiritual agitation. 2. Earnest inquiry. "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart;" they said, "What shall we do?" This is the simple, natural, constant course of things divine in the heart of man. When the truth of God is faithfully preached, and when the seed falls on good soil, there is *spiritual agitation*; the soul is smitten, the heart pierced; there are "great searchings of heart;" the old apathy, self-sufficiency, equanimity, is disturbed and broken up, and the spirit is troubled with a deep disquietude. It discovers that everything is wrong: the past is guilty, the present utterly unsatisfactory, the future clouded. Then comes *earnest inquiry*: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" "Wherewithal shall we come before the Lord?" How shall we be forgiven, justified, accepted? What is the path of reconciliation and peace? Through what spiritual experiences must we pass? What is the way into the kingdom of God? The soul, thus in earnest, turns to the sacred Scriptures or addresses those who speak in the name of Christ.

III. THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRING. (Vers. 38, 40.) 1. Repent; *i.e.* turn from sin and selfishness to righteousness and holy service; abandon the old and evil life of folly, thoughtlessness, worldliness, wrong-doing; put that away with shame and sorrow, and enter the opposite path—turn Godwards, truthwards, heavenwards. 2. Accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your Teacher, Lord, Saviour; be baptized into him. Heartily accept him, and honestly avow him, as your Divine Redeemer. 3. Separate yourself from the sin which surrounds you; "save yourselves," etc. (ver. 40); have no participation in guilt, and have no sympathy or fellowship with sinners, *as such*.

IV. THE PROMISE OF DIVINE MERCY AND INDWELLING POWER. These conditions fulfilled, there will be: 1. Remission of sins (ver. 38). 2. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost (ver. 38). Christ, our almighty Saviour, our Divine Friend, being with us, we shall have *above* us a reconciled heavenly Father to whom we can look up with rejoicing, childlike trust and love; and we shall have *within* us a Holy Spirit, cleansing the thoughts of our heart by his inspiration; sanctifying our nature; empowering us for the burden, the witness, and the battle of life; preparing us for the companionships and engagements of immortality.—C.

Vers. 41—47.—*Spiritual fervour.* The Pentecostal outpour was more than a mere flashing forth of Divine energy, suddenly emitted and immediately withdrawn; it was the communication of Divine power which remained in the Church and resulted in lasting spiritual fervour. This fervour, no doubt, took certain exceptional and temporary forms. 1. There were miracles wrought by the apostles (ver. 43). 2. There was a community of goods (vers. 44, 45), which was so far from being permanent and general, that it only lasted for a short time in the one Church at Jerusalem. 3. There was daily temple-worship, necessarily restricted both as to time and place (ver. 46). But though there were these peculiar and exceptional features, there was much in the spiritual fervour of those earliest days which belongs to every age of the Christian Church.

I. **IT WAS BEGOTTEN OF DIVINE INFLUENCE.** We must not disserve this passage from all that precedes, but remember that this remarkable manifestation of sacred feeling was the outcome of Divine influence. It was the gift of the Holy Ghost, descending upon the Church in copious streams of sacred power, which brought forth these abounding signs of spiritual life. All life in the soul of man is "born from above." Whatever looks like it, in the shape of extraordinary activity or intense feeling, which is not awakened by the Spirit of God, is but the semblance and show of it, and is not the vital thing itself.

II. **IT WAS MANIFESTED IN ABIDING FORMS.** 1. In open declaration of faith in Christ: "They that gladly received his word were baptized" (ver. 41). 2. In attachment to saving truth: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (ver. 42). Souls in earnest will not leave the truth by which they have been led to God to wander in byways of unsatisfying human fancies; still less to go off into the high-road of error. 3. In fellowship: with man, and also with God (vers. 42, 44, 46). The disciples "continued in fellowship, and in breaking of bread;" they "were together;" they "continued with one accord in breaking bread." Here was (1) human fellowship—the cordial, frequent associating one with another; and (2) fellowship with God in the Lord's Supper. 4. In prayer (ver. 42) and in praise (ver. 47). The sacred fervour which often comes as, in part, the result of devotion will spend itself largely in more devotion, in private and public "prayers," and in "praising God." Prayer and praise are the very atmosphere in which elevated piety lives and breathes and has its being. 5. In consideration of the needs of others (vers. 44, 45). They who have a real "zeal for God," who are devoted to Jesus Christ, will ask themselves what they can do to help those who are in need; how they can best contribute to the comfort, the elevation, the well-being of those who are left behind in the race, who are defeated in the battle of life. They will show, in some form—different states of society demand different methods—sympathy, liberality, succour.

III. **IT HAD UNFAILING RESULTS.** 1. *In sacred joy*: "They did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (ver. 46). We may reasonably doubt the excellence of any spiritual fervour which does not show itself in gladness of heart. 2. *In general devoutness*: "Fear came upon every soul" (ver. 43). If we are heartily and wisely in earnest, those who witness our lives will be impressed with the reality of our convictions, and will pause to ask whence this holy ardour comes. 3. *In abounding usefulness* (vers. 41—47). The Lord will add to the Church continually of those who "are in the way of salvation."—C.

Vers. 1—4.—*The epoch of the spiritual dispensation.* I. **THE DAY.** The fiftieth after the Passover; the beginning of the great festival of harvest. What associations of joy! It was a focus of national life. It was a convenient season for the designs of Providence. Jerusalem was thronged, and the multitude was alive with thought. A sound now heard from the depths of the world of spirit must vibrate through the conscience of mankind for ages.

II. **THE SOUND.** As of a mighty blast from heaven, sweeping through the whole house from top to bottom. The phenomena of the wind and of the storm have ever been the natural symbolism of Divine presence and power to the human intelligence. The sense of hearing is the peculiarly believing sense; all through the grades of language faith "cometh by hearing." Now it is the soft voice of love, and now that of power, which speaks; in the zephyr or in the boreal blast.

III. **THE LIGHT.** The eye, too, is addressed. This is the more sceptical sense, and either confirms or corrects the report of the ear. Thomas was in the meeting, and would possibly have explained the sound away. The testimony of the eye is needed for full satisfaction, and is given. Not one but many tongues, cleft and as of fire, are seen; on the head of each disciple rests a tongue. The picture is that of a wing of flame, distributed into manifold parts according to the number of those present. And this is the analysis of the symbol: cleansing, all-penetrating Divine activity; the love that consumes evil, and fuses the material of life to ends of refinement; unity of principle with distributive and various operation in this power. As the burning ray reveals the gem, so does the disparting flame reveal the love that ever burns in the centre of things, in the heart of the living God. Here, then, was the "Spirit

of power and of love” made known through ear and eye in inmost conscience and feeling.

IV. **THE EFFECT.** It was fulness of conscious life, which in turn breaks forth in wondrous action. All things are for this epoch possible. They begin to speak in foreign tongues. Their utterances are felt to be not their own. It is “according as the Spirit granted them utterance.” They are the Æolian harps on which the wind is playing. The best of our speech and thought is in like manner from an inner fulness, and is felt not to be our own. What we do as we say “unconsciously,” *i.e.* conscious that it is not we but God in us, is our true deed. Mozart could not explain to his friend the process of his marvellous musical constructions. At times the thoughts flowed into him in full stream, and he merely reported them as they came. We cannot artificially bring on the hour of inspiration. We must watch and wait and pray. For every faithful heart there are Pentecostal epochs. And of each it will be recorded, “suddenly it came,” like all Divine comings, to leave unlooked-for power and blessing behind.—J.

Vers. 5—13.—*The amazement of the multitude.* I. **WONDER IS CAUSED BY ANY BREAK IN THE REGULAR ORDER AND CUSTOM OF THE WORLD.** It is so in the kingdom of nature, and here in that of spirit. The country-folk of Galilee were least of all likely to acquire the power to speak the tongues of nations with which they were seldom or never in contact. And here unlettered men are found speaking the tongues of ancient and cultivated peoples. It is a type and prophecy of what the gospel in its simplicity is to do for all the varieties of mankind.

II. **WONDER WAS HERE ENHANCED BY THE MATTER AS WELL AS THE MANNER OF THE MESSAGE.** The burden of this deliverance in diverse tongues was the “great deeds” or “mighty works” of God. Notice that power is the great theme. In any new beginning of spiritual life or fresh era of revelation, perhaps it may be said, the power of God must first be felt by the heart before his mercy and love can be rightly received. Our weakness needs the disclosure of the power working within us to make all things possible, and our pride may need chastising by the proof that one touch of that power brings the wisdom of this world to nought.

III. **THE PHENOMENA OF THE SPIRIT ADMIT OF DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS.** The elation and exaltation of the mind produced by the incoming of Divine power outwardly resembles the intoxication of wine, and may readily be mistaken for it. With allusion to this, doubtless, St. Paul said, “Be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit” (see F. W. Robertson’s sermon on this text). This is an example of the coincidence of extreme opposites. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and only the spiritual man can distinguish the spurious from the genuine enthusiasm, the superficial effervescence of bodily excitement from the sublime manifestation of the presence of God in the soul. Here, too, lies a trial of faith. The enthusiast is liable to be confounded with the madman or the fanatic by the many who judge according to appearances. The results can alone show the reality or otherwise of influence. Genuine spiritual power is ever followed by moral regeneration in the community.—J.

Vers. 14—21.—*Interpretation of the phenomena of the Spirit.* I. **THEY ARE NOT TO BE CONFOUNDED WITH THOSE OF SENSUOUS INTOXICATION.** In this case the latter was not in the least likely, for it was still early morning. Indeed, Peter waves aside the explanation with an air of contempt.

II. **THEY ARE TO BE INTERPRETED BY THE LAWS OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE.** 1. *The teaching of the prophets*—the most inspired and enlightened of the race—must be fallen back upon. The prophet lived near to the fount of truth, and was the mouthpiece of the oracles of God. The oracle quoted from Joel lies in the centre of his short roll, and burns there like a core of fire. It seems the one portion of his prophecy which looks beyond the circumstances of his time, and can only be satisfied by repeated fulfilments in the course of all future history. 2. *The contents of the oracle of Joel.* (1) At some epoch undefined there is to be an outpouring of God’s Spirit upon all mankind. (2) The effect of this will be a general outburst of sacred utterance; an intense inward illumination. (3) The whole manifestation is to be accompanied by wonders, symbolic and significant of a spiritual revelation, and the passing away of old and out-

worn customs. (4) It will be an era of deliverance, of salvation. Men will cry to Jehovah, of old the Deliverer, and will be heard and saved from their distresses. With these prophetic hints the apostle would explain the wondrous events of the day. Christianity begins with a new effusion of the Divine into the human, the strengthening and illumination of the finite mind, the enlargement of its gifts of expression; a profound and general impression of the nearness of God, and the joy of a new-found freedom and salvation.—J.

Vers. 22—36.—*The connection of the Christian events.* All history has an inner logic and meaning, contained in the person and the love of God. The secret links of events may be in part traced by us.

I. THE LIFE OF JESUS. 1. *His simple and homely humanity.* "Jesus of Nazareth," a name of scorn to many, of unpretentious lowliness to all. 2. *His gracious, divinely attested career.* Though poor and despised of men, the favour of God was upon him. And the proof was in the energy which went forth from Jesus. Again we come upon the note of *power*. "Mighty works," or "powers," "wonders" which called attention to will introducing change, and "signs," or all-significant acts which pointed to an unusual meaning, attested that Jesus was the Organ of Divine power and will. 3. This *career was public*, led in the light of day. The evidence was not only of the highest quality, but of the most unquestioned universality: "as you all know."

II. THE DESTINY OF JESUS TO DIE. To the superficial observer, or one knowing the facts only from the outside—a Jewish or Roman historian of the time—it might appear that Jesus perished as Judas the Gaulonite had done, the victim of the conflicts of the time. Jewish and Roman interest and passion seemed to unite against him, and he perished, the Victim of hate and misconception. But this was but a small part of the truth. To one instructed in the Divine logic of history, the death of Jesus was no accident; it lay in the laws of the moral order, in the "definite counsel and foreknowledge of God." Yet it was an act of wickedness to put him to death. Possibly we cannot solve in thought the seeming contradiction of the foreknowledge of God and the freedom of man. Enough that we can recognize separately the perfect truth of each.

III. THE UPRAISING OF JESUS. God's hand released him from the grasp of death. Here, again, was the operation of necessary law. *It was impossible that he should be mastered by death*—he who is the very affirmation of life. The absolute life cannot live beneath its negative. And here, again, the past furnishes its hints to the solution of the truth of the present. Spiritual life is imperishable; he who possesses it has an immediate consciousness of immortality, and can find parables of the victory of life over death everywhere.—J.

Vers. 25—28.—*The parable of the Resurrection in David's psalm.* The apostle quotes one of the few utterances in the Old Testament which yield with any distinctness the hope of a life after the grave. But, speaking generally, the psalms, as the choicest expressions of the spiritual life of Israel, are "dark sayings" and "parables" of higher relations than those to which they immediately refer. In this psalm we find—

I. THE IMMEDIATE SENSE OF THE PRESENCE OF THE LIVING GOD. And this is a presence which, once enjoyed, carries with it the promise of its enjoyment for ever. God can never be less to me than he is at the moment of my highest spiritual joy in the possession of him. This sense of his presence gives perfect security.

II. THE EFFECT IS GLADNESS AND TRIUMPHANT HOPE. The soul will not be left in the gloom of Hades, to live on a life but the cold and shadowy reflection of the bright life on earth. This cannot be believed and God's goodness be believed. This cannot be believed and the filial feeling retained. At last all arguments for the immortality of the soul fall back upon this deepest basis, the ineradicable conviction of the goodness of God.

III. THE WHOLE IS AN ARGUMENT FROM THE PAST TO THE FUTURE. "Thou madest known . . . the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of gladness." And the argument may be applied in a wider sense than that present to the mind of the psalmist. For he was a prophet; and all prophecy is a germ which unfolds into endless meanings

which history brings to light. The greatest and most signal fulfilment of the prophecy was in the resurrection of Christ.

IV. THE FACTS, TOGETHER WITH THE PROPHECY, COMBINE IN ONE ARGUMENT FOR THE RESURRECTION. The facts were, that the risen Jesus had been seen by many. That now, after an interval from his departure, there had been a remarkable effusion of spiritual power. With these must be connected the fact that he had spoken of the coming of the Holy Ghost, the "promise of the Father." Putting the whole of the facts together, the conclusion was: Jesus, the despised and crucified, had been exalted to sovereign dignity, and in reference to Israel especially to the Messiahship; to be anointed Prophet, Priest, and King over his people for ever. The coincidence of extreme opposites is to be observed throughout the scheme of the gospel. It is illustrated, above all, in the humility and glorification, the weakness and power, the human contempt, and the Divine honour associated with the person of Jesus.—J.

Vers. 37—47.—*Effects of the Divine power upon the heart.* I. COMPUNCTION. Fear is awakened by every drawing near of God to man. And with fear is closely connected the sense of sin. Stated from the other side, the truth is: behind the power of God lies his holiness, which is as a consuming fire. The deepest seat of fear is not in our physical but in our moral instincts. Thus the fear awakened by the revelation of the All-holy is itself a witness to the fact that conscience is the central unity of our being. Our very self seems threatened when confronted with a Being who judges evil, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

II. INSTINCTIVE DESIRE FOR ACTION. "What shall we do?" Let us not take the words in the grossest sense of personal fear, and mere desire to escape from some imminent outward danger. Why should we? Brave as lions in the ordinary sense, there are men who cannot endure the face of their God. The Object before which all must quail is the Spirit revealed in the inmost moral convictions. All religion is a striving after inner unity, reconciliation between self and God. And the will is deeply concerned in this. It is a good sign when men ask, amidst the pains of a wounded conscience—What must I do? It implies the feeling of freedom; the fact that they have power and will left.

III. THE WAY OF SALVATION. As indicated in the words of Peter. 1. *A change of mind.* Repentance. To see its full meaning we should look to the Greek. It is *μετάνοια*: it is a change of thought from the bad to good, the erroneous to the true, or the less true to the more true. Repentance is not mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being. 2. *The expression of the change of mind.* By baptism—a pure and simple rite, significant to every eye and imagination of washing, of cleansing, of recovered purity, for intelligence, feeling, and conduct. The acts of the spirit are not complete until they have been clothed in outward form. We hardly know ourselves to be changed, and certainly others cannot know that we are changed, without the language of the act. Sacraments are thus needed both for the believer himself and for the society; they have a subjective and an objective value. 3. *The promises of the new life.* The man who comes out of paganism or ritualism is baptized into Christ, i.e. into a spiritual religion which offers promises as well as enjoins duties. (1) *Remission of sins.* Deliverance in its highest and most absolute form. The deliverance which was Israel's age-long dream passes out of its lower, sensuous, typical form of national freedom and independence into the spiritual form of *personal* freedom and independence of the dark necessity, the fate or bondage of sin. It is the discovery that freedom is in this deepest sense a reality which makes Christ's doctrine a great moving force in the world. Men grasp at the shadows of freedom, or the mere skirts of freedom, until this its true shape is revealed. (2) *The gift of the Holy Ghost.* Closely connected with the foregoing; for moral power goes hand in hand with moral freedom. Only in freedom from the oppression of sin can the soul become the organ of the Holy Spirit. The wide extent of this promise. To the chosen people—to their posterity, and to an undefined multitude of the heathen whom God shall call unto him. The *universality* of the gospel blessings here appears in germ, although from the lips

of one who afterwards sided with the Judaizers. The progress of Christianity has been marked by the growing appreciation of the part and place of the nations in the kingdom of God. 4. *Exhortation.* "Be saved from the generation of this crookedness," says the apostle, using an idiom of his native Hebrew. Salvation is ever from a *present evil*, affecting not only the individual but the society. It is the tyranny of custom which weighs upon all. And all that is said in the New Testament about this "present evil world," and the "course" of this world, refers to some such predominance of immoral habits in the general life of society. As evil, Proteus-like, changes its forms from age to age, so is the hope and message of salvation eternally fresh and new.—J.

Vers. 41—47.—*Effects of the Pentecostal day.* I. IMMEDIATE CHANGE ON THE PART OF MANY. Three thousand were found receptive to the truth, so powerfully attested in word and deed, and submitted to baptism.

II. PERSEVERANCE IN DISCIPLESHIP. That the conversion was genuine is shown by their diligent attention to the apostolic instruction, and frequentation of the Christian society. Perhaps no better tests of genuine change can be found. The breaking of bread and the prayers stand for the regular ordinances of religion. The life that is of God will ever prove its worth by becoming a social power, by seeking social nourishment and common edification.

III. THE SPREAD OF A GENERAL SPIRIT OF REVERENCE. This, too, is symptomatic of an outpouring of the Divine Spirit. It is not without reason we speak of the general "tone of society." When and wherever the Church is really alive unto God, and Christians have received an unction from the Holy One, public and private life feels the influence; the newspapers, books, gossip, turn upon serious matters; and the scoffers are shamed.

IV. OCCASIONAL MANIFESTATIONS OF DIVINE POWER. Wonders and signs by the agency of the apostles; in other words, indications of the Divine presence with chosen men, intimating special meanings directing to moral ends. But the occasional ever rests upon the constant and permanent. The wonderful ever serves to direct attention to the regular and the common. We should forget the beneficent law of spiritual things, did not special interruptions arouse us from the stolid apathy of custom.

V. A NEW MODE OF LIFE INTRODUCED. There was a deep sense of unity, and consequently delight in fellowship. They met together; they instinctively sought a perfect equality with one another. To carry this out involved in many instances, doubtless, *great personal sacrifices*—the parting with personal property and distribution to the needy. It was the best proof of love that could be given, and the best of sincerity. Usually the instinct for property is the last thing to go beneath the gracious expulsive power of Divine love. They were striving after the brightest ideal of life that Christian love can dream of; to make "all men's good each man's rule." A joyous religion inspired this conduct. The temple became again what it was designed in idea to be—the house of the Father and the home of man. By that sacred hearth there was for a time a bright, *visible picture* of the spiritual reunion between God and man. They "sat at feast, enjoying each the other's good," because all conscious of partaking of the bread of God. Joy broke into thanksgiving, and the dark shadows of mutual envy were dispersed. Finally, this life of the new Christian community became an irresistible centre of attraction; and daily men "in the way of salvation" were added to the Church. This episode is a type in history of the power and effect of the gospel. That life could not continue at this ideal height only reminds us that the actual world presents irresistible obstacles to the attainment of our best wishes. That it was manifested, though but for a short time, proves the direction of love, and is prophetic of its final dominion in the life of mankind.—J.

Vers. 1—4.—*The day of Pentecost: the manifestation of the Spirit.* I. THE TIME AND PLACE. Correspondence with the facts of the natural world and of the Jewish Church. Harvest festival. Connection with the Passover, from which it was reckoned—seven weeks. The gifts of God poured out at Jerusalem, where yet he was about to pour out his judgments. The new must be grafted on the old, according to the promises in the prophets, that there should still be a remnant according to the election of grace. Favourable position of Palestine to be the centre of the world's religious

life. Distinction from Greece and Rome, and the great absolutisms of the East. Providential education of the Jews to be the world's messengers in Christ's Name. Rebuke of human pride. Not to the wise, not to the wealthy, not to the politically powerful, was the function assigned, but to the small and despised people in whom the gracious preparation was made, to the Church when it was in the attitude of prayer.

II. THE FORM OF MANIFESTATION. 1. *Tongues*; not swords, not sceptres, but the sign of persuasion and moral victory over men's hearts. 2. *Five*, changing, subduing, penetrating, purifying, irresistible. The element of the world's destruction. So the power of truth brings about the overthrow of error and the destruction of the evil world. 3. Accompanied with the *sound of a mighty rushing wind* from heaven, symbol of the *vastness* of the spiritual forces now to be sent upon earth, of their *mysteriousness* of operation, of their *super-earthly* origin; not brought about by any devices or machinery of man's, but the free gift of God, that his Name alone be glorified. 4. *Distributed* amongst God's people; "sat upon each of them," "cloven tongues," probably referring to the flames being divided into portions—"parting asunder" (Revised Version). Whether the *all* of ver. 1 mean all the *twelve apostles* alone, or all the *disciples*, is of little consequence, for the promise of the Spirit was declared by Peter to be for all flesh (see below). 5. *The voice of the Spirit*. Either an *unknown* tongue which the Spirit interpreted, partly by inspiration of those who heard it, and partly by communication of its meaning to individuals, or the special gift of languages imparted for the occasion, by a miraculous elevation of the faculties, so that the uneducated Jew spoke a foreign tongue. The former seems the most likely. But the one great fact is the utterance of the Spirit's voice.—R.

Ver. 4.—*Baptism of the Holy Ghost*. Connect with facts; the position and responsibilities of the Church, the promise given, the antecedent state of the world, the need of a Divine power for the mission of grace, the importance of such a miracle for the confirmation of faith and the establishment of Christianity, the uplifting of the agents above natural infirmities, errors, and sins.

I. A GREAT EPOCH in human history. World filled with many things—thoughts, speculations, strivings, powers; capable of much, but the great want the Spirit. *Truth, love, life*, for a false world—a world at enmity with itself, full of disorder; a dying world, needing to be renewed and restored.

II. A GREAT GIFT of God to man. "*Suddenly*" bestowed; *freely*, apart from man's claims and merits; upon *all*, without respect of persons, for the selection of the few believing Jews, with a view to the abolition of Judaism and of all restrictions; *abundantly*—"all filled," to their own astonishment, with supernatural powers. Spiritual gifts above all other gifts. Even science points to a continuous ascent of man. He is only highest when he is filled with the Spirit of God.

III. A GREAT CHANGE in individuals and in the community. We may anticipate a similar baptism of the Holy Ghost, not with the same external manifestation, but with substantially the same elevation of faith and life. Instances of such a baptism in great preachers and workers, in lowly men and women, in periods of the Church's history. Suddenly the fact may appear, but, like the first Christians, our duty is to be ready for it, waiting, expecting, with one accord, often in one place. Revival of the Church, conversion of the world, should be viewed in their relation to this stupendous change, and what came out of it. Baptism is consecration. The Holy Ghost is not given for signs and wonders, but to endow the Church for its mission to the world. The power of utterance is the great test of Divine endowment, not in the sense of human eloquence, but in the fulfilment of the Spirit's work, to "convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8—10). And so—

IV. A GREAT OPENING OF HEAVEN. The one fact of Pentecost is the pledge of the future. It is the gate through which we can see endless glory: "angels of God ascending and descending." "All the families of the earth" blessed in the true children of Abraham. We must admit of no compromise in the proclamation of *such* a message. If Christianity is no more than a moral doctrine, then Pentecost is lost in the background of a primitive antiquity; if it is "life from the dead," then we must ceaselessly repeat the watchword, "This is he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." We can do nothing without a *Divine Christ, a Divine Spirit, the promise of the*

Father, a new creation. To this opened heaven all are alike invited. The conditions of such a baptism were proclaimed by Jesus himself on the mount, through all his ministry. "Come unto me;" "Ask, and it shall be given unto you;" "Walk in the light, and be children of light."—R.

Vers. 5—13.—*Spiritual facts in a world unprepared to receive them.* I. **DEVOUT MEN** may still be living at a very low point of spiritual apprehension and experience (ver. 5). To many conscientious and sober-minded people the manifestations of the Spirit a perplexity. Hence the importance of a progressive faith, a praying and expectant attitude. Religion apt to grow stagnant and perfunctory.

II. The **MULTITUDE** will be startled by that which comes from heaven. They need to be roused and quickened with great and enthusiastic utterances. The natural tendency of man is to rest in mere second causes. How could these "*Galileans*" so speak? Yet God has something which each one can feel "his own language." The gospel message must be brought home to men's "business and bosoms." Speak to them, not in a learned, or philosophical, or theological phraseology, but in a dialect with which they are familiar.

III. There will be **VARIETY** among perplexed hearers. Some will ask for information, others will mock and scorn, revile and blaspheme. Yet the first opposition or indifference may be followed by a blessed ingathering of souls.

IV. The **FEW SPEAKERS** compared with the vast sphere represented in the multitude—east, west, north, south—reminds us that God hath chosen the weak to confound the mighty. The field is the world, but the small beginning is yet an announcement of the "wonderful works of God." To him there is no small and great.—R.

Vers. 14—36.—*The Spirit speaking through the voice of an apostle.* Notice—

I. The **SIMPLICITY AND DIRECTNESS** of the sermon; beginning with the facts of the present, going back to the facts of the past, and ending in the solemn appeal to enter the kingdom of Christ.

II. The **SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY** on which it rests. The ancient promise of Messiah; the glory of the latter days; the prophetic psalms;—thus showing that the unbelief of those who despised that day of grace was inexcusable.

III. The **INSPIRED BOLDNESS** of utterance. The hearers charged with the rejection of the Messiah; the facts openly proclaimed, and their disproof challenged; the present, ascended glory of Jesus published as the glad tidings which should, if welcomed, obliterate the gloom of the last few years in Israel.

IV. The **AFFECTIONATE EARNESTNESS** mingling with all the discourse. A true Israelite is speaking as a brother to those who were the "house of Israel," over which Jesus came to be the Head.—R.

Ver. 21.—*The common salvation.* "And it shall be," etc.

I. **WHAT IT IS.** 1. Salvation, both present and eternal, in the *great day of the Lord*; amid the terrors of judgment. 2. *Spiritual life*, given by God, given to all and of every condition, manifested in the life and in the character, opening the eyes of the soul to Divine realities and future glories; flesh receives it, and is made spiritual; a new creation is pledged by it; flesh lifted up into the immortality of heaven. 3. Salvation through the *Name of the Lord*, wrought by him, illustrated by the wonderful facts of his history, secured by his infinite merit.

II. **THE SIMPLE CONDITION.** "Call on the Name of the Lord;" another description of faith in Old Testament language, including: 1. The soul's *cry for help* in the sense of sin and misery; call as one dying. 2. *Apprehension* of the Saviour. The name is the person, the character, the claim, the authority, the promise. 3. Prayerful consecration in response to the Divine grace. The day of salvation is light around us. We accept the light as the light of *life*. 4. *Universality* of the proclamation—"whosoever." The spiritual gifts are not poured out upon all, but the moving of a new life is the invitation to growth in grace. The words of Joel remind us that there are *special crises* of opportunity, which it is awful sin to slight. Where many are "calling on the Lord," shall we be dumb? "Who shall abide the day of his coming?"—R.

Ver. 22.—*The Divine humanity.* “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God.”

I. THE CLAIM. 1. Viewed in the light of human work. *A man*, to teach, to atone, to lead, as never man did. Compare the human supply of such wants with that provided by God in Christ. 2. Viewed in the light of Scripture promises. The line of prediction from the protovangel to the promise of the “Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings.”

II. THE PROOF OF THE CLAIM. 1. The superhuman character of Christ’s humanity; as spotlessly pure, coming forth out of an impure nation and decayed religious life; as supreme in spiritual qualities—love, self-sacrifice, etc. 2. The direct testimonies given by God, at birth, baptism, with a voice from the cloud, etc. 3. The works of the Lord himself. Their authority thus solemnly and conspicuously put forth by the Apostle Peter; their embodiment in the gospel; their harmony with the character and mission of the Saviour; their superiority to all others, before or since. “God did them.”

III. THE APPEALING FORCE OF THE CLAIM. 1. A “great salvation!” “How can we escape, if we neglect” it? 2. A Man amongst men, touched with fellow-feeling, tenderly claiming obedience. 3. A Name which gathers round it the testimony of the multitude which no man can number, approved by the facts of salvation in the past, waiting to find in us another proof that he is “able to save unto the uttermost,” etc.—R.

Ver. 33.—*Royal bounty.* “Being therefore,” etc.

I. RECEIVED OF THE FATHER. The throne of Christ is the right hand of the Father. “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” The obedience of Christ rewarded. The highest manifestation of the Divine in the Man Christ Jesus. The only true view of infinite power is that which sees it on Christ’s throne as the source of the Spirit of life. Man’s power destroys, God’s power creates and saves. The thrones of this world fall, because they are so unlike Christ’s throne.

II. THE HIGHEST SUMMIT which Jesus reached; to which he was exalted. He did not throw off humanity, but carried it with him. For the sake of it he endured the cross. The glory of the throne shines through the earthly scenes of his history. So we can see the summit of our blessedness beyond and through the steep sides of the earthly path. Exalted for us, Jesus shows us that there is a holy ambition which is not self-worship, but self-sacrifice. James and John were not reproved for desiring to sit beside Jesus, but for desiring it apart from Divine appointment—as mere personal favour.

III. THE GIFT ITSELF. “He hath shed forth this, which ye see and hear.” Spiritual power is given that it may be manifested; not in the world’s forms, not as ecclesiastics have claimed to exhibit it, but with Pentecostal grace—distinguished men, subduing and captivating messages. The poverty of the Church without this gift. The evidence of its presence in the spirit of loyalty to the King from whose throne it descends. Christ-like power is what we want. The individual appeal: “Ye see and hear.” The gift is already bestowed. Why should any be without it? An appeal (as in ver. 36) to the Crucifixion. “Ye slew him; yet he offers you his grace. Ye said, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us;’ yet he holds out his sceptre, and invites you to sit down with him on his throne.” **Is not this a love to put on the throne of our hearts?**—R.

Vers. 37—42.—*The day of spiritual wonders.* I. WROUGHT IN THE HEART. Repentance. Anxious inquiry. Submission to Divine teaching. Separation from the old life. Depth of the work revealed in progressive steadfastness.

II. THE FRUIT OF HUMAN AGENCY accompanied by Divine power. Preaching, the testimony of believers, the sight of wonders, the open gate of the Church.

III. SEALED with the appointed sign of the Spirit. Baptism, both selective and consecrative in meaning. It was to separate and to unite. Save yourselves *from* this generation. God calls you unto *him*.

IV. GIVEN IN GREAT ABUNDANCE. “Three thousand souls;” as encouragement to the Church; as a sign of promise and invitation to the world; as a confirmation of the gospel; as a preparation for immediate assault upon the mass of unbelief. For though

God can work with small and insignificant instrumentality, he summons his people to make great efforts.

V. The PLEDGE, PROMISE, AND PROPHECY of the world's ingathering. Nations shall be born in a day. The wonders of Pentecost may and shall be repeated, though we should not look for the repetition of the exact mode and form.

VI. The wonderful is a preparation in the spiritual world for the ORDERLY AND REGULAR. (Ver. 42.) As soon as possible the fruits of great revivals and religious excitements should be built up into the steadfast system and abiding fellowship. In the Church God works, as in the natural world. The new and extraordinary is brought at once into relation to the continuous line of progressive life.

VII. THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH stand immediately connected with its most vital point. When the spiritual life was freshest and least formalized, baptism and the Lord's Supper were observed. The antidote to sacramentarianism is not disparagement of that which the Lord himself appointed, but the closer identification of the rite with the spiritual grace which gives it reality. The true presence and operation of the Spirit is the remedy for all the evils of the professing Church; making work, prayer, teaching, fellowship, the regular and the extraordinary, all alike pure and true and heavenly.—R.

Ver. 37.—*The soul's questions answered.* "Now when they heard this," etc.

I. THE TRUE RELIGIOUS AWAKENING. 1. *Distinguished from mere excitement*; from educational and conventional preparation for public acknowledgment of Christianity; from an attitude produced by personal influences or circumstances, as a child pressed to call itself a Christian by parental affection, or a member of a congregation almost unconsciously carried forward to a position which has no true and deep feeling to support it. 2. *The fruit of preaching*, or other setting forth of the facts of the gospel in relation to the individual. The hearers were pricked to the heart, because they felt the application to themselves of the apostle's appeal. He did not employ any irregular or even sensational methods; he proclaimed the facts. He said, "You are verily guilty; the promise is made unto you." Directness of appeal cannot fail of its effects. 3. *The work of a special bestowal of the Spirit.* It was intelligent, conscientious, heartfelt, outspoken. There is no intimation of any abnormal manifestations, but simply the calm, earnest question of personal anxiety: "What shall we do?" Spiritual life begins in different ways, but it will always be marked by conviction of sin and acceptance of offered grace. Heart, conscience, life,—all changed.

II. THE TRUE BEGINNING OF RELIGIOUS LIFE. 1. *It is towards God.* The inner man recognizing the facts, responding to the appeal, turning the heart from its perversity and selfishness, feeling and acknowledging the greatness of the sin and the danger of condemnation. The tendency to multitudinism is one of the most injurious in modern life. The gathering of masses, not really changed towards God, into the associations of the Church, and so into a state of calm security as to their religious prospects, is a barrier to a vital, spiritual advancement. Better the Church should not be increased with its thousands, than that they should be mere nominal Christians. 2. *It is towards man.* They addressed themselves to Peter and the rest of the apostles. Religious life is not a solitary thing, not a mere matter between the soul and God; but between the man and his fellow-man—between the individual believer and the Church of Christ. The questions of the anxious and seeking souls should be drawn out by the Church. The Church should present itself to the world in such a way that the questions should be both humbly and affectionately asked. There is an authority of superior knowledge and experience and tried character which should be able to make itself felt. Yet men should see that we are their brethren, and that love to their souls is our ruling motive. "What shall we do?" Though we often teach men their moral helplessness and nothingness—that Christ has done all—still all true religious life means action; life must reveal energy, express itself in conscious, steadfast effort. The apostle immediately directed the awakened people to do something for themselves. "Be baptized;" "Come out and be separate." While it is possible to press an immature religious life to too early an acknowledgment, it is well to follow the apostolic precedents, and seal impression and resolve, with decided action and public testimony. We must cast ourselves on God. We are safer in the Church than in the world. Everywhere there is temptation, but the pledged Christian will have help in his holy vows.—R.

Ver. 39.—*God's promise of the Spirit.* "For to you is the promise," etc.

I. Consider it as the NEED of man, and the fulfilment of that whole dispensation of mercy under which man was placed when he fell. 1. Trace it through the bestowments of *the Old Testament*, and show that while God was ever bestowing his Spirit, both in special manifestations as in the inspiration of his messengers, and in individual life, yet the requirement of man was that in connection with a larger communication of truth and redeeming love there should be the lifting up of humanity itself, of the spirits of men by Divine gifts. 2. Show that such is *God's method always*. With gifts from without he sends gifts within. The gifts of science and discovery accompany an elevation of the mind and life of the world. Moreover, it is a Divine gift to be able to speak for Christ.

II. Consider the EXTENT AND APPLICATION of the promise. 1. Apart from all restrictions of human merit. To the crucifiers of Jesus—for God is merciful; to the Jew, notwithstanding his abuse of special privileges; to the Gentile, notwithstanding ignorance and degradation. 2. Apart from all restrictions of age. To the children as well as to the adults; to the families as well as the heads of households: for though the word "children" does not necessarily denote infants, it does not exclude them, and in such ways as by the analogy of Scripture we can interpret the "promise to the children," the word applies to the youngest. The Jew might well understand it as a covenant, which, like that of circumcision, was applied in its signs to the infant. 3. Wider than the utmost limits of human knowledge and belief. It is not for us, as it was not for the Apostle Peter, to say "whom the Lord our God should call." He has no respect of persons. He calls those whom we should not call. Peter himself was soon taught that God's purposes cannot be judged by man. The universality of the Spirit is the basis of all missionary efforts—the bond of the true Church.—R.

Vers. 41, 42.—*The beginning of great things.* "Then they that gladly received his word," etc. Trace the instrumentality from the shore of Lake Genncsaret, through the fall and restoration of Peter, to the day of Pentecost. One man standing up in that multitude endowed with spiritual gifts—with the proclamation of the gospel, or the sling and stone with which to conquer.

I. A WONDERFUL TESTIMONY TO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. 1. *The victory* over prejudice, indifference, fear—all the evil of heart and life. Full-grown men—Jews. Jews of that degenerate age, in the midst of anti-Christian influences, accepting a Word which condemned themselves—which incited them to forsake their old life, and count all things loss for Christ. Not only moved and partially changed, but wholly converted; ready to be put, by baptism, into the new life opened to them. 2. *The vastness of the work* accomplished. Not here and there one, but three thousand souls, which, as representatives of families and connections, may be reckoned as at least twenty thousand. Scarcely possible that every one should be individually solicited. The work was spiritual, miraculous. While there is much in the effect of numbers—the rapid spread of a common sentiment by contact of soul with soul, there is in the narrative no appearance of undue excitement. We must regard the fact as specially ordained, that there might be a mighty impetus given to the gospel at its starting-point. Many of the three thousand would become messengers to prepare the way of the Lord in heathen lands. 3. *The signs of a new creation.* In that multitude of converts there is no chaotic confusion, but the order of a new world rising into view. The leadership of apostles; the fellowship; the observance of the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; the recognition of prayer as an expression of faith and dependence on the continual outpouring of the Spirit. The apostolic commencement of the Church must be the model to which we continually refer for the corrections of those natural errors of development which, if not so called back to the ideal of the kingdom, will, by mixture with the world, destroy the fundamental conception of Christianity.

II. A GREAT EXAMPLE OF ABIDING SUCCESS IN SPIRITUAL ENTERPRISE. 1. Remark the entire *simplicity and sincerity* of the agents. Much of our failure caused by mixing up mere human schemes and inventions with the gospel. Danger of reactions. The Word was clearly, boldly, and fully preached, with direct personal appeal to the conscience as well as to the heart. 2. The steadfastness was the result of a continued *use of the means of grace*—teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers. We lose many whom

we reach with our word by not throwing round them quickly the net of our Christian community and institutions. 3. A great lesson on the importance of *waiting for God's time*, and being ready to receive the Spirit. All mere *got-up* revivals result in failure. God's Spirit will himself teach us *how* and *when* to expect the success. Follow the leadings of Providence.—R.

Vers. 43—47.—*The spiritual commonwealth.* The Bible not intended to be a statute-book for nations, but a Book of Divine principles, which, while they should underlie all legislation, are not intended to supersede the natural development of human law. The glimpse into the earliest Church life specially helpful to God's people, indirectly so to the world. Confirmation of the Acts in heathen authors, as Lucian, in his 'Peregrinus Proteus,' who refers to the community of goods and other features of the early Church.

I. THE EDIFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH RESTS UPON THE SUPERNATURAL. Fear on every soul; signs and wonders. Divine work both in the outward world and in the hearts and consciences of men.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE UNITING BOND in the new society is spiritual; not mere companionship, or social instinct, or common necessity, or political aim, but brotherly love springing out of faith—a faith showing itself in self-sacrifice and steadfastness.

III. THE SPECIALITY AND DISTINCTNESS of the Christian life in the midst of such a world. Unselfishness, mutual consideration, compassion for the needy, gladness and singleness of heart, devoutness, purity of home life, steadfast continuing in well-doing.

IV. THE MIGHTY EFFECT of a pure Church upon an impure world. The true method of spreading religion is not by breaking down the distinctions between Church life and worldly life, but by revealing the spiritual power of Christ's kingdom. "They had favour with all the people." The people know how to distinguish between reality and pretence. They will be always moved by sincerity. The Lord will add to his own work. The method which we see in nature is a type of that which is ordained in grace. The vigorous life is selected to carry on the increase. Half-hearted Christianity cannot convert the world. Multitudinism is a great mistake, as well as mockery of Christ. Let the Lord add to the Church; let not our desires, or even our observances of Christian institutions, multiply numbers without increasing strength.—R.

Ver. 47.—*God's work amongst men.* "And the Lord added," etc. Difficulty of reading history, especially Christian history, without reading into it our own prejudices and opinions. Infancy of the Church an important study; but as an adult often misunderstands a child, so we must beware of misconstruction of the simple facts. Yet a great good in getting as near as possible to the purity and unsophisticated artlessness of the primitive Church; a fresher, sweeter, more beautiful life. Connect this last verse of the chapter with what goes before. It is all a testimony to the Lord and his work. The prejudice against the supernatural is best overcome by pointing to the facts of Christian history and life. How could the Church have conquered the world unless the Divine had been manifested specially in the human? The few verses which describe the immediate sequel of the day of Pentecost like an open door into the new temple, which should take the place of the old. The disciples clung to the building in Jerusalem, but they themselves were the prophecy of a higher, spiritual edifice which should be filled with a greater glory.

I. SALVATION A FACT. "Be saved," or "those being saved." 1. *The rescue.* Salvation from self—as sinful, condemned, corrupt, dying; from the "untoward generation," *i.e.* from the world—from the sinful life and habits. If the message was understood in Jerusalem, so everywhere. Salvation is coming out of the old world into the new. 2. The gracious reception and pledged security. "Saved"—like the fugitive passing through the gate of the fortress. Necessity that there should be a separation unto Christ. The baptism was a confession by the mouth "unto salvation" *i.e.* unto safety within the fold. Not that the fold is itself equivalent to salvation, but it is the pledge of Divine grace. The presence and operation of the Holy Spirit set the promises of God clearly before men's eyes. They were invited to put themselves into the embrace of Divine power. So still, men are scarcely safe when they despise the fold of Christ.

II. SPIRITUAL WORK THE HOPE OF THE WORLD. "The Lord added to the Church" (or "to them," Revised Version). Divine in its origin, the grain of mustard seed has never ceased to grow—must spread to the ends of the earth. The difference between Church life and ecclesiastical assumptions. The true Church neither a mere assembly nor association, but a Divine fact—the body of Christ. The Name of Christ the rallying-point, the presence and authority of Christ the power. There was *confession*—open, public, decided; there was *fellowship*—true brotherly love; there was apostolic *doctrine and order*—not formalism, but living obedience to the laws of Christ. Sentiment and ceremony not to be substituted for practical religion. The community was not communistic. It was not a revolt against laws nor an experiment in politics; it was a simple method of expressing the sense of separation from the world. The believers must be provided for at any sacrifice, that they may continue faithful to Christ. It was not for the sake of abolishing distinctions, but of substituting the spiritual distinction for the falsehood of the world. In Christ Jesus there is neither high nor low, rich nor poor; all are one in him. The true remedy against mammon-worship, with all its crowd of evils, is to set human life on the spiritual basis. "Seek first the kingdom of God," etc. The renovation of the world will be by the increase of the Church.

III. THE OPEN SECRET OF CHRISTIANITY the mingling together of Divine power and human agency. Incarnation begins the Gospels, the day of Pentecost the Acts. The Lord must add to the Church. The Church must confess its own insufficiency, and seek the Lord. "Day by day" the addition was made, day by day the blessing falls. Aek for it, individually and in fellowship.—R.

Vers. 1—41.—*The day of Pentecost, and its immediate gifts.* "And when the day of Pentecost . . . And the same day there were added about three thousand souls." The day of Pentecost is emphatically the complement of the great days of the New Testament. The visible glories of this day are the fitting sequel, the almost natural sequel, of the more veiled glories of certain days that had preceded it. The heavenly lustre and music of the day of incarnation, unique as they were, reached the eye and ear of but few. The world was asleep! The dread, tremendous glory of the day of crucifixion, charged though it was with fullest significance, was not seen to be such at the time. The glories of the day of resurrection undeniably opened eyes and hearts to the keenest and most thankful appreciation of them, but their appeal was to a very limited number. When the calm, sweet, strange glory of Ascension Day revealed a vision of literally endless light, the scene undoubtedly began to widen, if only that it so heightened. And now but a short interval has passed, and there is a certain *manifestation* given to this day of Pentecost which reflects floods of glory upon the Giver, and pours light and hope, new and amazing, upon a world well-nigh prostrate. It is the simply told history of this day that is written for us in this chapter. And it tells us of—

I. THE MAGNIFICENT INTERVENTION OF A SUPERNATURAL PRESENCE. (Vers. 2—4). Observe: 1. *The signs of the presence.* It is distinguished by (1) the sound of wind, apparently without the usual other accompaniments of it to the *feeling*. (2) The sound of wind of irresistible and conquering energy. It is not as when "the Spirit of God moved on the face of the" archaic "waters" (Gen. i. 2), and it is not "as summer evening's latest sigh, that shuts the rose." No; nor is it as the "stormy wind and tempest." The elements are not in confusion, and the wind is not furious. But it sweeps along, nevertheless, with a certain irresistible majesty; rather, it distinctly thus sweeps down "from heaven." It is wind that "bears itself down," and is "full of might." (3) Its facile pervading and penetrating of "all the house where" the disciples "were sitting." St. John, for certain, was there, and learned then the grand original of his later—ay, much later—Patmos experience, "I was *in* the Spirit." All in "that house" were enveloped, bathed, "baptized" in the Holy Spirit. (4) An added *appearance*; an appearance of fire, manifold fire, every several portion of the bright burning shaped as the tongue, and one of these speeding to settle on each of the startled assembly of disciples. 2. *The first and direct results of the presence.* (1) Those to whom it was vouchsafed, and who "were sitting in the house," are "all filled with the Holy Spirit." This is the testimony, the assertion, of the historian at a somewhat

later period. Whether those who experienced the wonderful force knew in that same hour what had thus taken possession of them may be a question. If they knew it not in name, they very certainly began to know it in its marvellous nature. We justly give our imagination some leave of exercise here, and the more happily if that imagination can assist itself in any degree from the materials of our own experience of the quickening, invigorating influences of the Spirit in our heart. Evidently in degrees, ranging from little to the largest, does that Spirit vouchsafe his visits and his work in human hearts. What would it be if we knew him to-day in some really large measure! What conviction it would be to the individual heart! What commanding joy, inexpressible, overflowing to the very life and soul of any one disciple! But if such a visitation were granted to a gathering of disciples—just *one* meeting of Christian people—making account of the different time of day, the greater enlargement of scope of the day, the crowded people around, millions for thousands, the rapidity and trustworthiness of communication,—surely England itself would scarce contain the excitement, and the *Church* might well be beside herself for very joy. The mere imagination of this will help to reproduce for us some more vivid idea of the surprise of that moment, that hour of the day of Pentecost. (2) Those who were thus filled with the Holy Spirit are not rapt in ecstatic feeling, do not improvise celestial psalm and music, but they speak the many languages of earth. *They* speak, but the Spirit gives them the speech. *They* speak, but it is now literally fulfilled that the Spirit gives them in that same hour what they shall speak. The case is one of genuine *verbal* inspiration. There is little doubt, perhaps, that these numerous disciples spoke words which they did not understand the meaning of (1 Cor. xiv. 22), nor could have “interpreted” had they been called to do so. They uttered *sounds*, their faculties of speech being subject to the mighty and condescending power of the Holy Spirit. What of loss of dignity this may at first seem to the disciples, is far more than counter-balanced, not only by the suggestions of honour set on the organs of human speech in the use of them by One who may for the moment be called the Maker and Giver of them, but also by the gain of a clearly more impressive result. There was far less *mixture* of the human element in the Divine communication that purported to pass from the Spirit to the ear and mind of a large number of various-speaking peoples. It is the difference to us of a correspondent who indeed uses an amanuensis, as St. Paul often did in his Epistles, but who keeps with himself the dictating of every word. Such a one has not left the selection of words, or style, or turn of expression to another; and this is the *chief* thing we care about, though we should have prized his handwriting as well. Nor need it seem at all too far-fetched an inference, if any one hesitated to count it a *designed* arrangement, that through this *speaking* being so essentially the act of the Holy Spirit, a very strong suggestion of the *personality* of that Spirit should be borne in on the disciples then, and much more on disciples of succeeding ages. Absolute speech does not come from what is merely an influence, an energy, a power. It is the function of a person. And it is one of the highest of prerogatives of the human being. The disciples had lost a personal Presence, in the person of Jesus, which could never be replaced, and which never was to be replaced till he should “so come” again, “in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.” And yet, though the personal presence of Jesus was not to be replaced by another personal presence, it *was* most surely to be replaced by the presence of a Person. Would it not be calculated to assist disciples both to believe *correctly* and to feel grateful that the ever-invisible Spirit was none the less a Personage, a Being—not a vague influence nor a phantom? And *now* there is probably no cardinal fact of Christianity less honoured, less operative, than that of the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the disastrous causes of his being too often “slighted,” “sinned against,” “grieved,” and “quenched.” 3. *Certain incidents in the presence.* It is fitted (1) to a certain time. “When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” The time was certain; it was fore-spoken by Jesus; it was waited for by his disciples. But though certain, alluded to, and awaited, neither “the day nor the hour” was revealed. (2) To a certain place. The place certainly was Jerusalem. And the same Being who told the disciples “not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait” there, was one who “knew” also “the place,” the “one place,” of his loved people’s loved meeting, as he had once well known “the place” of his own agony—the garden. (3) To a certain temper of heart. “They were

all with one accord," *i.e. together*, "in one place." Juxtaposition and visible association do not always infer the purest of harmony by any means. But they did infer it now; and that the disciples were all with one accord in one place was the real fruit of their being all "of one accord." Since that blessed day, true it is—too true—that Christ's people have very often been "together" when they have not been "of one accord," "of one mind," "having the same love," "like-minded." But it was so now. And if it had not been, the grandeur of the day would either never have been at all, or would have "set in darkness" and shame. (4) Of undoubted design, to a congregate body, and one, comparatively speaking, *numerous*. No longer to a woman by herself, no longer to two disciples alone, no longer to the twelve, or the eleven, but at all events to some ten times that number (ch. i. 15). The Spirit often whispers silently, stealthily almost, in the ear of the soul most solitary. Not so now. The sacred illumination, sacred quickened faculty, and sacred joy shall possess "each" and "all together" of that new style of family, that infant Church—that little company of fellow-pilgrims, of fellow-voyagers, of a mere handful of an army. They need food, and strength, and comfort, and the inspiration of experiences—never, never to be forgotten—*shared together*. Grand uses frequently come of the Spirit's force over one individual, and him the obscurest of the obscure; but now grand uses were to come for themselves, for one another, for a world, in that the disciples were *associated* so variously, yet so closely, in ecstatic privilege, in unbounded surprise, and in the consentaneous joy of the unwonted inspiration that came "wild-murmuring o'er their raptured souls." (5) To an occasion that either admitted of the testimony or invited the challenge of a large and various multitude. There were present the comparatively large number of those who experienced the power of the Holy Ghost, but there were also near at hand a very much larger number of those who soon became spectators of what was transpiring. They were not only a large number, but a very various number. They hailed from different regions; they spoke different languages; their objects and their modes of life were, no doubt, very various. It were inconceivable that any collusion should obtain here, so far as spectators were concerned. In their excitement, and in the open expression of it, so natural, some did challenge, though the pitiful challenge fell still-born to the ground. "New wine" never wrought such marvel, each nationality must have felt, when addressed touching "the wonderful works of God" in its own language. But till then the Parthian, for instance, might set down to "new wine" the discordant sounds, as they must seem to him, of a dozen other nationalities. Just so far there was reason in the "mocking;" and, at all events, there was *use* in it. For the "new wine" theory found expression, got a hearing, and got a verdict too! Most profitable was this occasion, when "the multitude were confounded . . . were all amazed and marvelled . . . were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? . . . and others mocking said, These men are full of new wine." Such awakening, such spirit of inquiry and investigation, such clear proof of a readiness to challenge appearances rather than succumb too readily and run the chance of delusion, made for every man that was there a strong, convinced *witness* in time to come, and in the home and country of each. From being excited spectators, they became, man for man, so many intelligent and determined *witnesses* of "the wonderful works of God." From being gaping hearers, they became instructed and impressive preachers. And the unsettledness of their mind gave place to deep, unmoved conviction. The adaptation of occasion here gave two great advantages—the advantage of satisfactory and conclusive evidence, and that of an effective and willing missionary service over large portions of the earth.

II. A GRAND MANIFESTATION—DAY OF PROPHECY. (Vers. 16—21.) This was a very gala-day of prophecy. Often distrusted, often mocked, and often saluted with the taunting question, "Where is the promise of his coming?"—*now* the scene which stirred all Jerusalem was one "in demonstration of that Spirit and power" which dwelt in it. The day witnessed in matter prophetic the majestic force of the avalanche, overwhelming doubt and disbelief in deep destruction indeed, but carrying no other destructiveness with it. The piled predictions of ages past no longer tower aloft so proudly and forbiddingly, but they fall at the feet of an amazed, an astounded, but a revived and gladdened nation. Or, if the figure be permitted, the leases of property of immeasurable value fall in this day. And that this was a day of justest pride in

the career of prophecy, may be testified by the thought: 1. Of the largeness of the contents of it. The volume is an ample one indeed. What treasures it unrolled, and all the while seemed to say spontaneously, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in *your hearing*"! It was an abounding harvest that was now gathered in ripe,—a rich and gladdening vintage. It is not prophecy fulfilled for an individual king or mighty man, nor for a caste of priests, nor for a band of prophets, but it includes "all flesh, . . . sons and daughters, . . . young men, . . . and old men, . . . my servants and my handmaidens." It proved itself over a wide variety of human character and condition. 2. Of the intrinsic nature of it. "They shall prophesy." It is a fulfilment in *spiritual* sort. The Spirit is the great Worker, and spiritual results are still what underlie great outer wonders. Living powers of human nature, immensely intensified and diversified, —these are the *phenomena* at all events. They are marked as "the beginning," not of "sorrows," not of "tribulation," not of "miracles," but of "signs" that contain an amount and a kind of *signifying* power far in excess of all which had ever been. Now *began*—whatever its duration should prove to be—this world's last *æon*. And strongly marked are its characteristics from the first. "All flesh" begin to answer responsive to the might of the invisible Spirit, and in a certain sense the very presumption of Saul, and of those who were stricken because they touched the sacred ark, begins to be the law. Directness of individual contact with whatever should be most holy, for each and all, becomes the established, the enthroned religion of the world.

III. A GLORIOUS DISCLOSURE AND EMPHATIC PROCLAMATION COUCHED IN THE VERY WORDS OF ANCIENT REVERED PROPHECY. (Ver. 21.) That very prophecy that had seemed to cover, now served to proclaim loudly and distinctly the universal mercy of the one universal "Lord." The "gracious word" now proceeds from its lip, to begin its unresting journey. What a word was this, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved"! It is the disclosure in broadest daylight of the purpose of ages past; yes, of a purpose that had been purposed before the world began. Most assuredly prophecy had held it, and had made it visible, but to very few who *beheld*, though it was before their eyes. The eyes even of those to whom it *was* given to see "were holden that they knew" it not. And the vast multitude outside were long time dying without the knowledge or so much as one glimpse of it. Of the past three years Jesus had given significant hints of it in some of his works, and had whispered it sometimes in the ears of his disciples, and had distinctly uttered it in his parting commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." But to the day of Pentecost "is this grace given," that it should preach aloud, with a hundred tongues, and a hundred better than silver trumpets, the riches of the gospel of Christ. Three things mark what was then in particular, and what must ever essentially be the surprising riches of the proclamation. 1. It is hope to all and every one. 2. It is the call of a human voice alone, no doubt drawn deep from the heart, that is the method, the one simple method of access to that hope. 3. The hope is that of no mere respite, subterfuge, soothing relief, but of *salvation*. Exclusiveness "is finished;" ritual, ceremony, sacrifice, the earthly priest,—each "is finished;" tantalizing expectancy "is finished;" and everlasting salvation is to be had free, by any one and by every one, for the one anguished or trustful call of the heart "on the Name of the Lord." It is a fact worthy to be noticed, that, as the gospel of Jesus' own public ministry began from the quotation of Isaiah's prophecy (Luke iv. 17—21; Isa. lxi. 1), so the gospel of the day of Pentecost begins its illustrious career with the motto of a quotation from prophecy (Joel ii. 28—32). These two links—were they the only ones—how strongly they bind together the Scriptures of the old and new covenants, and the covenants themselves!

IV. THE FIRST OF THE LONG SUCCESSION OF CHRISTIAN PREACHERS. (Vers. 14, 29, 38). This honour was reserved for Peter, to be the first of that "great company which publish" the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ. He had been preparing for this place now these three years. He had passed through good fame and through ill, through not a little most merited rebuke; he had passed through, not the discipline of warning and correction alone, but also through that of the genial influences and constant stimulus of priceless privileges. The memories of the fishing, and the storm, and the walking on the water, and the death-chamber, and the brilliant heights of the Transfiguration, and the darkest contrasts of the shades of Gethsemane's garden, and the

judgment hall, and the look vouchsafed from the very cross after the terrible thrice denial, and of all the rest, were now all upon him. And he has made, at all events, this impression on us—the impression as of a man of: 1. Native impetuosity, of temperament. 2. Imperious moral judgments. 3. Liability to fearful lapse. 4. Unbounded enthusiasm and devotion to a great and good Master. 5. And *now* lastly, of a man with the eye of an eagle for the object dear to his heart.

V. A MODEL TESTIMONY TO "THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS." (Vers. 14—36). The character of a model Christian sermon may be justly claimed *throughout* for this address of Peter to the multitude. The leading features of it are strongly marked. 1. It is one testimony to Christ; the subject is variously approached, but it is *one*. Whatever the then reason, *the* subject is not lost sight of nor allowed to linger. Each approach to it, each conclusion from it, becomes more telling, till the pronounced assertion confronts the people, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." 2. It is a summary of indisputable historic facts. The incarnation and birth of Jesus are, therefore, not adverted to, as perhaps too remote. They did not come directly within the range of facts patent to the hearers of Peter. "As ye yourselves know" was an argument Peter loved to use. He didn't beg reliance on his judgment, opinion, or assertion, but he challenged the knowledge of those to whom he spoke. The "Man of Nazareth, . . . the approved of God, . . . by miracles and signs and wonders . . . the delivered" (though here Peter does insert the transcendent statement of Divine "foreknowledge" and "counsel"), "the taken, . . . crucified and slain, . . . the raised up" from death's kingdom and dominion, "the exalted by the right hand of God," and the corroboration of these statements of the Resurrection and Ascension from the prophecies of their own prized oracles,—these are the vital facts summarized now by Peter. The chain breaks nowhere. Peter is strong in his facts. 3. There was an unflinching style in the address. The indiscriminate people of Judaea and Jerusalem are before Peter, and barely seven weeks are passed since the Crucifixion, and Peter brings *the guilt* home in uncompromising language to the heart and the hand of those whom he addresses; and also declares that the wonders of this day of Pentecost, of which the fickle multitude were no doubt the willing witnesses, are all the work of that "Man of Nazareth" whom they had disbelieved, ill treated, crucified. Many men will hear to be told of their *guilt*, who won't stand the demonstration of their exceeding folly. But the hearers of Peter get both in his faithfulness and unflinchingness to his subject. "This Jesus . . . hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." 4. There was intense earnestness in the address of Peter. This, no doubt, went *naturally* a long way to disarm what might otherwise have seemed the offensive character of the matter of his indictment. The instance is an interesting and a remarkable one of the very severest rebuke consisting with a kindness only thinly veiled. And without a word of kindness *expressed*, the impression and effect are probably gained by the manifest intense earnestness and strongest conviction of the speaker. These things, so that they are not abused, are legitimately within the province of the Christian preacher. With this proviso it is *given* to him to dogmatize, only not in his own name; to rebuke in the most uncompromising manner, only not for any offence personal to himself merely; and to wield the denunciations of the future and the unseen, only not otherwise than as drawn, both for matter and for justifiable occasion, and *justly* drawn, from the warrant of revelation.

VI. A MODEL CONFSSIONAL OF THE CHURCH. (Vers. 37—40.) As was to be expected, in no respect is the transition from Judaism to Christianity more worthy of interested study than as it offers to view the healthy young growth of Christian institutions, taking root amid the ruins of the old and corrupt traditions of the "Jews' religion." Many a site that witnessed long time crumbling decay, stones no two of which lay together, and the very squalidity of disorder, now witnessed the surprising signs of vigorous, determined, and beautiful life. It were well if it had been possible to secure that these should *not* in their turn succumb, in lapse of time, to the affronts of human imperfection, and show again the pitiful sight of diviner growths within cumbered, choked, and finally killed, by fungus, excrescence, and merciless blight. Here, however, we have a fine example of the vitality of roused religious life, its own cries, and the methods of treatment with which it was blessed to meet. Observe: 1. The central fact—*conviction*. The conscienca

itself is touched, wakens responsive to the touch, and takes upon itself to speak for its owner sounds that have the sounds of life. Men hear, and are "pricked in the heart." 2. The first immediate course resorted to under the circumstances. Those whose hearts are thus "pricked," whose conscience is thus touched, begin to make inquiry, and inquiry of what they "shall do." They play not the rôle of excuse for the past, of moralizing reminiscence, or of any other of the pretexes for procrastination. It is the moment for undoubted action, for decided action, and, if *honest* ignorance exist as to the shape of that action, for prompt inquiry as to the way: "What shall we do?" No doubt, when the men and the time and the circumstances and those to whom they now addressed themselves,—when these all are put together, it must be granted that there was here the reality and the best part of genuine *confession*. 3. Religious interrogatories made, *not* under the probing of the confessional-expert; *not* under the conditions of morbidness, and *it* goaded; *not* in secrecy and solitariness. These, as between man and his fellow-creature, may be often more than doubtful. But it is in open day that this confessional-scene is placed. And safety invests it, and spiritual health and even symptoms of robustness are indicated. 4. Preachers not priest, doctrine not ritual, practice not penance, lively repentance not remorseful reflection, are the order of that well-omened hour. Yet, to speak of nothing else, if ever remorseful reflection—something short of remorse itself—might have put in a reasonably opportune claim, it was surely now, while Peter's stinging words still rang in their ears: "This Jesus whom ye crucified" (Revised Version). But no; the answer to the questions put at this honourable, open confessional is "Repent," altering at once the thing *you have been*, though alter you cannot the crucifying thing that you *have done*; "Repent," and show it before men, by being "baptized, every one of you," actually in that very Name, "the Name of Jesus Christ," whom you rejected and crucified, acknowledging thereby that you are bounden to him for "the remission of sins;" "Repent," and be baptized, and enter at once on the inheritance of long promise, "the gift of the Holy Ghost." That "gift of the Holy Ghost," *after* repentance and *after* baptism and *after* the remission of sins, as distinguished from the *prevenient* quickening effected by his sacred breath, would be the conclusive, surest token of the absolution of sin. For them and for ourselves this may sufficiently distinguish the ever-necessary working of the Holy Spirit in quickening the human heart from death, necessary equally with Abel and Enoch as with Paul or any man of modern days, from that special endowment of the Spirit for other uses, vouchsafed to the "new covenant" from the day of Pentecost downward to this day. This is the special grace and crown of the Christian Church, though probably still little understood, and its conquering force accordingly still little tested. From the language of ver. 40 we may understand that we have but a sketch of all that Peter said from the moment that he stood up to vindicate the prophesying army from the charge of drunkenness, to the moment that the actual administration of the rite of baptism began. Unstintingly he "testified," unweariedly he "exhorted," and this the burden of his enthusiastic and impassioned appeal, that those who heard should show themselves willing, anxious, eager to be rescued from the following and from the belongings of an inherently "crooked generation."

VII. A GLORIOUS AND MOST HEART-GLADDENING HARVEST. (Ver. 41—47). Three thousand were that day added to the hundred and twenty or thereabout, who began the day as believers in Christ. The multiplication was twenty-five for every one. They are those who "received his word." It will not be going beyond chapter and verse if we regard this as equivalent to "receiving the Word." Still, this is not the exact meaning of the historian, and as it is very possible that some of these very thousands at some subsequent time were guilty of defection, we may prefer to hold that those who came to be thus guilty did not receive "with meekness the engrafted Word, which was able to save their souls." They only caught a transient enthusiasm as they listened to Peter. Any way, some *then* also did *not* "receive" the word of Peter. "Some" *then* also "believed and some believed *not*." Some tares *then* also were mingled with the "good seed." Glorious, therefore, as that harvest was of the "latter day," it falls very short of the glory that shall be of "the last day." Then no Peter shall baptize, and no Church shall charitably judge, and no adulteration shall be possible. Then "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just" (Matt. xiii. 49); "The Son of Man shall send

forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41); "The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him. . . . And he shall separate," etc. Meanwhile the spiritual harvest and ingathering into the Church visible and militant of that day of Pentecost was glorious and heart-reviving. The thought of it is so still. It is still unique for one time, one place, and one preaching. Yet these are but the clothing of circumstance; and perhaps many a day since, the eye that surveys all, and sees everywhere at one and the same time, may have witnessed equal proofs of the converting power of Word and Spirit, the one spoken by the lip of man, the other teaching that lip to speak.—B.

Vers. 38, 41.—*The first practice of baptism as a Christian rite.* "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized . . . the Holy Ghost." "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized . . . three thousand souls." The sun of the day of Pentecost did not set without marking the moment of the inauguration of the rite of Christian baptism—a rite which has never ceased to prove the occasion of stir and difference of opinion down the history of the Church. Baptism, and the baptism of water, was of course a familiar thing to the minds of the disciples of Jesus. It was in no sense a novelty, for they had known it from the preaching and the practice of John the Baptist. And with the *original* of even this there can be no doubt the Jewish nation as such had long been acquainted. The rite, however, unavoidably invests itself with fresh dignity and fresh significance from the time that Jesus, in the interval between the Resurrection and Ascension, and especially in his very parting words before the latter event, enjoined his disciples to observe it, in the sense, not of submitting to it themselves at the hands of one another, but of calling others to it and administering it to them. They are expressly advised by Jesus that in their own case it would be utterly superseded by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, which the day of Pentecost was to bring, and which it now had brought. "This beginning," therefore, of baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ may well attract most interested notice. It practically owned to certain objects or requirements, whether more explicit or implicit in their character. And it is our duty to study it in the appearances it then offered to view.

I. IT IMPLIED THAT, GIVEN CERTAIN FAVOURING CIRCUMSTANCES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF KNOWLEDGE IN THEIR RELIGIOUS LIFE, MEN ARE CALLED TO ENTER INTO A DEFINITE AND FIXED RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST. Once the novel appeal to men was, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Now the more permanent appeal has taken its place: "Repent, and be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ."

II. IT SUPPOSES THAT THE ENTRANCE UPON SUCH RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST BE OF THE NATURE OF A PROFESSION, AND MORE OR LESS PUBLIC PROFESSION. Not in the retirement of sacred shrine, or of more sacred closet, or of most sacred heart alone, must the relationship be established. There were *reasons* why a certain kind of notoriety should attend it. That notoriety might be expected to have in it: 1. Some share of useful influence on the individual character of the person making profession. 2. Some helpful influence in the founding and holding together of the Christian society. 3. Some tribute of grateful and willing acknowledgment to him who once was put to "open shame."

III. IT CONTAINED IN IT A TACIT CONFESSION, IN THE VERY NATURE OF THE RITE SUBMITTED TO, OF THE TAINT INHERENT IN NATURE, AND OF NATURE'S NEED OF PURIFICATION. The indistinctness of prophecy that went before by centuries, and the unequivocal distinctness of apostolic language in both history and Epistle, give the description of *washing, cleansing, purifying*, as the symbolic significance of the rite of baptism.

IV. IT DID NOT, TO ALL APPEARANCE, ASK FOR ANY INQUISITORIAL ELEMENT OR SEARCHING INVESTIGATION ON THE PART OF THE ADMINISTRATORS OF IT. It would seem impossible, in the nature of the circumstances described in the history before us, that even apostles, under the highest amount of inspiration, could have done more than accept simply the profession of those who offered themselves for baptism. The guarantee they took of the very *repentance* which they urged and preached as the *deepest* matter in question, was only that which belonged to the fact of the people's

willingness and desire to be baptized. That was indeed a great and open *change of mind*, or repentance, which brought the people to this point. It seems impossible to imagine that baptism was now accepted as anything but the very first step toward holiness of heart and life. Those who were baptized did thus much—they “set their faces Zionward.” These are the *appearances* that invest the first occasion of the observance or use of baptism as a Christian rite. These appearances by themselves scarcely amount to the assertion of a permanent institution; and they can scarcely be accounted as speaking with authority the subjects, or the convictions, or the methods of its administration for all time and all circumstances, even upon the supposition of its permanent obligation. They are not, therefore, the less interesting; nay, they may kindle keener and more observant inquiry. But they need such inquiry, and they must be interpreted under the light of Christ’s ascending commission to his disciples, of obedience to which this is the first possible occasion, and in the light of the succeeding history of Christ’s followers during the apostolic period. At present baptism may be said to hold the place of an Initiatory rite. Through that first Christian baptism three thousand persons were introduced into the ranks of those who believed in Christ as the Messiah, and who were prepared to become learners in his school, and to put in practice (as was immediately seen) his principles. They no longer are of those who believe in sacrifices and ceremonial observances innumerable for “the remission of sins,” but “in the Name of Jesus Christ.” And they are introduced within the covenant of promise—that covenant the abiding promise to which was “the gift of the Holy Ghost.”—B.

Vers. 42—47.—*The first régime of the body of Christ’s disciples as a Christian community.* “And they continued steadfastly . . . such as should be saved.” It may be conceded that the history in these verses acknowledges to some appearance of repetition. This is appearance, however, rather than reality. The first of these verses gives in the highest possible form the headings of a subject which is developed a little more fully in the following five verses; and these same verses find room for a touch or two which antedate, though by a very trifling interval, the course of the history. The verses invite to an observation of the very first workings of Christian principle, craving, feeling, and practice. It is no more true that there are things most characteristic of infant life which drop away by process of time and the advent of maturity, than that methods appropriate to the actual infancy of the Christian Church will, as generations pass, inevitably be superseded by other methods, stronger, sterner, and to all outside appearance far less flexible. Yet, if the man cannot be forecast always in the child, for want of enough of the prophet’s vision, he can be traced back to the child. And a wonderfully tenacious personal identity is the lesson in human nature that is impressed on the observer. And well it is for us in the maturer ages of Christian individual life, and the Christian Church’s life, to refresh ourselves with the sight of the first facts of Christian Church life, and of the real principles that must ever be found in the last analysis to underlie it. Such a sight is here offered us. The following are the principal features of it:—

I. THE INFANT CHURCH CRAVES INSPIRED INSTRUCTION, AND IS FURNISHED WITH IT. The call for this had been foreseen by the great Master-teacher himself. In the same commission in which he charged his apostles to “make disciples of all nations,” he enjoined them to teach such disciples “to observe all things I have commanded you.” Great stress must be laid upon Christ’s own teaching. We cannot overvalue it. The stress he laid on it himself, by his unwearied labours in it, tells volumes of his own practical estimate of its importance. Meantime such an expression as that we find in Matt. xv. 9, “Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” differences for us most decisively not any mere question of style, and superiority of style, in the teaching that is from above, but the matter itself. The characteristic, then, begun with in the description of the new community was this: “They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching.” That was inspired teaching. And let the world stand in need of whatsoever else, it is to be laid down *emphatically* that the Church stands in need of *this*. Inspired teaching is the breath of the Church—its vital air, its light, and the alphabet of its knowledge.

II. THE INFANT CHURCH DRAWS TOGETHER IN CLOSEST AND MOST REAL UNION.

The "fellowship" spoken of in ver. 42 does not mark merely the fact of association with the apostles. Nor does it describe association with one another from the attractions of friendship, of new-born natures, or of worship. It marks a newer thing, and, considering the numbers of those concerned, a very new thing. Jesus, with the little circle of his twelve disciples, had suggested, possibly enough, the germ of this. But the number of twelve or thirteen living together on a common purse, and with no selfishly individual object whatsoever in view, was but the suggestion of a principle; and that now, as many scores, or possibly hundreds, should attempt a similar thing, was a bold thought; it was the daring of a high and unwontedly noble impulse, and best of all was the deed of it. Those who made up this new community first *did a thing*, that would have been called nothing else than utopianism while only talked about. It is something most reinvigorating to a Christian's faith in the hidden possibilities of a regenerate human nature, to think of the real proofs of sincerity and of utter earnestness that came out of the conduct of men who sold their lands and possessions, and brought all to one common stock. It was certainly a beginning of a "new earth," and none the less so that it was but temporary in the then form of it. It betrayed and it displayed a genius lying in the new-found forces of Christianity never to be forgotten. For a while there was no want and no wealth, except that best wealth, absence of want. The *snare* of wealth is vanished, and the charm of loving contentment smiles in the world.

III. THE INFANT CHURCH BRINGS WITHOUT HESITATION RELIGION INTO DAILY LIFE. The "breaking of bread" certainly did not mean *simply* the taking of the ordinary meals of day after day. There could have been nothing remarkable in individual men "continuing steadfast" in this. The "breaking of bread" referred to was that of a *united* meal, and this was the particular significance of it. Again, the life of those few weeks in Jerusalem would have been a life of mere desultory and unfruitful idleness, except for an unusual reality in occupations, which would generally be counted as at most the luxurious enjoyments of religious service. But these evidently become the *works* of religious service, and then was the fulfilling of the admonition, given some years later to the Hebrews (Heb. x. 24, 25), beautifully anticipated. They *considered* "one another, to provoke unto love and to good works," and they did not forsake "the assembling of themselves together" for that very purpose. *Thus* they assemble, and thus break bread day after day. On the one hand, we witness association "in breaking of bread" with its more or less of direct religious reference brought into the daily home and the daily life of those who composed the infant Church; and, on the other hand, we witness religious thought and religious purpose and religious work become for a season the staple occupation of "the common days." Perhaps all of us will agree that if ever works merited the title of religious, the works of those days did which had for their (secular) business the sale of lands and goods, to the end that "the price" of them (ch. v. 1) might go to the common treasury of the new-born Christian society.

IV. THE INFANT CHURCH STILL OBSERVES THE TEMPLE HOURS OF PRAYER. The history of temple prayer was rightly charged with sacredness to the pious Jew. As up to the last Jesus paid all due reverence to both temple and even synagogue also, so the young community of his disciples do not forsake the temple prayers. Public prayer was offered three times a day: at the *third* hour (ch. ii. 15); at noonday (Ps. lv. 17), or the *sixth* hour; and in the evening, at the *ninth* hour (ch. iii. 1; x. 3). The general history of the nation's prayer must naturally have abounded in interest, and many a touching allusion is made to it (1 Kings viii. 30—38, etc.; Dan. vi. 10; ix. 21; Ps. v. 7; xxviii. 2; lv. 17; lxxv. 1, 2; cxix. 164; cxxxviii. 2; cxli. 2; Isa. lvi. 7; Luke i. 10; xviii. 10; etc.). But not the least interesting fact in its history is that before us. While all things else—sacrifice, and feast, and ceremony, and priest, and the furniture of the temple, and its very stones—are doomed and about to disappear, its *prayers* bud out, blossom, bear fruit afresh. The point of living contact with God lasts. The old Church and the new join hands here. Prayer is the golden link between these, as it is between all earth and heaven.—B.

Vers. 43—47.—*The Church's immediate assertion of her own moral forces.* "And fear came upon every soul . . . daily such as should be saved." For many an institution of human society it is most easy to fix the date for the commencement of its

operation, and to assign its term. It is one among many of the marks of Christianity that, *once embodied*, it begins its work there and then, and begins it never to pause, never to cease, till it is all finished. The *peculiar* and, at the same time, rightful influences of Christianity embodied in human society showed themselves promptly and decisively. Nothing artificial could help, nothing arbitrary could hinder, these. And if to the last possible moment they stole their march on the world silently, and to that same world insensibly, they no sooner come into sight than they are *felt* also, and unmistakably felt. The kingdom of God, that in some sense "cometh not with observation," when once come, is ever making a mark, that calls to it *all* manner of observation. It is full to overflowing of *influence* on the individual heart, on the individual life, and on human society. The intrinsic character of Christian principle and the possibilities that are in it, are simply and beautifully witnessed to in the very first of the fruits which it bore.

I. IT WROUGHT AN UNUSUAL FEAR. It was an unusual fear, for more reasons than one. 1. The fear fell on *all*. If the "all" here mean the disciples and new converts only, yet the gain was great and the phenomenon noteworthy. But the great probability is that the "every soul" does not mean to point to those who were now enrolled in the new community alone, but to the vast number outside, who saw and heard of the apostles' "signs and wonders." The city was *still* oftentimes because of this new portent in the very midst of it. The men of the city "talked often one with another." There was a temporary, general weaning from indifference, from frivolity, and from the zeal of mere earthly business. 2. The source of the fear was unusual. It was *not* that of Sinai. It was not that of wind and storm, earthquake or fire. The elements of nature were what they long had been. Just now, at all events, the sun was *not* "turned into darkness, nor the moon into blood." It was a fear that came on men, not because of any overwhelmed impression made on the senses, but upon the mind. 3. The character of the fear was unusual. For it was that of awe and reverence—one that awoke inquiry, and provoked irresistibly deeper thinking than those hearts had been generally familiar with. It more resembled the fear that *ought* to possess men in the presence of the facts, responsibilities, and heaven-born opportunities of human life. There is no evidence nor even room to suppose that it savoured of anguished fear, or slavish fear, or tumultuous apprehension. This is one of the grand legitimate effects of Christian impression and conviction on the heart of either converted or unconverted, that they reduce to soberness and to some due sense of the things that are, whether in heaven or on earth, of which we may have thought previously far too little.

II. CHRISTIANITY BORE THE FRUIT OF A MOST UNUSUAL UNITY. *The brotherhood* of humanity now is exemplified. And though for many a reason and from many a cause, better or worse, its duration was very brief, yet we may say, "It is enough." We shall know it again, "in like manner" as we now know it. These two things may be most permissibly said to the grief that mourns devoutly its short duration: (1) that in very truth it was not really *so* short as it seemed; and (2) that but a glimpse of it was of use, but a glimpse of it good to behold, but a flash of it such as to leave when it had gone, and such as *has* left, a glory on the Christian soul and on its gaze.

III. IT BORE THE FRUIT OF A MOST UNUSUAL CHARITY. "To do good and to communicate" was not an absolute novelty; to give, and to give kindly and ungrudgingly, was not an unheard-of thing; to feed the poor and give him garments, and to visit him, sick and in prison, was exalted moral philosophy, and godly practices too, in and from the days of Job. But the charity, and the sacrifice of the just rights of property, and the *equality* of this large family, was, for the thoroughness and the scale of them and for the occasion—not one of shipwrecked distress on a desolate shore—something very new under the sun. This, again, in outside show and bulk, was of short duration, but perhaps not of so short stay as it seems sometimes. And this, too, we shall recognize again.

IV. CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE NOW BORE A VERY UNUSUAL MANIFOLD FRUIT. Yes, not only manifold for quantity, but *in kind*. These, all these *together*, are found by the disciples; namely, great happiness of heart, great happiness in association with one another (as though *no* "root of bitterness" sprang up), great happiness in worshipping God, and *great popularity* with all the people. They were halcyon days indeed! Their peculiarity, as representing the infancy of the Church, irresistibly reminds us of

the peculiarity of those early years in the humanity of the now risen, ascended, glorified Master himself. There was a time when it was said that "Jesus increased . . . in favour with God *and man*." It is even so now with the family of his followers. The analogy is striking. And it is striking as one novel indication of the condescension of the great Lord, who so closely *shared*, who still so closely *shares*, his Church's fortunes. For the resemblance must be quoted, not as one that shows the Church sharing its Founder's fortunes, but the Founder anticipating his Church's fortunes. In both examples how gratefully are we reminded of the legitimate influence, even in this world, of goodness! And how gratefully are we, by a mere *foretaste*, as it were, assured of that "favour" that Jesus and his truth and his faithful disciples *must* eventually command from the judgment of the world, whenever *the time shall come!* Nor was the Divine contentment that spread over and that evidently interpenetrated this newly fashioned society one which looked to mere selfishness then or to mere picturesqueness now. The favourable impression that it made on them that were without was useful as well as beautiful. It was *attractive*. And the very same qualities that made it attractive made it a safe refuge, home, school, nursery, to those that might own to the Divine attraction. To such a society the Lord added daily. And, let it with reverence be said, it could not be otherwise; but if it *could*, it would not. This is what the Church of Christ must be. It must be these all in one. The refuge for the sinner "saved;" his home on earth; his school; for many, because of their tender years, also the nursery of piety and devotion; but for *all*, young or old, a nursery, from which heaven is looked to as the introduction to the presence and abiding society of the Father himself. Thus, now, not the abstraction of a perfection of Christianity unlikely to be yet reached, but the off-erring, off-deficient embodiment of it in the lives of frail sinful, men, gave clear and beautiful proofs of what is the *genius* of it, of what it has in itself to do, and no obscure foreshadowing of the reign of love and peace and joy that Jesus is hastening on.—B.

Vers. 1—4.—*The symbols of the Spirit's presence.* It is important that we mark with some precision what actually occurred on this memorable day. On the day of Pentecost the company of disciples met together as usual at the customary hour of morning prayer, but whether in one of the thirty rooms which Josephus tells us were connected with the courts of Herod's temple, or in the private house where they lodged, is uncertain. As we know that they attended morning prayer in the temple (see ch. iii. 1), there is much in favour of the scene occurring within the temple precincts. *There* a large company could be readily and conveniently assembled, and *there* the high priest and Levitical guard would have the necessary authority to arrest "disturbers of the peace." While the apostolic company was engaged in prayer, a sudden rushing sound was heard, like that which accompanies an earthquake. It seemed to sweep through the room, and fill it with a new and inspiring atmosphere; and then, as each one of them looked in astonishment upon his companion, he saw a central flame come and part, settling in divided streams upon each head. The mystic symbols soon passed away, but they left the disciples conscious of a new life; they were as men moved beyond themselves by a mighty inward impulse. The glow of a Divine kindling was upon their faces, the passion of a Divine urging was within their souls, the freedom of a Divine utterance was upon their lips; they began to speak to the people around about the Messiahship of Jesus, the crucified. The rumour soon spread among the excitable multitudes, gathered from all parts, who were present at the feast. They crowded round the apostles; they felt the influence of their enthusiasm; they heard one and another of them speaking in the familiar language of their birthplace; they were moved by the power of a Divine presence, and that day three thousand bowed the knee to Christ. Those disciples had been told to wait for *spiritual power*—inward, heart-power. And the signs that attended the gift were designed to indicate the *kind* of power that came. It was a mighty breath filling them with larger life. They were caught up, and encircled as with a great wind of Divine energy, and in this atmosphere they breathed more freely, and lived more nobly. F. W. Robertson well expresses this in the following note:—"Just as if the temperature of this northern atmosphere were raised suddenly, and a mighty tropical river were to pour its fertilizing inundation over the country, the result would be the impartation of a vigorous and gigantic

growth to the vegetation already in existence, and at the same time the development of life in seeds and germs which had long lain latent in the soil, incapable of vegetation in the unkindly climate of their birth. Exactly in the same way, the flood of a Divine life, poured suddenly into the souls of men, enlarged and ennobled qualities which had been used already, and at the same time developed powers which never could have become apparent in the cold, low temperature of natural life." It may be well to recall the associations of the Feast of Pentecost, especially noting that it was held to commemorate the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. *Then* Law came as a series of formal commandments; *now* Law came as an inward impulse to righteousness; it was "written in the mind and the heart." The symbols designed to show the character of the Spirit's work in the disciples are three, viz. *wind, fire, tongues*.

I. THE SYMBOL OF THE WIND. This would recall our Lord's simile used in conversation with the inquiring Nicodemus (John iii. 7, 8), "The wind bloweth where it listeth," etc. It would also remind of the later incident when Jesus "breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). The figure in the Hebrew word for Spirit (*ruach*) is "breath," or "wind." We may note that the wind suggests the *freeness* of the Spirit, the *force* of the Spirit, and the *elevating* and *inspiring* influence of the Spirit.

II. THE SYMBOL OF THE FIRE. This would recall the words of John the baptizer, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Fire is conceived as the great *purging* and *purifying* agent. John could not forgive sin, or cleanse souls, or sanctify. For this work he prepared the way. Christ cleanses and sanctifies, by his Spirit, with a fulness and a power that can only be represented by the work of fire on precious metal. A power like fire is needed to destroy and root out *self* and *sin*.

III. THE SYMBOL OF THE TONGUES. It is difficult to decide precisely the form of the gift that came to these first disciples. Afterwards we find the gift of tongues explained as an ecstatic utterance, which required interpretation. Here we may assume that the gospel message was delivered by different individuals, in different languages, and in different parts of the temple courts. We should see that it fulfilled the promise made to the disciples of *power to witness*. The first sign of the power came in adaptation to the particular circumstances and needs of the day, and they might see in this the assurance that the power *would* come in adaptation to *every day's needs*. Not always as power to speak a foreign language, but always as power to speak, as the freed loosened tongue, as a new tongue, so that they might preach Christ, and witness everywhere for the "Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance, and remission of sins."

Conclude by showing that the symbols teach us this lesson—that the same Spirit is still with the Church and with us; and is as certainly and precisely adapting his grace and help to the work and the witness *we* are called to render.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The great lesson of the Pentecost.* It seems a strange thing that our Lord, when preparing his disciples for the coming of the Spirit, should set a higher value on that Spirit's work than on the continuance of his own (John xvi. 7—11). The only satisfactory explanation is this—that the Spirit's work *was* the continuance of his own. It continued that *Divine presence* which was essential to the stability and culture of the disciples; for both while he lived among men and when he passed beyond human vision, our Saviour's words were true, "Without me ye can do nothing." No longer is Christ *outside* us, only to be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, and touched by the hand; we are now the "temples of the Holy Ghost;" he dwelleth with us, and is in us. We do not rightly apprehend the scene of Pentecost if we regard it only as the first of a series of separate gifts of the Spirit, which *may* be made in answer to prayer. We take a much more comprehensive and truthful view when we regard it as the entrance of God the Holy Ghost upon his special mission in relation to the full redemption of mankind. It was, as it were, the opening of the heavens, and the sending forth of the Divine Spirit, *to brood for ever over the waters, quickening life*. It was his reception in the hearts prepared for him, that he might begin a work which, ever spreading and widening, seeks to enthroned God the Father in every heart and every life. As God the Son entered and won first a mother's heart, that he might get a standing-ground from which to enter the heart of the whole world; so God the Spirit came into the

souls of a few disciples first, only that he might extend his sway, spreading from heart to heart, entering, subduing, teaching, and sanctifying, ever working for that glorious day when the "people shall be all holy." We fix attention on this one point: The disciples gained, and kept from that day, a deep sense of their *entire dependence on God*, and on God as the *indwelling, inworking Spirit*. They could never recall that "day of Pentecost" without contrasting what they were before it came, and what they were after it had passed. There was contrast in their *measure of spiritual vision*, and contrast in the *energy and joy of their work*. And so they learned, in a most effective way, that their sufficiency was of *God*. The secret of all moral strength is dependence on God—open-heartedness to receive, and simple readiness to obey and work out, all the inward impulses and leadings of his Holy Spirit. Because the disciples learnt this lesson of Pentecost so well, therefore it can be thus reported concerning them, "They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following."

Application of this lesson may be made to the Christian. 1. We have a Christian *life* to maintain, culture and growth to watch over, higher truth to reach, clusters of graces to ripen, and the power of a holy example to wield. But we "are not sufficient of ourselves even to think anything as of ourselves." "Our sufficiency is of God." We too need the Quickener, Comforter, and Teacher. 2. We too have a *conflict* to wage, and *sufferings* to bear for our Master. And who "dares to do the warfare at his own charges"? We are only strong *in God* either to fight or to bear. 3. We too have a *work* to do for Christ, and a *witness* to render. And we must learn to say after the great apostle, "I can do all things through him who strengtheneth me." What we need is *spiritual power, Spirit-power, the Pentecostal power*. When shall we fully grasp the inspiring truth—the *Holy Ghost is with us!*—R. T.

Vers. 5—13.—*Men's attitudes toward things beyond explanation.* There are marked differences in the dispositions of men. At first sight the differences may seem to be so many and so great, that it is hopeless to attempt any classification of them. And yet, in the relations in which dispositions stand to revealed truth and the mysterious, there is a simple division, and a repetition of characteristic attitudes in each age. Observe the peculiar phenomena here, which tested the dispositions of the crowding multitudes. *Uneducated, countrified Galileans* were speaking to the comprehension of men who came from various parts of the earth and used several distinct languages. We do not know whether the disciples themselves understood the new words which they were empowered to utter, but it is certain that what the hearers heard was no jargon or incoherent speech; it was the story of Christ crucified and risen, given in the languages with which they were familiar. Manifestly here was a mystery, something surprising, needing explanation, something to exercise thought about; something which men of different dispositions would regard in different ways; something which would bring into expression the marked peculiarities of each class. Compare the way in which St. Paul's preaching at Athens tested the dispositions of his hearers (ch. xvii. 32). "Some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter . . . certain men came unto him, and believed." In our passage the attitudes taken towards the mystery were, at first *two*, and afterwards *three*.

I. SOME WERE IN DOUBT, AND WOULD INQUIRE FURTHER. (Ver. 12.) They were struck with surprise, confused, perplexed. They did not know what to make of these remarkable incidents; but they were not disposed to put them away from consideration, as necessarily delusions or impostures, because beyond a ready explanation. Their attitude was a right and a hopeful one. *Denial* of the "supernatural" is a sign of mental weakness or prejudiced obstinacy. *Doubt* about the "supernatural" is rational, and leads to inquiry, consideration, and due weighing of argument and proof. There is "*honest doubt*," and merely "*wilful doubt*." The first disposition finds expression in sincere and earnest inquiry for the solution and satisfaction and removal of the doubt. The second disposition rejects inquiry, and keeps the doubting, priding itself upon its ability to doubt. No proofs can satisfy *this* class of doubters. Both these are still found in our Christian society; and the times tend to multiply that hopeless class that prides itself on *doubting*. Our Lord gave us the best remedy for the doubting disposition when he said, "If any man *will do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine."

II. SOME MOCKED, AND WOULD SUGGEST EVIL EXPLANATIONS. (Ver. 13.) Such dispositions even our Lord had to deal with. Some who saw his miracles declared that he wrought them "by the power of the devil;" showing in this their exceeding folly, for our Lord's works were all *good* and *kind* and *helpful*, and not in any sense *mischievous* or *hurtful*, as the work of devils is. So here, we find some who would not think, would not doubt, but at once rejected the mystery, and showed their folly in their insulting suggestion, "These men are full of new wine." This kind of disposition is a hopeless one. Such men have no susceptibility. No argument or proof can reach them. To this class belong the deniers and mockers of the "supernatural" in our day. The infidel class of all ages and of this has been very largely made up of those who were *determined not to believe*. The hard heart is too often the one great hindrance to belief.

III. SOME AMONG THE INQUIRERS WOULD RECEIVE THE TRUTH WHICH WAS DECLARED AND ATTESTED IN THE STRANGE PHENOMENA. Peter's words were a stern rebuke of the "mockers," with whom he would not deign to argue; he would utter no more than the words that should declare their folly. He preached to the doubting and inquiring. He may not have satisfied them all that day. Many may have needed to think quietly about it all, and seek further for themselves; but then, even that very day, in response to his word, three thousand accepted the Pentecostal wonders as the Spirit's witness to Jesus as the "Messiah," and "risen" to become the present, living Saviour. Peter gives the example of bringing the doubting and inquiring to God's Holy Word: "To the Law and to the testimony." And still there can be no better way of guiding the seeking soul. The mysterious, the supernatural, is a stumbling-block in these days of the enthronement of human science, more serious than it has been in any previous age. The dispositions of men towards it remain the same; but the company of the scorners, who put the subject away as unworthy of consideration, is larger than ever. Yet there are still multitudes of susceptible and open-hearted doubters; and, with our Bibles in our hands, and our personal convictions and experiences giving tone to our words, we may hopefully plead with them to recognize God *in* nature, and God *beyond* nature; God's working within human explanation, and God's working beyond human explanation: a sphere "unseen and spiritual," that is altogether more real and permanent than the sphere "seen and temporal."

Urge, in conclusion, that the things of the *soul*, *religion*, and *God* must of necessity lie in this "beyond," "within," "spiritual," "supersensuous," sphere.—R. T.

Vers. 14—21.—*Prophecies of the times of the Spirit.* Some reference may be made to the Prophet Joel, the time when he wrote, and the first reference of his prophecy. The principles on which we discover Messianic allusions in the Old Testament books may be detailed and illustrated. Especially the two following principles:—1. Any reference which cannot fairly be fitted to or exhausted by any passage of history, or the history of any individual, may be referred to Messianic times, or to the Messiah himself. This principle guides us both in the Book of Psalms and in the prophets. It helps to decide the intention of Joel, in the passage before us, which no page of ordinary human history satisfies. 2. Any reference from the Old Testament which an inspired apostle is led to use as proof of the Messiahship of Christ, must be accepted as having *that* for its proper application. On this ground Joel's prophecy must be received as dealing with the times and dispensation of the Holy Ghost. The prophecies given by the Scripture writers are of the utmost importance, as tending to check the *material* conceptions of the Messiah, which the later circumstances and history of the Jewish nation seem to have greatly encouraged. Those prophecies keep prominently before men's minds the *suffering* aspects of Messiah's life, so suggesting that his power would be *moral*, not *material*; and the *spiritual* aspects of the kingdom he would set up, whose features should be "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The prophetic figures are often difficult, and need for their apprehension some knowledge of the sphere of poetical imagery from which Eastern writers used to draw their illustrations. Western composition is more formal and precise; and we should be careful not to press our associations with prophetic language in front of those associations which were familiar to the Scripture writer. Forgetting this, men have mistaken the meaning of the figures given in vers. 19, 20.

I. THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT. The leading features of it may be brought out by comparing it with the earlier "dispensation of the Law." Under *that*, God's Law was written on "*tables*," for men's eyes to read; under *this*, God's Law is written on *hearts*, and becomes an inward impulse. Under *that*, goodness was regarded as *right conduct*; under *this*, goodness is regarded as *right motive* inspiring right doing. Other similar contrasts may be urged; and it should be impressed that, in the gift of his Son and Spirit, God sought to lay hold of men's souls, and win them, in love and trust, for himself.

II. THE EFFECTS OF THE DISPENSATION ON MEN. Here Peter explains the *present* signs: the high enthusiasm of the disciples, the bold preaching, the power of the tongues, etc. We may go on to show what are the *permanent* effects, in present-day endowments for Christian work and witness. Still we only work truly and successfully as we work in the "power of the Holy Ghost."

III. THE SIGNS OF ITS ADVENT IN THINGS. (Vers. 19, 20.) "The imagery is drawn as from one of the great thunderstorms of Palestine. There is a lurid blood-red hue of clouds and sky; there are the fiery flashes, the columns or pillars of smoke-like clouds boiling from the abyss. These, in their turn, were probably thought of as symbols of bloodshed and fire and smoke, such as are involved in the capture and destruction of a city like Jerusalem." The fall of Jerusalem was the formal passing away of the old dispensation of Mosaism, and the full establishment of the new dispensation of the Spirit.

Press, in conclusion, the sublime hopes for mankind that lie in *this* "dispensation." Especially note ver. 21: there is now full and free *soul-salvation* for every one that calls upon the Lord in faith. The moral and spiritual redemption can now be applied to every open-hearted man by the energy of the abiding, indwelling, regenerating Spirit.—R. T.

Vers. 22—28.—*The first facts of gospel preaching.* From the very first the gospel preaching was made to rest on an *historical* basis. Apostles fearlessly appealed to certain known *facts*, which could not be gainsaid. It has been left to these later times to find *myth* and *legend*, when the contemporaries of the apostles dare not dispute the *literal* and truthful character of their statements. The interest of Peter's sermon—the first gospel sermon—lies mainly in its indicating what were early regarded as the *essential facts* of the gospel, and so the points to which the faith of men was called. The interest of the occasion of this sermon may be shown, and it should be impressed that we properly expect, at such a time, the utmost *clearness* and *definiteness*. Whatever is *essential* to Christianity surely found expression *then*, in broad statement and general principle. We find—

I. DISTINCT IDENTIFICATION OF JESUS. Peter will allow no possibility of confusion or mistake. There were doubtless many persons named "Jesus" in the country, but he speaks of Jesus of *Nazareth*; the Teacher who was so well known by this name; the man whom the elders of the nation despised and crucified. St. Peter, like St. Paul afterwards, testifies for "Jesus," whatever may be the disabilities that seemed to attach to him, and however Jew and Greek may despise him. They take Jesus, and *his whole story*, shameful crucifixion and all, and will not let any man doubt who it is that they preach.

II. FIRM ASSERTION OF DIVINE POWER IN HIS MIRACLES. "*God did them by him.*" The miracles as facts could not be denied, but their testimony to the mission, authority, and power of Christ might be turned aside if it could be made out that they were impostures, clever medical triumphs, or works wrought by Satanic power. Therefore St. Peter so earnestly declares that the miracles are signs of *God's power* in Christ. Show how this, once admitted, involves the truthfulness, sincerity, and goodness of Christ, since God would not work gracious healing works through a *bad agent*; and so it follows that Jesus rightly claimed the office and mission of Messiahship. This line of argument from the miracles is of permanent value in Christian evidence. Press our Lord's words, "Believe for the very works' sake."

III. OUR LORD'S ACTUAL CRUCIFIXION AND ACKNOWLEDGED DEATH. There is permitted no dispute as to the *personal guilt* of Jesus; he was *admittedly innocent*, freed from charge by every court that tried him, and made a victim to prejudice and malice

and religious bigotry. There could be no dispute as to his *real death* on the cross; Peter seems to remind the Jews that their council held the Roman centurion's certificate of death, and that council had set "watchmen" to keep the grave. And still there are two foundation facts of the gospel system: 1. Jesus was crucified as an *innocent man*. 2. Jesus actually *yielded up his life* on the cross. Show the importance of these facts to the doctrine of redemption in Christ's blood. A "lamb without blemish" was the only fitting "burnt offering" for humanity; it was consumed upon the altar, and the sacrifices accepted of God.

IV. OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION AS THE TESTIMONY OF DIVINE APPROVAL. Apostles constantly urge the fact that Jesus had risen from the grave. It is significant that the men of their day could not deny the fact. Give the lame and poor attempts to make out that the disciples had stolen the body. But apostles carefully say *God raised him*, and so publicly declared *His* acceptance of him and of his sacrifice. They do not say "he was raised," or "he raised himself." We know, therefore, that with him "God is well pleased." Peter seeks to carry home his teachings by appeal to Scripture. His plea is this—Jesus, crucified and risen, *asks our faith*, and to all who believe in him he gives "eternal life."—R. T.

Vers. 29—36.—*The first argument for the Resurrection.* The apostles distinctly witnessed to the *facts* of the Resurrection, as having come within their own personal knowledge. But they also argued from Scripture, that the Lord's resurrection was the natural and necessary completion of Messiah's earthly mission. In the above passage is given the first specimen of such argumentation; and it should be carefully noted that it is fitted to Eastern rather than to Western modes of thought. The late Dr. Robert Vaughan says, "The Oriental intellect is not logical. Its faculty is to a high degree intuitive; it reasons, but it rarely does so formally. It passes to its conclusions with a subtle celerity, resembling what we see in women, much more than by those scientific processes which are familiar to our Western habits of thought." The audience which Peter at this time addressed was composed of devout, God-fearing Jews, who were attending the feast, and it was therefore especially appropriate that his argument should be based upon the Scriptures, and take Scripture form. "The passage which he first quotes is taken from Ps. xvi. 8—11, and he argues that it could not be of himself that the psalmist there spake, for they had evidence that the words could not be truly said of him; but that, having regard to God's promise, he spake of him who was to be born from his line, as identified with himself." The second quotation is from Ps. cx., and is taken to suggest that David went down to the grave, and "slept with his fathers;" and the allusion to ascension and place at Jehovah's right hand could not possibly apply to *him*, but must refer to his "greater Son," of whose resurrection and ascension the apostles gave their witness. The argument may be followed through its several stages.

I. DAVID PLAINLY SPEAKS OF THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF SOME ONE. He does not deal, in these psalms, in vague generalities and pious sentiment. He was a prophet, and under Divine inspiration, and speaks with distinctness and definiteness. We must seek for the *person* to whom he refers.

II. HE COULD NOT MEAN HIMSELF. This, indeed, would be the first thought of the reader of his words, but it will not bear examination. The expressions are too large to be satisfied in the experience of any mere man. And, if taken literally, as they should be, they cannot be applied to *David* himself. They must refer to some great one who has *no earthly sepulchre*, because, though he died, he rose, and *no tomb holds his body*. But David's sepulchre was then recognized, and all regarded *him* as awaiting the general resurrection of the just.

III. HE MUST HAVE REFERRED TO MESSIAH. It must have been a prophetic utterance. And the Messianic character of both these psalms has been generally admitted by the Jews; so that Peter's proof-texts would not be disputed by his audience as unsuitable. The only difficulty would be the identification of Messiah. To this point he leads the argument.

IV. DAVID'S WORDS FIT THE FACTS WHICH THE APOSTLES WITNESSED CONCERNING JESUS OF NAZARETH. He only had been thus raised after death to the *spiritual and incorruptible life*. He only had passed, after resurrection, into the eternal world without

another experience of death. He alone met the conditions of the psalmist, and therefore he must be the promised Messiah. The *other cases* of resurrection narrated in Old and New Testament Scriptures should be examined, and the points of contrast between them and our Lord's case should be carefully noted; especially the most marked peculiarity in our Lord's case, that *ascension* followed resurrection, whereas all other raised persons *died a second time*. If, then, Jesus be the Christ, the Messiah, to him our "knees should bow, and our tongue confess."—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*The explanation of the signs of Pentecost.* Recall what those sensible signs had been. We may not think that the sound of the *wind* was still heard, and it seems hardly likely that the *tongues of flame* continued to rest on the heads of the disciples. But the ability to speak in foreign languages was the sign that chiefly arrested the people's attention, and this may have continued throughout the day. Some of the audience had, no doubt, also seen the "tongues of flame." St. Peter here makes three distinct points.

I. GOD HAS EXALTED JESUS OF NAZARETH. *This Jesus*, to whom he had been so distinctly referring. Here is an advance to a *conclusion* from the *facts* which the apostles witnessed. They declared the *facts* of resurrection and ascension. St. Peter now says—Admit the *facts*, and what follows? Surely this: *God has acknowledged, accepted, and exalted Jesus*, so affirming his *Messiahship*, and entrusting him with *Lordship* in the new spiritual kingdom (ver. 35). In no sublimer way could the Divine attestation of Jesus have been given.

II. GOD HAS FULFILLED THE PROMISES MADE THROUGH CHRIST. Give, from the closing chapters of St. John's Gospel, the promises of the Spirit as *Teacher* and *Comforter*. The truth of our Saviour rested on the fulfilment of those assurances. Peter bids the people see, in Pentecostal signs, the fulfilment of both the *general* promise of the Spirit given through ancient prophets, and the *special* and precise promises of the Holy Ghost given through the Lord Jesus.

III. SHOW THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT IS THE FINAL SEAL OF CHRIST'S CLAIM. He is given because Jesus is *glorified*. As exalted, as entrusted with holy authority and power, the Lord Jesus has "shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." The Spirit witnesses to Christ, and especially to his present claim, as Lord, to the *allegiance* of every heart, the *surrender* of every will, and the *obedience* of every life.—R. T.

Vers. 37—39.—*The gospel demands from men.* The moral influence exerted by St. Peter's speech, in the power of the present Spirit, should be noticed. Many of his audience were "pricked in their heart;" that is, were "stung with remorse at the enormity of the wickedness which had been committed in the crucifixion [of Messiah], and at the blindness with which the whole nation had closed their eyes to the teaching of the prophecies which had spoken of the Messiah." They asked, "What shall we do?"—"to escape the penalties which must fall on the nation that has so sinned against light and knowledge; who have had the true Light in their midst, but have comprehended it not, and have crucified the Lord of glory." By unfolding and illustrating the *intense feelings* with which the Jews anticipated the *coming* of their Messiah, we may set forth the terrible *revulsion of feeling*, and the overwhelming *shame* that smote them, when they were convinced that they had actually *crucified their Messiah*, offering him thus the greatest insult, and rendering themselves guilty of the gravest crime. St. Peter demands three things—*repentance, faith, and confession*. The first and last of these are distinctly stated, the second is implied.

I. THE GOSPEL DEMANDS REPENTANCE. This was the requirement of John the Baptist, and of our Lord when he sent forth his apostles on their trial mission. It is the proper and necessary *preparation* for forgiveness; it is the *state of mind and feeling* to which alone forgiveness can come, and by which alone it can be appreciated. Here the conviction of the one particular sin of crucifying Messiah becomes a revelation of general sinfulness; and so *definite repentance* is attended with a humiliation and humility which can be a *basis* of faith, an *openness* to receive further truth, and a *condition* fitted for a gracious forgiveness. Repentance is still the first gospel demand. Possibly modern preaching greatly fails because adequate prominence is not given to it.

II. THE GOSPEL DEMANDS FAITH. Here the special object of the *faith* should be dwelt on. The repentance of these Jews involved their believing that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed their Messiah. But this was not *saving* faith. It only crushed and humbled. The faith required is *personal trust* in the living, exalted Lord Jesus Christ, the present Saviour, and actual surrender of heart and life to him. It is belief in *his Name* as Saviour. This distinction should be fully unfolded and illustrated, with earnest pleadings for that *faith*, or *personal trust*, which actually links us to the living Saviour.

III. THE GOSPEL DEMANDS CONFESSION. This is the real point and meaning of the rite of *baptism*, which is the public act in which our faith in Christ is *declared*. If we are sincere in our faith we shall be *willing* to make it known. If we are earnest in our faith we shall *want* to make it known. And Christ's kingdom is to be spread by just this confession and acknowledgment of him. Therefore the demand is, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Show that this duty of "public confession" is sadly neglected in our day, and there is consequently a perilous vagueness, indefiniteness, and indistinctness characteristic of religious life. Press the importance of this duty, in relation both to personal soul-culture and to the duty of witnessing for the Christ in whom we hope.

Conclude by showing that the gospel response to those who meet its demands is *forgiveness*, involving *acceptance with God* and the *privileges of restored sonship*; and that this is sealed to us by the gift of the Holy Ghost.—R. T.

Vers. 41—44.—*Early impulses of Christian disciples.* Estimate the fervour of feeling which those knew who had found the Messiah; had found him altogether more glorious, more spiritual, than their highest thoughts had ever conceived, and actually felt the joy of forgiveness from him, and the inward witness of his sealing Spirit. It was a time of rapture and intensity, in which all selfish thoughts would be easily overcome, and the common joy bind all together in common bonds. In their enthusiasm they expected the Lord Jesus to return at once, and therefore they were so ready to resign even their worldly goods, and devote all that they possessed to the use of the brethren. The custom of large numbers living and eating together is familiar to Easterns, and may be illustrated by the daily meals provided for the citizens of Sparta. Possibly the first thought that came to the early disciples was that they might realize, in the larger sphere, the state of things existing between Christ and his apostles when he was in the flesh. Those apostles gave up their trades to be with Christ, and he and they had lived together, and had "all things common." The company so gathered present the first model of a *Church*. Circumstances soon modified the form of it; but we keep the essential idea of it, which is this: common indebtedness to Christ, and devotion to him, bring men together into a gracious sense of brotherhood and fellowship. They recognize their *oneness* in Christ.

I. THE IMPULSE TO FELLOWSHIP. (Ver. 42.) Or, to gather together. The centre of the gathering was naturally the apostolic company. A desire to hear more about Christ was awakened, and the converts would not separate. Staying hour after hour, there would arise the necessity for meals; and though this may have been readily met on the first day, some order and provision would be necessary as they kept together day after day. The impulse to fellowship felt by those sharing common opinions and beliefs is constantly recognized, and is the basis of all associations, clubs, and societies of men. Those with the common opinions enjoy, and are benefited by, each other's fellowship. Therefore the apostle bids us "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Urge that still this natural and proper impulse should be nourished and followed. Neglected *fellowship* is the sign of weakened impulse, failing "first love," and inadequate impression of the "great grace" received in Christ Jesus.

II. THE IMPULSE TO SELF-SACRIFICE. *Others* were more thought of than *self*. There was a general desire to imitate Christ by *giving up for others*. This seems the idea in their "having all things common." "Under the strong and general feeling of Christian charity, which sprang out of Christian unity, men gave as freely as if what they had were not really their own, but only held by them in trust for others.

Practically, what was any brother's came to be the brethren's; no man asserted his private proprietorship, or 'said that aught of the things that he possessed was his own.'" The following points may be illustrated:—1. *Community of goods is a dream.* One which earnest and sentimental philanthropists have dreamed over and over again. 2. *Community of goods is an impossibility.* Socialistic systems have always broken down. If the community could be once established, the disabilities of life and the different dispositions of men would immediately introduce irregularities. "Religious communisms have generally rested, like the monastic orders, on an ascetic rather than a social basis. The fanaticism of the German Anabaptists, indeed, did not lack force, but it involved the ruin of society. Recent humanitarian attempts in France and America to realize a voluntary communism, wanting a religious motive, have broken down" (Dr. Dykes). 3. *Community of goods is an extravagant assertion of a true and high principle,* viz. that whatsoever a man holds, he holds in trust, and in trust for the service of others. 4. *Community of goods is substantially realized in the Christian Church,* where, ideally, each seeks not his own but his brother's good. "There is no real cure for diseased society except the regeneration of the individual, and the individual is regenerated when you have substituted brotherly kindness for selfishness as the ruling motive or ground of character." "Just in so far as any man takes in the peculiar teaching of the gospel, such as the saving mercy of the Father in heaven, our oneness in the incarnate Son, and the binding common life of the Holy Ghost—to that extent he will cease to be a difficulty in the way of social economics. He will help others as much, and grasp as little for himself, as possible."

Conclude by pressing the importance of keeping our hearts ever open to the gracious and loving impulses of God's Holy Spirit; and also press the relation to an earnest life of charity, brotherhood, and goodness which is found in "*keeping our first love.*"—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

Ver. 1.—*Were going up for went up together,* A.V. and T.R. Peter and John. The close friendship of these two apostles is remarkable. The origin of it appears to have been their partnership in the fishing-boats in which they pursued their trade as fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. For St. Luke tells us that the sons of Zebedee were "partners with Simon," and helped him to take the miraculous draught of fishes (Luke v. 10). We find the two sons of Zebedee associated with Peter in the inner circle of the Lord's apostles, at the Transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus's daughter, and at the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (see also Mark xiii. 3). But the yet closer friendship of Peter and John first appears in their going together to the palace of Caiaphas on the night of the betrayal (John xviii. 15), and then in the memorable visit to the holy sepulchre on the morning of the Resurrection (John xx. 2—4), and yet again in John xxi. 7, 20, 21. It is in strict and natural sequence to these indications in the Gospel that, on opening the first chapters of the Acts, we find Peter and John constantly acting together in the very van of the Christian army (see ch. iii. 1, 3, 11; iv. 13, 19; viii. 14, 25). **The hour of prayer;** called in Luke

i. 10, "the hour of incense," that is, the hour of the evening sacrifice, when the people stood outside in prayer, while the priest within offered the sacrifice and burnt the incense (see ch. ii. 46, note). Hence the comparison in Ps. cxli. 2, "Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."

Ver. 2.—*That was lame for lame,* A.V.; *door for gate,* A.V. **Door.** If any distinction is intended between the *θύρα* here and the *πύλη* of ver. 10 (which is not certain, as *θύρα* is often used for a *gate*), we must understand *θύρα* of the double doors of the gate described by Josephus. Perhaps the lame man leant against one of the open doors. Which is called Beautiful. It is not certain what gate this was. In the 'Dictionary of the Bible' it is described as "the great eastern gate leading from the court of the women to the upper court," following apparently Josephus, 'De Bell. Jud.,' v. v. 3. But it is impossible to reconcile Josephus's two accounts—that in the 'Bell. Jud.,' v. v. and that in 'Ant. Jud.,' xv. xi. In the former he says distinctly that there were ten gates—four on the north, four on the south, and two on the east. In the latter he says there were three gates on the north, three on the south, and one on the east. In the former he says that fifteen steps led up from the women's enclosure to the great

gate, exactly opposite the gate of the temple itself (*ἀντικρυ τῆς τοῦ ναοῦ πυλῆς*); in the latter he says very distinctly that women were allowed to enter through the great gate on the east. With such discrepancies in the description of the only eye-witness whose evidence has been preserved, it is impossible to speak with certainty. But it seems probable that there were two gates on the east—one the beautiful and costly gate of Corinthian brass, elaborately described by Josephus, through which the women did pass; the other the greater gate, just opposite to and above the beautiful gate (*ἡ ὑπὲρ τὴν Κορινθίαν*), leading from the court of the women to the inner court; and that Josephus has confounded one with the other in his descriptions. Anyhow, the beautiful gate was probably on the east. Its correct name is said to be the gate of Nicenor. The temple. It must be remembered that the whole platform, including the porches, and the courts of the Gentiles and of the women, and the outer court and the court of the priests, was called *τὸ ἱερόν*; the actual house was called *ὁ ναός*; that part of the *ἱερόν* to which only Israelites were admitted, was called *τὸ ἅγιον*. Josephus also divides the precincts into the first, second, and third *ἱερόν*. The description of this lame man laid at the gate of the temple to ask alms is very similar to that in Luke xvi. 20 of Lazarus laid at the rich man's gate; only that the word for laid is in St. Luke *ἐπέβλητο*, and here is *ἐτίθειον*.

Ver. 3.—*To receive an alms for an alms*, A.V. and T.R. The R.T. has *ἑλεμμοσύνη λαβεῖν*.

Ver. 4.—*Fasting his eyes* (*ἀρεσθας εἰς αὐτόν*). Comp. Luke iv. 20, "The eyes of all were fastened upon him (*ἦσαν ἀρεσθίζοντες*);" and ch. xxii. 56, "looking steadfastly." St. Luke also uses the phrase in ch. i. 10; iii. 12; vi. 15; vii. 55; but it is found nowhere else in the New Testament except 2 Cor. iii. 7, 13.

Ver. 5.—*From for of*, A.V.

Ver. 6.—*But for then*, A.V.; *what I have that for such as I have*, A.V.; *walk for rise up and walk*, A.V. and T.R. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. What Peter meant by "in the Name," he clearly explains in vers. 12 and 16, where he shows that they did not work the miracle by their own power or godliness, but that the lame man was healed by the Name of Jesus, in which he believed. So our Lord said of himself, "I am come in my Father's Name" (John v. 43; comp. John x. 25). Observe the full designation of our Lord as "Jesus Christ of Nazareth" (*τοῦ Ναζωραίου*), as in ch. iv. 10, and comp. Matt. xi. 23. The faith which was the condition of the healing (*ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει*, ver. 16) embraced the humiliation and cross of

the Christ (as expressed in the word *the Nazarene*) as well as his power and glory.

Ver. 7.—*Raised for lifted*, A.V.; *his ankle-bones for anole bones*, A.V. St. Luke's medical knowledge discerns the cause of the lameness—a weakness in the ankle-bones.

Ver. 8.—*And leaping up, he stood, and began to walk, for and he, leaping up, stood and walked*, A.V.; *he entered for entered*, A.V. Into the temple (*τὸ ἱερόν*). He passed through the gate, and mounted the fifteen steps which led into the *ἅγιον* (see note to ver. 2).

Ver. 10.—*Took knowledge of him for knew*, A.V. Wonder and amazement (*θαμβος*); any very strong emotion of awe, or admiration, or astonishment. It occurs elsewhere only in Luke iv. 36, where it describes the awe and amazement which came upon those who witnessed the casting out of the unclean spirit from the man in the synagogue at Capernaum. The verb *θαμβέω* occurs in ch. ix. 6 in the T.R., and is rendered "astonished" in the A.V., but is omitted in the text of the R.V.; elsewhere only in Mark. i. 27; x. 24, 32. "Ἐθαμβος occurs once in ver. 11 of this chapter; and *ἐθαμβέομαι* in Mark ix. 15; xiv. 33; xvi. 5, 6; *ἐκστασις*, an ecstacy, mostly used of a state of transport, as ch. x. 10; xi. 5; xxii. 17. But in the LXX. (Gen. xxvii. 35), Mark v. 42; xvi. 8; and Luke v. 26, it is used, as here, for a violent emotion of astonishment and amazement.

Ver. 11.—*He for the lame man which was healed*, A.V. and T.R. The words of the T.R. are thought to have crept into the text from the portions read in church beginning here, which made it necessary to supply them. Held; by the hand or otherwise; not *clave* to in the spiritual sense. The porch that is called Solomon's. Josephus tells us that King Solomon built up with masonry only the eastern side of the temple enclosure, and that upon the artificial foundation thus formed one *σπῶδ*, or covered colonnade, was built, the other sides of the temple in Solomon's time being naked and bare of buildings, but that in process of time, and by an enormous expenditure of treasure, the ground was filled up, levelled, and made firm by the masonry of huge walls all round, and then the circuit of buildings was completed. This eastern *σπῶδ*, or colonnade, was called Solomon's porch (see John x. 23). Greatly wondering; *ἐθαμβοί* (see note on ver. 10).

Ver. 12.—*At this man for at this*, A.V.; *fasten ye your eyes for look ye so earnestly*, A.V.; *godliness for holiness*, A.V.; *him for this man*, A.V. The him at the end of the verse requires that the man should have been previously mentioned. The A.V. felt this, and so, having taken *ἐπὶ τούτῳ* as at *this*,

they rendered *abroû* by *this man*, as if Peter had supplied the want of the verbal mention by pointing to him. Fasten ye your eyes. (For the use of *ἀρενίσειν*, see note on ver. 4.)

Ver. 13.—*Servant for Son*, A.V.; *before the face for in the presence*, A.V.; *had for was*, A.V.; *release him for let him go*, A.V. The God of Abraham, etc. The continuity of the New Testament with the Old Testament stands out remarkably in St. Peter's address. He speaks to the "men of Israel," and he connects the present miracle with all that God had done to their fathers in days gone by. He does not seem conscious of any break or transition, or of any change of posture or position. Only a new incident, long since promised by the prophets, has been added. "He thrusts himself upon the fathers of old, lest he should appear to be introducing a new doctrine" (Chrysostom). God . . . hath glorified his *Servant* Jesus. *Servant* is manifestly right (so St. Chrysostom). It is the constant meaning of *παῖς* in the LXX.; *son* is always *viûs* (see ver. 26; ch. iv. 27, 30). In Matt. xii. 18 the A.V. has "servant." (For the Old Testament usage, see Isa. xlii. 1; lii. 13; liii. 11). Delivered up; *παρεδόκατε*, different from the *ἔκδοσαν* of ch. ii. 23 (where see note). The word is applied to the action of Judas in delivering up Jesus into the hands of the chief priests (John xix. 11), and to the action of Pilate in sending Jesus to execution (Luke xxiii. 25; John xix. 16). Here it is spoken of the whole action of the Jews in procuring the death of Jesus. Denied before the face of Pilate. The reference is exact to Luke xxiii. 13—23. To release him. There is a verbal agreement with Luke xxiii. 16, 17, 20.

Ver. 14.—*Holy and righteous One for Holy One and the Just*, A.V.; *asked for for desired*, A.V.

Ver. 15.—*Raised for hath raised*, A.V. The Prince of life; a remarkable title here given to our Lord, to bring out the contrast between him whom they preferred and him whom they rejected. Barabbas was a murderer, one who took away human life for his own base ends; the other was the Prince and Author of life, who was come into the world, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. This title, taken in connection with the preceding declaration, "God hath glorified his *Servant* Jesus," seems almost to be a reminiscence of our Saviour's prayer, "Father, . . . glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John xvii. 1, 2). Jesus himself in very many places dwells upon his own great prerogative of giving life: "I am come that they might have life, and . . . have it more abundantly" (John x. 10); "I am that Bread of life;" "I am the living Bread . . . if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever;" "I give . . . my flesh for the life of the world;" "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life;" "They that hear shall live;" "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" "The Son of man he lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should . . . have eternal life;" "The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The word *ἀρχηγός* applied to Christ is found also in ch. v. 21, and in Heb. ii. 10; xii. 2, rendered the "Author or Captain of their salvation," "of our faith." Whereof we are witnesses (see ch. ii. 22, note). The marginal rendering of *whom* is equally literal, and may be defended by reference to ch. i. 8; xiii. 31; but the rendering *whereof* is in accordance with the more frequent phrases (ch. v. 32; x. 39, etc.). The meaning is practically the same.

Ver. 16.—*By faith in his Name hath this for his Name through faith in his Name*, A.V.: the order of the words is changed from that of the A.V., to bring it into accordance with the order of the Greek, but with a great loss of force in English; *'behold for see*, A.V.; *through for by*, A.V. Yea, the faith; rather, *and the faith*. The two propositions are not the same. The first affirms that it is the Name of Jesus which has given him strength, objectively; the second that the faith (subjective) which is *through* or *by* him hath given him perfect soundness. There is some obscurity in the exact meaning of *ἡ πίστις ἣ δὲ ἀβροû*. Some (see Alford, i. 1) compare 1 Pet. i. 21, and make God the object of the faith of his witnesses, Peter and John. Others (Meyer) understand that the faith in the Name of Christ was wrought in Peter and John by or through Christ's ministry and resurrection. But it is much more consonant with other passages (ch. xiv. 9; xvi. 31, etc.; Matt. xv. 28, etc.) to understand the faith to be that of the man who was healed; and then the phrase, "which is through him," will denote naturally that it was through Jesus Christ that the man's faith brought him into contact, so to speak, with God who healed him. In the same spirit we read that the lame man "praised God" (vers. 8, 9) for the cure effected through the Name of Jesus Christ; and Peter says (ver. 15), "Whom God raised from the dead." The interpretation of the phrase *ἣ δὲ ἀβροû* depends upon whether we supply an active or a passive word. The faith which *acts*, or *works*, or *moves* through him is one way of understanding it; the faith which *is wrought or produced* through him is the other. The first is preferable.

This perfect soundness; pointing to what they saw with their own eyes while the man was leaping and dancing before them (δολοκληρία, perfect soundness, used only here in the New Testament; it is a medical term).

Ver. 17.—*In for through, A.V.* I wot that in ignorance, etc. Mark the inimitable skill and tenderness with which he who had just wounded by his sharp rebuke now binds up the wound. All sternness and uncompromising severity before, he is all gentleness and indulgence now. They were only "men of Israel" in ver. 12, now they are "brethren." He has an excuse for their grievous sin. They did it in ignorance (comp. Luke xxiii. 33; 1 Tim. i. 13). Only let them see their error and repent of what they had done, and their forgiveness was sure.

Ver. 18.—*The things for those things, A.V.; foreshowed for before had showed, A.V.; the prophets for his prophets, A.V. and T.R.; his Christ for Christ, A.V. and T.R.; he thus fulfilled for he hath so fulfilled, A.V.* He even excuses their ignorance by showing how the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God was brought about through it (comp. Gen. xiv. 5, and see above, ch. i. 23).

Ver. 19.—*Turn again for be converted, A.V., with no difference in sense; that so there may come seasons of refreshing for when the times of refreshing shall come, A.V. Turn again.* The turning to God is the consequence of the change of mind (μετάνοια). That so there may come; rightly for the A.V. "when," etc., which the Greek cannot mean. What Peter conceives is that if Israel turns to God at once in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, then there will come at once those times of refreshing, those blessed days of righteousness, and peace, and rest, and universal joy, which are the characteristics of Christ's kingdom as foretold by the prophets. Those days are delayed by the unbelief of Israel. Seasons of refreshing. The A.V. "times of refreshing" is manifestly right, though there is no article in the Greek. "Seasons of refreshing" seems very vague and vapid (see Alford, i. 1, who very appropriately and conclusively cites the phrase καιροὶ ἐθνῶν, "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24). Meyer also compares the παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ of Luke ii. 25, and so in ver. 21, χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως is rendered "the times of restoration."

Ver. 20.—*And that he may send the Christ . . . even Jesus for and he shall send Jesus Christ, A.V.; who hath been appointed (προκεχειρισμένον, ch. xxii. 14; xxvi. 16) for you for (προκεκηνυγμένον) which before was preached unto you, A.V. and T.R.* Who hath been appointed, etc. Jesus is already designated and appointed and made (ch. ii. 36) both

Lord and Christ, but his glorious presence with his Church is deferred for a time, during which he is in heaven (ver 21). The R.V. is surely very infelicitous here, as if there were several Christs, one of whom was appointed for Israel.

Ver. 21.—*Restoration for restitution, A.V.; whereof for which, A.V.; spake for hath spoken, A.V.; his for all his, A.V. and T.R.* Whom the heaven must receive. This is clearly right, not as some render it, *who must occupy heaven*. The aorist δεξασθαι seems to point to the moment when, at the Ascension, he was carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv. 51). The restoration of all things (ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων). This must be the same operation as our Lord speaks of in Matt. xvii. 11: "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things (ἀποκαταστήσει πάντα)," and from the words of Malachi (iv. 5, 6) it would seem to be a moral or spiritual restoration preparatory to the coming of the Lord. If so, the time of restoration is not exactly synchronous with the times of refreshing, but preparatory to them; preparatory, too, to that restoration of the kingdom to Israel of which the apostles spake to the Lord (ch. i. 6). Probably, however, St. Peter includes in his view the immediately following times of "the presence of the Lord," just as in St. Mark (i. 1) the preparatory mission of John the Baptist is included in the phrase, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Whereof God spake. The antecedent to "whereof" is "the times" (ver. 24).

Ver. 22.—*Moses indeed said for Moses truly said unto the fathers, A.V. and T.R.; the Lord God for the Lord your God, A.V. and T.R.; from among for of, A.V.; to him shall ye hearken for him shall ye hear, A.V.; speak for say, A.V.* Moses indeed said. Peter now verifies his assertion about the prophets in the previous verse by quoting from Moses, and referring to Samuel and those that came after. A prophet, etc. The quotation is from Deut. xviii. 15—18. That this was understood by the Jews to relate to some one great prophet who had not yet come, appears from the question "Art thou that prophet?" (John i. 21), and from the saying of the Jews after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world" (John vi. 14; vii. 40). St. Peter here teaches that that prophet was none other than Christ himself, who was like unto Moses in the fulness of the revelation given unto him, in his being a Mediator between God and the people, in being the Author of a new law—the law of faith and love, in building a new tabernacle for God to inhabit, even the Church in which he will dwell for ever and ever (see Heb. i. 1, 2).

Ver. 23.—*Shall be for come to pass, A.V.; shall not hearken for will not hear, A.V.;*

utterly destroyed for destroyed, A.V. Utterly destroyed. The Greek *ἐξολοθρεύω* occurs frequently in the LXX. for the Hebrew phrase, "out off from his people" (Gen. xvii. 14); but in Deut. xviii. 19, the phrase is quite different, "I will require it of him." St. Peter here gives the sense, not the *ipsissima verba*, and thereby marks the extreme gravity of the sin of unbelief (see John iii. 18).

Ver. 24.—*Them that followed for those that follow, A.V.; they also told for have likewise foretold, A.V.* From Samuel, etc. Samuel and *οἱ καθ' ἑξῆς* seems to denote what the Jews called "the former prophets"—the authors of the historical books. The whole phrase, therefore, comprehends "all the prophets" (of whom Samuel and *οἱ καθ' ἑξῆς* were the first), to whose testimony concerning himself our Lord appeals (Luke xxiv. 27, 44).

Ver. 25.—*Sons for children, A.V.; your for our, A.V. and T.R.; families for kindreds, A.V.* Ye are the sons of the prophets, meaning that they inherited all the promises made by the prophets to their fathers. Just as in ch. ii. 39 he said, "The promise is unto you and to your children" (comp. Rom. ix. 4; xv. 8). He thus enforces the solemn obligation of giving heed to what the prophets had said concerning Christ and his kingdom. In thy seed (see Gal. iii. 16). This covenant, into which God entered with Abraham, with an oath (Gen. xxii. 16, 18), and which was a

repetition and amplification of the covenant and promise already recorded in Gen. xii. 1—3; xv.; xvii. 1—8, was made *πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας*, with a view to, in the direction of, the fathers, so as to include them and their children after them. It was now fulfilled to those whom St. Peter was addressing, as is set forth in the next verse.

Ver. 26.—*Servant for Son Jesus, A.V. and T.R.; your for his, A.V.* Unto you first. In virtue of the covenant, the first offer of salvation was made to the Jews (see ch. i. 8; xii. 26, 46; Luke xxiv. 47; Rom. ii. 10, etc.; comp. Matt. xv. 24). His Servant (as in ver. 13). As regards the phrase, "having raised up," however natural it is at first sight to understand it of the raising of the dead, the tenses make it impossible to do so. Nor could it be said that God sent Jesus to bless them after his resurrection. We must, therefore, understand *ἀναστήσας* to be equivalent to *ἐξαιέσας*, and to mean "having appointed," set up, raised up (as the English word is used, Luke i. 69; Rom. ix. 17). In this sense God raised up his Servant by the incarnation, birth, anointing, and mission to be the Saviour. To bless you; to fulfil to you the blessing promised to Abraham's seed. In turning away, etc., deliverance from sin being the chief blessing which Christ bestows upon his people (see ch. v. 31, repentance is spoken of as Christ's great gift to Israel). So closed the second great apostolic sermon.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The unexpected gift.* In one of those rapturous passages in which St. Paul tries to make human language express adequate thoughts of God, he speaks of God as "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20). In saying so he does but mark, in one aspect, the distance between the finite and the infinite, and show how far the bounty of the infinite Giver outruns the desires of those who receive his gifts. The whole revelation of God's dealings with mankind is a continual illustration of this truth. How could it ever have entered into the mind of Abram to ask to be made the father of many nations, to be the father of the faithful in all ages and in all countries, to be the head of God's elect people, and to have his life and his words and his deeds handed down to the posterities through endless time? How could it ever have entered into the mind of Israel in Egypt to ask to be led dry-shod through the Red Sea, to be fed in the wilderness with bread from heaven, to receive the Law from Sinai, and to be put into possession of the land of Canaan? Or how could it ever have entered into the thoughts of a rebellious and fallen world to ask that the only begotten Son of God, their Maker and Lord, should be incarnate and expiate their guilt by dying for their sins upon the cross? The section before us supplies another instance of this exceeding grace of God. A poor cripple, lame from his mother's womb, had for upwards of forty years lived in hopeless and helpless infirmity. In the merry days of youth, while his companions and equals in years were sporting and gambolling in all the freeness of joyous spirits and supple, elastic limbs, he was bound down to his pallet, like a bird confined in a cage, or a dog chained in his kennel. In early manhood, while others went forth to their work and to their labour, earning their daily bread by honourable industry, he was reduced to be a mendicant, living in constrained inactivity upon the precarious bounty of others.

And so it was at the present time. Every day he was carried by some kind hands and laid at the Beautiful gate of the temple, in the hope that those who passed to and fro to the house of God would look with pity upon his misery and minister to his wants. They must have been sad and dreary hours passed in expectancy and frequent disappointment; watching the countenances of the passers-by: overlooked by some, turned away from with proud contempt by others; sharply refused by this well-dressed but hard-hearted Sadducee, and occasionally receiving a mite or a farthing from that ostentatious Pharisee; doubtful whether he would carry home enough to supply his daily meal and his necessary raiment. On this occasion he saw two men about to go into the temple. Perhaps their aspect awakened the hope that there were kind, loving hearts beneath their humble garb. Or, maybe, he merely uttered the usual, monotonous prayer like that of the Italian beggars, "Date qualche cosa per l'amor di Dio." Anyhow, we may be sure that his utmost hopes did not go beyond receiving some small coin at their hands. But when, in answer to the words from Peter's lips, "Look on us," he had looked up and probably stretched out his hands to receive the expected alms, instead thereof he heard the words, "In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." And in an instant he was whole. No longer a cripple, no longer chained down to his bed, no longer a prisoner, he sprang to his feet, he walked, he leapt, he danced for very joy, and, singing praise as he went, he entered the holy courts. Here there was an instance of God doing unto men exceeding abundantly above all that they ask or think. Here we have a type of the exceeding riches of God's grace, resulting in unlooked-for mercies to the children of men. Let us take note of it, and frame our estimate of God's character accordingly. Nothing more elevates the tone of a man's religion than a worthy conception of God's goodness. It stimulates his love, it kindles his adoration, it raises his hopes, it intensifies all his spiritual emotions. Low conceptions of God's nature beget a low standard of love and service. There is nothing like a true view of the infinity of the love of God, and of the unsearchable riches of his grace in Jesus Christ, to lash all the sluggish emotions of the heart into a holy and healthy enthusiasm. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it," is another mode of expressing the same blessed truth; and "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift," is the language of those whose experience coincides with the revelation which God has given of himself in his holy Word.

Vers. 12—26.—*The two judgments.* "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. xvi. 7). "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke xvi. 15). "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Luke xx. 17). The above passages, with many others, call our particular attention to the frequent contrariety between the judgment of men and the judgment of God. The section before us gives two striking examples of this contrariety.

I. The *first* is the contrariety between the judgment of the men of Israel as to the cause of the healing of the lame man, and the truth as declared by the apostles. The men of Israel thought that Peter and John had healed him by their own power or holiness. Their blind, carnal mind could not see beyond what lay just before them. They mistook the instrument for the cause. They could not see the power of Jesus Christ in heaven working through the hands of his servants on earth. And this is a type of a widely extended human error or false judgment. In the judgment of carnal men, however sharp their intellectual sight may be, everything is material, and the visible matter has no invisible spirit behind it. Famines, pestilences, earthquakes, are in their view natural phenomena with which the hand of God has nothing to do. Success or defeat in war, prosperity or adversity to the individual or the nation, are owing exclusively to the wisdom and prowess of men, not to the blessing or chastening of God. And it is even so in the Church. They see only the outward visible signs, and they ignore the inward spiritual grace. Holy baptism is a sign, a ceremony, a rite. It has, maybe, a certain significance, a certain admonitory or teaching power in their eyes, but they ignore the active, quickening energy of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament. The bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are emblems, symbols, tokens, but they apprehend not the body and blood of Jesus Christ "which

are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful" at the Lord's table. Sermons, if eloquent, able, and stirring, are things of natural power in their estimation, but they do not take into account the effectual working of the Holy Ghost accompanying the Word preached, and making it the power of God unto salvation. And so it is throughout, both in the world and in the Church. The carnal judgment of men takes into account only the natural and the material; those who have the mind and judgment of Christ recognize the supernatural and spiritual agency of God.

II. The other example furnished by this section of the contrariety between the judgment of man and the judgment of God is that which is so pointedly put by St. Luke, both here and in his Gospel: the preference given by the Jews to Barabbas over Jesus Christ. "Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life; whom God raised from the dead." Here, then, we have the Lord Jesus, the well-beloved Son of God; in whom he was well pleased; who always did those things that pleased him; to whom he said, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool;" whom God exalted far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; to whom he has given "a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That was the judgment of God. Now let us see the judgment of men concerning this same Jesus. He was in the world, in all the simplicity of his spotless righteousness, in all the dignity of his sinless humanity, in the majesty of the Son of God; the fulness of wisdom, of love, and of pure goodness beamed forth in his every word and work, but "he was despised and rejected of men." He was reviled as a blasphemer, as one that had a devil, as a gluttonous man and a winebibber, as a friend of sinners, as a seditious, turbulent man, as one that was not worthy to live. So he was brought before the judges of the earth, accused, arraigned as a criminal; smitten, buffeted, scourged, spit upon, condemned; led forth to execution, numbered with the transgressors, nailed to the cross, left to die amidst the jeers and taunts of his murderers. And when Pilate himself offered to release him, the offer was met with the cry, "Not this man, but Barabbas;" and Barabbas was a robber. That was the judgment of man. And have we not here a type of the frequent contrariety between the judgment of men and the judgment of God? The things, the persons, the characters, that God approves, find no favour with a corrupt and perverse world; the things, the persons, the sentiments, that God disapproves, receive the praise of men. The opinions of the day, the voice of the multitude, the prevailing tone of thought amongst men, are no safe criterion of worth and truth. We must ever remember that there are two judgments, the judgment of man and the judgment of God, and that these are often diverse the one from the other. It should be our constant prayer that God's Holy Spirit may give us "a right judgment in all things;" so that, on the various questions of interest which engage the thoughts of our own generation, we may be found in harmony, not with the conceits of men, but with the all-seeing mind of God.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Helplessness and healing.* In this interesting incident we have an illustration of the urgent spiritual necessities of our race, and of the sufficiency of the gospel to meet them. We have—

I. A GREAT AND SAD CONTRAST. They brought daily to the Beautiful gate of the temple a lame beggar, who asked alms of all that entered (vers. 2, 3). What a striking contrast is here!—the large, strong, handsome gate, wrought by the most skilful workmen, intended to add beauty and attractiveness to the magnificent temple, an object of keen, universal admiration; and, laid down at the foot of it, a poor, ill-clad, deformed, helpless beggar, fain to find a miserable existence by asking the pity of all that passed through. Such contrasts has sin introduced into this world. If we look on this whole fabric of nature as a temple in which God manifests his presence, and on our earth, with all its loveliness and grandeur, as one of its beautiful gates,

then we see, in strongest and saddest contrast with it, stricken, helpless, deformed human nature—man brought down to the very ground, unable to sustain himself, the pitiful object of compassion: we behold the fair workmanship of God with all its exquisite beauty, and we see sinning, erring, suffering, fallen man by its side.

II. A PICTURE OF SIN IN ITS STRENGTH. What more forcible illustration of this can be found than in a man lame from his birth (ver. 2)? One born to the heritage of mankind, viz. that of voluntary, happy activity; of walking, running, moving, whithersoever he would, with free power of motion, in all acts of duty, pleasure, affection;—this man doomed to utter helplessness, his deformity or disease becoming more rigid and incurable as the months and years pass by! What a picture, this, of our human spirit, created to enjoy the heritage of a holy intelligence, viz. that of free and happy activity in all the ways of righteousness, piety, usefulness; of moving joyously along all the paths in which God invites his children to walk; yet, from the very beginning, being utterly unable to walk in the way of his commandments, to run in the paths of wisdom and of peace, incapable of doing that for which it was called into being, and becoming more rigidly and hopelessly fixed in its spiritual incapacity year by year.

III. THE INTERVENTION OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD. 1. *It demands attention.* "Peter, . . . with John, said, Look on us" (ver. 4). The gospel of Christ has a right to make this same appeal to all men. No seeking, struggling soul has a right to be regardless of its offers. The beneficent and mighty works of Jesus Christ; the profound spiritual truths he uttered; the beautiful and exalted life he lived; the strange and wondrous death he died; the message of love he left behind him; the adaptation, proved by eighteen centuries of human history, of his system to the deepest wants of human nature;—all these conspire to give to the gospel of God the right to demand attention—to say, "Look on me;" see whether there is not in me the help and healing which you need. 2. *It disclaims certain offices.* "Silver and gold have I none," etc. (ver. 6). The gospel does not offer to do everything for man which it may be desirable should, in some way, be done. It does not propose (1) to effect renovation by revolutionary social changes, or (2) to bring about immediate improvement in the outward conditions of a man's life, or (3) to guarantee bodily health or immunity from temporal trouble and domestic loss. It tends to ameliorate the condition of mankind in every way, and ultimately it does so; but its first promise, and that by which it is to be tested and judged, is not of this order. 3. *It offers one essential service.* "In the Name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk" (ver. 6). It says to the stricken, wounded soul, "Wilt thou be made whole?" To the soul burdened with a sense of sin, it offers pardoning love and spiritual peace; to the heart oppressed with care and fear, it offers a Divine refuge in which to hide; to the soul struggling with temptation, an almighty Friend; to the weary traveller, a home of rest and joy. Whatever is the one imperative thing, that the gospel of Christ presents; but its offer is inward, spiritual, heavenly.

IV. THE BLESSED ISSUE. (Vers. 7—10.) This was: 1. Healing to him that had been helpless. 2. Gratitude showing itself in praise. 3. Interested attention on the part of those outside: "They were filled with wonder and amazement;" they were in a state most favourable for the reception of the truth. When we make an appeal to Christ, we are not to be satisfied until we have found spiritual recovery; until our souls are filled with the spirit of thanksgiving; until our restoration has told upon our neighbours as well as on ourselves.—C.

Vers. 11—21.—*The human and the Divine.* Human and Divine elements are here crowded together, as indeed they are in most if not all of the events of our life. We look at—

I. THE HUMAN ELEMENT. 1. *Excitement.* The man who had been lame, in the excitement of joy and gratitude, "held Peter and John" (ver. 11), and "all the people ran together . . . greatly wondering" (ver. 11). In the region of the Divine is calmness, serenity, peace; in that of the human is agitation, disturbance, excitement. 2. *Instrumentality.* (Ver. 12.) We do not effect anything of ourselves; we are co-workers with God. We depend on his Divine assistance, on the co-operation of forces that are acting around and within us, in virtue of his energizing power, for the accomplishment of our humblest undertakings. How much more emphatically is this the case in the sphere of

sacred usefulness, in the communication of spiritual life! There should be, there must be, as in the case of Peter and John, fitness for the work and obedience to the word and will of Christ; but after all it is not "our own power or holiness" that "makes any man to walk" in the ways of God. 3. *Guilt*, qualified by ignorance. Peter charges his hearers with positive and terrible crime (vers. 13—15); he does, indeed, make the abatement which is due to ignorance (ver. 17): they did not "kill the Prince of life," knowing that it was he whom they were crucifying. But they remained in guilty ignorance of his origin, his character, and his mission; and their ignorance, if it palliated, did not excuse their crime. We also often "know not what we do" when we wrong the innocent, when we sin against ourselves, when we rob God of the glory due to his Name. Our ignorance is not left out of the account by the Holy and the Just One; nevertheless he adjudges us to be verily guilty, and he condemns us. 4. *Penitence*. (Ver. 19.) We are to be changed in our mind, and be converted or turned from our evil ways to those which are right, pure, godly. 5. *Faith*. (Ver. 16.) Peter says that "faith in the Name" of Jesus Christ had given the lame man that "perfect soundness" which they all beheld. He does not say, or is not reported as saying, that these "men of Israel" must believe in him whom they had guiltily slain, but that was either implied or expressed in his address to them. "Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," is the testimony borne by apostles "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks" (ch. xx. 21).

II. THE DIVINE ELEMENT. 1. *Overruling wisdom*. (Ver. 18.) What God had shown beforehand needed to be done, he had, in the ordering of his holy providence, caused to take place. Through all these things which happened at Jerusalem, in which the hand of man had so large a share, there ran a thread of Divine agency; so that purposes of heavenly love and wisdom were after all fulfilled. He still "makes the wrath of man to praise him." 2. *Glorifying the Just and Holy One*. (Vers. 13, 15.) God is bringing many sons unto glory, as well as the "Captain of our salvation." He will ensure the ultimate acquittal and honouring of those who are reviled and wronged. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." 3. *Restoration*. (Vers. 12, 19—21.) It was the Divine hand, and no human magic, which healed this lame beggar (ver. 12). It is the hand of God which gives such blessed recuperative power to our bodily system, and which raises the sick man from the bed of suffering, weakness, acute disease, to newness of physical life. It is God who grants to the condemned but penitent spirit restoration to his loving favour ("that your sins may be blotted out"), and it is he who will one day grant to a renovated world "times of refreshing," the reappearance of Jesus Christ in his heavenly power and glory (vers. 20, 21). There is a sense in which (1) there is much that is marvellous in the working and outworking of God; it is so far beyond our finite understanding. But there is also a sense in which (2) there is nothing surprising in any acts of restoration or renovation we witness. It is only what we should ask for and expect of *him*. "Why marvel we" at that?—C.

Vers. 22—26.—*The greatness of Jesus Christ*. These verses may be regarded as attesting the unapproachable greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ; they invite us to think—

I. THAT HE WAS LIKE UNTO THE GREATEST OF ALL WHO PRECEDED HIM, BUT WAS GREATER THAN HE. (Ver. 22.) A *greater Legislator* than Moses, for his laws should last as long as time itself; a *better Man*, for he was absolutely without sin; a *worthier Leader*, conducting out of a harder bondage into a truer freedom, unto a land of greater promise.

II. THAT HIS RELATION TO MANKIND IS SUCH THAT THE REJECTION OF HIM IS THE RUIN OF OURSELVES. (Ver. 23.) To be ignorant of some human teachers is to lose a valuable heritage, a precious treasure, excellent and elevating enjoyment; but to refuse his friendship, to reject his service, is to cut ourselves off from the source of eternal truth, is to abandon ourselves to the course which ends in spiritual death.

III. THAT HE IS THE ONE GREAT HERO OF SACRED SCRIPTURE. (Ver. 24.) "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Rightly read, "all the prophets" testified of him, and pointed on to those days in which he lived, suffered, died, and rose again.

IV. THAT HE BLESSES WHOM HE SERVES WITH THE SUPREME BLESSING. (Ver. 26.) What would we give to those whom we would fain serve? Health, fortune, power, fame, human love? Jesus Christ blesses by "turning away every one from his iniquities." What a transcendent blessing is this! Consider: 1. How much it involves; viz. the removal of the penalty and the power of sin from each individual soul. 2. How much it implies; viz. the restoration of each soul to God (for to fear him, to love him, and to strive to please him, is the only way to escape from a state of sin), and entrance upon eternal life (for the sphere of sin is the region of death, and to be delivered from the former is to enter the kingdom of life, the life which is spiritual and eternal). 3. By what means it is effected; viz. (1) by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. ix. 26), and (2) by attracting us to himself and his service (John. xii. 32; 1 John. iii. 5, 6).

V. THAT, COMING TO REDEEM THE RACE, HE OFFERS HIS SALVATION FIRST TO THOSE WHO HAD REJECTED HIM. (Vers. 25, 26.) They to whom Peter spoke were "the children of the prophets;" but they had "denied the Holy One and the Just," and "killed the Prince of life." Yet to those who had so shamefully abused their privileges the apostle said, "*To you first,*" etc. Jesus came to "call sinners to repentance," to restore those who had fallen the furthest, to cleanse the most leprous, to raise the spiritually dead, to win those most utterly estranged and most bitterly opposed to himself. So great a Conqueror is he.—G.

Vers. 1—10.—The healing of the lame man. I. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE CURE. Peter and John were going up in company to the temple at the evening hour of prayer. Here we see: 1. The fellowship of different orders of minds in Christ. None more diverse in character and temperament than the impulsive Peter and the contemplative John. 2. Prayer one of the bonds of this fellowship, as expressed in the beautiful hymn, "How blest the tie that binds!" 3. An example of the profit of set times and seasons for worship. (See on the three times of daily prayer—the third, sixth, and ninth hours—Dan. vi. 10 and Ps. lv. 18.) And the good also of a fixed place of prayer. The temple, the synagogue, the Church, or the meeting-house; each has its hallowed and happy associations. How greatly devotion is helped by the imagination, and the imagination how dependent upon association, must be obvious to all. 4. The path of true devotion is often found to be the path that leads to useful service to others.

II. THE SUFFERER. Lame from his birth, deprived of that power of independent activity in which so much of the enjoyment of life consists, he is the type of a deeply pitiable class. To have health is so great a blessing, because it carries with it that of command over one's powers, and therefore freedom and independence. He was helplessly dependent—borne by others. Such sufferings remind us of the presence of moral evil, which can neither be explained nor explained away. But there are compensations: The lame man had friends. Seldom does such misery fail to stir up pity and enlist help. Outward evils are ever balanced in the Divine wisdom by inward good. We never know the kindness of man to man till sickness and sorrow reveal it. They carried him to one of the splendid gateways of the temple, that he might be in the way of the charitable droppings of alms from those that went in. The religious duty of almsgiving was preached up by the rabbis incessantly and in the strongest way—even to excess, as we may see from Lightfoot and other authors. One noted saying was that God suffered the poor to exist that rich men might earn heaven. Our theological and our practical views of the subject have changed. But at least we have a good example here: we should exert ourselves to place the sufferer within reach of help. The great problem of true charity is to bring the supply and the need into practice. If the intention be loving and good, something better often comes of it than is hoped for, as in this case. The sufferer, intent upon the minor boon, receives the higher blessing. So does a living Divine purpose shape our actions to nobler ends than we designed.

III. THE CURE. There is human means with Divine agency. 1. The human means. The apostles fix their eyes earnestly upon the sufferer. Thus his attention is aroused; his thoughts are collected; he is brought into a concentration of thought and feeling. It is not the wandering mind that God reveals either his thought or his power. The eyes must be lifted up to the quarter whence help comes. He who is conscious of hearing God's message to the souls of men may cry, "Look on me; listen to me!" Faith is not passive; it is an energy, expressed by looking, listening, coming, doing.

Thus only can the electric chain be completed; the healer and the healed be brought into vital contact. Directions must be complied with as the first condition of physical healing and of spiritual salvation. The best gift we have for our fellow-men is the gift of the head and heart. This is lasting; others perish in the using. We cannot lose the memory nor the blessing of good words. If we have no money to give in alms, we may make our fellow-man rich from our heart. Intelligence and sympathy are what all men want, and none are thankless for. We reap ingratitude where we have not really shown our heart. The best spiritual gifts recognize the worth of the recipient. Let us treat men as our equals—beings possessed of will. There are possibilities before them; let us reckon upon them and believe in them, thus inspiring them in their weakness with such healthy belief. 2. The Divine power in the human means. We cannot command our fellow-men except in the name of some authority which both he and we are subject to. He who can rest his appeals upon the firm words, "By order," or "In the name of the queen," or the like, has a might over wavering wills. Really to govern means first to have obeyed. The "Name" here signified a vast reality. "Jesus Christ of Nazareth!" It is the symbol of all power in heaven and earth; supreme, unrivalled, purely loving and beneficent. As ministers of Christ, we are servants of the Almighty, channels of charity, agents of a kingdom that must prevail. This power will be felt both by words and deeds. The tones of Peter's voice thrilled; his bidding awoke the slumbering power of volition; finally his hand, joined with that of the sufferer, completed the union of the Divine agency to save with the sufferer's will to be saved. The weak feet and joints became firm; the whilom prostrate one leaped up and stood; from this proceeded to walk; finally went with the healers into the temple, exultingly to render praise to God. The thankful heart is the best sacrifice we can offer to God. Without it, the best crown of the blessing he designs to confer is not attained. If men see our state changed, but not our heart, God is defrauded of his glory and his due in us. The joy of the comforted heart is the best proof of the love of the Comforter. He means our freedom and our joy; what if we disappoint his thought, so that it flowers not and bears no fruit?

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CURE. 1. *Popular observation.* They identified the man. They compared his present and past condition. Comparison is the foundation of our knowledge of truth. 2. *Popular reasoning.* They argued that the change could proceed only from one cause, and that Divine. The *quality* of changes points to the *quality* of the cause. Extend this reasoning, and the best, as the most popular, argument for Christianity is this: the change produced by it in man's condition prove it to be of origin Divine. 3. *Popular amazement and ecstasy.* Such are the words of the historian. Wonder is the reflection of the unusual and the unexpected in the mind. And this passes into ecstasy or transport when through the sensuous the supersensual, when through the natural the supernatural, appears. If all the course of life were common and familiar, God would be forgotten. Were wonders incessantly repeated they would become no longer wonders, and their power were lost. God shows his hand now and again that the spell of custom may be broken; hides it that we may reflect on what we have seen. Mingled fear and joy ever attend Divine revelations; fear in the thought of our utter dependence, joy in the thought that in that very dependence lies our hope and our deliverance.—J.

Vera. 11—26.—*Witness of Peter to Jesus.* A great congregation, in the mood of wonder and prepared to listen, is before him. He who had once denied his Master in a moment of weakness, is now enabled with great power to give testimony of him.

I. A DISCLAIMER OF INDEPENDENT POWER OR MERIT IN THE APOSTLES. The note of a genuine mission. The false prophet and the magician neglect nothing that will enhance their supposed supernatural character. The apostles insist that they are but men, have no power of themselves, are the agents merely of a higher will. So, too, peculiar piety on their part is disclaimed. They did not aim at the reputation of saints; they refused to encourage the natural delusion that they must be better than other men. This was not the way to popularity, but the simple course of honest witnesses for God.

II. THE RECENT EVENT TRACED TO ITS SOURCE. 1. God is the faithful God, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God of their fathers; these were dear and time-honoured

appellations. With these is now connected that of Father of Jesus. Thus the recent is united with the most ancient past. One unailing bond of Divine constancy and love knits the ages into unity, and makes history the unfolding of an increasing purpose. 2. His love is illustrated by the contrast with human hate. They had repudiated the Holy and Just One, and had begged the life of a murderer in his stead. Blindly they had hurried the "Author of life" to an ignominious doom. But who can contend against God, his power, nay, rather, his love? The purpose of life is victorious over human passion, and God will not suffer men to work out their suicidal intents to the full. The Resurrection, be it insisted, then, is the crowning proof of indefeasible constancy and will to save men in their own despite. 3. The energy to heal ever flows from the risen Christ. Faith is the condition of being blessed. It is the movement of the whole soul towards the Divine Benefactor. It is the junction of the human with the Divine will, and is the one principle of salvation.

III. DEDUCTIONS FROM THE PAST. History, and every portion of it, contains a Divine logic. Every study of it is idle which does not end with the question—What is the meaning for the present? What resolve is to be taken? What duty now to be discharged? The paths of experience converge towards one goal. 1. The crucifixion of Jesus had been an act of ignorance. They "knew not what they did;" neither people nor rulers. It was a mitigation of the crime, and divinely recognized. The acts of wrath are blind, and just judgment distinguishes between the evidences of passion and the evidences of ingrained perversity in man's acts. 2. It was at the same time a fulfilment of prophecy. God permits evil means to work out holy ends. The happiest revolutions have often sprung from momentary ignition of wrath and resentment. The feeble human heart expends its little explosive force, and silently makes an opening for the march of a higher purpose. It was necessary that Christ should suffer. Every pleasure is the reaction from a pain; every birth proceeds from travail; there is no deliverance without spiritual struggle. The most spiritual, the most living personality, must agonize and suffer most. This is the law. In the suffering of the "Leader of life" it finds its highest expression. Thus did Divine will confront human freedom, and the futility of resistance is shown. The very efforts of blind passion to defeat that will serve only to elicit its meaning. Like blows upon a vibrating substance, human sins draw deeper music from the heart of God.

IV. PRACTICAL DIRECTIONS. "Change your mind and turn." If we cannot influence the fixed course of things, it is wisdom to be influenced by it. If the Divine purpose is not to be bent aside for us, we must bend before it. We cannot change the course of fate, but we can change the course of our thoughts and actions. To persist in discovered error is like fighting against the stars in their courses. Sin is only unforgivable when it is persisted in as sin. The constant promise of the gospel is that sin shall no longer be reckoned to a man, *i.e.* viewed as a fact of his life, when it has been corrected by the will. Our deeper thought teaches us that there is no time for God. Our "now" and its self-determination is the question. One solemn moment of decision converts the error of the way into the direction of truth and right.

V. PROMISES OF FUTURE GOOD. 1. *They are of indefinable grandeur and attraction.* We cannot fully analyze the contents of any Divine promise. Its riches exceed definition and thought. At the same time, every promise has leading hints to guide faith and expectation. Here "times of refreshing" and the "sending of Jesus" form such hints. 2. *They point to a goal of history.* "The times of the restitution of all things." The golden age of paganism was in the remote past; that of Israel and of the gospel lies in the distant future. It rests, like all our good, upon nothing less sure than Divine will, and is the subject of prophetic oracles. To define is to limit and to narrow and to impoverish our noblest ideals. Let us be content, as Peter teaches elsewhere, to accept prophecy as a "light shining in a dark place, until the day dawn." 3. *They are designed to guide conduct, not to explain the future fully.* The prediction in the Law cited by Peter received many changing interpretations in the long course of its existence. The actual highest fulfilment was not recognized when it came. God ever fulfils himself unexpectedly. Meanwhile the delay of fulfilment keeps thought and hope awake. 4. *The growth and increasing emphasis of prophecy.* The sound dies not, but gathers in volume as it goes, filling the earth. Do we heed its sound now? Is there no voice of God for us in the instruction and warnings of the greatest spirits of

our time? Every teacher who bids us strive and aspire towards the ideal, the kingdom of God in the spirit, is a prophet, and is charged with a measure of oracular power for his generation.

VI. THE INHERITANCE OF THE PRESENT. We too are "sons of the prophets." God has spoken to us. Behind us lies the past, with its wonderful lore, its yet unsatisfied yearnings. We too are included in the Divine covenant of blessing. The process of events set in motion by the eternal Cause continues itself in us. The seed of his loving thoughts becomes fertile anew in the spirits of each succeeding generation, and appears in new blossom and fruit. Till "all countries of the earth" shall thus be sown and impregnated with the thoughts of God, the process shall continue. Away, then, with a dead theology which seeks for inspiration only in the fulfilled, not also in the fulfilling and the to be fulfilled. Let us believe in God, not merely because we know that he stirred in men's souls in days of yore, but because we feel him stirring in our own souls now.

VII. ORDER IN THE DIVINE PURPOSE. Israel first, next through Israel the nations are to be blessed. Spiritual force, like other force, must be concentrated that it may be diffused. Other nations have had light, but Israel the intensest. It is the moral consciousness which makes humanity; and in the turning from sin, men are in the way of all good, of growing good; the negation of evil is the affirmation of the principle of the spirit.—J.

Vers. 1—10.—*The apostles workers of miracles.* General Introduction. The witnessing vocation of apostles required miracles—as signs of the kingdom of Christ; as attestations of apostolic authority; as appeals to the world, and to the Jewish people especially, to accept the new doctrine; as corresponding in some measure to the miracles of our Lord, and so perpetuating the blessing of his ministry which he himself promised in his last discourses, "Another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever" (John xiv. 16). Consider the miracle itself.

I. ITS CHARACTER. 1. *Purely benevolent.* Performed on a beggar, helpless, miserable, altogether unconnected with the new society, unable to reward his benefactors. 2. *Conspicuously real.* At a public spot—the temple; at the ninth hour, when worshippers would throng to the place; on one well known to the whole city; daily laid as a public object of pity; helped by no one before, but now helped through Christ; born lame, therefore not labouring under merely temporary infirmity; not even asked for by the sufferer, but offered freely by the apostles, as by a sudden impulse of the Spirit.

II. ITS EFFECTS. 1. Upon *the man himself.* It raised him up physically and spiritually at the same moment. God often thus speaks to the soul through the body, both by afflictions and by visitations of mercy. It turned his wail of misery into songs of joy. Take the description of the work upon the man as typical of the course of gracious work, the bestowment of a new life and strength, first putting us on our feet with sudden leap of heartfelt gladness of faith; then "beginning to walk," feeling the new limbs like a child; then walking forward "into the temple;" then "walking and leaping and praising God," the conscious participation in blessings making us the ministers of joy to others, filling the temple with praise. 2. Upon *the apostles* and through them *on the Church and on the world.* The important place of the miracle as evidence of the Divine mission of the messengers. They themselves could scarcely have known what they could do until, by impulse of the Spirit, they put forth the energy. The believers who were sharers with apostles of the gifts of the Spirit would henceforth expect great things. Jerusalem must have been startled into attention and incipient faith. "The people saw him," etc. (vers. 9, 10). Although miracles regarded alone would never convert the world, yet in connection with the Word of God they powerfully arouse the minds of men. "Wonder and amazement" are God's agents in awakening the soul and preparing the ground for the seed of eternal life. Another great effect of the miracle was corrective and didactic. No one could doubt that the apostles were no self-seekers, no fanatics, no ambitious founders of a new sect; out simply heralds of the gospel. What they did was "in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." They began their work upon the poor, they appealed to the impotent and the helpless, they proclaimed their own poverty, and yet invited men to riches

such as the world knew not. They showed themselves the sympathizing brothers of all mankind, ready to give such as they had to give, without money and without price, a pattern of simplicity and spirituality.—R.

Ver. 6.—*Spiritual riches.* “Then Peter said,” etc. Introduction. The whole scene suggestive on the subject of the state of man. The contrast between the man lying in squalid misery at the gate of the temple and the splendours of the religious edifice. What was that religion which could bear to see such sights daily, and had no message for the poor? All gospels must be tried by this test: preach them to the poor. The men who wrought the miracle had learnt to cast themselves on God for the things of this world. They were as poor as the beggar, yet rich in the gifts of God. They had access to the Church’s offerings, yet, with a very unpriest-like self-denial, could say they had nothing. At the gate of the temple, at the hour of prayer, learn this great lesson of Divine endowment and prosperity.

I. A great example of PERSONAL WEALTH. “Such as I have.” What was it? The Holy Ghost filling all the nature. Consider the two men, *Peter* and *John*. What wealth of knowledge, insight, power over the souls of others! Even in external aspects, the results upon the life of the world traceable to these two names, immeasurable; yet they were both fishermen of Galilee. What they had had been given them by God. The endowment which enabled them to heal one whom the world could not lift up. Surely an infinitely greater gift to be able to work such works than any of those distinctions of literary genius or artistic skill which the world so extravagantly rewards. Such wealth is ours as believers, in greater or less degree—a wealth which no man can take from us, which grows by prayer and effort, which cannot die with us; “their works do follow them.” The Church should seek this wealth of the Spirit, not, as the false Church has done, the wealth that perishes, lest the money should perish with it.

II. An impressive illustration of God’s METHOD OF LIFTING UP THE WORLD from its ruin. Show that both Church and State have failed. The temple may have beautiful gates, but be full of hideous idolatry and shame. The State may abound in silver and gold, and yet present to the eye such lamentable pictures of helplessness, revealing its own impotence, as the poor mendicant, daily passed by at the most public place and the most sacred place of the city. The present aspect of both the professedly religious world and the social condition of our great populations demand a confession of man’s inability to produce a really happy society. Here there is: 1. *The Name of Jesus Christ* proclaimed as the new power that is wanted, as a redemption of the world from sin, setting spiritual life at the root of all other life, healing the miseries of men with compassion and wonderful works, promising the entire renovation both of body and soul in another world. 2. *The true Church* holds the lever in its hand by which the world shall be lifted up. We want the two apostles, the Petrine spirit of *faith*, the Johannine spirit of *love*. We must speak clearly and without reserve, in the Name of Christ, not in the name of ecclesiastical power and ritualistic display, to the poorest, and without greed of filthy lucre; and we must prepare to put forth such energy and gifts as we have, all alike, and in the spirit of fellowship; then we shall fill the world with praise, and the lame man shall leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing (see Isa. xxxv., as a prediction of the Church’s power over the world). The message is individual to the rich and to the poor, “Rise up and walk.” No life is true life which is not blessed of God.—R.

Vers. 11—26.—*A great sermon to a wondering multitude.* I. THE AUDIENCE. 1. *Different* from that previously gathered, which was made up of devout men chiefly, who were interested in the strange phenomenon of the tongues. This was a mingled multitude, partly of temple worshippers, partly of passers-by, including, therefore, many who were present at the Crucifixion, who had shouted “Crucify him!” 2. *Their state of mind.* “Greatly wondering,” ready to be taught, gazing inquiringly at the apostles, almost worshipping them. Strange that they should be so affected after having beheld the miracles of the Lord. Probably already deeply touched and filled with remorseful feelings by the Crucifixion, beginning to believe in the Resurrection, and so filled with alarm lest they had incurred the righteous wrath of God. Peter

“saw it,” that is, the signs of an awakened mind and softened heart. He “answered,” perhaps cries of astonishment and inquiry.

II. THE SUBJECT OF DISCOURSE. Not the miracle as a miracle, but *the Messiahship of Jesus*, as proved by it, and its practical bearing on those present. 1. The facts of the gospel are set face to face with the *words* of Scripture. The agency of man is shown to be entirely under the control of an overruling Providence, “the determinate counsel of God.” Thus the greatness and graciousness of the faith is at once clearly revealed. The miracle falls into its place as a sign of the Divine working. It is the Name of Christ to which all is to be ascribed. As the multitude were unconscious agents in fulfilling the prophecies, so the apostles are simply ministers proclaiming the gospel, inciting their brethren to believe. 2. The nearness of the kingdom of God is made the ground of an earnest *call to repentance and faith*. The tremendous responsibility of such a time is declared. If God has been working, how can he pass by the wilful disobedience and neglect of those to whom such a message is sent? 3. *The day of grace is heralded*. While the guilt of a Saviour’s crucifixion is boldly pronounced, the gate of life is flung wide open. Peter uses his key well. Times of refreshing and gladness will come if impenitence does not hinder them. Jesus has been sent to bless you, not to curse you; to offer up the blood you shed on your behalf, not to call it down upon your heads, as you did in your blind passion. It was an appeal from fear to faith. Behold the power, but understand that the power is not death, but life. Believe and live. A truly gospel message.

III. AN EXAMPLE OF APOSTOLIC EARNESTNESS. 1. Thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of *faith*. Look, not on us, nor on the healed man, but on Christ. The power and the holiness (or “godliness,” Revised Version), is not ours, but God’s. We are mere earthen vessels. The excellency of the power is God’s. The firm persuasion which gave boldness to the preacher was not mere natural eloquence, or physical strength, or temporary elevation in the eyes of the multitude; but a scriptural faith, which rested on the fulfilled promises of God, which saw the facts in the light of eternal truth, which grasped the hope of the future—“the restoration of all things.” 2. *Directness of appeal*. They were not afraid of their faces. They spoke to their consciences. The guilt of the crucifixion is charged home upon them. We succeed best with men when they feel our hand grappling their conscience; if only they believe in our sincerity and faithfulness. Yet the apostles could not know how such a charge would be taken. Wonder might be changed in a fickle multitude into self-justification and rage against the prophet who said, “Ye are the men.” Compare in this respect the New Testament prophets with those of the Old Testament. 3. *Sympathy and love to souls*. Nothing like inhuman pressing the charge or denunciation. They are “brethren” still. They did it “in ignorance.” They can yet be blessed and saved. There is “perfect soundness” for them if they will have it. 4. *Inspired wisdom and heavenly skill*. They were “taught of God” how to speak. The startling message comes first, “Ye are guilty;” then the Scripture exposition leading on to the loving appeal at the conclusion. Our last note should always be love. Yet the golden thread of gospel faithfulness must run through all. A model of preaching. Make the beginning, middle, and end, *Christ*. But let it be Christ the Saviour from sin; not Christ the mere Teacher, or Example, or Mystery of God; but the Messenger of peace to dying souls. The sermon, doubtless, is given only in rough sketch, for it probably occupied some time, as the miracle was wrought about three o’clock in the afternoon, and the sermon was interrupted in the evening. There was time for a discourse of more than an hour, so that we may suppose the facts and arguments considerably amplified in the delivery. It would seem that some two thousand were converted between the day of Pentecost and the close of Peter’s sermon in Solomon’s porch. It is, therefore, likely that a large proportion of that number owed their conversion to this sermon; and they were many of them of the populace. Their identification with the Church would, therefore, give great weight to the message, which would be remembered and repeated in substance through the city, and hence handed down to the writer of the Acts. We cannot do better than study such models of simplicity and earnestness; if we would be blessed with similar success among the people.—R.

Ver. 16.—*The power of faith.* “And his Name,” etc.

I. THE NAME OF CHRIST THE SOURCE OF THE POWER. 1. His *personal merit* as Redeemer. He himself worked miracles; not as a mere instrument in the hands of God, but as Divine. When he left the world, he appointed his apostles to be his representatives, giving them all power in heaven and earth in his Name. He ascended to the right hand of God as an accepted Saviour, and from thence sends down the gifts. 2. His *royalty* as Head of the Divine kingdom. The sufferings of the world belong to its state of ruin, though not caused by the sin of the individual. The kingdom of Christ is set up in the midst of the fallen race to bring about "the restitution of all things." The heavens are opened. The light comes down into the darkness. 3. His Name as an *object of faith*. The spiritual draws up the lower world into itself. To believe is to lay hold of the hand which exalts us. As Peter laid hold of the lame man by the right hand and raised him up, so the representatives of Christ lay hold of a dying world; and whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but rise with him into a new life.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH PUT FORTH. 1. From the Church upon the world. By listening to the world's cries, and directing the souls of men to the true Help. By taking the sufferers by the hand and calling down upon them the blessing of God. By proclaiming everywhere the gospel of "perfect soundness," in lieu of the world's false gospels of imperfect remedies, and as a free gift of God to man. 2. From the individual soul upon the life. The apostles represent faith; the lame man, the ruined state of our nature. The living principle implanted by grace works an entire healing of the whole of humanity. Show that all the evils which belong to our life are in some way traceable to the want of faith; that is, of harmony with God. Vital, practical religion lifts up one part of the nature after another. The Christian is the highest style of man. The gospel of the Resurrection preaches a renovation which begins on this side of the grave. The power of the risen Christ works through the whole man; at last gives him perfect soundness. The blessed effect of the Name of Jesus in our heart, in our circumstances, in our family, in our prospects of the future. We cannot receive the special gifts poured out on the early Church, which, in the form they then had, were intended to serve a temporary purpose, but we can receive that "most excellent gift of faith." The Church should not rest satisfied while there is little manifestation of the power of faith in the works accomplished. Why are we content to go to and fro to the temple, and see the wretchedness of fellow-creatures, without attempting to remove it? Why is any enterprise reckoned impossible? No limits to the successes of the Church when she is filled with faith. We want to lead the world "leaping and praising God" into the temple of his truth. We shall do it, not by argument, not by ritual, not by excitement, but by the putting forth of the power of the Holy Ghost.—R.

Ver. 19.—*Conversion*. "Repent ye therefore," etc. The universal requirement. Rulers and people. Ignorant and educated. Near the kingdom, or far off. The end to be aimed at by all Christian effort and enterprise. The application of all mighty displays of Divine power. The real beginning of individual spiritual life, and of a true Church.

I. THE NATURE OF TRUE CONVERSION. 1. Spiritual change. Not a mere ritualistic sensation, or educational development of the character, but being "born again." Repentance, change of mind, on the ground of facts acknowledged and promises received. The announcement of the gift of God prepared the way for the call to repentance. The kingdom of heaven is at hand, *therefore* repent; pass through the gate into life. 2. Man's co-operation with God. "Repent and turn again" (Revised Version), "that your sins may be blotted out," etc. No amount of feeling is conversion; no enlightenment of the mind, or even devoutness of spirit, supersedes the change of life. The sins are blotted out by the blood of Christ as guilt, their burden is removed from the conscience, the heart, and the life, when repentance and faith introduce the sinner into the state of grace. What the apostle appealed for was a real coming out of the old state into the new. We must not be satisfied with mere religiousness, instead of decided confession of Christ before men. Direct the Word to the individual: "Repent *ye*." The participation of privilege as children of Abraham, as members of the favoured nation, no release from the obligation to repent. The Church itself needs revival and change.

II. ENCOURAGEMENTS. 1. The *great fact*. Conversion is a reality, already seen.

The Spirit of God is already poured out. The beginning of the new life is before our eyes. Others are changed, why not ye? Distinguish between the right and wrong use of such a fact. No necessity to wait for great revivals. Danger of expecting excitement to do God's work for us. The actual existence of a living, working Church of Christ in our neighbourhood is the great call to us. 2. The offered blessedness—the blotting out of sins. Sense of pardon the spring of the new life. The function of thankfulness in practical Christianity. The impossibility of progress without a sense of liberty. Hence the defective Christianity of our Churches. No sense of victory over sin. 3. The promised future. "Seasons of refreshing." Return of Jesus Christ. Restitution of all things. The key-note of revelation. The golden horizon of the world. Power of hope in awakening energy. "Pilgrim's progress" is towards "the celestial city." Turn your face from the city of Destruction to the city of God. The call to repentance should never be a mere denunciatory cry against sin, a mere pointing to the overhanging Mount Sinai, which gendereth bondage; but as the loving invitation to rejoice in the "presence of the Lord," from which the blessing is ready to come forth. Address men not as far off, but as nigh—within the temple courts, under the outspread wings.—R.

Ver. 26.—*The mission of Jesus Christ.* "Unto you first," etc. (Revised Version, "Servant," see margin). The Bible its own interpreter. All acknowledge the greatness, wonderfulness, perfection of the gospel portrait. Misconstruction of the facts by the Jew, by the unbelieving philosopher, by the mere moralist, by the rationalist. The last verse of the apostle's sermon a summing up Scripture and facts of history. So always revelation and history explain one another. The truly evangelical view of Christ the only one that appeals to the universal human heart.

I. THE INFINITE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE GOSPEL RESTS. God raised up his Son (Servant); God sent him. 1. The twofold aspect of the Divine character thus presented to us. Love desiring to bless; righteousness requiring the putting away of iniquities. All is from the Father. 2. The person and the work of Christ revealed in their intimate union. "Raised up," comprehending the whole conception of the mediatorial exaltation of Jesus Christ. Difference between his history and that of any mere human agent raised up for action. The necessity for all that we find in the Scripture record. God knows it, though we may not see it. 3. The Scripture is not given to be worked up by men's devices into mere food for human pride; it is a practical Book, the foundation laid, to be built upon. Christ was sent to bless us, and we can find the blessing only as we seek it practically.

II. THE UNIVERSAL MESSAGE TO THE WORLD. 1. The moral state of all men shows the necessity for such a proclamation. "Your iniquities." The history of the gospel reminds us that the most religiously instructed were far from being the most godly. The superstitions and oppositions of the world multiply its iniquities. Man cannot turn himself to God. 2. The whole gospel must be preached, or its true success cannot be realized. The mutilated Christianity of our time is proving itself impotent. We must lead the hearts of men to a person; we must teach them dependence on a power; we must call them to newness of life, a life already made manifest through Christ, both in his history and in the history of his people. Then: 3. The blessing should be put first and foremost. Blessing which the world has been waiting for from the beginning, which it has been prepared for by the dispensations, which it received in germ in Abraham and his seed, but which is for all the families of the earth. Hence it was "to the Jew first," as the consecrated messenger; but as the patriarchs were taken to the larger sphere of Egypt that they might come forth from it prepared to be God's messengers, so Christianity must be taken from its Judaistic standpoint, and put into the central position of the world's life, that it may draw to itself Greece and Rome, the East and the West, the whole nature and existence of humanity. So now the progress of man is from the emancipation of the individual, through that of the nation, to the cosmopolitan blessedness of mankind as a race. The mission of Christ is to each and to all.—R.

Ver. 1—ch. iv. 4.—*Peter's second sermon and its results—one evening's good work.* The history contained in the Acts of the Apostles continues to be a record of Peter's work. This great honour is bestowed on the active, earnest, impetuous disciple of the

days of Jesus' flesh. And it must be accepted as a certain proof that his repentance had been deep and sincere. The name of his loving companion and old brother disciple John is now introduced. But nothing that he may have either said or done is noticed with any particularity as yet. That he did contribute something in both of these sorts, however, is evident from the language of vers. 3 and 11 in this chapter, and vers. 1, 13, and 19 of ch. iv. The continued happy and hearty co-operation of the two is meantime worthy of notice, and tells its own tale; and if a conjecture is to be hazarded at all, none but the most natural need be repaired to—that John was feeling the quiet and reverent way to a service which he loved with his whole heart, and willingly yielded the precedence to another, Peter, whom he saw, ever since the issue of the race of the sacred sepulchre, if not before, to be a born pioneer. The really central fact of this portion of Scripture is another sermon from Peter, with its occasion so significant and its results so gladdening. Let us notice—

I. ITS VERY FORCIBLE TEXT—A MIRACLE. The days of discoursing on the *description* of what had been were not yet come. Peter founds his discourse on something to which he literally pointed his hearers, saying, "Ye see and know" it. Nor has Peter now the hard task of exciting attention and interest. These are abundantly excited. Deeds have gone before words, certain practice has gone before doctrine. The subject is invested with *life* and reality all round, and Peter undoubtedly has the grand advantage of speaking to ears that *want* to listen, because mind and heart are inquiring. Yes, Peter discourses upon the text of a miracle. And it is one (1) which is verified within the actual knowledge of those whom he addresses; (2) which is of an undeniably beneficent kind; (3) which is wrought, not on inanimate or unconscious nature, but upon nature both animate and conscious, and yet in addition possessed of reason; (4) which claims some connection evidently with human eye, voice, and hand, namely, those of Peter (vers. 4—7); (5) which nevertheless appears to draw for its deeper potency upon the inspiration of a *Name* invoked by that very Peter; (6) which results not merely in some surprising and most welcomed physical effect, but in certain spiritual manifestations as well (vers. 8, 9); (7) which derived some additional interest and significance from the very place where it was wrought—at a gate of the temple; (8) which found its occasion from a prayer for help, but meantime gave help out of all proportion to that which had been asked. Four general observations respecting the miracle as a whole should be made. 1. This miracle is the first recorded as wrought by the apostles in the new Church. 2. It most distinctly professes to be wrought "in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth." 3. It created a widespread interest, and awakened prompt and close scrutiny. 4. It is characterized by certain among the whole number of those who considered and investigated it as "a notable miracle," and one which they "could not deny," though with the very best wishes to deny it.

II. THE AUDIENCE TO WHOM THE SERMON WAS PREACHED. 1. It is a large and evidently altogether miscellaneous assembly. 2. It is an assembly who immediately look as though they attributed the miracle to "power" or to "holiness," or both. 3. It is an assembly who, in their wonder, excitement, and probably, also, genuine gratitude, are ready to attribute that "power" and "holiness" to two fellow-men. 4. It is an assembly guarded and corrected upon this matter without an unnecessary moment's delay.

III THE SERMON ITSELF. No picture ever brought out more faithfully or forcibly some figure in the landscape, no portrait some feature of countenance, than does this once spoken, now written, sermon bring out forcibly and faithfully certain truths. Note: 1. *The grand subject of it.* "Jesus Christ" (vers. 13, 18, 20). And (1) the transcendent relationship belonging to Jesus is with unqualified emphasis now asserted. He is the "Son of the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob." He is the "Son of the God of our fathers." Before the death of Jesus, Peter had boldly borne most unequivocal testimony to his own faith in the "Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. xvi. 17; John vi. 69), and, it may be supposed, to that of his fellow-disciples at the same time. And Peter had been in that act blessed with the great reward of hearing his Lord's own estimate of the special grace bestowed upon him. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Be this so, it is equally certain that this "generation"

of the "Son Jesus" had not only not been publicly preached to the people, but had in a sense been suppressed. Far otherwise now. Jesus has suffered, risen, ascended. And his right and dignity in this most cardinal respect is to be proclaimed. (2) The *names* to which Jesus has entitled himself by character, by sufferings, and by achievements are boldly spoken. He is "the Holy One and the Just . . . the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead;" and he is "that Prophet." (3) His treatment at the hands of men, and even of those who were at the moment the hearers of Peter, with all the aggravations of it, is enlarged upon. It is not only the fearless fidelity of Peter that is worthy of note here. Beyond and below this, the *method* itself is to be noted, which consists in going to the very root of the disease, probing it to the core. Thus Peter, looking at the guilty in the face, says, "Whom *ye* delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when *he* was determined to let him go. But *ye* refused the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and *ye* killed the Prince of life." And yet it is "*his* Name . . . that hath made this man strong, whom *ye* see and know . . . and given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." There is in all this no slurring over of the guilt, of the aggravations of it, or of the fact that those who were there and then listeners were the abettors of it or accessories to it. (4) His very contrary treatment at the hands of his Father, God, is brought into prominence. "God . . . hath glorified his Son Jesus, . . . God hath raised him from the dead . . . and to you first hath sent him to bless you." This all, involved *the* vital point. The Jew who could have brought himself to believe that God was thus "well pleased" in Jesus, would have been the first to condemn *himself*; and with swift force is this, therefore, brought down upon him, in that incontestably he *ought* to have believed and seen long ago. The Jew is answerable for his guilt and folly, let them be mixed in whatever proportions. Let his "ignorance" bear what proportion it may to the sum total of his fault, his ignorance was his own look out, was not necessary, was inexcusable, and the smart of the consequences of it he must now become acquainted with, and must wince beneath it. Peter sees the door opened for him, and he enters in. He has his hearers now. The link that often seemed missing to them, who had no eyes to see aught except a *negation*, is found, and Peter is determined that eyes shall no longer pretend being shut to it. With such crushing effect betimes do circumstances prove *providences*, and the sudden glorious crisis at the Beautiful gate that evening at nine o'clock crowds with conviction and humiliation and shame many a conscience, many a heart. Things are rapidly reversing now. This is the hour of Jesus. Peter now puts on his head one crown of glory—the crown of thorns in the past! (5) Lastly, the inherent *force* of Jesus is asserted. His *is* a Name—there can, there shall be no denial of it, no mistake about it—above every name. With a certain power of repetition, which is not "vain repetition," does Peter state it: "And his Name through [*by the method of*] faith in his Name . . . yea, the faith which is through him," is what hath given this man "this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." In which grand and emphatic statement these two gospel axioms may be found, (a) that Christ is *the one Object* on which faith may try her virtue—"My faith would lay her hand on that dear head of thine;" and, (b) that Christ is the one Object whose virtue—"for virtue went out of him"—it is worth faith's while to try. There is unsurpassed virtue in Christ, and the access to that virtue, the method of drawing upon it, is by faith. So there is unsurpassed virtue in faith also. Christ, and Christ alone, meets, and meets abundantly, the want of man, of any and every man. Faith, and faith alone, brings Christ and man so together that the one imparts and the other receives all that can be needed, asked, desired. This must be called the kernel of the apostle's sermon now. And it is the kernel of *Christianity*. This is the essence and distinctiveness of *Christianity*. And beyond a doubt this it is that constitutes its *unwelcomeness* to a proud world's heart, its inexpressible *welcomeness* to an humble, stricken heart, that only asks one thing—if now at last its unfathomed depth and unceasing craving may be worthily, sufficiently filled. 2. *The appeals that follow upon it.* Peter is, indeed, all the while earnestly appealing to the people; but *this* appeal is no mere declamation, either vague or impassioned. It is grounded, firmly grounded, upon other appeals. (1) The first appeal is to events quite recent—to a history within the actual knowledge of all the nation, but most of all of the city of Jerusalem. The "holy" character of

Jesus, his "just" conduct, his betrayal and repudiation by "*his own*," his suffering, resurrection, and glorification, at least in so far as the Ascension was concerned. (2) The second appeal is to their own "oracles," and the prized stores of their own treasured prophecies. Peter well knew the just purchase he gained in confronting his audience with quotations from their prophets (vers. 18, 21, 22, 24, 25). (3) The third appeal is one made to their own conscience. This consisted not only in the plain and uncompromising manner in which Peter brought to their remembrance their most recent offences against their own conscience, partly under the cover of ignorance in their crucifying of Christ, but beside this in his direct naming of them as *sinner*s. He exhorts them not as "the ninety and nine" "which needed no repentance," but emphatically as those who needed to "repent," needed to "be converted," needed "the blotting out of their sins," needed the "sending of that very Jesus Christ" who had been "preached unto" them, though hitherto in vain; needed the warning of that terrible prophecy, that said, "The soul that heareth not shall be destroyed from among the people;" needed to be reminded that they were the "children of the prophets and of" a most venerable "covenant;" and needed to be reminded, withal, of the last highest touch added to their privilege *and their responsibility*, in that to them "first God had sent his risen Son," to offer them *first* the fulness of that richest "blessing," which consisted in the "being turned away each from his iniquities"—glorious diversion indeed! There is not a sentence but was a message to the conscience. Not a sentence but what must have "pricked the heart." And not a sentence but what *would have been* a winged barbed arrow, except for the mercy that each time took the aim, and which mercy was as "purposed" as the arrow's aim was deliberate. Such a marshalling of allegation against hearts and consciences, and the living men to whom they belonged, rarely had been, rarely has been. But when it *has*, true it is that it is *in pari materia* that it has occurred—in the matter of men's treatment of Christ and of their own souls. Withal Peter did not distrust the influence of (4) the appeal to *hope*. Through all the faithfulness of plain speaking and the severity of naked truth, kindness seems to betray itself, and to wish to make its deeper existence felt. The prompt disclaiming of any special and superior power or holiness in himself and brother apostle was a happy beginning on the part of Peter, and tended to put to sleep envy and the spirit of a comparison that would all have added to the smart of the reproof for conscious wrong-doing. Again, Peter does himself (ver. 17) mitigate in some degree their sin, by the suggestion of their "ignorance" and of that of their "rulers;" and in the same breath addresses them as "brethren." His allusion to the fulfilling of prophecy amid all the stern facts of the "suffering" of Christ had also the germ of hopefulness in it. The "blotting out of their sins," and the whisper of "the times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord;" the inspiring quotation of the "Prophet to be raised up from among their brethren, like unto" Moses; and the fixing of the fact that it was on these very existing days that the whole ranks of "prophets from Samuel" downwards had concentrated prophetic attention; and, last of all, the rehearsing of the old promise to Abraham, clenched by the assertion of its being now in course and act of fulfilling;—surely all this was ground thickly sown with the seeds of hope. So absent was the tone of disparagement and *depreciation*, when the lips of Peter spoke most stinging truth! Great is the *recuperative* energy of souls, when there is any room for hope left. But depreciation is a cruel foe to hope, if it take effect; and if it do not take effect, it is sure to make more irreconcilably active the spirit of self-defence and of opposition. Nor can we doubt, nor would we wish to doubt, that the sermon of Peter showed one grand fulfilment of the promise, that it "should be given in that same hour what they should speak" to those who were called by the Spirit to speak for Jesus.

IV. THE FIRST EFFECTS OF THE SERMON. The first effects were a plain anguish of what occurred very often in later times. These first effects are not all discomfiture. Nor are they results that count half and half, with no clear balance either of gain or of loss. To count nothing on what may succeed them, the *first* results show the preachers Peter and John *bound*, the Word they preached *not bound*. 1. *The apostles, who preached, are imprisoned*—for what length of time the sentence discreetly left unsaid. The apostles were laid hands on by *ecclesiastics*, committed by self-interest to endeavour to maintain the *status quo* in the Church and the world—by one *official* and by a few self-styled *theologians*, drier of the dry and most erring of the

erring (Matt. xxii. 29; Mark xii. 24, 27). 2. *The doctrine they had been preaching was not imprisoned.* "Many" who had heard it "believed." Fresh wings were given to it to fly abroad. Either the additional, or more probably the total, number of believers was now "five thousand." And the imprisonment of Peter and John is certain to have had these two consequences upon *them*, viz. that fresh thought would be stirred up in every one of them, and fresh utterance of the mouth of every one of them be provoked. Thus it is very far from being a case of all loss. The "Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" wrought great things this day, and truth made great advance.—B.

Ver. 25.—*The true importance of ancestry—what it is.* These words were some of those addressed by Peter to a crowd of wondering and admiring spectators, and of attentive hearers also. These were gathered for him by the fact of the man whom he had delivered from his lameness resolving to cleave as long as he could to the side of his deliverer. The "common people" did on this occasion gladly hear Peter, as formerly they gladly were wont to hear his Master and their own. We are grateful to be able to recall these circumstances and this connection of the text; because on certain other occasions Peter, Stephen, and Paul, and many a time Jesus himself, had to refer to the ancestry of the Jews in order to point severest reproof and condemnation unrelieved. But it is not so now. Reproof and condemnation are only partly aimed at here. We have here—

I. A WORD OF REMINDING IN DUE SEASON. The office of *reminding* may seem but a humble one. But how true the friend sometimes who undertakes it—who waits not for some grand occasion of instructing, of informing you of what you did not know, or of charming you with the latest discoveries of science or applications of art, but who simply brings afresh to your thought what you had long known! *Conscience* is such a friend when we will listen to it. It does not teach what is new, but does remind and remonstrate. *God's Holy Ghost* is such a Friend when you will listen to him. He both reveals the new and brings to remembrance the old, specially those dear old words, of priceless value, of Jesus. *The written and spoken Word of God* is such a friend. How many of its messages are but the pronounced repetitions of your own reason, experience! They are your own judgment and observation, now ushered in with all the added impressiveness that comes from the "endorsement" of the Divine page and pen. And now Peter tells his hearers no new thing. They had long ago known it, and had built much upon it. They built, though too ignorantly, large part of their hopes of salvation upon their being the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their trust was in the covenant God made with Abraham. Their great charter was "Moses and the prophets." But had it not often come to this, that they eagerly remembered their boasted rights but kept a poor memory for their duties? They would enforce their claims, ignore the correlative demands upon themselves, long more than due! "We have Abraham to our father," was their ever-ready cry; yet they had "killed the prophets," and "stoned them that were sent to them," and had "crucified the Prince of life." "Of him," says Peter, "all the prophets spoke," from Moses the greatest, and Samuel the second greatest. And surely you won't forget that "you are the children of those prophets," and won't consent to act unworthily of that relationship! Was not this a word of reminding in due season? And was it not put very kindly by Peter to his congregation? Perhaps all the same tone of thought, all the same suggestion for memories, awake enough at the point of rights and claims, but that fade at the point of *duty and responsibility*, characterizes to a very large degree the present day. Men do not forget they are Englishmen; they do not forget to boast their freedom. Are they touched in one of these or the like respects, they resent it as though the apple of their eye was touched. But they forget they are the children of those who got these things for them "through much tribulation;" who fought, suffered, died, for their privileges. They forget they are the children of Reformers and Protestants, who "resisted even unto blood," and for conscience' sake were burned at the stake; that they are children of those who loved, spake, and did *the truth*, cost what it might. It was a very effective point which Peter made when, viewing it as a *kindly* reminder, he said, "Ye are the children of the prophets."

II. A WORD CONCEIVED IN THE VEIN OF REBUKE. While it is not at all necessary

to construe the text as the language of stern rebuke, yet it may imply some rebuke. And this *deserves* rebuke, when men are so willing to touch human life at all its points of contact with pleasure, self-interest, honour, privilege, but are so very shy of it at its points of contact with duty, effort, sacrifice. With the many, the strongest bent, deepest inclination of their life is still but what they can get and have, what they can say or think to the advantage of themselves. The choice is a mournfully sorry one, when it is considered to what it comes. For its one-sidedness it earns rebuke. For its cowardice it earns rebuke. For its certain unprofitableness it earns rebuke. And not least does it earn rebuke because of its higher opportunities forfeited, and nobler passions and principles wasted and alienated. The harvest is too surely reaped, of disappointment, vanity, and vexation of spirit, or self-stricken darkness itself. But let some one begin life from the diametrically opposite standpoint. Let him accept the theory that life is for duty, that it is responsible for the vaster advantages with which it began than those with which it was begun by preceding generations, that it calls for work more strenuous, and sacrifice more willing, and self-surrender more entire by very virtue of the honour and advantage it has drawn from its own forefathers; and *that* life is shaped for high ends. It will not fail of real fruitfulness; it will not expire, a sorrow and a shame. The gentle suggestive *rebuke* couched in the text touches the essential difference between two such lives. You are not the children of possession, and of ease, and of the "rest and be thankful" school; you are the descendants of a noble, strenuous, solemn race. They had large brains, they had bone and muscle about them, sinew and nerve were firm and firmly tied, and their heart was capacious. Ay, to other sort men oftentimes prefer to trace their lineage; but to *this* sort, the kindly rebuke of Peter, of the Word and Spirit of God, of his providence, and of our own conscience, should oftener turn us and our ambition.

III. A WORD EQUIVALENT TO A STIRRING SUMMONS FOR A PEOPLE OF EXTRAORDINARY DIGNITY AND PRIVILEGE. It will be granted that the Jews were such a people. Yet, with all their honour and splendour, their unique religious privileges, and their pre-eminent political prestige, it must be allowed that they show but a faint type of ourselves. They rose to a pinnacle of national greatness, and great was their fall; but it was no mystery. The beginning of it was plain, the course of it was plain. It was often pointed out by priest, prophet, preacher, and by that man of the people themselves, who "was an Israelite indeed." Yet they wrought their own downfall, and cruelly undermined their own proud position, because they lost ear, heart, and pride for that which was their glory, and to *its* announcement greatly preferred to sound their own trumpet. But were there ever heirs like ourselves? Was there ever an heritage like ours? Of what prophets are we the children, when we think of the accumulations of knowledge, of conviction, of attestations of God's existence, providence, government, revelation, which the stream of time has been bearing down, richest freights to our shores? In such sense we are children of no obscure parentage, "citizens of no mean city," owning to a history of unsurpassed significance. Ages and centuries of the past bend their surprised gaze upon us; they compass us about with clouds of witnesses. And when the gentle reminding is passed, and the suggested rebuke seems to fail, one thing only remains—impassioned appeal, a summons that must wake all but those who are securely dead. Live we, then, worthily of our antecedents, mindful of our responsibilities as heirs of such a past. Let us *flee* from unfaithfulness, and scorn the seductions of ease and luxury. Let us purge ourselves from vanity, perverseness, and self. Let us pray for a divinely opened eye, mind, heart. And show by God's grace that we have not forgotten, but on the contrary do make it our business to remember, whose "children we are."—B.

Ver. 1.—*Habits of public prayer.* The Lord Jesus set the example of regular attendance on the synagogue services; and both he and his apostles seem to have daily attended at the temple at the appointed "hours of prayer," when they were resident in the "holy city." Some illustrations may be given of the prayer-habits of both Jews and Mohammedans; and the *value*, but also *peril*, of customs of public prayer may be pointed out. "We read in Scripture of three specified hours of prayer, in accordance with which the psalmist speaks of his own custom (Ps. lv. 17). In like manner Daniel prayed 'three times a day' (Dan. vi. 10). The hour of morning

prayer was the third hour; and Peter went up to the house-top to pray (ch. x. 9) about the sixth hour, which was noon; and the evening prayer was *this* to which Peter and John were going up." We fix attention on the fact that, though the apostles had the new personal "life in Christ," they found public religious service and duties still demanded their attention. Soul-life, spiritual life, still needs for its culture "public prayer" and "united worship."

I. THE TWO SIDES OF THE DEVOTIONAL LIFE. The private and the public. Both are necessary. Each helps the other. Since men are not isolated individuals, their personal and private devotions cannot satisfy all their needs and claims. And since the individual can never be lost in the crowd, public devotions can never adequately express the precise personal needs. Our Lord taught us the duty and value of private prayer (Matt. vi. 6).

II. THE RELATION OF PUBLIC PRAYER TO PERSONAL CULTURE, AND TO THE DUTY OF WITNESSING FOR GOD. Take first to "personal culture." In private devotion there is danger of *morbid introspection*; public prayer fills our thought with *God* rather than man. When alone the *self-sphere* may become too prominent; when we join with others we are helped to *forget self* in common sympathies, desires, and prayers. At home *communion* and *petition* are prominent in our prayers; in the assembly of God's people the prominent thing is *intercession*. Besides this, in public worship we are influenced by holy sentiment, and swayed by high emotions, and realize the *joy* of the Divine life. These things bear most directly on healthy soul-culture. Further, it is our bounden duty to make solemn public declaration of our belief in God, and submission to his authority and rule. Such a declaration we make in the act of going to, and joining in public prayer and worship. Our "houses of prayer," and our "hours of prayer," and our "millions of worshippers," still attest England's belief in God; and every one should feel jealous lest the fulness and clearness of that testimony should be in the least degree impaired. Deal with modern neglect of worship, and the custom of *half-day* worshipping.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD HABITS IN RELATION TO PUBLIC PRAYER. Herein we have the example of our Lord, of his apostles, and of the saints through all the ages. It would be difficult to find the case of one eminently holy man or woman, in all the Christian history, who held lightly or neglected the public worship and ordinances of the Church. Such habits should be formed and well watched over *in early life*. Those united together as friends, as husbands and wives, should help each other to maintain the habits. For they bear good influence on *family* life, on *social* life, and on *national* life. The constant association with Divine things has a gracious and hallowing influence, and renews every earnest purpose to live the *godly* life. The formation and maintenance of such good habits is, further, a sign of *self-mastery* in the spirit of loyalty and obedience to God. And such self-mastery is the very beginning and necessary foundation of all high morality and virtue. It guarantees that effort will be made to enthrone *God* and *duty* over bodily passion, and over all life-associations.

IV. THE PERILS OF FORMALITY IN PUBLIC DEVOTIONS. We may come to share in worship "to be seen of men." We may put the sensual (or sensuous) above the spiritual. We may find our hearts satisfied with the *ceremonial*. We may pride ourselves upon our regularity. Our very familiarity with worship-forms may lead to repetition without thought or feeling. The Judaism of the time of our Lord presents a painful instance of how easily the life may go out of a national religion, leaving only the formal observance of ever-multiplying rites and ceremonies. And the Mohammedan, dropping prostrate at the sound of the *muezzin*, and incoherently muttering words of prayer, warns us of the insidious and fatal peril of formalism in public religion.

In conclusion, explain and impress the close and direct relation that exists between private devotion and public devotion. The *life* we can put into public worship must be the life which has been touched, quickened, and cultured by God into strength, in our prayer-chamber at home. We cannot, with any surety, *get* life at public worship; but we can always *bring* it with us to the worship. The law works broadly, and it may be thus briefly stated: *The nourished and kept soul has life for worship*. Then "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," and see to it that you carry to the sanctuary of God hearts beating high with love and reverence and trust.—R. T.

Ver. 2.—*The kinship between religion and charity.* From the exegetical portion of the Commentary materials for the *introduction* may be obtained. Such introduction should treat of the suffering poor in the East, showing how necessarily dependent they were upon promiscuous charity. With their condition may be contrasted the care for the poor in all Christian lands, and the provision of hospitals and institutions for their relief. Some account may also be given of Herod's temple, and the position of the gate called *Beautiful*. Josephus says the other gates were overlaid with gold and silver, but this one, which was probably the gate on the east, which led from the court of the women, was "made of Corinthian bronze, and much surpassed in worth those enriched with silver and gold." It may further be shown how this miracle, wrought by the agency of St. Peter, resembles the gracious miracles of healing wrought by our Lord himself. The picture of this poor and hopelessly suffering man suggests the following topics for meditation:—

I. THE DISPENSATIONS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE BEING BODILY DISABILITIES FOR SOME MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY. This, as a fact, may be variously illustrated, and it may be shown, from our Lord's teachings, that neither bodily infirmities and disabilities, nor earthly calamities, are necessarily direct results of personal sin or fault. They are oftentimes hereditary consequences of ancestral sin. They are often products of circumstances and conditions of life, over which the sufferer had no control. They may be regarded as the great sin-burden lying on the race, and borne more evidently by *some* members *for the sake of all*. So long as the race is *sinful*, it must have the character of its sinfulness marked and impressed by manifest, painful, unsightly, revolting, and apparently hopeless forms of "suffering" all around it. The "suffering" as well as the "poor" we have always with us.

II. SUCH DISABILITIES SET SOME MEMBERS OF THE HUMAN FAMILY UPON THE BROTHERHOOD AND CHARITY OF OTHERS. For, if we look upon them aright, we regard them as bearing the *common* burden, and so bearing *our* burden. *We* might have been among the blind, or dumb, or lame, or idiotic, or paralyzed; and it is never enough that we thank God for our freedom from special disabilities; our thankfulness only finds its natural and proper expression in *caring for*, helping, and relieving the disabled and distressed. Sufferers, wherever they are found, should touch our hearts with tender emotions. We should have such an open, sensitive heart as can take them all in. It is well if we show special interest in some particular *class* of sufferers—the orphan, incurable, lame, sick children, deaf and dumb, etc. To take a higher ground, our Lord is the *great Sufferer*, and so the head of all *sufferers*. Therefore, for his sake, and as showing our tender sympathy and love *for him*, we should take his suffering brethren into our love and care. "Doing it to the least of the brethren is doing it to him." "He that loveth God [his *Father*] should love his *brother* also."

III. A NATURAL EXPECTATION LEADS MEN TO LOOK FOR SUCH CHARITY TOWARD THE DISABLED FROM THE RELIGIOUS. It is a fact that systematic efforts for the welfare of the naturally disabled are only found in lands where Christian thought and feeling prevail. It may be illustrated and enforced: 1. That this connection between religion and brotherly charity is *natural*. It is the fitting impulse of "human kindness" that leads us to care for others, but it is the special impulse of that *new feeling* that comes with personal and saving relations with Christ. 2. That this connection is *right*. Urged as such by Divine command and Divine example, as well as by the example of all noble and holy men. 3. This connection has been, in Christian lands, *fairly well met*. Show into how varied spheres Christian benevolence and charity may now run. Ask earnestly, and with direct applications—Is it true, individually for us, that our piety has *cultured into holy vigour our charity*? If not, it is of little worth to us or to others.—R. T.

Vers. 6, 16.—*The power of Christ's Name.* The Revised Version, in its rendering of ver. 16, sets the *Name* forth even more prominently than the Authorized Version. It reads, "And by [or, 'on the ground of'] faith in his Name hath his Name made this man strong." This represents the actual order of the Greek words. The incident is so graphically described by Luke, that a suggestive picture of the scene may be given as introduction. The point of difference between this and our Lord's miracles which needs attention is this: Our Lord required signs of faith before he wrought his miracles

St. Peter did not wait for such signs in this object of the healing power. Two reasons may help to explain the difference. St. Peter had to show the faith which *he* and the other apostles had in Christ. Signs of *their* faith were just then the important thing, rather than signs of the man's faith. As our Lord acted directly, and not as an agent, he could give entire attention to the reciprocity, or receptivity, of the objects of his power. And we may also say that the miracle was wrought rather for the *people's* sakes than for the man's. It was a call to *them* to give heed to the apostles' witness; and therefore St. Peter was, properly, more concerned about the influence of the miracle on the people than even about the moral condition of the lame man. St. Peter acted on a sudden impulse of the Holy Ghost which dwelt in him, and it was fitting that he and the rest of the disciples should keep themselves open to the Spirit's leadings, ready to follow and obey the inward inspirations and monitions. Compare Paul's response to Divine direction, in ch. xvi. 6—10. We need, in these days, to recover our lost faith in the presence and lead of God the Holy Ghost, and to win the attitude of watching for his gracious guidance. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." St. Peter's explanation of the miracle is that it was wrought in the "power of Christ's Name." This we endeavour to understand.

I. CHRIST'S NAME GATHERS UP HIS RIGHTS AND ATTRIBUTES. A name should be the expression of what a *thing* is, or what a *man* is. Nowadays names of persons are conventional and without significance; they are fixed by accident or by sentiment. In olden times they held *meanings*, and were appropriate to individuals; so a name was an explanation or revelation. In sympathy with this it is said that the redeemed are to have a "new name" on their foreheads. It will gather up into an expression their privilege and their joy as the *fully redeemed*. F. W. Robertson, in his sermon on 'Jacob wrestling' (First Series, p. 41), says, "In the Hebrew history are discernible three periods distinctly marked, in which names and words bore very different characters. In the first of these periods names meant truths, and words were the symbols of realities. The characteristics of the names given then were simplicity and sincerity. The second period begins about the time of the departure from Egypt, and it is characterized by unabated simplicity, with the addition of sublimer thought and feeling more intensely religious. The third period was at its zenith in the time of Christ—words had lost their meaning, and shared the hollow, unreal state of all things. Jacob lived in the first age, when men are sincere and truthful and earnest, and names exhibit character. To tell Jacob the Name of God was to reveal to him what God is and who." "The use of *Name* as the equivalent of *power* is very Jewish. It grew out of such passages as Ps. cvi. 8, 'He saved them for his Name's sake.' In the literature of the Jews great power was attributed to the Name of God, even when only inscribed, e.g. as it was said in tradition to have been on the rod of Moses." The Name of "Jesus of Nazareth" stands, therefore, for his *Messiahship*, his *mission*, his *infinite worthiness*, his *accepted work*, and his *present power*. Or, we may say, it stands for *him*, and sets him forth as the present Redeemer, "able to heal and to save unto the uttermost."

II. CHRIST'S NAME INVOLVES HIS SPIRITUAL PRESENCE. This would be a familiar association to the Jew. God was in the bush, but Moses only had his Name. God delivered Israel from Egypt, but Israel knew him present with them only in his Name. They worshipped a God whom they never saw, and only could "exalt by his great Name, *Jah*." And so Jesus Christ was gone out of the sphere of the senses. Really, however, present still, spiritually present, and working gracious and mighty works through faith in his Name. This is all *we* have of Christ—his Name. And yet for us too it is the grasping of the spiritual reality of his presence.

III. CHRIST'S NAME CAN HEAL THE SICK. Because he is present in the Name. "The Name did not work as a formula of incantation; it required, on the part both of the worker and receiver, faith in that which the Name represented—the manifestation of the Father through the Son." The most striking illustration of the apostle's faith in Christ's Name, i.e. Christ's actual presence and power to heal, is found in the recovery of Æneas (ch. ix. 34). St. Peter spoke as if he saw Christ there, saying, "Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole."

IV. CHRIST'S NAME CAN HEAL THE SIN-SICK SOUL. For all outward and material healings are but illustrations of what Christ *is now doing in moral spheres*, in our hearts

and lives, if we will, by faith, open to him. And what is called *faith* is simply this, soul-opening to the living Saviour, who, in his Divine power and grace, can *come in, and heal, and cleanse, and save*. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," etc. Appeal as to whether there has yet been this *openness* to Christ. Impress that, in all healing and saving work, man may be the *agent*, but the *power* lies in the *Name*, which gathers up for us a *present living Saviour*.—R. T.

Vcr. 6.—*Responsibility in the possession of power*. Travellers tell us that one of the saddest things to be seen in Eastern countries is the crowding of beggars in the approaches to Mohammedan mosques, and at the gates of cities and large houses; many of them presenting the most painful and revolting pictures of human suffering. "The stationing of beggars, especially maimed beggars, at the gate of the temple, was evidently suggested by the persuasion that the feelings of those who were proceeding to, or had been engaged in, an act of solemn worship, would be more inclined to charity and benevolence than at ordinary times" (see 'Bible Lands and Customs,' Van Lennep, vol. ii. p. 754). Fix attention on the words actually spoken to the beggar by St. Peter, and consider (1) *The consciousness of power*, and (2) *the responsibility of conscious power*.

I. THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF POWER. "Such as I have give I thee." St. Peter felt that he had *something*. He knew that he could benefit and bless the sufferer, if not in the precise way which the man anticipated. The common power of "silver and gold" St. Peter had not; the far better power, to heal, St. Peter had. What we so greatly need is to awake to the consciousness of the power that we have in Christ Jesus; to believe in the abundant and varied powers with which the Church of Christ and the individual Christian are endowed. We should expect to see signs of power in each other, as fellow-Christians. God never renews any man by his Spirit without also endowing him with a *gift*, or *talent*, in trust. Powers differ in different men. Each man has his own. *Wealth* is a power—a dreadful power, if it has not been first laid on the altar of Christ, and then taken up and used as his; a glorious power if, on starting life, the soul has made a great covenant with Christ, and solemnly vowed that whatever may be gained shall be consecrated to him. *Intellect* is a power. Every man who knows a little more than his neighbour has a power. He can teach, he can enlighten, he can lead. But a man may have little money and little mind, and yet have the trust of that far higher thing—*spiritual power*. He may be able to lay hold of, and use for the blessing of others, the "great power of God." That "spiritual power" lies dormant too often in us. We need something to work in us as in St. Peter, and waken the *consciousness* of our trust; something stirring in us mighty impulses, shaking us out of our apathy and selfishness, compelling us to say, "A *witness* for Christ has to be made, and I must help to make it; a *work* for Christ has to be done, and I must help to do it; the *world has to be won* for Christ, and I must set to work to win the *little piece* of the world in which God has been pleased to put me."

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CONSCIOUS POWER. All God's gifts to us are for our giving away to others. All God's strength is for *use*. If he makes an arm strong, it is for work. If he makes a voice strong, it is that it may plead with others for him. If he makes a heart strong, it is that it may inspire others to nobler things. There is no Divine blessing that is intended to *rest with us*. All blessings that flow to us are to flow *through us*, gain force from us, and flow on in refreshings beyond us. If you are compelled to recognize the fact that *you could*—you could give, you could teach, you could sympathize, you could cheer—then upon you rests a solemn responsibility. What you *can* do for Christ and for his brethren, you are *bound*, by all holy persuasions and considerations, to do. Such as you have, by *gracious trusts* from God, that you must be ever ready to *give and spend and use* for the service and the blessing of others.—R. T.

Vers. 13—15.—*The apostolic witness to Christ*. Our Lord distinctly appointed the apostles as his *witnesses* (Luke xxiv. 48; ch. i. 8). In these their early sermons or addresses, we may find the points which they considered were specially entrusted to them to declare. They would be sure to give first the basis or foundation *facts* on

which the Christian system rested, and then gradually unfold the various doctrines which were embodied in those facts. Their central, foundation fact was their Lord's resurrection. It even seems that, at first, the Resurrection stood out more prominently before the apostles' minds than the sacrificial death. The precise proportions and relations of the Christian truths became matters of later adjustment; and, indeed, we are *still* trying to get them complete and satisfactory. Very many of the modern doctrinal controversies and sectarian disputes are occasioned by a failing sense of the *proportions and relations* in the *whole* of truth; some things are exaggerated and some underestimated; men fight hard for *pieces* of truth, as if they were the *whole*. The true work, worthy to engage all our thought and heart, is the fair estimate of all the various pieces, and the skilful setting of each in its fitting place. In the early preaching of the apostles may also be noticed how they seem to stand aside, so that Christ, their Lord and Master, only may be seen and honoured. In this following the example of that Master, for he seemed ever to be stepping aside in order that men may fully see the Father. And in this also showing to us what is the essential spirit of all Christian preaching. The preacher's *self* must never be prominent; we may only set forth "Christ Jesus the Lord." The scene in "Solomon's porch," or portico, may be described. It was on the eastern side of the temple, and "consisted of a double row of Corinthian columns, about thirty-seven feet high. It was, like the porticoes of all Greek cities, a favourite place of resort, especially as facing the morning sun in winter" (John x. 23). In this same portico Jesus himself had taught. The prominent points concerning the Lord Jesus presented by St. Peter are—

I. **JEHOVAH SENT AND ACKNOWLEDGED HIM.** (Ver. 13.) The word *Son* would be better *Servant*, and then the passage (Isa. xlii. 1), "Behold my *Servant*, whom I uphold," is at once brought to mind. In addressing the Jews, it was necessary to show that no claim was made for Jesus Christ as a *new and independent* God; the teaching of his divinity was consistent with both the teaching of the *Divine Unity*, which was the Jews' great truth, and the teaching of the *Divine Trinity*, which is the great Christian truth. To the Jew a *new* God must be a *false* God, for Jehovah is *one*. Messengers of Jehovah they could receive. Manifestations of Jehovah they could accept. The conception of the "Son of God" was not to them an impossible one. And therefore our Lord so earnestly pressed that the Father God had sent him; and the apostles urge that Jehovah's seal of acceptance rested on him and on his work. This truth is needed still. We cannot rest in the salvation wrought by Christ unless we can fully see that it is *God's* salvation (see John iii. 16).

II. **MEN DENIED HIS MISSION, AND CRUCIFIED HIM.** (Ver. 13.) St. Peter gives the fact—Jesus was "delivered up;" and the aggravation of the fact—the clamours of malice actually overcame the natural sense of justice in the Roman governor. In reminding the people of this, St. Peter declares the *moral* character of their act; and charges home upon the people the *guilt* of the judicial murder of no less a person than the national Messiah. For the actual denial of Christ, see John xix. 15; and for the purpose of Pilate to release Christ, John xix. 4. The fact of the denial is made the basis of the appeal for *repentance*. The fact of the crucifixion is urged as the guarantee of his *actual death*. Such enemies as they were would never leave their work imperfect.

III. **HE WAS FREE FROM CRIME, AND JUST BEFORE MEN AND GOD.** (Ver. 14.) The personal innocence of Jesus aggravates the iniquity of those who secured his death; but it also bears directly upon the work of redemption that he wrought. Had he to bear the true burden of penalty for his own sins, he could not be the efficient Burden-bearer for others. Had he spot, stain, or blemish, he could not be the acceptable sacrifice for humanity, which must be the "Lamb without blemish." Show how much is made, in the Epistles, of the personal innocence and perfect virtue of the Saviour. "Holy, harmless, undefiled," etc.

IV. **HE WAS THE PRINCE AND AUTHOR OF SALVATION AND LIFE.** (Ver. 15.) For the term "Prince of life," see ch. v. 31; Heb. ii. 10; xii. 2. It means, "He who is the source whence life and salvation flow." The chief thought in St. Peter's mind is that of the Resurrection. He who conquered death is "Prince of life," and has power to give life. St. John also says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Our Lord himself said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and *the Life*;" "I am come that they

might have life;” “I give unto them eternal life.” The worthy apprehension of what Christ *is*, and *can do*, makes the Jewish *denial* and *crucifixion* of him seem a most hateful crime; and our long *neglect* of him our unspeakable shame (Heb. ii. 3, 4).

V. HIS MESSIAHSHIP, HIS MISSION, AND HIS POWER TO SAVE, ARE, ONCE FOR ALL, AND SUFFICIENTLY, DECLARED IN HIS RESURRECTION. (Ver. 15.) If that resurrection be a *fact*—and to it all the apostles and disciples give witness, and on the literal truth of it St. Paul is even willing to stake the Christian system—then there are important inferences to be drawn from the fact, and especially this one: *Jesus is the Christ*. Therefore to him every knee should bow, and to him every sin-burdened heart should seek. So it is seen that the apostles were true preachers, model preachers; they set *Jesus* forth, and bid all eyes look to *him*.—R. T.

Vers. 17, 18.—*Man's ruling and God's overruling*. St. Peter admits that the rejection of Christ was done *through ignorance*, but he does not allow that this is a sufficient excuse. Ignorance has many degrees, and may arise from many causes. It may be *wilful*. It may be a consequence of *cherished prejudices*, and then it is guilty ignorance. “The Jewish multitude were ignorant from want of teaching, their rulers from mental perverseness in looking only on one part of the prophecies concerning the Messiah.” For the treatment of the relation of “ignorance” to “guilt,” compare St. Paul's teachings in ch. xvii. 30; 1 Tim. vi. 13. The point which St. Peter dwells on in these verses is, that in the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, men appeared to act on their own will and to carry out their own plans; but the deeper fact was that they accomplished the Divine purposes and fulfilled the divinely given prophecies. Scripture writers do not discuss the harmony between Divine sovereignty and man's free-will; but they show us man *acting freely*, and then draw aside the veil, and show us *God's purpose accomplished by that very action that seemed to be so free*. And the explanation is this—that all God's plans are formed upon perfect consideration of all that will occur; and this includes the Divine knowledge of how men will act, in their free will, in particular circumstances. To him who knows man altogether, the precise way in which every man *will* act, under every set of possible circumstances, must be fully anticipated. On this we may further dwell, and gain some apprehension of the Divine order.

I. MAN IS FREE TO ACT ON VARIOUS MOTIVES. He *does* act by motive. He may be moved by *differing* motives. He will act upon that which seems to be *strongest*. The strength of a motive greatly depends on the *disposition* and character which it urges. There appear to be a *vast multitude* of motives. Probably they could be greatly reduced by classification. The complexity and difficulty of knowing how a man will act in given circumstances does not arise from our inability to estimate his motives, but from our inability to judge how particular motives will *influence him*. We can tell by what considerations the Sadducees, Pharisees, and priests were moved to secure the death of Jesus. It is this acting of men *on motive* that gives *moral character* to their acts, and so brings on them the possibility of *guilt*.

II. ALL HUMAN MOTIVES, CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CHARACTERS ARE KNOWN TO GOD. The circle of motives that can possibly appeal to man's moral nature God completely spans. The precise circumstances under which motives urge in any given case, he fully knows and accurately weighs. The force which, under every set of circumstances, every motive will gain on every particular character and disposition, he perfectly estimates. And, though it is an almost impossible conception, we must conceive of God as looking down the long “stream of time,” leaving his creatures free to act in all situations, and yet knowing beforehand the decision of every free will in every conceivable case. This is the marvel of the Divine *foreknowledge*.

III. ALL DIVINE PLANS ARE FORMED UPON THIS PERFECT ESTIMATE. Especially apply to the redemptive plan. In view of what would happen, and what men would do, the plan of *redemption in the slain Lamb* was formed before the foundation of the world. Man worked out his own prejudice and passion in the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, and God worked out his plan of saving the race by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. That we might know of this *overruling*, the prophecies of Messiah were given. So we see how *man's guilt* remains in his freedom to act on motive; and yet God's purposes remain *unchanged* by all men's wilfulness, since the wilfulness was all *foreknown and estimated*.—R. T.

Vers. 19, 21.—*Times of refreshing and of restitution.* These two words refer to the same time. "Without doubt the Apostle Peter, as well as all the disciples, and the whole apostolic Church, regarded the coming of Christ as near at hand, but still always as something future. This 'coming of Christ' is to be conceived as coinciding with the 'times of refreshing,' and his sojourn in the heavenly world closes with his return to the earth for the completion of his work. The conversion of men, therefore, and the diffusion of faith in Christ, are the conditions of the speedy approach of that blessed time" (comp. 2 Pet. iii. 9—13). "Respecting the sense of the term 'restitution of all things,' no doubt can arise if we keep steadily in view the relation of the Redeemer to this sinful world: Christ is the Restorer of the fallen creation, and therefore the word 'restitution' derives from his redeeming power its peculiar meaning, viz. that of bringing back to an originally pure condition." The Revised Version materially improves the reading of these verses: "Repent, . . . that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." "These times or seasons of refreshing, and those 'times of restitution or (restoration) of all things which God hath spoken,' both seem to refer to the same great hope of the Church, and are connected with the second sending forth of Jesus Christ from heaven to earth." Peter had clearer ideas of the Messianic kingdom, but he was still trammelled by the national and temporal figures under which it had been prophesied. His purpose evidently is to urge the audience to an immediate acceptance of Christ, as the way to bring on the establishment of the long-promised and glorious Messianic time. And the point of impression for us is this—*Man's penitence, obedience, and faith prepare the way for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and the fulfilment of all the Divine promises.* "The faster Israel turned to Jesus, the sooner would Jesus return to Israel." By this consideration we are still urged to preach the gospel, and persuade men to repent, at home and abroad.

I. THE TIMES OF REFRESHING THAT ARE ALWAYS CLOSE AT HAND. God is ever "waiting to be gracious," as it were watching for opportunities of giving men his rich spiritual blessing. Revivals are always close by, when men's hearts are made humble and open and seeking. Does an individual soul set itself upon humiliation and prayer? the "times of refreshing" are at hand for it. Does a Church unite in confession and supplication? the "times of refreshing" will come in response to its cry. And this assurance should act as a moral persuasion, and urge men to seek for higher and better things. "We are not straitened in God." He would bless us more abundantly if we were more truly ready for the blessing. "He is able to make all grace abound," etc. Taking "times of refreshing" as seasons to be realized now by the soul and by the Church, we may obtain illustrations from the Old Testament history, especially instances occurring in the later years of the national decline, such as the reformations under Hezekiah and Josiah. Or from the New Testament, especially dealing with Pentecost. Or from the Christian ages, noticing that such "times" take a variety of form and character. Sometimes they are prominently *intellectual*, as illustrated in the revival under Luther and the Port Royalists; sometimes they are prominently *practical*, as illustrated in the revival under St. Bernard; sometimes they are prominently *emotional*, as illustrated in the revival under Whitefield, and in the Scotch and Irish revivals of recent times. Such "times of refreshing" are necessary to the proper culture of our spiritual life. Under present conditions, the maintenance of good is so difficult. Oftentimes even holy purpose flags, and we become weary in well-doing. So in all departments of life we need revival times. Such are our summer restings, our Sabbaths, birthdays, etc. If we will but set ourselves in proper attitudes of humility and seeking, we shall find God's "refreshing times" ever at hand. Apply especially to the calling of men to repentance and faith. Show what power on them we gain when, with St. Peter, we can say, "The grace is ready, waiting for you if you will turn. Forgiveness is ready. The door of the new kingdom is open ready. Eternal life is ready. God waits but your uplook to come in, and save, even you. Repent, that the good times may come for you."

II. THE TIMES OF RESTORATION THAT ARE COMING BY-AND-BY. We should get some fitting ideas of the great plan for the recovery of the fallen race of man. Unquestionably the world is a fallen, disordered, ruined world. But God has gracious purposes concerning the "restitution," or setting right, "of all things." And our Lord's death for human redemption began the restoration of all things. Our Lord's present spiritual

work in the "heavenlies"—the moral and spiritual spheres—is the presidency of the restoring work. Then we must conceive of some glorious coming day of restitution, when the Divine plan and purpose shall be fully accomplished. We can only gain very imperfect and unworthy ideas of what that day will be; but we may gain deep impressions of our own relation to its on-coming, and of our own duty to hasten the glorious time, by seeing to it that the work of restoring grace is fully wrought in our hearts, lives, and spheres, and that the gospel of the living Saviour is so widely preached that "every knee may be brought to bow to him." There is a true sense in which we may hasten the day when the Redeemer "shall see of the travail of his soul, shall be satisfied," and shall "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." We may give ourselves to Christ, and make one more sinner won. We may speak of Christ to others, persuade them to repent and believe, and so help to multiply the number of the saved, who shall be acknowledged in that great day.—R. T.

Vers. 22, 24.—*Moses' witness to the Christ.* The first reference of Moses in the words used (Deut. xviii. 15) should be carefully noticed. The higher Messianic references of the Old Testament usually underlie an immediate relation to historical events or individuals. "As the words stand, taken with their context, they seem to point to the appearance of a succession of true prophets, as contrasted with the *diviners* of Deut. xviii. 14; and, even with St. Peter's interpretation before us, we may well admit those prophets as primary and partial fulfilments of them." It seems that the Jews were fond of comparing the promised Messiah with their great prophet and lawgiver, Moses. Of this one specimen may be given from the rabbinical writings. "Rabbi Berakhiah says, 'As was the former redeemer, so shall the latter redeemer be.' While of the former redeemer it is said (Exod. iv. 20), 'And Moses took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass;' so of the latter, for it says (Zech. ix. 9), 'He is lowly and riding upon an ass.' And while the former redeemer brought down manna, as it says (Exod. xvi. 4), 'Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you;' so the latter redeemer will bring down manna, for it says (Ps. lxxii. 16), 'There shall be abundance of corn in the land.' And as the former redeemer caused the well to spring up (see Numb. xxi. 17); so the latter redeemer shall also cause the waters to spring up, for it says (Joel iii. 18), 'A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim.'" Moses dwells upon the fact that the coming Messiah should be *like him*. This comparison may be opened in the following particulars:—

I. MESSIAH WAS TO BE "OF THE BRETHREN." Our Lord was born of Jewish race. And he was, as a fellow-man, able to understand and to sympathize with those whom he led. He was a "man of like passions;" "in all points tempted as we are;" "able to succour them that are tempted." The importance of the *actual humanity* of our Lord in the theological systems of St. Paul and St. John should be fully unfolded. And the additional interest of his being a *Jew* may be pointed out. The history of the Jews shows that they have a singular power of adapting themselves to all climes, languages, nations, and societies; and that which is true of *them* is true of our Lord's gospel, as bearing, so markedly, the *Jewish stamp*. It can *adapt* to all the conditions of mankind, and be preached to every creature.

II. MESSIAH WAS TO BE A REDEEMER. Like Moses in this, he was to bring a people *out of bondage*, deliver them in a *glorious and Divine manner*, and lead them until their *full redemption was complete* in the possession of Canaan. This comparison may be made more minute. And it may be urged that, as the Redeemer, our Lord asks the same surrender to him, *in trust*, that Moses asked.

III. MESSIAH WAS TO BE A LAWGIVER. This was the great work of Moses. He took the *entire person, life, and relations of the people* into his regulations, settling rules for their moral, social, national, and ecclesiastical conditions. And so we come "under Law to Christ," who covers with his "new commandments" the *whole* of our lives and associations. "One is our Master, even Christ."

IV. MESSIAH WAS TO BE A TEACHER. This is the permanent idea of the term "prophet"—one who comes between God and the people, as instructing them in the Divine will. Both Moses and the Lord Jesus taught the people concerning *God, sin, duty, salvation, character, etc.*

V. MESSIAH WAS TO BE A JUDGE. This Moses was presiding at the chief national

tribunal. And God has “committed all judgment to the Son.” He “shall judge the quick and dead.” “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.” Impress from Heb. x. 28, 29, “He that despised Moses’ Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God?”—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*Christ’s mission to the Jews.* St. Peter had been speaking of our Lord’s resurrection, and it is natural to connect the expression of the text, “having raised up his Son Jesus,” with that resurrection. The idea, however, seems to be more general—God having provided, prepared, given, set forth. Matthew Henry gives the complete thought: “God, having raised up his Son Jesus, appointed and authorized him to be a Prince and a Saviour; and, in confirmation of this, raised him from the dead, sent him to bless you, in making tender of his blessing to you. God raised up Jesus when he constituted him a Prophet. Some refer the raising of him up to his resurrection, which was the renewal of his commission.” This is St. Peter’s direct appeal to the Jews, and declaration of the particular mission of Christ to the Jews. To *them* the gospel was first to be preached. Their former Divine revelation was a gracious preparation of them for the reception of the new revelation. But the new blessing would not come to them merely as a nation; it would come to *each individual*, and to the whole only through the individual, and depend upon the openness and acceptance of *faith*. Apostles were to “begin at Jerusalem.” The points made prominently by this simple appeal are, (1) *God is the Saviour*; (2) *he saves by his Son Jesus*; (3) *the essence of that salvation is the turning of men away from their iniquities.*

I. GOD IS THE SAVIOUR. The apostles always kept to the idea that Christ is the *Medium* of the salvation, and God the *source*. Sometimes the exigencies of theological systems have led to the practical neglect of this important distinction. *God saves men.* God’s *love* is the fountain of redemption. God’s *wisdom* fashions the redemptive plan. God’s *Son* executes the redemptive purpose. God is in all, and God must be glorified in all. No apostle puts this more plainly than St. Peter. Compare his very forcible language in 1 Pet. i. 21, “Who by him *do believe in God*, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be *in God*.”

II. GOD SAVES BY HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. Whom he *sent* to the earth, and whom he *raised* from the dead. This is *God’s way* of salvation. It is the *only way*. By both considerations we are urged to accept it.

III. THE ESSENCE OF THAT SALVATION IS THE “TURNING OF MEN AWAY FROM THEIR INIQUITIES.” The special iniquity dealt with here is the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus; but *that* is ever regarded as displaying and proving, in a very impressive manner, the fallen and ruined condition of men. It was such a display of malice, prejudice, and hard-hearted wilfulness, as revealed the *utter badness* and corruption of humanity. Show that the root-cause of evil in man is *self-love, self-seeking, and self-will*. In these things lie our *iniquity*. From them we can only be turned by the *love of another, the seeking of the good of another, and the enthronement of the will of another*. Therefore Jesus Christ is set forth, we are bidden to look at *him, know him, set our love on him, and enthrone him*. He can work a mighty saving work in every heart and every life that is turned towards him and opened to him. And *penitence and faith* can open our heart-doors. The way and the means to secure “Divine forgiveness,” “blotting out of sins,” and “times of refreshing,” are that “repentance” and “turning again” to which the apostle has been exhorting the people. This is urged first upon the Jews, but it is the condition of salvation for Jew and Gentile alike.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

Ver. 1.—The captain of the temple. Only here and ch. v. 24, and Luke xxii. 4, 52 in the plural. Some have thought that the commander of the Roman garrison of the castle of Antonia is here meant. But as

the scene is laid in the court of the temple, this is very improbable. Josephus (*Ant. Jud.*, xx. vi. 2) speaks of an officer apparently of the temple, who was called *ὁ στρατηγός*, and was certainly a Jew by his name Ananus, and being, as Josephus relates further (*Bell. Jud.*, ii. xii. 6), the

son of the high priest Ananias. He also mentions the captain of the temple ('Bell. Jud., vi. v. 3) at the time of the destruction of the temple. There can be little doubt, therefore, that the captain of the temple here spoken of was a priest who had under him the Levitical guard, and whose duty it was to keep order in the temple courts in those turbulent times. He appears from ch. v. 24, 26, Luke xxii. 4, 52, and the passages in Josephus, to have been an officer of high rank.

Ver. 2.—*Sore troubled for grieved, A.V.; because for that, A.V.; proclaimed in Jesus for preached through Jesus, A.V.* The preaching the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as the "Firstfruits of them that slept," would be especially obnoxious to the Sadducees, "which deny that there is any resurrection" (Luke xx. 27). The Sadducees were at this time in power (see ch. v. 17; and comp. ch. xxiii. 6—8); and we learn from Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' xx. ix. 1) that the son of this Annas (or Ananus) went over to the sect of the Sadducees, being himself high priest as his father had been.

Ver. 3.—*Ward for hold, A.V. (see ver. 18); morrow for next day, A.V.* They laid hands on them. The harsh persecution of the disciples at Jerusalem at this time when the Sadducees were in power is in exact accordance with Josephus's statement in the passage just referred to, that the Sadducees were more severe and cruel in their administration of justice than any other Jews. Their tenet of no life to come made them look to severe punishments in this life.

Ver. 4.—*But for houbet, A.V.; that for which, A.V.; came to be for was, A.V.* The number of the men; strictly, of the males (*ἀνδρῶν*) (ch. v. 14), but probably used here more loosely of men and women. It is not clear whether the five thousand is exclusive of or includes the three thousand converts at the Feast of Pentecost; but the grammar rather favours the former, as there is nothing in the word *ἀνδρῶν* itself to signify "disciples," or "believers," and therefore it is more naturally referred to those of whom it had just been predicated that, having heard the Word, they believed it.

Ver. 5.—*Were gathered together in Jerusalem for at (ver. 6), A.V.; or, as it should rather be rendered, to—some of them probably living in the country.* This clause is placed in the A.V. at the end of ver. 6 because, in the T.R., Annas, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander are in the accusative case, whereas, in the R.T., they are in the nominative case; for which reason the R.V. supplies the words "was there" in ver. 6. We see here the different classes which composed the Sanhedrim.

Ver. 6.—*Annas the high priest was there for Annas the high priest, A.V.* This is

the same Annas as is mentioned in Luke iii. 2 and John xviii. 13, and is described as "father-in-law to Caiaphas." He is called by Josephus, *Ananus*. The succession of the high priests was so irregular, and their tenure of the office so uncertain, in these later years of the Jewish commonwealth, being dependent upon the caprice of the civil rulers who appointed and deposed them at their pleasure, that it does not surprise us to find Annas and Caiaphas high priests at the commencement of John the Baptist's ministry, then Caiaphas at the time of our Lord's passion, and now Annas again. It is possible, however, that Annas may have continued to be president of the Sanhedrim, and be called high priest, even when not actually so. He seems to have lived to old age. He is mentioned by Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' xx. ix. 1) as having had the singular felicity not only of enjoying the high priesthood himself for a great length of time, but of having five sons promoted to the dignity of high priest, viz. Elazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and Ananus (or Annas). Caiaphas (John xviii. 13). Of John and Alexander nothing further is known, but Farrar conjectures that John may be "the celebrated Johanan Ben Zakkai, and Alexander perhaps the wealthy brother of Philo" ('Life of St. Paul,' i. p. 107). Of the kindred of the high priest; rather, of the high priestly race. The high priests were only taken from certain families; the members of which were called *ἀρχιερεῖς*, or chief priests, A.V. (Matt. xli. 21; xxvi. 47, etc.). Many of these would naturally be the near relations of the high priest.

Ver. 7.—*Inquired for asked, A.V.; in for by, A.V.* In what name; *ῥητος*, what, means exactly, "what kind." The miracle might have been wrought, as it seemed to them, by Beelzebub, or by magic (Luke xv. 15, etc.; ch. xiii. 6; xix. 19, etc.), as well as by Divine power and in the Name of God. They asked which it was. In the Greek there is an emphasis upon the "ye," which is placed last, equal to "such as you," unlearned and contemptible men.

Ver. 8.—*Elders for elders of Israel, A.V. and T.R.* Filled with the Holy Ghost; in direct fulfilment of the promise (Mark xiii. 11; Luke xii. 12; xxi. 14, 15; comp. ch. vii. 55). St. Peter addresses them with all respect (see Matt. xxiii. 2).

Ver. 9.—*Are for be, A.V.; concerning a (good deed) for of the, A.V.; an (impotent) for the, A.V.; this man for he, A.V.* We; emphatic, probably in response to the emphatic "you" at the end of ver. 7. An impotent man. The following *οὗτος*; this man, makes it necessary to supply the definite article, as the A.V. has done. St. Peter alludes to the

good deed, *i.e.* the benefit done to the lame man, being the subject of a criminal inquiry, as a tacit condemnation of the unrighteousness of such a course.

Ver. 10.—*In (the name) for by*, A.V., and again, *in (him) for by*, A.V.; but if *ἐν τῷ* is rightly rendered *by what means*, *ἐν τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ* and *ἐν τούτῳ* ought to be rendered as in the A.V., *by*. Be it known unto you all, etc. St. Peter skilfully excuses himself from any presumption in preaching to the rulers by making his words the direct and necessary answer to their inquiry. Jesus Christ of Nazareth (see ch. iii. 6, note). Whom ye crucified, whom God raised. With what wonderful conciseness and force are the great doctrines of the gospel condensed into a few words! The human nature, the mediatorial glory, the humiliating but atoning death, the glorious resurrection (a cardinal point in all the apostolic preaching), and the present might of Christ to save his people on earth, are all set out in half a dozen pregnant words. Even in him. The apostle thus passes from the Name to him whose Name it was. Before you. How could they deny what was actually before their eyes?

Ver. 11.—*He for this*, A.V.; *the builders for builders*, A.V.; *was made for is become*, A.V. He is the stone. He had just appealed to their own senses; he now adds the witness of their own prophets. These had declared that the stone which was set at nought by the builders should become the chief corner-stone; just as it had come to pass. The quotation is from Pa. cxviii. 22; only St. Luke here substitutes the word *ἐξουθενεῖν*, to set at nought, for that used by the LXX., *ἀποδοκιμάζειν*, to refuse, or reject as unfit. The word *ἐξουθενεῖν* is applied directly to our Saviour in Luke xxiii. 11, and the similar word, *ἐξουθενόειν*, in Mark ix. 11.

Ver. 12.—*And in none other is there salvation for neither is there salvation in any other*, A.V.; *neither is there any other, etc.*, for *there is none other*, A.V.; *that is given for given*, A.V.; *wherein for whereby*, A.V. The eighteenth Article of Religion refers directly to this verse as proving that eternal salvation can be obtained only by the Name of Christ.

Ver. 13.—*Beheld for saw*, A.V.; *had perceived for perceived*, A.V. The boldness; literally, *free or out spokenness* (*παρρησία*), and properly used with words signifying to speak (see ch. ii. 29; iv. 29, 31; xxviii. 31; John vii. 13, etc.), and so the verb (*παρρησιάζεσθαι*) means “to speak freely and boldly” (ch. ix. 27, 29; xiii. 46; xiv. 3; xviii. 26; xix. 8; xxvi. 26; elsewhere in the New Testament only in Eph. vi. 20; 1 Thess. ii. 2). St. Peter had shown his free-spokenness in so boldly proclaiming the resurrec-

tion and mighty power of him whom the rulers he was addressing had crucified. Boldness of speech, when combined with charity and moderation, is a most important grace for a minister of Christ. Unlearned and ignorant men. The term *unlearned* (*ἀγράμματος*) means that they had no “knowledge of Jewish culture” beyond the Scriptures. *Ignorant men* (*ἰδιώται*) was a technical term for those who had not studied in rabbinic schools. The word *hedge* occurs frequently in the Talmud (Farrar’s ‘Life of St. Paul,’ vol. i. p. 106). They took knowledge, etc. *Annas and Caiaphas* or some of their people, it is likely, had seen them in the high priest’s palace (John xviii. 15—18).

Ver. 14.—*Beholding for seeing*, A.V.

Ver. 16.—*Wrought through them for done by them*, A.V.; *to all for to all them*, A.V. Only here and at ver. 22 and in Luke xxiii. 8 has *miracle* been retained in the R.V. as the rendering of *σημεῖα*: everywhere else it is *sign*. *Wrought through them*; more literally, *hath come to pass through them*.

Ver. 17.—*Threaten for straitly threaten*, A.V. and T.R. The subject of that it spread seems to be “a notable miracle.” They could not deny that it had taken place, but they could prevent the knowledge of it spreading, by forbidding the apostles to speak of the Name of Jesus in which it had been wrought.

Ver. 18.—*Charged for commanded*, A.V.

Ver. 19.—*Rather for more*, A.V.

Ver. 20.—*Saw and heard for have seen and heard*, A.V. We cannot but speak, etc. We have here another instance of Peter’s boldness of speech under the influence of the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 21.—*And they when they, etc., let them go for so when they, etc., they let them go*, A.V.

Ver. 22.—*More than for above*, A.V.; *wrought for showed*, A.V. *Wrought*; literally, as in ver. 16, *came to pass, or happened, or took place*.

Ver. 23.—*Came for went*, A.V.; *the elders for elders*, A.V. To their own company (comp. Mal. iii. 16). The chief priests (*οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς*); evidently the same as those who were described as being “of the kindred of the high priest,” in ver. 6 (where see note).

Ver. 24.—*They, when they heard it, lifted for when they heard that they lifted*, A.V.; *O Lord, thou that didst make, or as in margin, thou art he that did make, for Lord, thou art God, which hast made*, T.R. and A.V.; *the heaven and the earth for heaven and earth*, A.V. With one accord (*ὁμοθυμαδόν*) occurs eleven times in the Acts (ten times in the R.T.) and only once elsewhere in the New Testament, viz. in Rom. xv. 6. *O Lord, etc.* Either the margin or the A.V. is preferable to the R.V., which gives an unmeaning vocative pendent. The word here used for “Lord”

is *δεσπότης*, from which our English word "despot" comes. It means "master, owner," in respect of slaves, and "a lord" or "king," whose power over his subjects is similar to that of a master over slaves. Here, with reference to creation and God's unlimited power over all that he has made, the Church in danger finds support and solace in the thought of God's absolute sovereignty. The term is applied to God in the New Testament elsewhere only in Luke ii. 29 (where observe its relation to *δούλος*); 2 Pet. ii. 1; Jude 4, R.T. (of our Saviour); and Rev. vi. 10, where *σύνδουλοι αὐτῶν* immediately follows, as here in ver. 29 does "thy servants." In the LXX. it sometimes answers to *Elohim*, and sometimes to *Adonai*. As regards the question how the whole assembly joined in this prayer, whether by a common inspiration, or by repeating the words after him that prayed them aloud (Alford), or by merely singing the second psalm (Baumgarten), or by all using what was already a formulary prepared for the needs of the Church (Mayer), it is difficult to speak positively, nor is it of any moment. Another possible explanation is that several members of the congregation, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, uttered brief prayers and praises, the consenting matter of which Luke thus puts together.

Ver. 25.—*Who by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David thy servant, didst say for who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, T.R. and A.V.; Gentiles for heathen, A.V.; peoples for people, A.V.* Who by the Holy Ghost, etc. The R.T. here is impossible, but the T.R. is perfectly easy and natural. The confusion in the manuscripts from which the R.T. is formed appears to have arisen from *στόματος* having been accidentally mistaken for *πνεύματος*, which led to other changes. Three readings resulted and seem to be combined: *ὁ διὰ τοῦ καρπὸς ἡμῶν Δαβὶδ εἰπὼν*; or, *ὁ διὰ πνεύματος ἁγίου εἰπὼν*; or the original one, *ὁ διὰ στόματος Δαβὶδ παιδὸς σου εἰπὼν*, which is preserved in the T.R.

Ver. 26.—*Set themselves in array for stood up, A.V.; Anointed for Christ, A.V.* Set themselves in array. *Παρίστημι* does not specially mean "to set themselves in array," which implies a battle, of which there is not question here, but it means simply "to present" or "show themselves" (ch. i. 9) "to be ready," or, as in ver. 10, "to stand." Anointed. The text in the whole citation follows the LXX. exactly.

Ver. 27.—*Of a truth in this city for of a truth, A.V.; Servant for child (as in oh. iii. 26), A.V.; didst anoint for hast anointed, A.V.; peoples for people, A.V.* For of a truth, etc. The saying just quoted is proved to have been the word of God by its exact fulfilment in the heathen and Jewish rulers

and peoples who were concerned in the crucifixion of the Lord Christ. In this city. This is omitted in the A.V. and T.R., but found in most uncials and Fathers, and adopted by Wordsworth, Alford, Meyer, Bengel, etc. Herod. St. Luke (xxiii. 1—12) is the only one of the evangelists who records the part taken by Herod in conjunction with Pontius Pilate in the condemnation of Christ. Possibly the inference may be that St. Luke was led to record it in his Gospel from knowing of this application of Ps. ii. to him and Pilate. Peoples, in the plural, either because of the "many nations" (ch. ii. 5) from which the Jews of the dispersion came to Jerusalem, or with reference to the twelve tribes (see Gen. xxviii. 3, "Thou shalt be a multitude of peoples," Hebrew).

Ver. 28.—*To do for to do, A.V.; fore-ordained to come to pass for determined before to be done, A.V.* To do (for the sentiment, comp. oh. ii. 23; iii. 18). They were gathered together for the purpose of executing their own will, as they thought, but really to fulfil the purpose of God (see also Isa. x. 5—15; xxxvii. 26, 27). See here the comfort to the Church of looking upon God as the *δεσπότης* of the whole earth.

Ver. 29.—*Look upon for behold, A.V.; to speak thy word with all boldness for that with all boldness they may speak thy word, A.V.* Lord. This time *Κύριε* (Kyrie), the word in the LXX. for *Jehovah*, and the special designation of Jesus Christ (ch. ii. 36, etc.), but here applied to God the Father. Look upon; a more forcible rendering than the A.V. *Look upon*, for the purpose of frustrating and punishing. The only other place in the New Testament where the word (*ἐπέιδεω*) occurs is in Luke i. 25, where the Lord "looked upon" Elisabeth to confer a blessing upon her. In 2 Chron. xxiv. 22, "The Lord look upon it and require it," the LXX. have the simple verb *ἴδοι* instead of *ἐπίδοι*. It is beautiful to notice how, in the heat of the unjust persecutions, the Church hands over her quarrel to her Lord, and is only careful that she be not stopped in her work by the threatenings of her enemies. To speak thy word with all boldness (for the word "boldness," see ver. 13, note).

Ver. 30.—*While thou stretchest for by stretching, A.V.; thy for thine, A.V.; through for by, A.V.; Servant for child, A.V., as in ver. 27 and ch. iii. 13, 26.* While thou stretchest, etc. The A.V. seems preferable. It was the fact that, while they preached the Word of God, the Lord confirmed the Word with signs following, which gave them such superhuman courage to persevere in the face of death and bonds. And this was God's method and means of encouraging them. And that signs and wonders may be done. But this clause is better rendered, as Beza

and Bengel render it, in dependence upon *ἐν τῷ*, and by signs and wonders being done, as the consequence of the stretching out of the hand of Jesus. The other ways of construing the sentence are either to make the clause, "that signs and wonders may be done," dependent upon "grant," which seems to be the meaning of the A.V., or else to take it, as Meyer does, as an independent clause, expressing the aim of the stretching out of the hand.

Ver. 31.—*Wherein they were gathered for when they were assembled*, A.V. When they had prayed. When they had finished the preceding prayer. The place was shaken, perhaps by a mighty wind, as in ch. ii. 2. The word *σαλεύεσθαι* is properly used of ships or of the sea agitated and tossed by the wind; so Matt. xi. 7, "A reed shaken by the wind." But it is also applied to the rocking caused by an earthquake (ch. xvi. 26), which may be the kind of shaking here meant. In this fresh outpouring of the Spirit, whereby they were enabled to speak the word of God with boldness, they had a direct and immediate answer to their prayer (see Isa. lxx. 24).

Ver. 32.—*Soul for of one soul*, A.V.; and not one of them said for neither said any of them, A.V. The great increase in the number of believers had been recorded in ver. 4. And the state of public feeling alluded to in ver. 21 makes it likely that yet more may have been converted to the faith. This was very important, no doubt; but it was scarcely less so that this great multitude were one in heart and soul, closely united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love.

Ver. 33.—*Their witness for witness*, A.V. (*τὸ μαρτύριον*). Their witness. It was one of their chief functions as apostles to bear witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (see ch. i. 22, note). Great grace, etc. Some understand this of the singular favour with which the people regarded them. But it is better to take it of the grace of God which abounded towards them in spiritual gifts and abundant unction and rich blessing, crowning their labours with success.

Ver. 34.—*For neither for neither*, A.V.; among them any for any among them, A.V. One striking proof of the greatness of the Divine grace that was upon the Church at this time was that there was no such thing as want or poverty among them. The equality typified in the daily collection of manna was literally fulfilled among them (2 Cor. viii. 14, 15); for the rich sold their houses and lands, and laid the price of them at the apostles' feet, to be used for the common wants. The present participle in the Greek (*παλοῦντες . . . ππρασκομένῳ*) indicates the process as continuing (Meyer).

Ver. 35.—*Laid them for laid them down*,

A.V.; unto each . . . as any one for unto every man . . . as he, A.V., a change without an improvement. Laid them at the apostles' feet. A significant token of the place occupied by the apostles (as later by the bishops of the Church) as the trustees and dispensers of the Church's funds as well as of the Church's doctrines. Compare "Ante pedes prætoria in foro expensum est auri pondo centum" (Cic. pr. Flacco, quoted by Alford). We have, too, here an instance of the way in which Church institutions rose gradually as occasion gave birth to them. So the institution of deacons (ch. vi. 2, 3), of presbyters or priests (ch. xiv. 23), of bishops (1 Tim. i.—iii.), of Confirmation (ch. viii. 14—17), appear to have come about in each case *pro re natâ*.

Ver. 36.—*Joseph for Josea*, A.V., as ch. i. 23; *Son of exhortation for The son of consolation*, A.V.; a man of Cyprus by race for and of the country of Cyprus, A.V. Joseph. In the variation of manuscripts it is difficult to say which is right. Some (Grotius, Alford, etc.) consider the two forms as mere variations in writing the name Joseph. But it seems more probable that Josea is the same name as Josiah, only without the addition of the Divine Name (Jah) at the end (see Simon, 'Onomast.'). It is found as a proper name in the T.B. of Matt. xiii. 53; xxvii. 56; Mark vi. 3; xv. 40, 47; Luke iii. 29 (Jose); and is not likely to have been substituted for the common name of Joseph. The Codex Sinaiticus has Josea only in Mark xv. 40. The R.V. has Joseph in Matt. xiii. 53, and Josea in Matt. xxvii. 56; Mark vi. 3; xv. 40, 47. In Luke iii. 29 the R.V. has Jesus. But Josea is probably right both here and in the above-cited passages. Barnabas; literally, son of prophecy; i.e. a prophet, as he is called in ch. xviii. 1. Probably his exhortations under the influence of the Holy Spirit in the Church assemblies were particularly stirring and edifying. The Greek version of the name, *υἱὸς παρακλήσεως*, should be rendered, as in R.V., Son of exhortation, for "son of consolation" is a meaning which can hardly be got out of the Hebrew. The apostles seem here to have followed our Lord's example in naming the sons of Zebedee, sons of thunder. A man of Cyprus by race. The A.V. is less accurate, but it gives the sense better. Cyprus was the country where he was born and lived, as it is likely, his fathers had done before him. But he was hardly, in our sense of the words, a Cypriot by race. We know that a great many Jews were settled in Cyprus (Philo, 'Leg. ad Calum.,' § 36; Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiii. 4; Alford, on ch. xi. 19); and we learn from ch. xiii. 5 that in Salamis alone there were several synagogues.

Ver. 37.—*A field for land*, A.V.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—31.—The first persecution. On observing the phenomena attending the introduction and spread of Christianity in the world, one which arrests our attention is the persecution which at different times its disciples have met with from the world. The Lord Jesus himself, "the Author and Perfecter of our faith," was rejected of men and crucified. And when, after his glorious resurrection, the apostles preached the faith, and verified the truth of what they preached by such signal miracles as that recorded in ch. iii., iv., and in consequence drew large numbers of people to the faith of Jesus Christ, we see the hand of power immediately stretched out to arrest the progress of the gospel, and to silence its preachers by threats, imprisonment, and death. What were the secret springs of this first persecution, as they are exposed to view in the narrative before us?

I. THERE WAS THE GENERAL JEALOUSY ON THE PART OF HUMAN POWER OF ANY GREAT MOVEMENT NOT EMANATING FROM ITSELF. "By what power, or in what name, have ye done this?" was their angry question. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" was the similar question of the Pharisees in our Lord's lifetime. The same jealousy of any free movement, the results of which might be dangerous to the existing power, and which implied an independent spirit on the part of those concerned in it, is apparent also in the Roman persecutions of Christianity, and in the crucial test of loyalty required of the followers of the new doctrines, that they should sacrifice to the emperor. The persecutions of Lollards and Protestants by our own monarchs before the Reformation, and of Romanists and Puritans after the Reformation, were due in some considerable measure to the same impatience of any rival or of any non-dependent power whatever.

II. THERE WAS IN THE CASE OF ANNAS AND HIS CO-RULERS A FIERCE HOSTILITY TO PETER AND JOHN AND THE REST OF THE APOSTLES, ON THE GROUND OF THE DOCTRINE PREACHED BY THEM. The doctrine of those in power was Sadduceism. They were the secularists of that day. Their creed was this world, and nothing beyond it. No angel, no spirit, no resurrection, no life to come. And this creed they held with a fierceness not unusual with those who hold negative doctrines, and repudiate the bigotry of dogmatism. When, therefore, the apostles with marvellous boldness and confidence, and with a simplicity of purpose and force of eloquence which carried all before them, not only preached generally the doctrine of the Resurrection, but affirmed that Jesus Christ, whom Annas and Caiaphas had given up to be crucified, was actually risen from the dead, that they had seen him and conversed with him after his resurrection, and that by his power and in his Name the lame man had been healed, their indignation knew no bounds. They could not deny the miracle, they could not silence the preachers by argument. But they could cast them into prison, they could, they thought, silence them with threats; and so they did the one and attempted the other. And so it has been since. The pure and holy doctrines of the gospel of Christ have been opposite alike to the polytheism of Greece and Rome, to the polygamy of Mahomet, to the tenets of Rome. And so those in power who held these various doctrines, have in turn drawn the persecuting sword against the faithful who upheld them. It has ever been error and the sword against God's truth.

III. But we can see another reason for the violence of the rulers against the apostles of Christ. We may be sure that the crime of delivering Jesus to the Romans to be crucified had not been accomplished without many and sore rebukes of conscience. They knew of Christ's blameless life of active goodness and beneficence; they must have heard from many lips of his healing and his kindness to the sick and poor; they had heard his teaching themselves, or had heard of it from others, how wise, how instructive, how Divine it was. And yet, in their envy and malice, they had given him over to death. At least they hoped that no voice could come from the grave to rebuke them; and that their Victim was silenced for ever. But now they were told that he whom they had slain was alive again; that he whom they had seen hanging on the cross was at the right hand of God; that he whose head had drooped helplessly in death was in possession of all power in heaven; that he had sent his Holy Spirit with extraordinary gifts to rest upon his disciples; that he healed and made alive; that

the marvellous power which they saw in the poor fishermen of Galilee was his power; and that he would come again in glory to reign as the Lord's Christ. Can we doubt that their slumbering conscience was aroused to a very troublesome activity, that guilt awakened fear and alarm, and that most unwelcome anticipations crowded upon their minds? "Ye have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us," was their angry expostulation and the expression of their fears. Clearly, unless these fears brought them to repentance, they would rouse them to hatred and indignation. They did the latter, and this persecution was the result. And beyond a doubt this disturbed but not converted conscience lies at the bottom of much of the world's hatred of the truth of Christ. Men have sense enough to know that if the Word of God is true they are condemned. The doctrines of the gospel are at variance with a heart full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin. The same word which shows the grace and love of God shows the foulness and hatefulness of sin. Men who have settled down into a course of sin and wilful ungodliness do not wish to be disturbed. They wish to sin on in peace. They have no thoughts of renouncing all their old ways of thinking and feeling and acting. Whoever disturbs them, and breaks in upon their security, is an enemy. The disturbing doctrines are hateful, and all the more so if reason or conscience sides with them. And so anger and contempt and vengeance cry down the feeble voice of conscience and prompt the hand to violence and persecution. But—

IV. NOTE THE SAINTS OF GOD UNDER PERSECUTION. They flinch not, but are bold to preach the truth unto bonds and unto death. They do not avenge themselves, but commit their cause to God. They flock together not to fight, but to pray, and to exhort and comfort one another. And in the end, instead of being dismayed, they are strengthened. Their faith is increased in the furnace of affliction; the Comforter comes to them; and the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.

Vers. 32—37.—*Church unity.* We speak in these dark days of unity in Christ, of brotherly love, of the communion of saints. But what do we see when we look around at the multitude of them that believe? We see some forty or fifty denominations of Christians, all keeping apart from one another, not willing to meet together, to pray together, or to receive the Holy Communion together. These different bodies are constantly at different degrees of strife with each other; sometimes waging actual war one against another, at others engaged in bitter controversies, and carrying on a strife of tongues and pens. Even among those who belong to the same religious body what differences of opinion, what unbrotherly denunciations, what schisms, what party movements, are constantly breaking out! And yet we look with complacency upon this broken surface of Christendom, and make no great effort to correct it. Perhaps, if we can get a glimpse of true unity in Christ as it was seen for a while in the Church of Jerusalem, we shall be put to shame, and strive after something better.

IN THE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM, THEN, THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF BELIEVERS WERE OF ONE HEART AND SOUL. Rich and poor, learned and simple, Pharisees and Sadducees, Levites and Jews, were so united in Christ that all other distinctions were lost. Selfishness was gone, for each loved his brother as himself. What each man had he held it not as his own, but as a steward of Christ for the good of all. The love of money was swallowed up in the love of Christ. The ordinary worldly life seemed to have melted into the life of faith and godliness. Their wants were spiritual, their occupations were spiritual, their joys were spiritual. In this happy state, in this clear atmosphere of love, the great truths of the gospel shone out with marvellous brightness; the resurrection of Christ especially stood out in the lineaments of a distinct reality; and there was a rich glow of grace over the whole Church. The whole body received the apostles' doctrine, submitted to their rule, committed everything to their ordering. It were difficult to say whether the apostolic authority in the Church derived more of its vigour from the appointment of Christ, or from the love and reverence of the people. The two forces were centred on the heads of the twelve, and gave them an invincible power. Such was Church unity in those golden days. This is not the place to consider the causes which have broken to shivers that frame of heavenly beauty. But it may be a not unfitting opportunity to entreat all who may read these lines to dwell upon the beauty of the scene here depicted by St. Luke, to contrast it with the miserable

aspect of our schisms and party divisions, and to make every effort in their own sphere to forward unity and godly love, to put aside all stumbling-blocks and hindrances to Christian harmony, and to labour after that oneness of heart and soul which ought to result from fellowship in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ, and from having one and the same hope of sharing the resurrection of life through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—21.—*Truth from the tribunal.* The principles which are illustrated or suggested here are—

I. THAT MEN IN THE HIGHEST RELIGIOUS POSITION MAY BE ALL WRONG IN THEIR THEOLOGY. The priests were *grieved* that the apostles taught the people that which we know to have been God's own truth (ver. 2). In every age since then, the teaching of pure doctrine has been a veritable grief to those who have been regarded by many as the religious authorities of the land.

II. THAT MEN IN THE HIGHEST POLITICAL POSITION MAY BE USING THEIR POWER AGAINST THE WELL-BEING OF THE STATE. The state officials "came upon" the apostles of our Lord (ver. 1), and "laid hands on them, and put them in hold" (ver. 3). How often has this scene been re-enacted since then; the men in office using their authority to restrain and silence the teachers of truth, the reformers of national life!

III. THAT FAITHFUL MEN HAVE THEIR CONSOLATION WHEN OPPOSED AND SILENCED BY THE STRONG. That was not a very unhappy evening which Peter and John spent in the stronghold of the temple. As they walked within the narrow bounds of their captivity, they thought rejoicingly of the "five thousand men" who had heard the word they had spoken, and had believed it and been saved by it. Spiritual successes are an ample compensation for material discouragements (ch. xvi. 25).

IV. THAT TO FAITHFUL MEN GOD GRANTS COURAGE AND CONSTANCY ACCORDING TO THEIR DAY. (Vers. 5—13.) Before the Sanhedrim Peter and John show themselves brave and fearless. There is nothing apologetic about their demeanour, nothing supplicatory about their tone. They stand erect and they "speak straight on," as men who stand before God and who speak for him. In truth, they are men *in* whom God dwells (ver. 8); hence their noble attitude and their manly spirit. God gives them grace according to their day. So will he to us also. Let us be receptive of his truth when he speaks to us; let us be faithful at our post when we speak for him; and then, when the trial hour shall come, he will nerve us for the scenes through which we shall have to pass, and we shall be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

V. THAT THERE IS ONE, AND ONLY ONE, ROAD TO HEAVEN. (Ver. 12.) Many paths lead into it; there are many ruts in the road; many very different pilgrims along it; many views as we look out on either side of it and at different stages on it. But there is *only one way*: this is found in him who says, "I am the Way."

VI. THAT THE SPIRITUAL TRIUMPHS OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH ARE THE MOST COGENT WITNESSES ON ITS BEHALF. (Ver. 14.) In presence of reclaimed drunkenness, silenced profanity, cleansed and uplifted impurity, regenerated selfishness, humbled pride, what can infidelity or irreverence do? It is dumb; it is helpless.

VII. THAT HUMAN ERROR IS IMPOTENT IN ITS CONTEST WITH DIVINE TRUTH. (Vers. 16—21.) Authority, in the person of this Jewish Sanhedrim, is ill intentioned enough; it is willing enough to smite; it considers patiently and earnestly how far it dares to go; it threatens, forbids, threatens still further, and then impotently and ignominiously releases. Error is often fiercely antagonistic, industriously hostile, actively opposed to the truth of God; but—let us take courage in dark hours—it is held under restraint; there is a point beyond which it cannot go; it will be compelled to relax its hold, and truth will come forth, before long, rejoicing in its liberty.—C.

Ver. 13.—*Association with Christ.* We gather from these words—

I. THAT LEARNING IS NOT NECESSARY TO GOODNESS. The persecutors of Peter and John "perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men"; not uneducated men,

in the worst sense of that term, but lacking in the higher culture of their time. But though thus comparatively unlearned, they were men of strong faith, of true piety, of godly zeal, admirable in the sight of men, acceptable servants of Jesus Christ. Human learning is a desirable, but it is far from being a necessary, thing to excellence of character or nobility of life.

II. THAT COURAGE IN THE CONDUCT OF THE GOOD WILL ARREST THE ATTENTION OF THOSE WHO ARE IN THE WRONG. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John . . . they marvelled." Whatever virtues are unappreciated by the ungodly, courage always enlists attention and provokes admiration. Be brave, and you will be heard; stand to your colours with undaunted spirit, and men will, however reluctantly, yield you their respect.

III. THAT ASSOCIATION WITH JESUS CHRIST WILL ACCOUNT FOR ANY EXCELLENCY OF CHARACTER. When the priests and elders wanted to account to themselves for the boldness of these two men they remembered their connection with Christ, and were no longer at fault. That will account for anything that is good. Much intimacy with him who "regarded not the person of man" will always make men brave; frequent communion with that Holy One of God will always make men pure of heart; close friendship with him who came to lay down his life for the sheep will always make men unselfish, etc.

IV. THAT THE BEST THINGS ABOUT HUMAN CHARACTER ARE THOSE WHICH ARE SUGGESTIVE OF JESUS CHRIST. There is nothing which is such a tribute to human worth as that men are thereby reminded of Christ. What impression are we most anxious to convey about ourselves? The answer to that question will be a sure criterion of our spiritual standing. If we are nearing the goal which is set before us, if we are attaining to any real height of Christian excellency, we shall be truly and earnestly solicitous that our constant spirit and daily behaviour will be suggestive of the temper and the principles of Jesus Christ our Lord.—C.

Vers. 19, 20.—*The simpler and the deeper truth.* Here we have—

I. A TRUTH WHICH IS PALPABLE TO ALL—that when the Divine and the human are in conflict, the human must yield to the Divine. "Whether it be right . . . judge ye." The judgment required was one that any man could pronounce; the question may be answered by the humblest understanding. 1. Ordinarily, the commandments of God and of man are in unison; it is, as a rule, our duty to God to obey the human parent, teacher, magistrate, minister. 2. But occasionally, we are compelled to believe that God bids us act in a way directly at variance with the commands of man. The apostles now found themselves in this position. Since then martyrs, confessors, those who have been persecuted for Christ's sake, in every age and land, have found themselves thus placed. And these have included not only the men whose names history has preserved and whose praise poetry has sung, but many thousands who have struggled and endured in quiet homes and narrow spheres, whose heroism no tongue has told, no pen recorded. 3. Then the human authority is nothing to the Divine. We must obey God rather than man; we must give our first allegiance, our most dutiful submission, to the Eternal Father, to the Divine Teacher, to the King of kings, to the Head of the Church himself.

II. A TRUTH WHICH IS APPRECIABLE ONLY BY THE BEST—that we are under a holy compulsion to testify the truth we know: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." All can understand that men will speak the truth they know when, by so doing, they will gain anything which satisfies their lower nature—pecuniary reward, or personal prominence, or the gratification of receiving the interested attention of others. But it is not every one who can understand that men feel themselves under a holy compulsion to declare what God has revealed to them in order to relieve a full and burdened heart. This is a case in which "only the good discern the good." But those who are in sympathy with God and with heavenly wisdom will understand that human hearts may be so impressed with the excellency, the beauty, the fruitfulness, the divinity of truth, that they are positively oppressed while they remain silent, until they have "spoken the things they have seen and heard." The word is in the heart as "a burning fire shut up in the bones," etc. (Jer. xx. 9; Job xxxii. 18, 20; Pa. xxxix. 3; 1 Cor. ix. 16). The fact that not

only the apostles of our Lord, but thousands of souls since then, have felt thus constrained concerning Christian truth, suggests: 1. That it is a truth of transcendent worth which it is foolish and wrong to trifle with. 2. That we have not risen to the full height of appreciation of it if we do not feel irresistibly impelled to make it known to others.—C.

Ver. 22.—*Spiritual inflexibility: a sermon to those in the midst of life.* The words of the text indicate that there was one fact which contributed greatly to sustain the miraculous character of the healing act that had been wrought. We might interpolate between this verse and the preceding—*there could be no manner of doubt that this work was of God, "for the man,"* etc. We instantly recognize the force of the reasoning. When a man has suffered for forty years from physical deformity or rigidity and is restored in a moment, there is obviously some supernatural power brought into exercise. Long continuance in such a case immensely aggravates the difficulty and enhances the virtue of the cure. In this, as in so many other respects, the moral world answers to the material.

I. IN THE EARLIER YEARS THE SOUL IS RESPONSIVE TO THE TOUCH OF TRUTH. As God made us, and before we are acted upon and injured by the forces of evil, we are impressionable and flexible of soul. The mind is eager to learn and ready to receive; the conscience is quick to approve or to rebuke; the heart is tender and affectionate, readily responsive to goodness and to love; the soul is appreciative of that which is spiritually fair and beautiful; the will is open to change if cause be shown for reformation and return. This is the time when moral maladies can best be cured, when we may well hope that the heart will be healed of its sicknesses, and that the spirit will "be made whole" by the great Physician.

II. CONTINUANCE IN SIN INDURATES THE SOUL. When a human soul has continued for forty years in an evil habit or in a state of sin, it has become hardened in its way. Conscious wrong-doing acts harmfully on every faculty of our nature. 1. It blinds "the eyes of the understanding." 2. It hardens the heart. 3. It weakens and blunts the conscience so that its stroke is decreasingly effective. 4. It stiffens and fixes the will in its chosen course. Thus it makes the man himself unapproachable, unimpressionable, incurable. They who are passing on from youth and young manhood into middle life, not having entered the kingdom of God, have urgent need to "consider their ways." They are reaching the moral condition in which their conversion to God is a thing of greatest difficulty and serious unlikelihood. In the Book of Life, if their name should be recorded, will it not be added, as a proof of the wonder-working power of the Spirit of God, "for the man was forty years old," etc.? Remember that (1) salvation is *never impossible*: at twice forty years of age it is within the reach of penitence and faith; but (2) it becomes *growingly unlikely* as the periods of human life pass by. The Holy Ghost saith, "To-day."—C.

Ver. 23.—*The use of freedom.* "Being let go, they went to their own company." We have here an apt illustration of—

I. AN ACT INCIDENTAL TO LIBERTY. "Being let go"—the hand of restraint being taken off them—"they went to their own company;" they followed the bent of their own inclination, and went to those with whom they were in sympathy. This is the constant accompaniment of human freedom. As soon as the parental hand is relaxed, as soon as the teacher's eye is off them, as soon as the restraints of home and the guardianship of elders are removed, the young take their own course, follow their own bent, choose their own company. We never know what men really are until we take away the bonds by which we hold them in check, and they go "whithersoever they will"—whither their own principles allow, and their own tastes direct them.

II. THE WISDOM OF THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR OTHERS. It is of little use to hold the reins so tight that, as long as they are held by a firm hand, there can be no wandering. What is to be the event when the reins must be thrown up? What will be the course chosen when they whom we guard are "let go"? If we do nothing more and better than carefully imprison within walls of correct behaviour, we shall be bitterly disappointed with the result. It is our wisdom and our duty to provide for the hour when those for whom we are responsible will be "let go," and when they will

assuredly go to their own company—will seek out those persons and those things with which they sympathize. We can only do this (1) by implanting right principles, and (2) cultivating pure tastes. These, and these only, will lead the young, in the days when they act for themselves, to shun that which is wrong and to pursue that which is holy, wise, useful.

III. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF FREEDOM. Young people! 1. You will soon stand at the point where you will decide on your own course. 2. If, then, you are right at heart, you will walk in the path of life; choosing the company of the good, the ways of wisdom. 3. If, then, your heart is not right with God, you will be tempted to follow an evil bent. It will be a most perilous hour with you. (1) To give way to the lower inclinations is to enter the road of ruin. (2) If you love life and hate death, go not whither you *would*, but where conviction tells you you *should*. Harken to the heavenly voice which says, "This is the way; walk ye in it."—C.

Vers. 23—37.—*The resource of the devout, etc.* Released from the restraint of law, the apostles returned to "their own company," and there they related what they had passed through. We may be sure that the whole of that community of brethren entered, with deep and strong sympathy, into the feelings of their two leaders; they all felt that a very critical hour had come to that new cause which they represented. Under these circumstances they bethought themselves of—

I. THE RESOURCE OF THE DEVOUT. "They lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (ver. 24). They felt, as their prayer indicated, that: 1. All power was in his mighty hand: "Thou art God, who hast made heaven," etc. Vainly would the heathen rage, and kings and rulers conspire against the "holy Child Jesus," the Son of the living God. 2. A gracious purpose was in his sovereign will. However earthly potentates might imagine they were carrying everything their own way, they were but "doing what his hand and counsel determined before to be done" (ver. 28). 3. He could impart a power which would make them superior to all fear of man. They asked for boldness of speech (ver. 29), and, with this end in view, for signs of his presence (ver. 30). Prayer is the constant, unailing resort of all holy souls. What time we are afraid we must trust in him; we must flee unto him to hide us.

II. DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT. (Vers. 31—33.) The Lord responded to his people's prayer, and granted them: (1) a manifest sign of his presence and favour (ver. 31); (2) the fearlessness of spirit they so much desired (ver. 31); (3) power to testify of Christ (ver. 33); and (4) inward, spiritual confidence and joy: "Great grace was upon them all" (ver. 33). God now vouchsafes to his waiting children the blessings they seek of him: the assurance of his presence, power to act as his witnesses, success in their labours, rest and joy of heart in him and in his service.

III. THE COMMUNITY OF THE FAITHFUL. (Vers. 32, 34—37.) The essential part of this passage is the opening sentence, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul" (ver. 32). The measure which they adopted, viz. a community of goods, was peculiar, exceptional, transitory. It is not a practical method, suited to such conditions as those in which we find ourselves. It is not enjoined by apostolic word, nor is it sustained by subsequent apostolic practice. It was evidently special, local, temporary. But it is essential that those who belong to the same heavenly kingdom, and especially those who are members of the same Christian Church, should (1) cultivate a true and deep sympathy, "oneness of heart," and (2) take some practical measures to supply the wants of the necessitous from the treasury of those who have more than they need.—C.

Vers. 1—22.—*Christ's servants before the tribunal.* I. THEIR APPREHENSION. *Its causes.* 1. The jealousy of those in ecclesiastical power. Caste, privilege, and established professions are ever jealous of popular influence. It is ill for learning and for religion when they come to be identified with the interests of a class. But neither can be shut up to the few. Light and truth are the common property of all. As there is no function higher than that of the genuine teacher of religion, so there is none which attracts more suspicion and jealousy. The essence of bigotry is exemplified by the Sadducees. Not believing in the Resurrection, they would put down any teaching of it by force. The force of persecution *never* comes from love of truth, but

ever from some form of interest. The temper of the truth-lover is ever for free speech and free thought. He knows that the truth, being a beam of God, cannot be quenched, and is reflected with all the more glory from the mists of error. Often men mean by "the truth" their own opinions and prejudices. History shows, and passion constantly ignores, that to put down opinions is impossible. The spirit of man acquires force both in good and evil by resistance. Let what you consider false be either ignored, or, far better, honestly examined and discussed. But, in fact, no *absolute* falsehood can live an hour; and when desire is shown for suppression of free utterance, *fear* of the truth, not love of it, is betrayed. 2. Another cause was the popular acceptance of the gospel. The thousands may be despised as individuals, but their collective feeling commands respect. When the multitude wait on a preacher, and their lives are changed by his influence, we may be certain that there is a deeper agency at work than appears. The very extravagances which attend popular religious movements are in their way evidences that men are being acted upon by unwonted spiritual power.

II. **THEIR EXAMINATION.** They stood in the presence of the Sanhedrim—the great ecclesiastical court and ruling body of the nation. It is a sublime contrast between the power that is and the power that is not of the world. The parts of the prisoners and the judges are really reversed. Sincerity is ever the judge; appearances go for nothing in the spiritual sphere. 1. *The question.* The fact is not disputed; the question is—How is it to be accounted for? What power, whose Name, had been at work here? The surging up of a new power in Church or state is a formidable thing. What is its nature? how must we deal with it? is the care of the powers that be. 2. *The answer.* First, a good thing has been admittedly done. Out of prostration and weakness a sufferer has been restored to health and freedom. Facts are stubborn things. Our acts speak louder than words, and tell for us or against us irresistibly. So let us live that the facts of our life may plead for us trumpet-tongued. Second, the interpretation of the fact. The name and power of Jesus are behind it. Thus does spiritual force rise up and react against those who idly fought against it. Here was the crucified One darting a ray of his glory upon suffering. The Resurrection: it was no fancy; it stood illustrated in the person of the restored man in the presence of the court. What else was or could be the meaning of the fact? No other explanation is attempted. Accusers and accused stand beneath the shadow of a power of which the one are feeble foes, the others mighty agents. Life is full of these contrasts, these coincidences of extreme opposites; power dwindling into impotence, feebleness lifted into power. The stone cast aside on the highway proves to be the corner-stone of a new building. The rejected of men, who could not save himself, becomes revealed the Elect of God, and sole Source of salvation. Contempt of goodness is avenged by the manifested contempt of God.

III. **THE EMOTION OF THE COURT.** The judges are overcome in spite of themselves by the extraordinary contrast before them. It is rare that the learned do not feel a deep secret contempt for the ignorant and unlettered. An overvaluation of words and logic blinds to realities. But here the calm eloquence of those simple men breaks out like the ray of a pure gem hidden in some rough matrix, and dazzles the intelligence. Memory is stimulated, and Peter and John are identified as disciples of Jesus. There was a combination of evidences which fairly reduced the judges to stupefied silence. There stood the well-known figure of the paralytic; side by side his confessed healers; the clear statement of the Divine agency in the case has been boldly and impressively given by them; finally their former connection with Jesus is recognized. The whole chain of antecedents and consequents hangs firmly together. The logical process in fact and thought is complete. Infinitely better the silence which bows before irresistible reasons than the silence which is gained by force. Here again extremes meet. Mute are the lips of the unjust, who have evoked eloquence from the innocent; the silencers have reduced themselves to dumbness. 'Tis ever so. When violence seems to have made the truth to retire for a time, it has really sent it on a larger arc of travel, from which it will surely return to smite the propelling lie.

IV. **THE CONSULTATION.** Policy is consulted when conscience is absent. It is dubious, and flies to compromises. There were three courses open: to punish the

apostles—this, in the state of popular feeling, could not be ventured on; to approve their conduct—this was conscience' dictate, but conscience was here stifled by a powerful conspiracy of interest; the miserable compromise remained—to discharge the prisoners for fear of the multitude, to warn them against further teaching in fear for themselves. There is danger in all societies and committees of men for the conscience. They are more timid than in isolation, and timidity is mean and treacherous to the noblest instincts of the heart. Men will back one another up in doing things or refraining from doing things, when they would have been more true if left to themselves. 'Tis a moral trial in these respects to act with others. Shelter for our cowardice, stimulus to our active passions, is found in the fellowship of close interests.

V. THE PROHIBITION AND RELEASE. The apostles were no more to "speak in this Name," which had proved so mighty a spell to loose. More definitely *utterance* of, and *teaching* in, the Name are forbidden. The Name stands as usual for all that lies behind it—the whole contents of Christian truth. 1. *The prohibition aimed at an impossibility.* The mind cannot be chained; the spontaneous movements of the spirit cannot be checked by force; the Word of God cannot be bound. Force can only act within the laws of nature; it enters not the kingdom of spirit. 2. *The martyr's alternative.* Shall he obey God or man? The tyrant must tremble when he hears the question put. Physical necessity is on his side; moral necessity, revealed in the conscience, on the other. The one says to the witness—*You shall not*; the other replies from his breast—*I cannot but.* Obedience to God gives confidence and security. The tyrant and his victim change places when it is seen that the latter has placed himself against the rock of eternal right. 3. *The martyr's decision.* He will *not* obey man rather than God. He has one clear principle only—to obey the voice in his soul. Immediate consequences form no element of calculation. They may be favourable to him, as now in the physical sense, for the many may be for the moment on his side; or they may be fatal. With eye far fixed on eternity, and ear attent upon the Divine voice, he goes forward. He trusts God and is not afraid. His being is only safe in devotion to duty.—J.

Vers. 23—31.—*The joy of faith confirmed.* The Church, on hearing of the recent events, break out into expressions of joy. As usual on such occasions, the voice of ancient sacred song becomes their voice.

I. OUR HELP IS IN THE CREATOR. Man's need and weakness lead him now to shun and now to seek almighty power. There are awful moments when the soul's sin seems to have called the lightning and the thunder from the sky, to have awoken the threat of the earthquake, the storm, and the sea. Other exultant moments, when the solemn sounds of the deep heart of nature are like the cannon of a friendly force advancing to a beleaguered city's aid. The most powerful conqueror, like Napoleon amidst the snows of Russia, may be in turn conquered by the physical forces of nature. The moral forces represented in the will of the Almighty and All-Holy cannot be successfully resisted. This is the deep truth in the Davidic psalm.

II. PHYSICAL FEEBLENESS WITH MORAL MIGHT. 1. In the case of David and his kingdom. Study the historical circumstances reflected in the psalm. Look at the tiny kingdom of Judah, placed amidst great foes on every hand. She led a threatened life for ages; it seemed impossible she could survive. Yet the small one became a thousand, the vine grew in spite of every cropping fox or wasting boar, the little lodge in the garden was not overthrown till it had sent forth a ray of light over the lands. Moral life, derived from the immediate inspiration of God, was in her. The enmity of the world served but to elicit and mature that life. 2. In the case of Christ and his kingdom. The like relation is repeated in another form. Corrupt Israel joins with pagan Rome in the attempt to suppress the truth and resist the will of God. David, the anointed king of Jehovah's selection, is the type, in a lower relation, of Jesus, the anointed Prince in the higher and purely spiritual relation. Upon this analogy hope is firmly built. As the great prince of olden time had risen in Jehovah's might superior to all his foes, so might his Antitype be expected to lay prostrate faithless Israel's and proud Rome's might beneath his throne of moral majesty.

III. PRAYER THE INSTRUMENT OF WEAKNESS AND OF STRENGTH. Of *weakness*, for it implies dependence; and were our wishes convertible into facts, there would be no prayer. Some form of helplessness alone brings men to their knees. Yet it is the expression of *strength*; for strength in weakness is the very secret and heart of moral energy and of Christian piety. 1. *The aim of prayer*. It is that the human spirit may be united with the Divine, whether in action or in suffering. Action lay before the suppliants now—action chiefly or wholly by *utterance*, which is ever the special action of the Christian witness. *Boldness* in that utterance—the very thing which had impressed the Sanhedrim in Peter and John—was the thing needed. The renewal of strength must come in prayer. God grants at one time only sufficient for that time. He does not allow the accumulation of capital. He lends that we may spend and come to him again. But boldness must rest upon the knowledge of facts. So closely does courage link with knowledge that the Greek philosopher even said they were identical. Without some evidence that God is on our side, we cannot have the heart to go on. Where, then, may we look for such evidence? The apostles sought it in the manifestation of Divine energy to cure. This was the significant symbol of his presence and of the intention of the gospel in those days. They were justified on the ground of *experience*, clear, repeated, and definite, in expecting this kind of encouragement. We, on the ground of our experience, are entitled to expect something different, but equally in its way real. Divine energy to heal through ways and means not less Divine because natural, we are to seek and make an object of our prayer. 2. *The answer to prayer*. In this case it came in a manner not to be mistaken—by an immediate impression on the senses and on the inward consciousness of all. The houses trembled; their spirits vibrated to the inner touch of God; their tongues were loosed, and the sought-for fluency and confidence were given. How can we apply this to modern times? No sober Christian teacher dares to encourage the expectation of such “signs and wonders” now. They belong to a past mode of religious consciousness, a disused mode of revelation. For “God fulfils himself in many ways.” How important to know in what direction to look for God—the point on our horizon where he may be expected to appear! Much, the greater part, must be left to individual experience. Let every worshipper seek for the Shechinah in his heart. And in general, let us teach that no special manifestation of God is to be expected out of the lines of clear intelligent experience. Experience is itself the ordinary and most precious revelation of God’s will. And the experience of every soul, devoutly read, contains past wonders, and prophecies their recurrence.—J.

Vers. 32—37.—*A glimpse of ideal social life*. Of life, that is, in the idea of the God of love. Such glimpses are given doubtless to stimulate our faith and our aspiration; and withdrawn because struggle, not perfect attainment, is the condition of actual life.

I. SOCIAL UNITY. It rested on a common faith, a common ideal, a common sentiment. Union with God is the only basis of human social union. Here, from the depths of the spirit-life, this principle was for a brief space brought to light. What was then made *visible* fact is constantly the invisible fact and ground of the spiritual kingdom.

II. ITS EXPRESSION. The abolition of property. Property is the most tenacious of institutions, because it is the product and the insurance of the person, the individual, the self of each man. Were the self-life, whose instinct is centrifugal and separates us from the commonality, suspended, in that moment property must cease. For then the centripetal instinct, or love, must exert its force unfettered. This was what took place under the high tide of the Spirit’s life in Jerusalem. Men forgot the peculiar in themselves, knew and felt only the universal. *One heart, one soul*; the ideal of heroes, patriots, philanthropists, was for a fleeting period realized. The magnet of the Name that reconciles drew all wills to itself. Necessarily there was an extraordinary access of power to individuals, for they drank of the very central source of all power; as we are weak who think self-interestedly and unsympathetically. And joy must accompany this entire emancipation of the spirit from the fetters of self. Nor could there be that sense of indigence which makes us ashamed and cramps our energies. All is for each, as each is for all. Self-sacrifice is the last test of love, its only infrangible proof. When the pain of self-sacrifice ceases, there the triumph of love is complete. And in

the pouring of men's once private property at the apostles' feet, was the illustrious evidence of the conquest of the Prince of life over the human heart. As if to clench the argument, the special instance of Joseph's sale of his field is given. There is art in this. One such definite fact suggests a multitude of others to the imagination. Christian ethics simply teach that the inducement to work for wealth is the power for social good. Whenever this is seen to be the theory of wealth acted on in our society, it will be evidence of a new stirring of Divine love in its heart.—J.

Vers. 1—4.—*The first persecution.* I. THE GROUND OF IT. 1. *Religious intolerance*—"the priests." 2. *Political animosity*—"the captain of the temple." A representative of Rome, alarmed by the crowd and fearing popular tumult. 3. *Rationalistic unbelief*—"the Sadducees." The troubles of the Church are thus foreshadowed, proceeding from the three different sources which will always unite against the truth. Against two facts they rose up: the people were taught; the Resurrection was the substance of the teaching. Popular religion is never liked by priests, rulers, and infidels. They are "sore troubled" when the gospel manifests its power. So it was in the Reformation. The old and corrupt Church gained over the state to its purposes. And soon there was a great rising up of the proud intellect of man against the simplicity of the message. At the bottom of this combined movement was a *stricken conscience*. The Resurrection condemned them all. They knew it. So still the Resurrection condemns the corruptions of the Church, the despotism of the world, and the pride of unbelief. We must never reckon on a peaceful victory. The *people* are not really cared for by the high ones of this world. They learn no lessons from the past. Progress must be in spite of them.

II. THE MANNER OF IT. 1. *Cautious*. "Put them in ward unto the morrow" (Revised Version). Fear of the people; recognition of the power of the apostles; bewilderment in the sense of their own guilty part in the Crucifixion; pretended respect for the forms of justice and self-deceived conventionalism. Underneath punctiliousness there is often a great depth of pride and hollow-heartedness. 2. *Tentative*. It was not a full burst of fury against the apostles, but an experiment to see how far they would go in their defiance of authorities. It was supposed that a night in prison would quell their courage, that an appearance before the Sanhedrim would probably break off the rising plant at the root, for it was seen that there was no great display of physical force among the sect. 3. *Ignorant and perplexed* in policy, for there could be no decided and deliberate movements against the new doctrine on such grounds. Nor were the elements of the conspiracy congenial. Priests would care nothing for Sadducees, and Roman rulers despised both. They could not have studied either the facts of the case or the characters of the apostles. They made a dash upon them in the provocation of the moment, hoping to snuff out the light at once. Their ignorance of Scripture and worldliness of spirit made them capable of such folly, and the fruit of it was a very significant rebuff.

III. THE EFFECT OF IT. 1. *On the Church itself*. (See the rest of the chapter.) Deepening the spiritual life; promoting brotherly love, prayerfulness, and sympathy; preparing for future trials; revealing the utter weakness of the opposition; fulfilling the promise of Christ as to their endowment in the presence of enemies; magnifying the gospel in their sight; helping them to feel that they must hearken unto God and not unto men; deepening their insight into Scripture and enlarging their prospect of the future triumph of the gospel, which they thought of in the spirit of prophecy. 2. *On the world*. Drawing to them popular sympathy; making them the talk of Jerusalem, and so leading many to inquiry; testing the hearers whether they were prepared to encounter such dangers for Christ. The five thousand would be henceforth drawn together, and the world would see the Church more distinctly. It was well that the new doctrine should be manifestly put over against the old. Many may have been perplexed by the reverence which apostles showed for the temple and its worship. While still addressing themselves to Jews, it was now plain that to be a disciple of Christ was to break away from Judaism. The effect of the miracle would be heightened; for it would be asked, naturally, why the workers of such a cure should be so treated. It has never been a success to persecute. It shows weakness in the persecutor; it reveals power in the persecuted; it spreads abroad facts that might otherwise be ignored.

This beginning of the Church's fight with false religion and worldly pride throws great light along the ages, and teaches us many a lesson concerning Church history.—R.

Vers. 5—12.—*The servants in the footsteps of their Lord.* I. Compare the CIRCUMSTANCES of this testimony with those in which Jesus stood. Some of the same were present. Actuated by similar feelings against the truth. But notice: 1. Called together on the ground of one specific fact—the miracle done (ver. 7) undeniably real. 2. Without any accusation as in the Lord's case. No false witnesses called. 3. In appearance, at least, orderly and candid; inquiring, "By what power, or in what Name, have ye done this?" certainly evincing, as does the sequel, considerable reaction from the fury of the Crucifixion. Conscience was at work. A sign that the gospel was already beginning to lay hold of Jerusalem.

II. Consider the TESTIMONY borne by the apostle. 1. The *substance* of it. It pointed to the signs of Divine power present; connected those signs with the Name and authority of Jesus Christ; clearly announced the fulfilment of Scripture, and invited all to rejoice in the blessings of the gospel. 2. The *inspiration* of it; seen in its simplicity, boldness, wisdom, and yet supreme gentleness and love. A perfect respect for the old, and yet an entire acceptance of the new with all its consequences. It was not the address of a criminal excusing himself, or of a suspected man putting by the misconstructions of enemies; it was the appeal of a herald and inspired ambassador, fulfilling his Divine office to be a witness to Jesus. There was in it a sublime indifference to human opposition, and yet a confidence in the sufficiency of the gospel which could not have been of merely human origin. Peter spoke as one "filled with the Holy Ghost," the Spirit of truth, life, and love; as a true Israelite, without one word of disparagement of what was represented in that Sanhedrim; and yet as a true apostle of Christ; as the priest of that restored temple, of which Jesus was henceforth the Corner-stone; and as a true prophet, able to connect the present with the past and the future, and say, "Thus saith the Lord."—R.

Ver. 12.—*The unfolded banner of salvation.* "Neither is there salvation in any other," etc. The contrast between the position of Christ's heralds *then* and *now*. They pointed to one miracle just wrought; we point to the whole succession of wonders along the line of Christian history. Already the Name of Jesus is "above every name." (1) *A proclamation*; (2) *a warning*; (3) *an invitation*.

I. A PROCLAMATION. "None other name." 1. The proclamation of *witnesses*. They knew the person, they saw the power, they were subjects of the grace. The Name was a history, testified by those who published it. Others could take knowledge that they had been with Jesus. So Christians still can speak of the Name as in their own hearts and lives "above every name." 2. The proclamation of *inspired teachers*. The name misunderstood among Jews, because salvation itself nothing to them, not spiritually regarded. The Name of the "Messiah" represented the promise of atonement, spiritual deliverance. The apostles themselves taught of God, otherwise would never have known the secrets of the Name. They proclaimed salvation necessary to all, denouncing the self-righteousness of the Jews. 3. The proclamation of *sincere philanthropists*. "Under heaven given among men." The standard set up at Jerusalem, but it meant conquest of the whole world. No name will bear this test but Christ's. Other names, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, have but a limited range of sympathy—divide the world, not unite it. The history of man is a progressive preparation of the race to acknowledge a Name which shall be adapted for universal recognition and homage. A missionary spirit the test of a true Church.

II. A WARNING. There are other names among men. Recall the chief dangers of our present time. The builders at the temple of human progress are setting at naught the corner-stone. An emasculated Christianity, robbed of its deepest adaptation to the wants of men; a mere bundle of moral principles and examples. The pride of the human intellect set on the throne; in rationalistic criticism; the dry bones of the Bible offered instead of the living reality; in socialistic theories put in place of spiritual change, which alone can produce the fruits of righteousness; in sophistical arguments against the leading doctrines of the gospel; and pretended philanthropy, which means nothing but trifling with the awful realities of sin, and undue exaltation of the material above

the spiritual interests of men. Other names in the Church. The priest hiding the Saviour; the ritual shutting out the truth; sectarianism dishonouring Christ; names of leaders and teachers made into temptations to spiritual pride, and mere hero-worship substituted for simple-minded obedience to Christ's commandments. Yet the Name above every name in *fact*, and must be seen to be so. The Name of the coming Judge, who, though he find not faith on the earth, will still destroy all that exalteth itself against him, "that God may be all in all."

III. AN INVITATION. 1. *To acceptance of a free gift.* "Given amongst men." Contrast between Christ's method of helping men and that of the world's teachers. 2. *To separation from a lost cause.* The names of the world represent the old things which are passing away. Come out and be separate. Name the Name of Christ in order to realize salvation. Half-hearted religion no joy. 3. *To anticipation of a final victory.* As the Name we honour represents a life which went up from the lowliest places on earth to the highest in heaven, so those who are called after the Name rise to the throne to reign with Christ. Will you sell such a birthright for vain delight? Will you forfeit such a prospect for lack of faith?—R.

Vers. 13—22.—*The impotence of unbelief.* I. In the presence of **FACTS.** The historical evidence of the gospel must be pressed home on men's consciences. Make them acknowledge, "We cannot deny it." The facts of Christian life and character before their eyes. Hence the power of great movements like those of the evangelical revivals.

II. In contrast with the **MORAL STRENGTH OF DEEP CONVICTION AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD ALLEGIANCE TO TRUTH.** The shifting of ground, the sophistry, the blasphemy, the dishonesty, the malice, and yet the cowardice of modern unbelief. "What shall we do to *these men*?" The question was not "What shall we do with the facts?" but "How shall we escape dealing fairly with them?" Personality is the resort of weak and dishonest minds. If they will not believe, they persecute.

III. In **SENSELESS THREATENINGS AND PRESUMPTION** in the presence of the mysteries and glories of advancing faith. "That it spread no further among the people." Folly of such a policy. The people see through the devices of a false Church—are not long deceived by the vain boastings of infidelity. A bold and aggressive method must be the hope of the Christian Church in the climax of opposition now reached. We must plant ourselves firmly on the rock of undeniable facts, and hearken unto God rather than unto men. "All men then will glorify God for what is done."—R.

Ver. 13.—*Witnessing for Christ.* "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." Fulfilment of the promise, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." Reward for obedience to the precept, depend on the Spirit. No mere human resources applied to; the men simply spiritual men, bearing witness to Divine facts.

I. A **GREAT CHANGE MADE MANIFEST.** Fishermen, Jews, once filled with fear, now bold, eloquent, full of the Holy Ghost, proclaiming a doctrine once hateful to them, uplifted to a lofty conception of the kingdom of God. The whole explanation in the fact they had been with Jesus, as disciples, as chosen out by him for their mission, as qualified for it by his gifts of the Spirit.

II. A **GREAT EFFECT PRODUCED.** 1. *By the clear and decided expression of Christian faith.* The world is much more impressed by beholding a wonderful contrast to itself, than by seeing Christians compromising principles for the sake of enlarging the Church. 2. *By fearless condemnation of evil and proclamation of the kingdom of Christ.* We should remember that all wickedness is weakness. We must speak like Peter and John. We must keep the Head of the corner in view. 3. *By the wonderfulness of spiritual work and life.* Uncarned and ignorant men can render an incalculable service to the cause of Christ by making others marvel, when they speak out boldly their humble testimony. But let all who hear it say, "They have been with Jesus."

III. A **GREAT LESSON TAUGHT.** 1. *To the apostles themselves.* The power of faith; the protecting presence of God; the safety of boldness; persecution making opportunity; the suffering servant honouring the Master. 2. *To the council.* To judge righteous judgments; to learn the method of grace; to see the errors of the past. But we should be warned; for such lessons were in vain, although enforced with such power. 3. *To*

ourselves. The whole incident teaches the strength of the spiritual life; the method of the Christian work; the glory of the believer's prospects. Those that have been with Jesus shall share his victories.—R.

Ver. 20.—*The aggressiveness of the gospel.* "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The early history of Christianity a striking proof of its Divine origin. Man's method is to wait opportunities, God's to create them. Man prepares his strength before he puts it forth; God makes his strength perfect in weakness. The "foolishness of preaching" *Athanasius contra mundum.* We must pay no heed to the world's scorn and distrust of enthusiasm.

I. THE RELIGION OF CHRIST AGGRESSIVE BECAUSE IT IS REAL. "The things which we have seen and heard." 1. Not *speculative*, but simply practical; things of men's moral life, things which concern all, things of infinite importance, having their roots in eternity. 2. Not things of human *systems* and ecclesiastical *dogmas.* The apostles did not preach either against the Church of Judaism or about the Church government of Christianity, but about gospel facts which underlie all systems and must make the substance of all creeds. 3. Things of *experience*—"seen and heard." They spoke as witnesses; and the more we can preach as simply bearing testimony to the gospel, the more power we have. The various false religions of the world powerless to help because they appeal little to fact and experience.

II. THE UNIVERSAL OBLIGATION OF SPEAKING FOR CHRIST. 1. *Speaking before men.* The notion of secret discipleship utterly false. Special value of outspoken faith, both to the believer himself, in confirming, maturing, guiding, clearing the spiritual convictions themselves, and in supporting practice by the help of a solemn, recorded vow of service. The deeper and the more real the feeling, the more necessity to speak it before others. 2. *Speaking to men in Christ's Name.* We hearken unto God and he bids us speak. It is a power that grows with exercise. The world requires it more and more. Books can never take the place of preaching. In all ages men have looked for and trusted their spiritual leaders. The things of the gospel were not done in a corner, and they must be brought out into public life. Read the Bible in the midday light of modern thought and business enterprise; it is fitted to every stage of human advancement. "Stand up for Jesus."—R.

Vers. 23—31.—*The two kingdoms in array against one another.* I. THE SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATION RECOGNIZED. The Holy Ghost spake it. The view given in Ps. ii. corresponds with that which pervades the Bible. The Babel power over against the kingdom of God. God making all things to work together for his purposes. The history of Jesus Christ a wonderful confirmation of this view. The disciples in their faith and fellowship following their Master and accepting the responsibilities of the position.

II. THE SPIRITUAL SUPREMACY ASSERTED. 1. By *prayer.* Appeal to God to justify the faith of his people. Martin Luther, "God must save his own Church." As the Lord of heaven and earth, the Revealer of his own truth and will, the God of history, which shows his faithfulness. 2. By renewed *self-consecration.* "Grant to thy servants boldness." They did not shrink from the conflict, but laid hold of Divine strength. 3. By expectation of *manifestation* of power. The miracle already done was but the beginning of great things. We must not be satisfied with mere moral order as a testimony to Christianity. We should pray for and expect moral miracles; not a repetition of *ancient* signs and wonders, but marvels of spiritual life—souls healed, the dead raised to life.

III. THE KING ENCOURAGING THE SERVANTS OF HIS KINGDOM. Before the battle closes the commander speaks the word of appeal and encouragement along the line of his army. When God has appointed us to do great work, he prepares us for it by the special gifts of his Spirit. External signs: "The place shaken"—to remind them that earthly powers were in God's hand. Spiritual grace vouchsafed: "All filled." The sense of a brotherhood, of an army going forth to fight, deepened by the outpouring of gifts upon all. The word spoken "with boldness." Force being made manifest; perfect love casting out fear. We commence from this time a new stage of the history. Persecution is doing its work—calling out the graces of the brotherhood, turning weak men into heroes. The simple, devout dependence of those primitive believers a *great example* to us.

The Church is lacking in boldness. We must be prepared to grapple with the enemy. We must bring their threatenings to God and pray that he will look upon them. Above all, we must ask to be filled with the Holy Ghost.—R.

Vers. 32—35.—*The host of God drawing together in readiness for action.* I. A COMMON SPIRIT in the believing multitude. 1. The spirit of faith. 2. Of self-sacrifice. 3. Of fellowship. 4. Of service. They were of one heart and soul to speak and work for the new kingdom.

II. A COMMUNITY OF LIFE AND PROPERTY. The simple and natural expression of the common spirit. Not the modern communism, or anything like it, for that is man's experiment to better himself; but the Christian communism was the believers' expedient to accomplish the will of God.

III. A marvellous sign of the SPIRIT'S PRESENCE AND POWER. "Great grace upon all." Great power in apostles; great testimony given to Christ. An active, self-denying, speaking Church challenging the world.—R.

Ver. 32.—*Christian communism.* "And the multitude of them that believed," etc. The Bible not a book of politics or earthly legislation. Danger of misapplying its teaching, by forgetting that it does not dictate formal rules and creeds, but describes the working out of great principles. The social problem of human history—reconciliation of individual advancement with social and organic progress; failure of all merely human attempts; danger of men's experiments; despondency; revolution; selfishness of the higher classes; misery of the poor; necessity for change in the material condition of society; recognition of the primary law, the external facts coming forth from the internal life.

I. The SPIRITUAL FACT set forth. "One heart and soul" in the multitude. 1. Cannot be produced by mechanical means. 2. Is the root of all true strength and prosperity in society. 3. Is the gift of the Holy Ghost. We should pray for it. The great spiritual revivals of history have brought about great moral and social changes. Reformation; revival of Wesleys and Whitefield, etc.; missionary spirit of the present century.

II. The MORAL MIRACLE wrought. The universal self-denial. The confidence in a new state of things, though only at present at the threshold. The absorption of individuality in brotherhood. A new fact in Jerusalem; testimony to the power of Christ and his doctrine.

III. The PRACTICAL TEACHING EMBODIED in the facts. 1. Depend upon spiritual forces, not on political expedients. 2. Let the multitude work out its own form of brotherhood, from the one heart and one soul; not trust to mere philosophical theorizing and dreams of enthusiasts. 3. Preach Christianity as the great uplifting and renewing power of the world; not revolutionary, not by wars and strifes, but by sanctification of the multitude of wills. 4. Hold up the gospel prophecy to the poor, not to excite in them envy of the rich, not to delude them with predictions of a speedy deliverance from necessary burdens, but to incite them to the prospect of a larger share in the progressive prosperity of mankind, and to co-operation in the work of uplifting their fellow-men. We should be of one heart and soul, rich and poor alike.—R.

Vers. 36, 37.—*A great example of spiritual excellence.* The intention of the writer is to set in contrast the work of the Spirit in Barnabas and the work of the devil in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira, as also to show to us the relation of character and life to one another; the blessing on those that obey the Spirit, the curse on those that lie against the Holy Ghost and resist the will of God in his Church. The difference of meaning in "paraklesis," according to some "exhortation," according to others "consolation," helps us to keep in mind that the exhortation was consolation; that those who preached appeared among men not as mere dry exhorters and teachers, but as proclaiming a kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

I. THE CHANGE WROUGHT in Joseph Barnabas. 1. A *Levite*, but not passing by the fallen and dying humanity. Notice the contrast between the priesthood of the old covenant and the priesthood of the new; between the man of a corrupt and decaying

system and the new man in Christ. 2. A *Cypriot* from a country noted for its self-indulgent luxury and sensuality, yet by the Spirit of Christ delivered from selfishness. 3. A man of some *wealth*, becoming poor for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and subjecting himself to the new law of the apostles. The wonders of the Middle Ages anticipated. Yet our aim should not be to fill the Church's treasuries, but to bless the world with the spirit of self-sacrifice. The abuses of the ecclesiastics have always been their not being true sons of exhortation and consolation, but "greedy of filthy lucre."

II. THE ILLUSTRATION OF GOSPEL PRINCIPLES. 1. Counting all things loss for Christ. Losing life to find it. The Church, as well as the individual, is richest and happiest when it reckons its whole self as devoted to the work of helping others. 2. The sons of exhortation and consolation, *i.e.* the messengers of mercy, must be examples of self-sacrifice, and enforce their precepts with public deeds of generosity, and manifestation of the work of the Spirit in their own lives. The preaching of the Church will never much affect the world so long as it does not lay its wealth at the feet of Christ. 3. The true law of Christ's kingdom is not "Each one for himself and by himself," but all faithful to the vocation of the Church. "At the apostles' feet." He was a rich man, and probably a highly educated man, but he did not set up a Church for himself. He recognized Christ's rule. He was willing to be a servant that he might fulfil his ministry of consolation to the world, and so he was immediately recognized by those who represented the Master—"surnamed by the apostles." 4. The stamp of special, solemn approval is set on faithfulness to conscience in the money matters of the Church. There is an *eye* watching our *hand*. The money brought should be not merely what the world expects to be brought, or what will satisfy the demands of the time and maintain our reputation with fellow-Christians, but what the "law of Christ" dictates, which is the law of absolute self-denial, and overflowing brotherly affection. We may not be a Paul, or an Apollos, or a Peter, or a John, lacking qualifications for such eminence, but we may emulate the example of Joseph Barnabas, and be sons of consolation, channels of blessing and comfort to the world. If we would be so, let us lay what we have at the feet of the apostles, avoiding caprice, self-will, disorder, heresy, strife, self-exaltation. There is a true apostolic doctrine and fellowship in the world. Cling to it, and cast all to it.—R.

Vers. 4—22.—*The first trial of Christian preachers in a court of judgment, and their victory.* A few words of a historic character lay for us the scene of this trial, put us in possession of the question at issue and of the parties, as between whom, if not really so, it is to be settled. We are, however, justly at liberty to take note of certain silences as well as of certain utterance and preparations for utterance. Those who "laid hands" on Peter and John, "and put them in ward" last night, were silent then as to the reason why. No such thing as a civil uproar was hinted at, as matter of apprehension; and no sufficient ecclesiastical reason could, it is evident, be so much as formulated into a proposition capable of representing either morals or law. "Being *grieved* (!) that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead," is all their case showed last night. And this morning the Sanhedrim—who as much for moral as for civil reasons ought to have been examples of something different from this—render themselves collectively amenable to the same remarks. It was well for all of them that Peter and John were not Romans, either by purchase or by birth (ch. xvi. 37; xxii. 28). On the other hand, the silence of Peter and John themselves on this matter is worthy of notice. They remembered something of that great gift, greater grace of their Master, and were now learning in practice some lessons of him. Sometimes the very achievements of silence are great, and great often the rewards of it shall be. They were silent, for the injustice of their imprisonment had been inconvenience personal to themselves, but just as likely advantage to their Master's cause. They were silent, rather than waste time and waken temper as well as prejudice toward them in their would-be judges. And they were silent, on the very wise principle of letting "these men alone," that they might run out the more quickly and self-condemningly their humiliated career. And it was not long before it was seen to what undignified shifts they were brought. Notice—

I. THE VERY ILL-SHAPED INDICTMENT. (Ver. 7.) It were, indeed, only by courtesy that it could be dignified with the name of an indictment at all. The Sanhedrim greatly

stood in need of a word from the governor Porcius Festus of just thirty years later, when he said to King Agrippa, in reference to Paul, "For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal signify the crimes laid against him" (ch. xxv. 27). The Sanhedrim are guilty of this very unreasonableness. 1. They interrogate instead of indicting. They are going the way to make themselves *beholden* to their own prisoners for some information and instruction. 2. There is this *primâ facie* weakness in the very interrogation, that it is not directed to the *character* of what has been done, but simply as to *how* something has been done, that is all the while tacitly admitted to be unchallengeable in its nature. 3. *However*, though their course be ever so much at fault for informality and for worse reasons, it has one commanding excellence about it. It does go at once to the point. It goes home to what was in their own heart. They cannot, in the nature of things, find fault with Peter and John for relieving of his lameness a man now "above forty years old," and who had never been anything but lame. And they cannot find fault with them for doing this on a "sabbath day," because it was not the sabbath. So it is only left them to try and find something to take hold of, in "the kind of power," or "the kind of name," by or in which they had "done this thing;" which, it is noticeable, they do not choose to call here by its right name, "a notable miracle," as they do immediately afterwards in their secret conclave (ver. 16). And, further, they may hope to find something to take hold of in "the *kind*" of answer the two apostles may proffer. But this does not prove to be the case; for *their* discretion, silence, temperateness, cannot be surpassed. If the picture, then, of this trial shows the court put in a foolish position, it shows the accused or the prisoners in an intrinsically proud position. They are masters of the position, strange to say.

II. THE DEFENCE. (Vers. 8—12.) Notice in this defence: 1. That the method of it may be justly assigned to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Peter is emphatically described as "filled with the Holy Ghost." 2. That, nevertheless, it is of the simplest character. It might be said to be of *nature's* simplest style. (1) It consists of a mere statement of facts. "You ask," says Peter, "of a deed, a 'good deed, done to an impotent man.' You ask by what, by what virtue—call it 'power' or call it a 'name' as you will—that impotent man has taken the advantage of what is contained in that good deed." And Peter continues, without a word, or tone, or sign of apology, "Be it known to you, and to the whole nation beside, that it is by the virtue of One whom you and they know but too well—Jesus of Nazareth, whom you and they crucified, and—wonderful contrast of rebuke—whom God raised from the dead. Here standing before you, and beside us, your prisoners, is a man, who is more to be remarked upon for the fact that he was made whole by *that* Name, than simply for the fact itself, that (as none can deny) he has been made whole—genuinely made whole." (2) It consists, further, of a quotation from the Old Testament, of words most personal to the court listening to Peter, and the application of which to them Peter minces not at all. Peter speaks just as though it were one of those cases in which *truth* must and will out. There can have been no effrontery in the *manner* of Peter's utterance, nor any appearance of intentional affront, else we cannot imagine that his sentence would have been allowed to come to an end. Often as wrong manner prejudices the interest of welcome truth, the present was an instance of the converse how truth of the most unwelcome kind got its fair force, being unprejudiced by any flavour of bitterness, spite, taunt, or malignity. (3) It consisted of a word of genuine universal gospel as well. Now does even Peter speak a more catholic gospel than he is at the moment conscious of. He anticipates in *one breath* the apostle of the Gentiles, who was yet to come. But independently of this, and stopping short of it, Peter's aim is to speak of that Name of Christ as the Name of the *only* Saviour, rather than to speak of the universal sweep of his dominion and virtue. He has got his foot in; he sees the narrow end of the grand wedge in; he seizes the priceless opportunity, and uses it. The defence had the seeds of triumph in it, and it triumphed.

III. THE EMBARRASSMENT OF THE COURT. (Vers. 13—18.) This was, in very deed, a most pronounced embarrassment. It is spoken by the historian in five plain enough statements. The *signs* of it, also, were probably only too plain, or otherwise the case was a great exception to a very general rule. 1. Those who sat in the seat of authority were, unfortunately for the position they filled, stricken with amazement. "They

marvelled " at the imperturbed flow of speech and resolute wielding of argument which proceeded from two men who, as being "unlearned" and *unprofessional* men, ought rather to have been overawed in the presence of such as themselves—as they thought. In the midst of their amazement, however, they either *remembered* the fact, or saw in the very bearing of the men the fact, that they were old associates of Jesus. 2. They were fairly stricken with silence. There, present before them—there, at the very side of the prisoners, proffering himself as a living monument of their last evening's work—was the veritable healed man himself. Such a juxtaposition of *facts* ties into silence very perverse-wayed tongues. "They can say nothing against it." 3. They are stricken with an idea that a private conference with one another may suggest a way out of their undignified difficulty. There is always something very suspicious, ominous of impending disaster, if the men that love the broadest daylight of public glare suddenly are for retreating into the unloved shade. 4. Retired from public gaze, they find themselves still stricken with a perplexity that grows no better for deliberation and secret conference. For one thing only do we seem able to admire in any sense these men. They *have eyes to see*, and they have not got to the point of seeing facts to *deny* them. They will not hazard themselves into the position of denying a "notable miracle manifest" to all the rest of the world that lives in Jerusalem. But their perplexity is the greater, what they *shall* do. 5. Because they are fearful of the one thing, *truth*, which should have made *them* fearless, they are stricken with love of an expedient simply so insane in its certain working that it at once worsened their whole case and plight. They will forbid the tide. They will command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, *but no further*." They will bid to flow back a river that shows an unmistakable force and breadth and depth of current. They will threaten and prohibit. Whether they are counted as legislators, or statesmen, or judges, they are childish and incompetent.

IV. THE DECISION AND FOLLOWING ACTION OF THE COURT. (Ver. 18.) "They command" the apostles "not to speak at all nor to teach in the Name of Jesus." Thus began the struggle between civil command and human conscience, not indeed in the history of the world, but in the history that has ever shown it in most intensified form, of the Christian Church. Notice: 1. The parties to this struggle. Traced home, they resolve themselves into the *wish* of some against the *conscience* of others. 2. The intrinsic and even notorious inequality of these. That *wish*, it is true, will be said to be founded upon opinion, judgment, experience, consent of many. But this is equivalent to an open betraying of the proportionately easy access to it, of disturbing causes—causes that lay it actually open to suspicion, and render it *unreliable*. *Wish* notoriously *sins* in being the victim of feeling, and none can be "ignorant of its devices." A hundred elements, each one of which is a possible avenue of error, go to form that wish or will of the some which then presumes or endeavours to impose upon the conscience of other some. On the other hand, conscience, whether it be allowed to be more or less of an *original* faculty or principle of human nature, owns to and justly claims a *native* prerogative, the prerogative of the judge. And *it may err*. It will be liable to err, and has in point of fact often shown itself liable to err—on *one* side, through being *uninformed*, or *ill* informed. Yet, whoever flouts it (whether the owner of it himself or another for him), is guilty of flouting *pro tem*. "the powers that be," and those powers, powers that "be of God." Say whatsoever may be said to the derogation of the individual conscience, that man stands on perilous ground indeed who risks what is involved in neglecting his own conscience, or who takes in hand to supersede that of others, by his own fiat, under whatsoever name or misnomer it may endeavour to pass muster. To very different moral zones of being do the voices of external command and of internal command belong. As once a whole world was on one side, and Noah and the Divine command on the other, so it is quite possible that the whole world might be on one side, and an individual man and his conscience be on the other side, and *these* be in the right. And it was something like this, though *not* this, that was to be seen now. The whole authorities of a nation were in this court on one side, and Peter and John on the other; and these were in the right, and the real strength of position lay with them. 3. The unconquerable deep facts of human nature and life to which these phenomena conduct. For we get here a suggestion and a glimpse of the idea according to which God has provided for the security of his mighty grasp on the mighty mass of mankind. There is left no doubt which is the

mightier. This method of securing a certainty and even facility of hold upon the vastest bulk of mankind, to disintegrate it if one corrupt mass, or gradually to reintegrate it, without recourse to flood or deluge or any physical force, invites most grateful and reverent study. The analogies of physical nature, more and more laid bare to light by science, offer many an inferior harmony with it. God's moral hold upon the great mass depends on and is regulated by his hold upon the individual and the individual conscience; and often exhibits itself in this shape—that one *conscience* touched will prevail against ten thousand men, will suffice to make “a divided house,” and put a wonderfully centrifugal tendency into the constituent parts of what seemed a very compact whole. While, on the other hand, thousands and all the influence they could wield, and all the torture they could apply to martyrdom itself, will leave the conscience unharmed and unmoved. “Command,” then, and “threat,” varied only by “threat” and “command,” are the singularly weak weapons to which this embarrassed and undignified court now resort. And these soon enough crumble to their touch.

V. THE REBUFF SUSTAINED BY THE COURT. (Vers. 19—22.) This rebuff contains not a few points which make it remarkable. 1. It is no doubt uttered in a respectful tone and manner, but for decision of language and firmness of front it wants nothing. It distinctly emphasizes the subordinate character of the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrim; it distinctly emphasizes their prisoners' knowledge of it; and as distinctly it emphasizes the intention of the prisoners to continue to do the things they were commanded not to do, and respecting which they were threatened. 2. The rebuff administered by Peter and John contains a reiteration of that which was so often the unconcealed strength of the apostolic message—the doctrine and impulse of “God,” the matters of fact, such as they themselves had “*seen and heard*.” Three forces sustained (and should still sustain) the Christian preachers—that they spoke things within their own knowledge, that they found themselves irresistibly moved to speak of these things, and that their undying conviction was that those things were the things of God. Upon what a platform of unassailable strength do they now stand, who hold this reply only to prohibition and threat, “Whether it be *right* in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”! The implications are manifest. That the apostles must do what is *right*; that by right they mean what is so in the *sight of God*; that this may utterly traverse and contravene the criterion of right with the Sanhedrim; and that they are cognizant of a call to speak which they cannot and will not disobey. 3. The rebuff so fits in to truth, to time, and to circumstance, that there is nothing left for those most smitten by it but to sit down quietly under it. Except for the inanity of “further threatening” Peter and John, those who now smart are also like certain others, “*speechless*” (Matt. xxii. 12). So sometimes does God cover with the shield of his wondrous protection his servants. They are without a shred of worldly position, of influence, of wealth. They sit on no throne, can summon no legions, nor wield one weapon. Yet are they themselves kept safe as “the apple of his eye.” They gaze, too, with the light of the Divine eye on human hearts, darkened with guilty tumult because unloyal to the truth. And it is entrusted to them to wield the weapon of unanswerable rebuke. Many a victory falls far short of what it seems. Greater than all, it showed, was the victory of Peter and John, when the Sanhedrim, after enduring keen rebuke and blank rebuff, nevertheless “let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.” It is so, God protects and exalts and all in one honours his servants with highest service in his Name.—B.

Vers. 23—31.—*The grateful, emboldened, and prayerful Church, and the Spirit's witness.* With all the naturalness of simplest truth, we are told how the apostles, in their new character of discharged prisoners, hie away at once to their brethren of the Church. And we are in this passage taught how—

I. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE A HOME OF TENDEREST, MOST FAITHFUL SYMPATHIES, AND OF HOLY SOCIAL INTERCOURSE. Now it is too often the place of suspicion, distrust, unhappy emulations. Or it is the place of coldest indifference. None welcome the coming, speed the parting, guest. Or it is only the place of an almost selfish seeking of the proffered religious instruction, or exhortation, or enjoyment that may,

under those conditions, scarcely be realized. The germ of the Church showed far otherwise. The highest type of Church life possible on earth may be confidently calculated on to show something very different. And till such difference become plain in any part of the Christian Church, it faintly indeed reflects the glorious reality above.

II. THE CHURCH SHOULD BE "THE ROYAL EXCHANGE" OF CHRISTIAN NEWS, OF CHRISTIAN ENTERPRISE, AND OF CHRISTIAN BUSINESS. The world may know, and all the better that it should know, the achievements of Christ and his truth. But the Church should know them still better, and often under very different aspects. Nor has the Church anything to conceal of its purposes or its methods; yet may these oftener be hallowed, and be more abounding and richer in grace and the elements of success, when considered and matured in the Church. If only we could imagine the account in detail which Peter and John now gave "to their own company" of their experience, and what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard, and of the irresistible impressions of the characters of others which had been made upon their minds, by the events of the past, say, fifteen hours, since they had been put in ward! Now every ear was attention, gladdened thought smiled on every countenance, and emboldened purpose stirred every heart. While anon the "threatenings" (ver. 29), that had been among the things which "the chief priests and elders had said to them" (ver. 23), received also their due consideration. It is quite to be supposed that no one of that "company" but found himself stronger for the joy of that hour, and more watchful and forearmed for what of forewarning it had in it.

III. THE CHURCH SHOULD FIND THE PLACE IN FULLEST GRANDEUR OF ADORATION, CRATEFUL PRAISE, APPEAL, AND PRAYER, MET TOGETHER IN ONE SERVICE. Everything argues that the scene now before us was one of high inspiration. A large multitude of sympathetic souls hear the simplest tidings on a certain subject of the two liberated apostles; and though doubtless some one must have led off the chorus, forthwith the whole company "lift up their voice to God with one accord." And as we listen to that most real orchestra, what is it that we hear them singing? They uplift first the outburst of adoration; it is the snatch of a song sung by their ancestors a thousand years before (vers. 24—26), and it simulates the responsive too. For it quotes the confirming word and declaration of God, putting it as if in response to the human ascription made first to him: "Lord, thou art God . . . and thou didst say, Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" We listen still, and there follows the recitative—a few bars that tell the recent history of the Messiah, the anointed Jesus. But these strains do not die off without pronouncing in majesty the foreseeing, foredetermining, sovereign counsel that belongs to God. Then follow appeal (ver. 29) and prayer (ver. 30), and they both were acceptable and accepted. In this appeal and prayer, with the reverent suggestion they venture upon—"by stretching forth thy hand to heal"—there is something touching and pathetic. It were as though those who prayed bespoke of their sovereign Friend that he would not overlook the "threatenings" wherewith they were threatened, but that he would divinely checkmate these by *again* "stretching forth the healing hand," and again and again working "signs and wonders by the Name of Jesus," so that, together with faithfulness granted to his servants to speak the word, there might be superadded to them "boldness" in speaking it. Nothing less befits the character of the Word of God, scarcely anything more dishonours it, than to speak it fearfully, half apologetically, or with halting accents and uncertain sound. It is worthy to be spoken with that boldness which is all its own, and its own least due. Nothing on earth can equal the grandeur of a service like this. Such a service cannot find its *habitat* except in the Church. But has it found it *there* as often as it might?

IV. THE CHURCH SHOULD WORK FOR ONE THING—THE EMPHATIC WITNESS OF THE HOLY GHOST. Christianity is the *dispensation of the Spirit*. It is very certain that the most perfect outline of Christian truth is but a skeleton, and the most complete and harmonious and scriptural body of Christian doctrine but a corpse, except as the Spirit breathes life and power into them. The skeleton may be a marvel of adaptation and symmetry laid bare to the eye of whoever will behold, and the fashioned and filled-in body may be an exquisite model for grace and proportion; but they are dead till the *Spirit* gives the life. This is not to be supposed to need any proof now; but if

it did, the word of Jesus himself about his own truth, previous to his death and after his resurrection, and the conduct and directions of Jesus previous to his ascension and to the day of Pentecost, amply prove it. But though it needs no proof, it may very largely need enforcement. Probably *nothing* so stays the advent of the grandest effects of Christianity as forgetfulness on the part of its professors of the *force* necessary, because divinely appointed, to *give* it effect. The Spirit is not honoured as he should be in the Church. The Church does not "look for" *his* coming, nor wait for him, with much longing and with trustful prayer. At this very time and for some years past there has been a wonderful activity within the borders of the Church—almost preternatural—but, alas! not at all relatively evidencing the supernatural. "Lo, here!" and "Lo, there!" has long been the cry; so-called "revivals" have been proclaimed, and the *stir* of them, at all events, has been seen in most various sections of the Church; undeniably an unwonted industry of head and hand and foot has prevailed in the region of human instrumentality. And those who have thus wrought have been *far too* ready to "blow the trumpet and proclaim" a self-made and only self-found triumph. But *where* has the real life been evidenced? Where have real abounding fruits been witnessed? This is a thing not less remarkable than it seems, but far more so, and it begs to be approached, not with offhand explanation, but with exceedingly reverent scrutiny. That many men of incorrupt life and unsuspected simplicity of aim have laboured with extremest zeal to lay hold upon their fellow-men for Christ, and the fruits of their labour have been a grievous gleaming instead of an undoubted crop! Collateral explanations and mitigating considerations must yield to the one solemn account of it. The Holy Spirit has not been in the midst of that work, has not been the beginning and the end of that activity. But what is this which we have here? It is a refreshing crisis for which truly everything had prepared the way. Yes, but without it—if *it* had *not* come—everything that had gone before would have been dried to the aridity of the sandy desert itself. "When they had finished praying, the very place where they were assembled together was shaken." It meant the entrance of the Spirit of all power and might. "And the assembled believers were all filled with the Holy Ghost"—Pentecost repeats itself—"and they spake the word of God with boldness." What thought, what hallowed musing, what prayer of the Church, should seek both for itself and for the world another visit of this same kind!—B.

Vers. 32—35.—*A novel unanimity.* It is safe to say that this verse marks one of the world's largest moral strides of progress. It is a landmark in itself, of widest significance. It is a moral landmark of deepest and most grateful omen. Travel through the whole history of the Old Testament, and you come to no spot that can show a sight like this. The nearest approach to it some finger-post prophetic, prophetic of nothing else than *this*. From this landmark the world has confessedly travelled on again far. But *it* is not either "taken away" or so much as "removed." It stands where it did, and it is what it was. And it has become also a beacon. Some beacons are for warning, but this for encouragement and for inspiration of the highest degree. In the unanimity so novel and surprising found in this passage of sacred history, there is no great difficulty in distinguishing the essential and permanent amid what was accidental and likely to be temporary. Eighteen centuries fled of the world's and the Church's history have not failed to throw on the subject all necessary light. They have shown that it was none of the genius of Christianity to reduce the complexity of human life and business to a simplicity that would show no problem at all. Christianity has far too *much* genius for this; its meaning and its resources alike justly more ambitious, almost by an infinite quantity. And they have shown that amid a multitude and a variety of elements and interests, of relationships and duties, Christian principle, motive, and love have been ever engaged, are still engaging themselves, in eliminating one fellowship, one family. Want shall not be more common than resource, nor demand than supply, nor prayer than the loving-kindness which hears and answers, prompt and bountiful. And these things not of physical miracle, but of the *community* of "kindred minds." Meanwhile we are permitted to examine the conditions of a fellowship that amounted to a unanimity most astonishing. We are permitted to study it *not* in theory but in actual fact. Notice—

I. THE REAL NATURE OF THIS UNANIMITY SO NOVEL. It is of a *moral* sort. It is not of an intellectual sort, nor indeed of *any* other possibly more open to view, but less deep and far-reaching than this. "They were of one *heart* and one *soul*." They *felt* one, wished, hoped, purposed, and sought, as though, instead of being a "multitude," they were "all one."

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS UNANIMITY SO NOVEL. One thing, one thing only, accounts for it. It comes from spiritual causes, and is of spiritual birth. It answers to the work of deepest impressions and influences made upon whatever was deepest found in certain men. It is true that certain some, who had "no depth" in them, and had experienced no deep influences, *seemed* caught by the contagion of it; but what they were really caught by was the contagion of the *appearance* of it. Long before the sun rose to its "scorching heat" they were "withered away." No entrancing Utopian doctrine captivated the "multitude." The Holy Spirit wrought deep in their heart. No calculations of the doctrines of human society, of science, of economy, showed the way to this unanimity, but only the uncalculatingness of "souls" moved by that same Holy Spirit. The *doctrinaire* and the professed unbeliever may have their version to give of this unanimity, but to the believer in Scripture it is as important to note as it is impossible to disbelieve it, that this great phenomenon was the fruit of a supernatural Being working in men's hearts. Of all lame philosophies of human life and human events, that is the lamest that leaves out the theology of the simplest version of Christianity.

III. THE VISIBLE EFFECTS OF THIS UNANIMITY WERE NOVEL. These visible effects were *practical* in their nature. They were such as both pervaded and *penetrated*—they *dominated* the life of those in whom they were shown forth. They consisted of good *deeds*. They were the good deeds of genuine "charity." They bespoke the extinction (at all events for the time) of selfishness, and they furnished a *literal* example of the fulfilling of "the second great commandment," viz. the loving of one's neighbour as one's self. They were effects that showed no laboured attempt, nor even the consciousness of effort, and in these very features of them looked the more like "the fruits of the Spirit." Nor could they be confounded with mere detached and individual good deeds. They were systematic, and if they could be said to leave the giver poorer at all, they left him also poorer for all his life. He gave and gave all that he had to give in many instances, and therein notably differentiated himself from the man who may work himself up or be worked up to the point of giving one large subscription, but who has never yet risen to the occasion of giving—in one that largest and least—*himself*, first to "the Lord and then to his people." But *this it is* that was the attested outcome of the unanimity of these disciples, that they gave themselves to one another. And of this no account offers itself but one that carries with it the inevitable conclusion, that they had first given themselves to the Lord. However, it is the thing patent with which we have here to do, and that was not the profession of a Divine, but the proof of a mutual, love. Pointing to this unusual "multitude," we may say—nay, all subsequent times have said—"The works that they did bare witness of them." For the rich and those who *had*, by a voluntary levelling down, and by the simplest, most natural organization, put poverty, want, and their attendant evils to flight. Artificial distinction on the one hand, and envy on the other, sank swift below the horizon. Wonderful transformation to be wrought only by the "Holy Spirit"! While it lasted it showed a dispensation by itself, unique, "elect, precious." While it lasted, it exhibited the people of God as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people," successfully showing forth "the praises of him" who had called them "out of darkness" into what certainly was "*marvellous light*."

IV. EVERYTHING REMARKABLE IN THIS UNANIMITY WAS SO FAR FORTH INTENSIFIED IN THE MULTITUDE OF THOSE AMONGST WHOM IT WAS PROVED. The greater multitude of any people *must* carry so much greater variety. Varieties of age and character, of position and of past life, must in this multitude have been strikingly represented. But all these, whatever they were, did "that one and the selfsame Spirit work" to a harmony and union unknown before. To think of the vast variety of opinion, and temper, and taste, and feeling, all meekly, obediently, gladly, lowering their pride! They sway themselves into a rest of peace that "the world knoweth not." And

worthy of observation indeed is this. It shuts the mouth of the taunt that Christianity is the religion of a clique, of the weak, of the few. It is the open augury of a religion that is to convince, to unite, and to rule *all*; but its rule, the rule that is most binding of all rule—that of love.—B.

Ver. 36—ch. v. 11.—*The earliest of the tares, in the field of the Church.* The age of the Church numbered as yet only its days. The "good seed" had been sown in the field by "the Son of man" but a few hours, yet "the enemy . . . the devil" had found a prized opportunity to "sow tares," and uscs it not in vain. The names and history of Ananias and Sapphira are among the best known of all those imbedded in Scripture. When the striking episode, however, is detached from its proper place, it loses very much of its significance and force. But, taking the time and place of it into account, the episode is in the highest degree dramatic. And the *reality* of the history which it recounts, it is which exalts it to that height. It is one of those unwelcome products of human nature which mean, in equal proportions, three things—the painful, the startling, and the too true. A very crisis of glory is dashed by an incident of darkness, sin, and shame. It is dashed thus, however, in the present instance for "about the space of three hours" only, when the majesty and integrity of truth are terribly vindicated. Let us consider—

I. THE SIN HERE RECORDED. Though it may seem desirable to supplement the *words* of the narrative, the thought and intent of it want nothing. Thus, though it is not so worded in the case of Ananias, it is plain that when he brought what any way *purported* to be the full price of his vended "possession" and "laid it at the apostles' feet," either interrogated or without interrogation he gave it to be understood that it really was the full price. The ground of Peter's suspicion on the matter is not stated. But a choice of explanations of it can easily be offered. Something in the manner of the man, even possibly some needless asseveration of the entirety of the price, or something disproportionately small in the price brought as the equivalent of the "possession" parted with, or the discernment of the inspired and spiritually sensitive apostle, not set in motion by any external cause, may quite account for it. In this last supposition Peter will remind us, not unworthily, of Peter's loved Master, in the exercise of a certain spontaneous detection, and in preventing any greater mischief by a certain promptness of anticipation. Be this as it may, in the analysis of the sin under consideration it must be that: 1. The first constituent of it is a capital *falsehood*, and this needs no further comment. 2. Falsehood the deceiving purpose of which suffers no little aggravation from the cruel affront it offers a new-born loving, holy little society, and the august representatives and leaders of it, now known for their inspiration and for the miracles they had wrought. 3. Falsehood in the matter of a religious and voluntary service. 4. Falsehood that was intended to win for those guilty of it a reputation for zeal toward God and enthusiasm of liberal love toward man, when neither the one nor the other was there. 5. Falsehood that meantime was covering, or seeking to cover, no higher style of character than this, viz. to save stealthily something from (what is inwardly regarded as) the wreck for self, and yet share the contributed beneficence of others. The case was presumably this—a man, under the cover of religious motive and resolve, professes to sell all and give all, forsooth that he may secretly store some, and be placed at an advantage for getting more. The rich young ruler was sincerity, honesty, and enthusiasm, all to perfection, in comparison of this exhibition. 6. Falsehood that was deliberate. It was not the result of any sudden gust of temptation. It was deliberate to the extent of being concerted between two. The unhallowed imagination, thought, resolve, of one heart soon grows into the unhallowed covenant of two hearts. Alas, for the suggested picture, for the mournful portraiture of human nature, for the dark *interior*, too faithfully drawn, of that household! To sum up, then, what has gone before, the direct falsehood of Ananias and Sapphira (to call them for the moment *one*) was not the whole sin, but, bad as it was in itself, was but the outside covering of sins, too strong nevertheless to be held of it. "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after" (1 Tim. v. 24). The delicacy and exquisiteness of all the fellowship of circumstance amid which the sin of Ananias and Sapphira saw the light, measure the extent of the affront it dared to offer to truth, and augur the fearfulneſs of the doom that

should visit that affront. Hence it comes that we do *instinctively* understand Peter's inspired estimate of it—that it is a “lie unto the Holy Ghost . . . unto God,” and a “tempting of the Spirit of the Lord.” And in thus estimating the sin, in “the light of God's light,” Peter reminds us of David, who, bowed in deepest anguish for the sins of murder and adultery, nevertheless cries to God, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned!”

II. PETER'S OWN DIAGNOSIS OF THIS SIN THAT NOW PRESENTED ITSELF TO VIEW. There is manifestly a deeper treatment of such a presentation of human nature open to us; but especially was it open to the inspired apostle. Let us follow his guidance more exclusively. It was *given* to him to conduct us deeper down into the retreats of human hearts, and we do well to use our opportunity to follow him. Peter indisputably finds these three things. He finds: 1. A proffered interference of Satan. 2. An accepted interference of him, on the part of Ananias. 3. The issue—a “lie to the Holy Ghost.” We touch here distinctly the things characteristic of *revelation*. They are, it must be noted, the things resented not by the scoffer only, but by the rationalist, and by science, simply *quoad* science. The provinces of revelation and science in human life, however, are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive, but they are complementary. And the Christian is the rich man because he feels and knows them such. We have then here, from the lips of Peter, the first introduction, since the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost, of the personality of Satan as the antagonist of the Holy Ghost. His work is immediately what reproduces itself through the human heart, as not merely “a lie,” but a “lie to the Holy Ghost.” So much for the intrinsic work and the presumably most prized object of Satan. But, again, it is not now Satan, but Ananias, who is standing at the bar of Peter—Peter, an inspired apostle, and laden with the significant attestation of miracle. And the *crucial* question upon which Peter arraigns Ananias, and is going to found very shortly his stern condemnation of him, is this (*though somewhat obscured in Authorized Version*): “How is it that Satan has won what ought to be the stronghold of your heart, so that you have ‘lied to the Holy Ghost’? No physical necessity, no moral necessity, no necessity *whatever*, was laid on you to sell your possession at all. And yet you have taken in hand to do this, and ‘taken into your heart’ to do it, with such superadded suggestion of Satan, that you have made your deed the vehicle of a ‘lie to the Holy Ghost,’ and of sharp death to yourself.” The supreme event follows for Ananias close upon the word of Peter. And a certain irresistible conclusion also for us follows close upon the word of Peter—that either we are reading a fable and a lie, or that Ananias was the tool of Satan, and was held *responsible for becoming so!* This is among the very first lessons, in the matter of the spiritual relationships and facts of human hearts, taught under the emphatic “dispensation of the Spirit.” And he can scarcely be envied who risks his own opinion against such a lesson. We cannot consent to suppose (though some have supposed it) that Peter's meaning simply amounted to this, that Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost because he lied to *him*, who was inspired of the Holy Ghost. No; Ananias lied to the Holy Ghost in three degrees. He lied to him in being false to any *genuine* impulse that he had at first experienced from him; in being false still when he knew that he had forsaken his guidance and yet *pretended* to be moved practically to join the new society by selling and giving; and, lastly—and this consummates and sufficiently expresses all—in electing to cast in his lot with Satan, in his capacity of arch-antagonist of the Holy Ghost. Upon the whole consideration of the sin of Ananias, it must be concluded that, by human analysis of it, they must indeed be “fools” who “make a mock of sin.” Yet, under the searching and deep cutting of Divine analysis as expressed in Scripture, is not the same conclusion reached with tenfold impressiveness?

III. THE DIVINE WITNESS AGAINST THIS SIN. 1. It was “a swift witness.” The tares are emphatically not allowed to grow with the wheat and abide a later judgment. The reason for delay (Matt. xiii. 29) did not exist here. (1) An unerring eye detects the bad seed. (2) A steady, unerring hand can uproot the ill growth without uprooting also the good growth. 2. It was a witness so swift that no time “for repentance,” no interval of grace, is granted—possibly because there was literally no “place of repentance” (Heb. xii. 17). Was it now that a real instance was found of the “sin against the Holy Ghost,” to be “forgiven, neither in this world, neither

in the world to come" (Matt. xii. 32)? 3. It was a redoubled witness. The second instance following so close on the first and in its *exact* track made impressiveness itself yet more impressive, as the rapid redoubled peal of thunder strikes a *tenfold* terror into the heart. 4. The witness was timed with a precision that *examples* how closely the eye, the ear, the *hand itself* of the supreme Ruler of mankind may be *always* upon the track of human individual life. That eye sees *all* and to the time. That ear hears *all* and to the time. That hand is close upon *all* and to the moment of perpetration, and might stay the deed, or at once reward it or visit it with swift retribution. This is not what is generally and to practical purpose believed. The absolute, physical proof of it would manifestly take off all its strain from faith, and reduce to nothing the moral government of the world. It is enough if *example* be given, and if the veil now and then be drawn aside, or, as in this instance, suddenly rent to the revealing of that which is behind.

IV. THE SPECIALTY OBSERVABLE IN THE TREATMENT OF THIS SIN. The *swift* and conclusive visitation of this sin, with arraignment, punishment, and judgment all in one, was a method new for anything done as under the Spirit of Christ. During the personal ministry of Christ on earth nothing can be instanced to resemble it, except the withering of the fig tree, and that does *not* resemble it. Christ refused to call fire from heaven or to permit a sword in the hand of a disciple. And when the unregenerate impetuosity of Peter did use the sword, Christ went so far as to undo what it had done. Forbearance and long-suffering were unfailing watchwords with Jesus. Let us observe that: 1. *One* thing justifies this summary treatment, namely, that the agent in it is without doubt none other than *the Spirit of detection*, of conviction, of unerring discernment, of perfect knowledge. Whether this sovereign Spirit, the Holy Spirit, led the way rapidly through the instrumentality of Peter, or finally, without any use of even the lip of Peter himself, executed swift sentence, the entire responsibility rested with that same eternal Spirit. 2. *One* thing may with but little less hesitation be counted to *explain the reason* of this unusual "course of the Spirit," namely, the exact crisis at which the tender young society had arrived in certain *moral* aspects. The prompt and peremptory "course of the Spirit" on this occasion was *not* for any *external* defence of the body of the infant Church, but for the inner defence of it, of its very heart, of its self. In this swift visitation, whatever of kindness there was, that the communion of the true should not be poisoned by the presence of the false, and whatever of stern example there was to operate as an immediate counteractive and deterrent, alike the one and the other meant mercy and consideration toward an infant *heart*. The elements which went to make that heart just what it now was have already been passed under review. We know full well that the Church was not permitted to depend long for its purity upon such witness as this. Nevertheless, the memory of it and of the principle contained in it has ever lived, lives still a powerful witness in itself, both for the Church and for the world.

V. LASTLY, THE IMPRESSION PRODUCED BY THE JUDGMENT OF THIS SIN. "Great fear came on all them that heard these things" (ver. 5); "Great fear came upon all the Church, and upon as many as heard these things" (ver. 11). 1. The impression that was produced was one of a healthful *sort*. Many times as fear finds false occasion, this was an occasion most just. Human hearts need betimes such rousing. "Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation of the world" (2 Pet. iii. 4), is the languid complaint of the life of far more than those from whose lip it is heard. When God is "strict to mark iniquity" *now*, men begin to fear, and they think, and they believe, for an hour at least, in the reality of *moral* distinctions. Pity and shame it is that men do not understand and believe that there is a sense in which God assuredly *is* and will ever be "strict to mark iniquity," so that they should "fear before him all the day." It is God's mercy which wakes fear betimes by methods such as that under consideration; for that fear is helpful to *remind*, and to *arrest* attention, and to suggest *onward* thinking. And it is not less God's mercy that he does not use such method very often. For it would make harder those who will be hard. And it would deprive the willing and obedient of the opportunity (1) of *testifying* what faith they have, and (2) of *testing* that faith, and (3) of getting greater strength to it. 2. The impression was one that wrought on

saint and sinner, on the Church and on "all that heard" of what had transpired. The Divine judgment no doubt aimed at this twofold ministry, in one and the same providence. (1) Though the "fear" were of the nature of a shock to the disciples that formed that cheerful and holy society, yet it tended in the directest manner possible to recover them from the greater shock of such a sight as *this*, falsehood and hypocrisy and unreality triumphing, or even permitted to *breathe* amongst them. And (2) because the "fear" was of the nature of a shock, it worked caution and the awe of reverence on the part of those who were outside the Church. These were very forcibly reminded that to be true disciples meant something more and deeper than in an hour's enthusiasm joining themselves to a happy company, whose very earnestness had it in it to enlist a natural sympathy. The sympathy that joins any man to the Church of Jesus Christ must be something different from a natural sympathy. It must be an inward, deepest sympathy wrought by the Spirit.—B.

Ver. 3.—The first prisoners for Christ. It appears that by this time the movements of the apostles were beginning to be an object of serious concern to the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Probably the Sadducee party, which succeeded in securing our Lord's death, was still predominant in the great council; this is indicated by the prominence given to the "Resurrection" by the enemies of the disciples. In addition to the general annoyance at the public preaching of the apostles, the officials of the temple were grieved at the crowding of the people round the new teachers in the temple courts. So in the *name of order*, but really in the *spirit of jealousy*, they were arrested, late in the evening, and put in safe keeping until the next day. Jewish rules did not allow judgment to be given at night. Imprisonment was only a precautionary measure; the Jews did not *punish* by imprisonment. Where mention is made of it, as used for punishment, in the Scripture records, the authorities who inflicted it were not Jewish. The point to which we now direct attention is, that a *confession of moral impotence* is made in all *physical* attempts to stop and crush teachers. Intellectual and moral error can only be fairly met by the teaching of the *corrective truth*. Only when men fail to conquer by *reasoning*, can they wish to take up material weapons of any kind. When reason fails then men imprison, and beat, and torture, and kill. And physical forces never can succeed in crushing moral ones. It has been true for every age, and is as true as ever to-day, that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." Physical restraints are only proper in relation to wrongs that disturb the *social order*. They are wholly out of place in connection with matters of *opinion*.

I. THESE PRISONERS WERE ONLY TEACHERS. They only talked to the people. They only appealed to mind and judgment. They only announced some new truths. They only invited the people's belief. Part of the offence against them arose from the known fact that they were unlearned and ignorant men; not specially trained rabbis, and so not regarded as *fit* to preach. An instance of the class-prejudice which sadly prevails still. Illustrate from the story of great missionaries. They have only been teachers, yet how often, in different countries, they have excited prejudice and suffered persecution! The same is still, in measure, true of all great thought-leaders; all men who are "before their time" must expect to be misunderstood and persecuted.

II. THESE PRISONERS TAUGHT NOTHING AFFECTING SOCIAL ORDER. They did not encourage vice or lawlessness. They did not interfere with family life, local government, social customs, or politics. Like their Master, they dealt with broad and general principles, expecting these, when implanted, to gain their own growth and expressions. Even their little excitement in the temple courts, and temporary interference with the temple order, was a matter of no moment. There was no occasion for the temple police to interfere with them.

III. THESE PRISONERS TAUGHT NOTHING AFFECTING CEREMONIAL RITES. There were, indeed, personal examples of diligent and devout Mosaism; strict in all matters of ceremonial duty. They never uttered a word that could be regarded as disrespectful to the temple or the Jewish system. They never tried to break one single person away from his ceremonial duties. Their teachings were *within Judaism*, and the most jealous conservators of the old system had no good reason for fearing their influence. This, however, applies to *true* Mosaism, and not to the burdensome ritual added by the rabbis, against which both our Lord and his disciples vigorously

pleaded. But on this particular occasion the apostles had not even attacked the rabbinical system.

IV. THE TEACHINGS OF THESE PRISONERS ACTUALLY TENDED TO PRESERVE SOCIAL ORDER AND MAKE BETTER CITIZENS. Such is everywhere the natural result of the preaching of Christ and the teaching of Christianity. Loyalty to Christ helps to secure loyalty to the earthly ruler, and the virtues Christianity cultivates find their expression in the social and national spheres. Then why were these men arrested? Because the men in power were jealous of the influence they were gaining, and feared they would lose their own authority and influence on the people. *Self-seeking* is at the root of all religious persecution. And because the men who opposed them could not meet and answer them *in argument*, they had to fall back upon the unworthy weapons of threatening and force (see vers. 16, 17). Impress that no physical bonds have ever yet been forged that could *bind in the truth*.—R. T.

Ver. 11.—*The despised Stone a sure Foundation.* For the Scripture figure here used the following passages may be compared:—Isa. xxviii. 16; Eph. ii. 20—22; 1 Pet. ii. 7. The construction of our modern buildings does not permit of special importance being given to a *foundation-stone*. We now put in *memorial stones*. Very probably the Scripture figure is taken from the immense work of masonry, found necessary at one corner of the temple area, in order to complete the sacred precincts. This corner foundation, raised right up out of the valley, made a deep impression on the Jewish mind, and was regarded as the foundation of the temple. Some prefer to think that reference may be to the virgin rock which was probably covered by the holy of holies. A foundation, in the sense of a basis-truth or principle, is necessary for a religious system or a personal faith. Here St. Peter's words are addressed to certain persons, and we consider—

I. THE BUILDERS. Such the Sanhedrim regarded themselves as being, because they were at the head of the ecclesiastical government of the people; they settled the order of ceremonies, duties, and obligations, and required men virtually to take their religion *from them*. They would advise and direct, and the people should have no will of their own in religious matters. Explain that a new rabbinical system had grown up round the Mosaic, and crushed out its life. For this rabbinical system, as bringing the people entirely under their sway, the members of the Sanhedrim were so jealous. Fix attention on the exceeding peril and amazing folly of *men* in trying to formulate and impose a religious system, when one had been fully revealed and its principles adequately detailed. No wonder they went astray, binding burdens on men's shoulders grievous to bear. No wonder they were wholly wrong, both in their *foundation* and in their *superstructure*.

II. THEIR FOUNDATION-STONE. What can man's foundation, for any religious system he may construct, ever be but *works—man's works*? There is nothing else they can select. If they want anything better, they must give up trying to find it or to lay it, and let God both find and lay. Disguise it how we may, call it by what skilful names we please, men's foundations for religious systems or personal hopes are always *self*; something *we can do ourselves*. Illustrate from other systems than Christianity, showing that *self* and *self-service* and *works* are the foundations of Brahmanism, Mohammedanism, heathenism, and Catholicism. Those trying to feel confidence in the foundation-stone of self are sure to pass by, and fail to find interest or attraction in, the stone God offers to lay in Jesus Christ, the sure Foundation. This point may be urged in its application to personal religious seeking and experience. Many a man has had to see the utter ruin of his buildings *raised on self*, before he could find interest in, or care to build upon, the *Rock of Ages*.

III. THE CORRECTION OF THEIR MISTAKE. The great Master-Builder interfered, choosing his own good and wise time. Sanhedrims and rabbis could only be under-builders. Because of their wilful errors he puts them aside, and sets forth the apostles in their stead—just as, in older days, he made *prophets* take the place of incapable *priests*—and bade those apostles lay firmly down the despised Stone, even Jesus, the Nazarene. It is to be the very Head of the corner, and the whole erection of the Christian Church is to lean safely up against it and upon it. Impress that still there are mistaken builders, who pass by Christ, and assume authority to lay *other ji unda*.

ions. And still it is as true as ever it was, that God makes Jesus Christ, for each soul's salvation and life, the "tried Stone, the precious Corner-stone, the sure Foundation; and he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed."—R. T.

Ver. 12.—*The one saving Name.* As one of the earliest preachings of the gospel, this sermon contains a striking illustration of the *simplicity* of the gospel message. From it we may learn what things were set forth as the primary and essential facts of Christianity, before the development of Christian doctrine. Theology is a science formulated by human genius; for it we are mainly indebted to Augustine and Anselm and Calvin. But it would be a sad thing indeed, for the thousands of "way-raring men," if an adequate apprehension of a human theology were essential to personal religion. This sermon deals with *facts*, with the *known* historical facts of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection; and with the *unknown* facts, declared upon the apostolic authority, of Christ's office, commission, and authority, as risen and exalted. Upon these facts the sermon makes deductions and applications, as in our text.

I. SALVATION. Some have strangely suggested that by this word St. Peter only refers to *bodily healing*, and simply asserts that in Jesus Christ is the true miraculous power. But we cannot thus lose the deeper meanings and applications of truth. *Sin* is the great human ill, and salvation, to be any salvation at all to man, must deal with and compass *it*. For this sin that has wrought and is working in us we need "salvation," and it is but to mock us to say that Christ is not the Saviour from *sin*. Show what a large, comprehensive word "salvation" is; compare it with *healing, teaching, reforming*, etc. It is the word which expresses the deepest need to which any soul can ever awake. At the very edge of death the aroused jailor cries, "What must I do to be saved?" Plead as to whether there has yet been open vision to the discovery of this master-need. What, indeed, can it profit any one of us to gain the whole world, and have our soul unsaved?

II. SALVATION BY A NAME. 1. *A name stands for a person*, and includes whatever rights may belong to him. Illustrate by the ambassador acting in the name of the queen; travellers finding safety in using the name of Englishmen; Moses coming forth in the Name of Jehovah. So the apostles went forth, spoke and wrought, in the Name of Christ. And salvation is by the Name, *i.e.* by the present rights and power of the living Saviour, whom apostles introduced to men. 2. *A name stands for a plea.* As St. Paul used his name as a Roman citizen. The Name of Jesus is a sufficient plea to secure *acquittal*, for all due satisfactions have been wrought by Christ. The Name of Jesus becomes a sufficient plea to secure *acceptance*, for all required righteousness has been won by Christ; and we, by faith united to him and bearing his Name, come into his power and share his rights.

III. SALVATION ONLY BY ONE NAME. "None other name" is designed to be exclusive. Then see what it excludes. Few, perhaps, will now actually substitute something for Christ, and deliberately say, "I will not be saved by Christ." But there was, in *older times*, a subtle substituting of fancied ideas about God's *mercy*; and there is now danger of our substituting *knowledge and science*. Many will try to put something *along with* Christ. Men try to join their own name with Christ's; or they put together the Virgin Mary and Christ; or the Church and Christ; or even, in subtle forms, the Bible and Christ; or feelings and Christ. All are wrong things if they are set in the *first place with Christ*; all may be good if kept in their proper *second places*. For soul-salvation there is only *one Name*; the essential thing is that we stand in living relations of faith and love with him whose "Name is above every name."

IV. SALVATION IN THE ONE NAME FOR ALL. Otherwise it could not be exclusive. If it is to be the *only* Name, then it must be the all-sufficient Name, or God would be deceiving us in permitting such broad and gracious invitations to be made to us. The real wants of men are common to all men. We all want health, love, knowledge, and truth; and it is equally true that we all want *pardon* of our transgressions, *liberty* from the slavery of self and sin, the *life* of righteousness, and the *hope* of the eternal glory. "Salvation" gathers up all these, and all these are found in and through Christ Jesus only.

CONCLUSION. The way of salvation keeps its simplicity. And "to *you* is the word of this salvation sent." There is one Name—only one Name; believe, and you shall be

saved. Search the world over and the ages through, there is no other; and yet one day to this Name "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess."—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Signs of having been with Jesus.* We should always keep the thought close to us that our spirit and our word and our conduct, as the professed disciples of the Lord Jesus, are being *daily watched*; sometimes kindly, sometimes unkindly, always keenly. Men do "take knowledge of us." Something must be wrong if our life as Christians is not so toned and characterized as to arrest attention. There was something about the apostles which puzzled the Sanhedrim: there was more than they were able to discern. We may see what actually *did* impress them, and also what might reasonably have impressed them.

I. The Sanhedrim were struck with the **POWER**, the **COURAGE**, which the apostles had gained from Christ. Power, high personal influence, moral courage, had been characteristic of the Lord Jesus. In the apostles power showed itself in firm, noble witnessing to the *facts* they knew and the *truths* which had been entrusted to them, however offensive the facts and the truths might be to the rulers who listened. In us the like power, given by Christ, may show itself in *steadfastness to principle*, even when that may place us in social disability; and in *practical consistency*, whatever may be our surroundings. Illustrate by firm keeping of the sabbath law; and by such passages as "Having done all, stand;" "Quit you like men, be strong;" "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." There is great need of a more steadfast opposition to accepted worldly maxims and worldly habits. Christians should *dare to be singular* when Christly principles and the Christly spirit are imperilled.

II. The Sanhedrim might have been struck with the **CHARACTERS** of the apostles, as fashioned by Christ. The character of the Lord Jesus had been peculiarly his force, and these apostles had come so fully under its influence that they had become, both consciously and unconsciously, moulded thereby. They had learned, as Christ's disciples, to seek "whatsoever things are true," etc. (Phil. iv. 8). Their natural characters were being sanctified; and, in measure, they were exerting the influence of **personal** moral excellence and virtue, even as their Lord had done. This may be illustrated in St. Peter. Pure and lovely character is still the highest power on men everywhere. None can wholly withstand the influence of sweet and saintly lives.

III. The Sanhedrim might have been struck with the **RULING PRINCIPLE** of the apostles' **CONDUCT**, which they had learned of Christ. It was the principle of the *constraining love*. Love to Christ, by whom we are redeemed. Love to the brethren who share with us in the common redemption. And love to the *unsaved*, for whom we may well desire the unspeakable blessings which we have ourselves received. Love is ever seeking to *find expression*, and will not be satisfied with measures of self-sacrifice short of the self-sacrifice of Christ for our salvation.

We cannot hope to exert the same influence on those about us that was wrought by the apostles on the Sanhedrim, until we learn to be oftener with Jesus. And that we may be in two ways. 1. *In the outward fellowship of the Gospels.* We may study them better. We may meditate on them more frequently. We may realize more perfectly the Christ they reveal, and so "know him," and feel the power of his presence. 2. We may be with Jesus in the *inward fellowship of cherished thoughts.* Taking him into our hearts as we take our dearest friend, and often holding with him secret soul-communings. Then men would plainly see upon us, day by day, the signs that we "have been with Jesus."—R. T.

Vers. 23—31.—*Praise for safety and prayer for power.* "From the court-room the apostles retired to the Church. Christian confessors win their victories in the face of day; but the strength by which such victories are won is only to be got where Jesus got his, in secret. Remember Luther's broken cries as he lay on his chamber floor at early morning on the 18th day of April, 1521 (D'Aubigné, 'History of the Reformation,' bk. vii. ch. viii.). In every crisis of strain and peril through which our lives must pass, at every moment of supreme difficulty, Sanhedrim threatenings, Worms Diets, or whatever less thing it be before which our faith and courage quail, there is for us no place of help like the secret footstool of Almighty God, nor any weapon like the cry of faith" (Dr. Dykes). Notice that the prayer of the disciples is addressed to God, not to Christ. ~~Also~~

that in the worship and prayer *one voice led*, finding expression for the common feeling, and the rest of the company probably responded with "Amen" spoken aloud. From the *exegetical* portion of this commentary the precise meaning and allusions of the prayer may be learned. We dwell on two things.

I. MAN'S PRAISE AND PRAYER. Compare other recorded songs and prayers. Especially unfold that the *praise* took the form of a *psalm*. Compare the so-called "Psalms of David." It was a public rejoicing on account of a Divine deliverance that was of public interest. Compare Miriam's song at the Red Sea. Impress the duty of recognizing God's hand in our lives, and praising him for his "merciful kindnesses." The *prayer* took the form of a request for precisely the things needed at the moment, *viz. power to witness* and *power to work miracles*, in attestation of the truth witnessed. An example of *directness* in prayer.

II. GOD'S RESPONSE TO MAN'S PRAISE AND PRAYER. A *renewal* of the special grace and endowment with which the apostles had been started on their work. *Renewals of grace* are still God's best answers to our prayers (2 Cor. xii. 9).—R. T.

Ver. 32.—*Nothing our own*. "The chief way in which at that time a member of the Church could express his unshaken devotion to the common cause, or his willingness to sacrifice to the last penny for the common weal, was by placing his realized capital at the disposal of the brotherhood. The endangered position of the little community (through the enmity of the Sadducean party) thus tended to inflame the fervour of its charity, and gave a new impetus to that common relief fund which had been started at Pentecost." "There can be no question that an expectation of Christ's immediate return from heaven, acting along with the unity of thoughts and feelings, made these men willing to part with their possessions and goods." Such community of goods has always been part of theories of perfect commonwealths. In this case each member of the Church held his possessions only as a trust, and was prepared to yield them up, if the exigencies of the brotherhood demanded such a surrender. We have, then, in this picture of the early Church, a model of the *spirit* that should animate the members of Christ's Church in all ages. We do not say models of *conduct*, because the application of such models in changing generations becomes uncertain. Models of the essential *principles*, and of the *spirit*, which we should cherish, are both more helpful and of more constant application. The early Church expressed Christian feeling in *outward forms*, just as childhood gets impulsive and unrestrained expression for its sentiments and emotions. Their new faith in Christ suddenly brought them close together, and made them conscious of new and binding sympathies. There was at first a great gush of impulsive brotherhood. Compare the intense feelings animating, and the extraordinary sacrifices made, when the year A.D. 1000 drew near, because of the expectation that Jesus would return on the first day of that year. The feeling was so far *right*, but the mode of its expression did not gain permanence. Compare the impulse for *missions* so often strongly felt by young Christians. What these men actually *did* we may not make a model. The *spirit* which led them to do it, and the spirit in which they did it, are a model for us all. There are three sentiments that may be cherished concerning our earthly possessions.

I. WE MAY REGARD THEM AS OUR OWN. Illustrate by the parable of the rich fool, who says he will build greater barns, "where I may bestow all *my* fruit and *my* goods." This is both a false and an unworthy sentiment; for "what have we that we have not received?"

II. WE MAY REGARD THEM AS CHRIST'S. Compare the sentiment of St. Paul, who could say, "To me to live is Christ."

III. WE MAY REGARD THEM AS OURS IN TRUST. Then they become talents for whose use we are responsible. And we learn to feel that they are not to be spent for *self*, but used for *others*; and self-denial, charity, and self-sacrifice are recognized as the first of virtues. Put alongside this sentiment of the early disciples concerning their *property*, the sentiment of the apostles concerning *the disciples themselves*—"Ye are not *your own*;" and then we have the twofold feeling which Christians ought ever to cherish; and our anxiety concerns (1) holding ourselves for the Lord, and (2) holding our property at the service of others for Christ's sake. "We are not our own." Nothing that we have is our own. All is Christ's. We are Christ's. And then

St. Paul argues back, that "all things are" really "ours" in Christ (1 Cor. iii. 21—23).—R. T.

Ver. 33.—"Great grace." This expression may refer to the measure of Divine favour resting upon the early disciples; or to the favour which they found among men, who could not fail to see and admire the spirit of "self-sacrifice" which was exhibited by what they were doing. We dwell on the former of these references. More grace, fresh grace, greater grace, rested on them after the imprisonment and deliverance of their leaders. We are to understand that the holy fervour manifested by them at this time was not accounted for by such things as the incoming of wealthy members or the multiplying of their numbers, but by the increase and enlargement of the "grace" that rested on them. "Great grace" is ever the one secret of great spiritual power. Looking at the incidents connected with the text, we observe—

I. THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST BESTOWMENT OF GRACE. Recall the scene of the Pentecost. Show in what sense that may be spoken of as the *first* coming of the Spirit. Explain why that coming was attended with *outward signs*, and why the presence of the Spirit is not *now* manifest in such miraculous gifts. The "grace" in us may be as great—may be greater—though the attendant signs and expressions differ. Show what are the *first* signs of "grace" working in us. Signs in *thought, feeling, conduct*, and *relations*. Illustrate by what is said of Saul of Tarsus: "Behold, he prayeth."

II. THAT FIRST GIFT OF THE SPIRIT WAS WELL RECEIVED AND USED. This may be illustrated in the earnestness and zeal of the apostles, as well as in the *active*, devoted, and zealous life of those converted under the apostolic teachings.

III. BECAUSE WELL RECEIVED AND USED, MORE GRACE WAS GIVEN. The further grace enabled them to *suffer* nobly and well; to *testify* for Christ even before governors and kings, and to *pray* together and *live* together and *work* together, in loving union and mutual forbearance, and charity. And so we come to apprehend afresh God's great and ever-working law, expressed in the familiar words, "To him that hath shall more be given;" "We are not straitened in God;" "Then shall ye know, if ye follow on to know the Lord," etc. God's grace is indeed "free," sovereignly free, but he has been pleased to set it under conditions; and one of the chief conditions is that we shall have used wisely and well the grace already received. To those who are *faithful in using* grace the promise applies, "He giveth *more* grace." Then, if we feel the need of and long for "great grace," let us see that we deal rightly in response to the leadings and movings of the grace we have. Empty the vessel in service for others, and God will be sure to refill it. Trim the lamp, and let its light shine brightly all around, and God will be sure to replenish it with abundance of fresh oil.—R. T.

Vers. 36, 37.—*The power of a high example.* That of Joses, or Barnabas. This man was the companion of St. Paul in his first missionary journey (ch. xiii. 2). For his character, position, and influence in the Church, etc., see the Commentary. His was by no means the only case of self-sacrifice, but it was, for some unexplained reasons, the most striking case, and it was regarded as a typical one. Possibly the subsequent influence gained by Barnabas led to the preservation of this narrative of his noble self-denial. And we may learn from him *what a mission opens for those who can make great sacrifices for Christ.*

I. RICHES ARE OFTEN A RELIGIOUS HINDRANCE. Illustrate from our Lord's teaching respecting the "camel and the needle's eye." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter the kingdom of God!" "Not *many* mighty, not *many* noble, are called." The poor in this world are often the "rich in faith." Barnabas's property might have *kept him from Christ*, or made him only such a *timid and weak* disciple as rich Nicodemus and rich Joseph of Arimathea were.

II. RICHES OFTEN BECOME A TEST OF RELIGIOUS FEELING. Illustrate from the case of the "rich young ruler," who had some feelings and desires, but could not wholly follow them. Love of position and of wealth was stronger even than longing for "eternal life." Compare *Demas*.

III. RICHES MAY BECOME A MEDIUM OF RELIGIOUS EXPRESSION, AND SO A MEANS OF RELIGIOUS CULTURE. It did in the case of Barnabas. He used his talents and his gifts for Christ's service and his Church's good, and he further found out how he might,

for the same purposes, use his *money* and his *lands*. He was both blessed in himself and a means of blessing to others in so doing. Still those who have the trust of riches need the impulse of the example of Barnabas, and may even reach towards the completeness of his self-sacrifice. Explain that there is sometimes an *exaggeration* in the surrender of all property, and assumption of voluntary poverty, which is in no sense commended by this example. To use our property wisely and well in the service of Christ is a far nobler thing than to shirk our personal responsibility by surrendering it all to others. The lesson to learn from the record concerning Barnabas is that we should hold all we have—riches, talents, position, influence, everything—at the call and service of our living Saviour, and be ready even to *sacrifice it all*, if in that form we are required to testify our “zeal for the Lord.” But the imitation of a high example has this peril. It may be merely the imitation of the *act*, and not an act dictated by the same *motives* and done in the same *spirit*. The followers of “them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” are those, and those only, who act in the hallowing and ennobling influences of the same “constraining love.” We must yield and give only for *Christ’s sake*.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER V.

Ver. 1.—Ananias (*Ananias*). In Neh. iii. 23 the Hebrew name אַנְיָה (God covers or protects) is thus rendered in the LXX. But the name occurs nowhere else. The very common name אַנְיָה, *Ananias* (God is gracious), is also rendered in the LXX. Ananias (*Ananias*), and is doubtless the name meant here and in ch. ix. 10; xxiii. 2, etc. Sapphira does not occur elsewhere. It is either derived from the Aramean אֶפְרָיִם, beautiful, or from the Hebrew סַפִּיר, a sapphire. A possession (see ch. ii. 45). The kind of possession is not specified by the word itself, which applies to houses, fields, jewels, and wealth generally; but the nature of the property is shown by the word *χωστρον*, applied to it in vers. 3 and 8, which means especially “a parcel of ground” (John iv. 5), “a field” (ch. i. 18, 19).

Ver. 3.—*Thy for thine*, A.V. Peter said. It was given to Peter on this occasion, by the Holy Ghost, to read the secrets of Ananias’s heart, just as it was given to Elisha to detect Gehazi’s lie (2 Kings v. 25, 26); and the swift punishment inflicted in both cases by the word of the man of God—leprosy in one case, and sudden death in the other—is another point of strong resemblance. To lie to the Holy Ghost. It is only one instance among many of the pure spiritual atmosphere in which the Church then moved, that a lie to the apostle was a lie to the Holy Ghost under whose guidance and by whose power the apostle acted. Ananias’s fraud was an ignoring of the whole spiritual character of the apostles’ ministry, and was accordingly visited with an immediate punishment. The death of Ananias and Sapphira was a terrible ful-

filment of the promise, “Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained” (John xx. 23).

Ver. 4.—*Did it not remain for was it not*, A.V.; *thy for thine own*, A.V.; *how is it that thou hast for why hast thou*, A.V.; *thy heart for thine heart*, A.V. Did it not remain, etc.? The exact meaning is—Did it not remain to thee? i.e. unsold it was thine, and when sold the price of it was thine. There was no compulsion as regards giving it away. The act was one of deliberate hypocrisy—an attempt to deceive God himself.

Ver. 5.—*Upon all that heard it for on all them that heard these things*, A.V. and T.R. Gave up the ghost (ἐξέψυε). The same word as in ver. 10 and ch. xii. 23, but found nowhere else in the New Testament. Great fear, etc. We have here an example of punishment which is remedial, not to the person punished, but to others, by displaying the just judgment of God as a warning against sin.

Ver. 6.—*And wrapped him round for wound him up*, A.V.; *they carried for carried*, A.V. The young men (νεῶτεροι: called in ver. 10 νεανίσκοι). There does not seem to be sufficient ground for supposing, with Meyer, that a definite class of Church servants is here meant. The young men of the Church would, as a matter of course, perform such services as that here spoken of, when directed by the πρεσβύτεροι, the elders, in age or office.

Ver. 7.—*And it was about, etc.; better rendered, with Meyer, and it came to pass, after an interval of three hours, that his wife*, etc. It is a Hebrew idiom (comp. Luke v. 12).

Ver. 8.—*And Peter answered, etc.* Peter’s question gave her the opportunity of con-

fessing the fraud had she been penitent. The land (see *note* to ver. 1).

Ver. 9.—*But for then, A.V.; they shall carry for carry, A.V.* To tempt the Spirit, etc.; *i.e.* thus daringly to put the Holy Ghost on trial, whether or no he is able to discern the thoughts of your evil hearts (comp. Luke iv. 12). The feet of them, etc. The burial, including the distance to and fro, had taken three hours, and they were just returning to the Christian assembly when Sapphira was confirming her guilt as an accomplice in her husband's lie.

Ver. 10.—*And she fell down immediately for then fell she down straightway, A.V.; gave up for yielded up, A.V.; they carried her out and buried her for carrying her forth buried her.* She fell down immediately. The Spirit who killeth and maketh alive thus vindicated his discernment and his power, and testified to the truth of his prophet St. Peter, by whose mouth he had just foretold the death of Sapphira. Gave up the ghost (ver. 5, note). Buried her by her husband. What a strange example of conjugal unity! One in their Jewish religion, one in their conversion to the faith of Christ, one in their hypocrisy, one in their terrible death, one in their common grave! one in the undying record of their guilt in the Book which is read by every nation under heaven!

Ver. 11.—*The whole Church for all the Church, A.V.; all that heard for as many as heard, A.V.* The awful death of the two liars to God not only struck a salutary fear into the minds of the whole Church, but filled with awe all outside the Church who heard of it; and doubtless gave a temporary check to the persecutions, while it disposed many to hearken to the apostles' preaching.

Ver. 12.—By the hands of the apostles, etc. Two things are here remarkable. The one that Christianity at its beginnings was mightily helped and advanced by miracles done in the Name of Jesus Christ. The other that the authority of the apostles as the rulers of the Church was greatly strengthened by these miracles being wrought exclusively by their hands. We cannot understand either the external relations of the Church to the world, or the internal relations of the people to their spiritual rulers, unless we duly take count of these two things. With one accord (see ch. iv. 24, note). In Solomon's porch (see ch. iii. 11, note). It is quite true to nature that Solomon's porch, having been the scene of the miracle, became the place of frequent concourse. There is a difference of opinion among commentators as to whether the *all* refers to the whole Christian laity as in ch. ii. 1, or to the apostles only. Alford thinks

the latter, Meyer the former. The opinion that the whole body of Christians is meant seems most probable, both from the use of the words in ch. ii. 1 and from the phrase *συνουμαδον* (especially in connection with *ἀπαυρες*), which seems more applicable to a mixed multitude than to twelve colleagues like the apostles. You could hardly say that all the queen's ministers met in a Cabinet Council with one accord. There is no need for the parenthesis as in the A.V.

Ver. 13.—*But for and, A.V.; howbeit for but, A.V.* The rest seems most naturally to mean those who were not included in the *ἀπαυρες*, viz. the Jews as distinguished from the disciples. The effect of the miracles was that the Jews looked with awe and reverence upon the Apostolic Church, and none durst join them from mere curiosity or with any idle purpose. But, on the contrary, the people magnified them, treated them with the utmost respect, and spoke of them with all honour. Join himself (*κολλᾶσθαι*). The word occurs in the New Testament ten times, of which seven are in St. Luke's Gospel or in the Acts. The other three are in St. Paul's Epistles (see for the use of it in the sense it has here, Luke xv. 15; ch. viii. 29; ix. 26; x. 28; xvii. 34).

Ver. 14.—Added to the Lord; as in ch. xi. 24, not as in margin. Multitudes; *πληθη*, found in the plural nowhere else in the New Testament.

Ver. 15.—*Even carried out for brought forth, A.V. and T.R.; that, as Peter came by, at the least his shadow for that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by, A.V.; some one for some, A.V.* Insomuch; not to be referred back to the first part of ver. 12, as indicated by the parenthesis in the A.V., but to the whole description of the Church's glorification in vers. 12—14.

Ver. 16.—*And there also came together the multitude from for there came also a multitude out of, A.V.; about Jerusalem for about unto Jerusalem, A.V.; folk for folks, A.V.; that were for which were, A.V.* And there also came together, etc. One great result of these numerous miracles would be to manifest that the Lord Jesus was still with his Church as truly as when he was upon the earth (Matt. xxviii. 20), and this manifestation remains for the comfort of his people, even now that such miracles have ceased. With regard to what is said in ver. 15 of the shadow of Peter being thought to have had a healing power, it may have been true that it had, as Christ could heal by a shadow as well as by a word or touch, but we cannot say for certain that it was so; anyhow, it was a marvellous season of refreshing to the Church, preparing her for the coming trial.

Ver. 17.—*But for them, A.V.; they were*

filled for were filled, A.V.; jealousy for indignation, A.V. The high priest rose up. It was high time for him and his friends the Sadducees to be up and doing, if they wished to stop the spreading of the faith of Jesus Christ and the Resurrection. Which is the sect of the Sadducees (ch. iv. 1, 2, note). It does not appear that Annas himself was a Sadducee, but his son was, and hence it is highly probable that the Sadducees should have attached themselves to Annas, and made a tool of him for suppressing the doctrine of the Resurrection. *The sect; alpeis* (see ch. xv. 5; xxiv. 5, 14; xxvi. 4; xxviii. 22). The word was applied first by Jews to Christians, and then by Christians to sects (1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 1). Jealousy scarcely so well expresses the idea of ζήλος here as indignation does. In the First Epistle of Clement, ζήλος is applied to the anger of Cain, of Joseph's brethren, of the Israelites against Moses, of the persecution of St. Peter and St. Paul (iv., v.). It is only occasionally that it means that kind of anger which we call jealousy. The high priest and his party were indignant at the defiance of their authority, and at the success of the doctrine which they had made it a special object to put down.

Ver. 18.—*Laid hands* (as ch. iv. 3, A.V. and R.V.) for *laid their hands*, A.V. and T.R.; *in public ward for in the common prison*, A.V. *Laid hands*, etc. *Laid their hands* is equally right, even when αὐτῶν is omitted, as the translation of τὰς χεῖρας. There is no difference in the sense in the two renderings, or in the two passages, though in ch. iv. 3 the phrase is ἐπέβαλον αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας, and here ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀποστόλους. In public ward. The A.V. is more idiomatic and expresses exactly what is meant by the phrase τηρήσει δημοσίᾳ. Meyer quotes the phrases τὸ δημόσιον in Thucydides, and οἰκία δημοσία in Xenophon for the common prison (see ch. iv. 3).

Ver. 19.—*An angel for the angel*, A.V.; *out for forth*, A.V. An angel, etc. The phrase is a translation of the Old Testament phrase πῆλ ἄγγελος. But in Hebrew it is impossible to insert the definite article before ἄγγελος, and therefore the phrase is properly rendered, "the angel of the Lord." In the passage before us and other similar passages, Κύριος seems to stand for ἄγγελος, and therefore the rendering of the A.V. would seem to be right, in spite of what is said by eminent grammarians to the contrary. Compare, too, the phrases ὁδὸν εἰρήνης (Luke i. 19); βῆμα Θεοῦ (Luke iii. 2); φωνὴ βοῶντος (iii. 4); and see especially Luke ii. 9, where ἄγγελος Κυρίου ("the angel of the Lord,") and δόξα Κυρίου ("the glory of the

Lord") stand in parallel clauses. The R.V. inconsistently renders the first "an angel," and the second "the glory." In like manner φωνὴ Κυρίου (ch. vii. 31) is "the voice of the Lord;" and in Ps. xxix. (xxviii., Septuagint) 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, the LXX. have uniformly φωνὴ Κυρίου for ἄγγελος (see ch. viii. 26, note). Out (comp. ch. xii. 7, etc.).

Ver. 20.—*Go ye for go*, A.V. In the temple; not in the house, but in the courts. The words of this life; i.e. this life which is in Christ, whom ye preach, through his resurrection from the dead (comp. John vi. 68, "Thou hast the words of eternal life;" see too the whole chapter and 1 John i. 1—3).

Ver. 21.—*This for that*, A.V.; *about day-break for early in the morning*, A.V.; *prison-house for prison*, A.V. About day-break. In the hot climate of Jerusalem people are about very early in the morning (comp. Matt. xxvi. 57, 75). But the high priest, etc. The narrative would run more clearly if the passage were translated more literally, *Now when the high priest and they that were with him were come* (to the council-chamber the next day) *they called together*, etc. The narrative is taken up from vers. 17, 18. Having (ver. 18) put the apostles in prison, they met the next morning to decide how to punish them. The council (τὸ συνέδριον); i.e. in the Hebrew-Greek, the Sanhedrim, the great council of the nation, consisting of seventy-two members, usually presided over by the high priest. It is frequently mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. v. 22; xxvi. 59; Mark xiv. 55, etc.; and ch. xxii. 30; xxiii. 1, etc.; above ch. iv. 15). On the present occasion, besides the members of the Sanhedrim, there were gathered together all the senate (γερονσία) of the children of Israel, an expression which occurs only here, but which seems to comprise all the elders of the Jews, even though they were not members of the Sanhedrim. But some (Schleusner, Heinrich, etc.) understand it as merely another phrase for the Sanhedrim, added for explanation and amplification. The council, of course, were ignorant of the escape of the prisoner. The prison-house (δεσμωτήριον); "prison" (A.V.) represents φυλακή in the next verse.

Ver. 22.—*The officers that came for when the officers came and*, A.V. and T.R.; *and they returned for they returned*, A.V.

Ver. 23.—*Prison-house for prison*, A.V., as in ver. 21; *we found shut in all safety for truly found we shut with all safety*, A.V.; *at the doors for without before the doors*, A.V. and T.R. But the *within* at the end of the verse seems to require the *without* of the T.R.

Ver. 24.—*The captain of the temple for the high priest and the captain, etc., A.V. and T.R.; words for things, A.V.; were much perplexed concerning them for doubted of them, A.V.* The captain of the temple, etc. Meyer, followed by Alford, retains the T.R., in which the word for the high priest is *ὁ ἱερεὺς*. It is true that this word occurs nowhere else in the New Testament for "the high priest." But in the Old Testament *הַכֹּהֵן* is very frequently used to designate the high priest, as Exod. xxix. 30; xxxv. 19; Numh. iii. 32; 2 Chron. xxi. 11; 2 Kings xxii. 10; 1 Kings i. 8, etc.; and in such places is represented by *ἱερεὺς* in the LXX. So that St. Luke may very probably have used it here where the context made the meaning clear, and where he intended to use the word *ἀρχιερεὺς* for "the chief priests." For the *captain*, see above (ch. iv. 1, note). He was especially interested as being, probably, the officer who had arrested the apostles the day before. Were much perplexed concerning. The verb (*διανοεῖω*), which only occurs in the New Testament here and ch. ii. 12, x. 17, Luke ix. 7, and (in the middle voice) Luke xxiv. 4, means properly "to be in doubt which road to take," hence generally to be in doubt, perplexity. They may apply either to the words, the strange things just reported to them, or to the apostles about whom the things were reported. It seems most natural to refer it to the words. They were in doubt and perplexity as to what it would all grow to.

Ver. 25.—*And there came one for then came one, A.V.; behold for saying, Behold, A.V. and T.R.; the prison for prison, A.V.; in the temple standing for standing in the temple, A.V.* Standing implying the calm, fearless attitude of the men. There is an apparent reference in the mind of the writer to the words of the angel in ver. 20, "Go ye, and stand and speak."

Ver. 26.—*But without for without, A.V.; lest they should be, omitting ἵνα, for lest they should have been, with ἵνα, A.V. and T.R.* Lest they should be, etc. The best way of construing the words, whether *ἵνα* is retained or not, is to make the clause "lest they should be stoned" depend upon "not with violence;" putting "for they feared the people" into a parenthesis; thus explaining why they thought it dangerous to use violence.

Ver. 28.—*We straitly charged for did not we straitly command? A.V. and T.R.; not for that ye should not, A.V.; teaching for doctrine, A.V.* We straitly charged, etc.; *ἐπερωτῶ* seems to require a question to follow. Your teaching (for the command, see ch. iv. 18). Intend to bring, etc. Here the secret of the persecution comes out.

The guilty conscience winced at every word which spake of Jesus Christ as living. The high priest, too, would not so much as name the name of Jesus. It was "this name," "this man;" as in the Talmud, Jesus is most frequently spoken of as *Teloni*, i.e. "such a one," in Spanish and Portuguese *Fulano*, or still more contemptuously as "that man" (Farrar, 'Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. p. 108). This terror of blood-guiltiness is a striking comment on the saying recorded in Matt. xxvii. 25.

Ver. 29.—*But for them, A.V.; the apostles for the other apostles, A.V.; must for ought to, A.V.* Peter is the spokesman the sentiment is that of the united apostolate. Must obey God, etc. The rule is a golden one for all men, all circumstances, and all time (comp. ch. iv. 19). Peter does not deny having received the prohibition, but pleads the superior force of the command of God, as set forth in the following verses.

Ver. 30.—*Hanging him for and hanged, A.V.* The God of our fathers, etc. Observe how carefully Peter preserves his own brotherhood with the Jews whom he was addressing, and the continuity of the New Testament with the Old Testament as being the sequel of the acts of the same God of Israel. Raised up; viz. from the dead; *ἤγειρε*, not *ἀνίστατο*, as ch. iii. 22, 26. Some, however (Calvin, Bengel, etc.), take *ἤγειρε*, as here used, to mean "raised up" in the wider sense of *ἀναστήσασαι*, as in the T.R. of ch. xiii. 23, where, however, the R.T. has *ἤγειρε*. Slew; viz. with your own hands, as *διεχειρίσασθε* means. It only occurs besides in ch. xxvi. 27.

Ver. 31.—*Did God exalt for hath God exalted, A.V.; remission for forgiveness, A.V.* With his right hand; i.e. by his mighty power, as the instrument of Christ's exaltation. A Prince (ch. iii. 15, note). Repentance first, "a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek. xxxvi. 26), and forgiveness next (comp. ch. ii. 38; iii. 19, etc.).

Ver. 32.—*Witnesses for his witnesses, A.V. and T.R.; so is the Holy Ghost for so is also the Holy Ghost, A.V. and T.R.* We are witnesses. The direct reference is to the command recorded in ch. i. 8, which they felt imperatively bound to obey. So is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost bare witness to the gospel preached by the apostles by the powers which he gave them to heal and work miracles, and by the conversion of many who heard the word: "the gospel preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven" (1 Pct. i. 12). Mark the solemnity and authority which Peter claimed for the gospel by thus asserting that the Holy Ghost was the witness with the apostles to the truth of their testimony concerning Jesus Christ.

Ver. 33.—*But they, when they heard this, for when they heard that, they, A.V.; were minded for took counsel, A.V. and T.R. (ἐβόλευντο for ἐβουλεύοντο, as also ch. xv. 39).* The word for were cut to the heart (διέπρωοντο) is found only here and in oh. vii. 54, where the full phrase is given. It means literally, in the active voice, “to saw asunder,” and is so used by the LXX. in 1 Chron. xx. 2. In Heb. xi. 37 it is the simple verb *πρω* which is used; *πρω* and several of its compounds are surgical terms.

Ver. 34.—*But there for there, A.V.; in honour of for in reputation among, A.V.; the men for the apostles, A.V. and T.R.; while for space, A.V.* A Pharisee named Gamaliel. St. Luke had mentioned (ch. iv. 1 and v. 17) that there was an influential party of Sadducees in the Sanhedrim. He, therefore, now specially notes that Gamaliel was a Pharisee. There can be no doubt that this alone would rather dispose him to resist the violent counsels of the Sadducean members, and the more so as the doctrine of the Resurrection was in question (see ch. xxiii. 6—8). Moreover, Gamaliel was noted for his moderation. That *Gamaliel* here named is the same as that of ch. xxii. 3, at whose feet St. Paul was brought up at Jerusalem, and who is known in the Talmud as Rabban Gamaliel the elder (to distinguish him from his grandson of the same name, the younger), the grandson of Hillel, the head of the school of Hillel, and at some time president of the Sanhedrim, one of the most famous of the Jewish doctors (as the title *Rabban*, borne by only six others, shows), seems certain, though it cannot absolutely be proved. The description of him as a doctor of the law, had in honour of all the people; the allusion to him as a great teacher, learned in the perfect manner of the Law of the fathers, and one whose greatness would be as a shield to his pupils, in ch. xxii. 3; the exact chronological agreement; the weight he possessed in the Sanhedrim, in spite of the Sadducean tendencies of the high priest and his followers; and the agreement between his character as written in the Talmud and as shown in his speech and in the counsel given in it,—seem to place his identity beyond all reasonable doubt. There does not seem to be any foundation for the legend in the Clementine Recognitions, that he was in secret a Christian. If the prayer used in the synagogues, “Let there be no hope to them that apostatize from the true religion; and let heretics, how many soever they be, all perish as in a moment,” be really his composition, as the Jews say, he certainly had no inclination to Christianity (*Prid. Conn.* i. 361).

Ver. 35.—*He said for said, A.V.; as touching these men transposed from the*

order of the A.V.; *are about to do for intend to do, A.V.*

Ver. 36.—*Giving himself out for boasting himself, A.V.; dispersed for scattered, A.V.; came for brought, A.V.* Rose up Theudas. A very serious chronological difficulty arises here. The only Theudas known to history is the one about whom Josephus writes (*Ant. Jud.* xx. 5), quoted in full by Eusebius (*Eccles. Hist.* ii. 11) as having pretended to be a prophet, having lured a number of people to follow him to the banks of the Jordan, by the assurance that he would part the waters of the river, and as having been pursued by order of Cuspius Fadus, the Procurator of Judæa, when numbers of his followers were slain and taken prisoners, and Theudas himself had his head cut off. But Fadus was procurator in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, immediately after the death of King Agrippa, ten or twelve years after the time when Gamaliel was speaking, and about thirty years after the time at which Gamaliel places Theudas. Assuming St. Luke to be as accurate and correct here as he has been proved to be in other instances where his historical accuracy has been impugned, three ways present themselves of explaining the discrepancy. 1. Josephus may have misplaced the adventure of Theudas by some accidental error. Considering the vast number of Jewish insurrections from the death of Herod the Great to the destruction of Jerusalem, such a mistake is not very improbable. 2. There may have been two adventurers of the name of Theudas, one in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, and the other in the reign of Claudius; and so both the historians may be right, and the apparent discrepancy may have no real existence (see Wordsworth, *in loc.*). 3. The person named Theudas by Gamaliel may be the same whom Josephus speaks of (*Boll. Jud.* ii. iv. 2) by the common name of Simon, as gathering a band of robbers around him, and making himself king at Herod's death (*Sonntag*, cited by Meyer, etc.). But he was killed by Gratius, and the insurrection suppressed. A variety in this last mode has also been suggested (Kitto's *Cyclopædia*), viz. to understand Theudas to be an Aramaic form of Theodotus, and the equivalent Hebrew form of Theodotus to be מתיאס, Matthias, and so the person meant by *Theudas* to be a certain Matthias who with one Judas made an insurrection, when Herod the Great was dying, by tearing down the golden eagle which Herod had put over the great gate of the temple, and who was burnt alive with his companions, after defending his deed in a speech of great boldness and constancy (*Ant. Jud.* xvii. 6). A consideration of these methods of explaining the apparent

contradiction between the two historians shows that no certainty can without further light be arrived at. But it may be observed that it is quite impossible to suppose that any one so well informed and so accurate as St. Luke is could imagine that an event that he must have remembered perfectly, if it happened under the procuratorship of Fadus, had happened before the disturbances caused by Judas of Galilee, at least thirty years before. But it is most certain that Josephus's account of Theudas agrees better with Gamaliel's notice than that of either of the other persons suggested, irrespective of the identity of name. The first way of explaining the difficulty above proposed has, therefore, most probability in it. But some further corroboration of this explanation may be found in some of the details of Theudas's proceedings given by Josephus. He tells us that Theudas persuaded a great number of people to "collect all their possessions" and follow him to the banks of the Jordan, where he premised, like a second Elijah, to part the waters for them to pass over; that they did so, but that Fadus sent a troop of horse after them, who slew numbers of them, and amongst them their leader. Now, if this happened when the business of the census was beginning to be agitated, after the deposition of Archelaus (A.D. 6 or 7), all is plain. Theudas declaimed as a prophet against submitting to the census of their goods ordered by Augustus. The people were of the same mind. Theudas persuaded them that, if they brought all their goods to the banks of the Jordan, he would divide the stream and enable them to carry them over to the other side out of reach of the tax-gatherer. And so they made the attempt. But this was an act of rebellion against the Roman power, and a method of defeating the purpose of the census, which must be crushed at once. And so the people were pursued and slaughtered. But apart from the census of their goods, one sees no motive either for the attempt to carry away their property, or for the slaughter of an unarmed multitude by the Roman cavalry. So that the internal evidence is in favour of St. Luke's collocation of the incident, at the same time that his authority as a contemporary historian is much higher than that of Josephus. Still, one desiderates some more satisfactory proof of the error of Josephus, and some account of how he fell into it.

Ver. 37.—*Enrolment for taxing, A.V.; some of the for much, A.V.; as many for even as many, A.V.; scattered abroad for dispersed, A.V.* Judas of Galilee, otherwise called the *Gaulonite*, as a native of Gamala, in Gaulonitis. He was probably called a

Galilæan because Galilee was the seat of his insurrection (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xviii. i. 1 and 6; also 'Bell. Jud.,' ii. viii. 1; xvii. 8). He was the great leader of the Jews in opposing the census ordered by Augustus, after the deposition of Archelaus, and carried out by Cyrenius, or rather P. Sulpicius Quirinus, the Proprætor of Syria, with the assistance of Cumanus, the subordinate Governor of Judæa. Judas, with Zadoc his coadjutor, was the founder of a fourth Jewish sect, nearly allied to the Pharisees, and his sedition was founded on his philosophic tenets. Josephus speaks of him as the author of all the seditions, tumults, slaughters, sieges, devastations, plunder, famines, ending with the burning of the temple, which afflicted his unhappy country. He gives no account of his death. But his two sons, James and Simen, were crucified by Tiberius Alexander, the successor of Cuspius Fadus. Another son, Menahem, having collected and armed a large band of robbers and other insurgents, after a partially successful attack on the Roman camp at Jerusalem, was miserably slain. The enrolment (*ἡ ἀπογραφή*, as Luke ii. 1). The purpose of Augustus, which had been delayed some years from causes not accurately known, perhaps in deference to some remonstrance from Herod the Great, was now carried into effect. Quirinus was sent, apparently the second time, as Proprætor of Syria, to which Judæa was now attached, with Cumanus under him as Procurator of Judæa, to make a valuation of all their property. The Jews had been first persuaded by the high priest Joazar, *i.e.* apparently in the end of Herod's reign, or the beginning of Archelaus's, to submit to what they greatly disliked, but were now roused to insurrection by Judas of Galilee ('Ant.,' xviii. i. 1). He also perished. Nothing is known of his death beyond this notice of it. Scattered abroad. Not crushed, for the insurrection broke out again and again, having the character of a religious war given to it by Judas of Galilee.

Ver. 38.—*Be overthrown for come to nought, A.V.*

Ver. 39.—*Is for be, A.V.; will not be able to for cannot, A.V.; them for it, A.V. and T.R.; to be fighting for to fight, A.V.*

Ver. 40.—*Called unto them (προσκαλεσάμενοι) for simply called, A.V.; they beat them and charged them for and beaten them, they commanded, A.V.; not to speak for that they should not speak, A.V.*

Ver. 41.—*They therefore for and they, A.V., dishonour for the Name, for shame for his Name, A.V. and T.R.* (see 1 Pet. iv. 12-16; John xv. 21).

Ver. 42.—*Every day for daily, A.V.; at home for in every house, A.V.* (see ch. ii. 46)

note); *to preach Jesus as the Christ for preach Jesus Christ*, A.V. and T.R. The meaning is that they daily preached Jesus Christ both in the temple and in the house or houses where the disciples were wont to meet (see ch. ii. 46, note). The spirit and conduct of the apostles here recorded is a

precious example to their successors. To glory in the cross, to count shame endured for Christ's sake the highest honour, and to be unwearied and undaunted in teaching and preaching Jesus Christ through good report and through evil report, is the true character and work of every bishop of souls.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—11.—*The first hypocrisy.* Hitherto all had been bright and beautiful in the new-born Church of God. Brotherly love, disinterested kindness to one another, heroic courage in the face of danger, unhesitating devotion to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and an unflinching profession of faith in his Name, had been the common characteristics of the multitude of them that believed. The Church was as the garden of the Lord in the midst of the world's wilderness. It was a bright spring-tide, soon, alas! to be checked by the cold blasts of selfishness and the love of this world. The time of millennial blessedness was not yet come. Satan was not yet bound. On the contrary, he was unusually busy, with persecutions from without and temptations from within, in his endeavours to hurt and corrupt the children of the kingdom. Indeed, we may notice, as a universal feature in the economy of the kingdom of darkness, that every great step in advance of the kingdom of light is followed by some corresponding movement intended to defeat it. The sowing of the good seed is the signal for the sowing of the tares. The salvation of God is confronted with some counterfeit of Satan. The faith of God's elect was opposed, even in the first century, by subtle heresies of man's or Satan's devising. The glorious spread of the gospel in all lands had a counterplot in the extraordinary growth of the imposture of Mohammed. The great Reformation in the sixteenth century was hindered by the hypocrisies and fanaticism which sprang up by its side. And so it was now. The great enemy of man could not look on the blessedness of the company of Christians without trying to mar it. He must have some portion even within the enclosure of Christ's Church. Even there all must not be guileless truth, all must not be unselfish love. He must have some to do him service even though they called Christ their Lord. But how could he find an entrance into those holy precincts, how climb up into that heavenly fold? In human character the highest rank consists of those who love righteousness for its own sake, and with various degrees of success actually attain to it. There are those among them who attain the sublimest heights of virtue and godliness, and there are those who at the best, and amidst many stumblings and falls, are only struggling upwards. But they all belong to that highest class who really desire to do the will of God and to be conformed to his image. But there are others who do not belong to this class at all. They, perhaps, admire virtue in others. But especially do they covet the praise and high esteem which virtue conciliates to itself. In a religious society they perceive that certain actions are praised of men and bring certain pleasurable consequences to the doers of them. These fruits of goodness they desire to possess. But then they will not make the sacrifices, suffer the losses, endure the privations, which are inseparable from such actions. The double heart immediately casts about to find some method of obtaining the good without making the sacrifice. To be thought righteous, good, religious, not really to be so, becomes the aim and object. Fraud, deceit, lies, false pretences, are called in to help, and the hypocrite stands, kneels, gives alms, talks religiously, by the side of God's true saints, till his hypocrisy is brought to light, and he stands revealed as a dissembler before God and man. But meanwhile, in the sight of the world, true godliness is discredited by each fresh exposure of the hypocrite. The defamers of God's people are encouraged to say that there is no such thing as the pure love of God and disinterested obedience to his will; and they argue that the most consistent livers are only the best dissemblers. There are, doubtless, many other useful lessons to be learnt from the study of this *first hypocrisy* in the Church of God. It is good to dwell upon this account of it, upon its detection, and upon its awful punishment, because it is only a type of countless other cases which have since happened, and are daily hap-

pening, and which, whenever they do happen, do injury to the cause of Christ. We may learn in this melancholy example how the love of money, or the love of the praise of men, or a greedy appetite of applause, or an ungodly emulation of the fame of other men, or the habit of thinking of appearances more than of reality, and of putting on a religious garb without taking care that our hearts are really moved and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, may, almost before we are aware of it, be leading us into the paths of the hypocrite instead of into the way of the just. And in the fearful exposure and punishment of these first Christian hypocrites, we may learn how certain it is that sooner or later every hidden thought and every secret of the heart will be brought to light; and that none will be able to stand before the all-searching eye of God but those who walk before God in godly sincerity, while they trust with a steadfast faith in the merits of their almighty Saviour. But anyhow we may be sure that this example of hypocrisy by the side of eminent holiness in the primitive Church, is thus set forth in its distinctness by the inspired historian, to be a touchstone by which to try future actions, to be a type of an evil which would be found to exist in all subsequent ages, and to be a warning to the children of God to watch against the very first beginnings of declension from simplicity and sincerity in their relations to Almighty God.

Vers. 12—42.—*The advancing tide.* The gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ crucified and risen again had issued from Jerusalem at the bidding of the Lord. Would it ever stop? would it ever cease to advance? would it ever meet with obstacles sufficiently strong to turn back its current and to arrest its progress? When the flowing tide is hurrying towards the shore, some particular wave is checked by an opposing rock, and is shivered into spray before it can reach the shore. But wait a little and the rock is sunken beneath the waters, and the waves roll on unchecked to their goal. Sometimes a temporary lull seems to have fallen upon the languid waves, and three or four in succession do not reach the bounds which their predecessors had attained. But yet a moment and the tide advances in its unbroken strength, and never fails to fulfil its destined course. It is just so with the gospel of Christ. Its advance is sure. Its strength is in the unchanging will of God. It has a course to run; it will run it. It has an end to fulfil; it will fulfil it. Hindrances, obstacles, defiance, it will meet with from man in a thousand varying forms. The opposition of hard unbelief in those who boast that they have intellect and philosophy on their side; the opposition of adverse creeds seeking to supplant the true faith; the fierce persecutions of ungodly power hoping to stop by force the progress of a hated truth; the divisions and dissensions of Christians among themselves; the abounding of iniquity and the chilling of Christian love; the sudden rise of some heresy or apostasy;—these and such like hindrances may occasionally seem to check the onward flow of the waters of life, and at times to threaten its further advance. But, like the irresistible tide of the mighty ocean, God's purpose is pressing surely on; and by the time decreed by his eternal wisdom the whole "earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 9). The chapter now before us gives a most striking view of this irresistible advance as well as of the obstacles opposed to it. One hundred and twenty men and a few poor, weak women are, as it were, the seed which the hand of the Lord has sown in an uncongenial soil. Immediately around them was all the bigotry of Pharisaic Judaism, clinging with desperate and impassioned obstinacy to the traditions of their fathers, and ready to kill and be killed on behalf of the Law of Moses, on the one hand; and the hard, cold scepticism of the Sadducees on the other, denying with agnostic incredulity the existence of anything beyond the ken of their eyes or the grasp of their hands. In the wider circle of the outside world there was the iron heathenism of Rome. Imperial tyranny and Casarean power; military force and the despotism of the sword; sensuality of the deepest dye; idolatry of the most aggressive and all-engrossing kind; philosophies the most adverse to the cross of Christ. How and where could the gospel make its way? Would it not die in the upper room where it was born? But what do we read? "There were added to the Church about three thousand souls;" "Many believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand;" "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women;" "The number of the disciples was multiplied;" and so on, marking the constant advance of the Church of God. And yet all the while every effort was being

mude to check this advance. There were already "prisons oft." There were the fierce threatenings of those who had power to execute them; there were stripes inflicted; there was the majesty of the law and the authority of rulers arrayed against them. But it was all in vain. The preachers could not be silenced; the preaching could not be stopped; the miracles could not be hid; men's hearts would turn to Christ when they heard of his grace; multitudes would leave the side of the persecutors and join themselves to the persecuted. The tide would flow on. It rushed over the heads of the opposing rocks. And then worldly wisdom came in with its prudent counsel, "Leave these men alone." And so for a time the work of God went quietly on, gathering strength and acquiring solidity from day to day, in preparation for future hostility from the world without, and future hindrances from corruption within. But these first fortunes of Christianity have left to the Church in all ages a model of the conflicts that await her, and of the only method of obtaining victory. They show us that through opposition and contradiction, in sunshine and in storm, amidst encouragements and under depression, the servants of God have to persevere steadily in proclaiming the grace of God and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, have to go forward in an unswerving obedience to the commandment of Christ and an unflinching confidence in his almighty power, and that success is sure. "On this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—A fatal forgetfulness. There are several truths which this sad incident suggests to us. We may view them thus—

I. THAT A NEW ENTERPRISE MAY SURVIVE A VERY DAMAGING BLOW. It was a very serious misfortune to the new Church that two of its members should commit a sin worthy of death, and pay that terrible penalty in the view of all. The apostles must have felt that they and the cause with which they were identified had received a severe blow; but it was far from being a fatal one. It was one from which the cause of Christ soon recovered; nay, it was overruled "for the furtherance of the gospel." Let not any Church or any sacred cause be too much disheartened by a check at the beginning. With truth and God on its side, it will survive and flourish.

II. THAT VERY SERIOUS SIN MAY BE CONNECTED WITH AN ACT WHICH IS OUTWARDLY VIRTUOUS AND GODLY. To those who looked on as Ananias and Sapphira brought the money they did bring and laid it at the feet of the apostles, their action must have seemed pious and generous in a very high degree. But we know it to have been utterly and even fatally defective. It becomes us to search with fearless and faithful glance those of our deeds which men approve as most commendable, lest, while around us is approval and congratulation, there should be entered in the book of account in heaven a sin of great enormity against our name.

III. THAT WE MAY BE COMMITTING A HEINOUS SIN IN AN ACTION WHICH SEEMS VENIAL TO OURSELVES. In all likelihood, Ananias and Sapphira imagined that they were doing an action which, while it was calculated to win respect, was not very, if at all, reprehensible in itself. They probably reconciled it to their own sense of rectitude. Men do so now. In connection with religion and philanthropy they do guilty things which kindle the wrath of the righteous Lord, supposing that they are only departing a few degrees from integrity, or are even worthy of praise. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

IV. THAT IT IS A FALSE AND MOST PERILOUS THING TO SUPPOSE THAT THE GOOD CONNECTED WITH ANY COURSE WILL COUNTERBALANCE SOME ONE SERIOUS SIN THEREIN. Ananias and Sapphira may have thought that the piety and charity of their conduct would more than balance the sin of their deception. They were miserably wrong and were fearfully disabused of their mistake. If we wilfully break one of God's plain commandments, supposing that the virtues of our action will cancel the wrong, and thus allow ourselves to fall into deception (as here), or into dishonesty, or into excess, or into arrogance and pride, we shall have a sad and, it may be, a rude and awful awakening from our grievous error.

V. THAT THERE IS A FORGETFULNESS WHICH IS NOTHING LESS THAN FATAL. Ananias

and Sapphira made a mistake which was simply ruinous. They overlooked the fact that the Holy Spirit of God was in close connection with his Church, and was acting through his servants. They forgot that when they were trying to deceive inspired men they were acting falsely in the face of the Divine Inspirer, so that when they imagined they were lying unto men they were really lying unto God (ver. 4). For this guilty oversight they paid the last penalty of death. Is not their sin too easily reproducible and too often re-enacted? Too commonly men guiltily overlook the presence and agency of the Divine Spirit. 1. A Church does so when it is resting in human and earthly advantages for its prosperity; when the minister trusts to his eloquence, the people to those arts and influences which are from below and not from above; when both are forgetting that there is an almighty power which is within their reach and at the command of believing prayer. 2. The human soul does so when it disregards the influences which are at work upon and within it; when it treats lightly the pleadings of the pulpit, the warnings of friendship, the prickings of conscience, the convictions and impulses which call it to newness of life. Is not this to sin against the Holy Ghost, and is not the penalty of it spiritual, eternal death?—C.

Vers. 11—16.—*Elements of influence.* Instead of the sin and death of Ananias and Sapphira proving disastrous to the infant Church, the melancholy event was followed by a period of extraordinary success. There was a high tide of prosperity; the gospel showed itself a great power in the community (ver. 14). Here are some of the elements of that power.

I. THE TERRIBLE. "Great fear came upon . . . as many as heard these things" (ver. 11). "By terrible things in righteousness" God sometimes answers us and impresses us. *The fearful* has a work to do in inspiring awe and leading to conviction and conversion. There are awful truths in connection with the gospel (Matt. xxi. 44; xxiv. 51; xxv. 46, etc.), as well as terrible facts happening in the providence of God, which do their work in the mind, solemnizing, subduing, preparing for thought, devotion, consecration.

II. THE BENEFICENT. (Vers. 15, 16.) In apostolic times Christian beneficence took the form of miraculous healing, and it was most efficacious in attracting and winning men. Now it takes other forms hardly less effective. The hospitals of the missionary in India and China, and the philanthropic institutions of England, initiated and sustained by Christian sympathy and self-sacrifice, are great elements of power. Christian kindness, taking a thousand shapes, flowing in a thousand channels, is an untold, incalculable influence for good.

III. THE SACRED. "The people magnified them" (ver. 13). To whomsoever this applied, whether to the apostles only or to the band of believing disciples, it is clear that a certain reverence was paid to those who bore about them such marks of close association with the Divine. To those who walk with God, who are men of prayer and of real devoutness of spirit as well as blamelessness of life, there will attach a certain sacredness which will cause them to be "magnified by the people," and their word will be with power.

IV. THE SUCCESSFUL. It is clear, from the fifteenth and sixteenth verses, that the publicity gained by the "many signs and wonders" of one day brought together a still larger congregation of the sick and the expectant the following day. Success in Jerusalem begat success in "the cities round about." The moral and spiritual triumphs of the truth have been elements of influence of signal worth. What God has wrought in opening blind eyes of the mind and cleansing leprous souls has been the means of extending the healing and renewing power of Christ on every hand. What stronger argument have we than this—What Christ has done for such sad and sinful souls he can and will do for you?

V. THE SUPERNATURAL. "Signs and wonders" are not now wrought by the hand of the ministers of Christ. But the supernatural is with us still, though the miraculous is gone. In connection with the preached Word, and in answer to believing prayer, the iron will is bent and the rocky heart is broken, the blind eyes are opened, and from the grave of sin dead souls come forth to newness of life.—C.

Vers. 17—29.—*Three things Divine.* The success of the Christian cause had the

effect which might have been anticipated; it aroused the intense hostility of the enemies of the Lord, and their bitter opposition found vent in a speedy arrest and imprisonment of the apostles (vers. 17, 18). But man's adversity was God's opportunity, and we have—

I. DIVINE INTERPOSITION. (Ver. 19.) How vain all bolts and bars to shut out those whom God would have to enter, to shut in those whom he would have escape! The hour had come for his interposing hand, and all the contrivances of man's wrath were broken through as if they were but "the spider's most attenuated thread." We often wish for the direct interposition of God now; we often ask for it; we often wonder that it does not come, thinking that the hour for Divine manifestation must have arrived. The duty and the wisdom of true piety are (1) to ask God to deliver in his own time and way; (2) to expect his delivering hand at some time and in some way; (3) to wait in patient endurance till his time has come; (4) to recognize his gracious hand in whatever ways he may be pleased to act.

II. A DIVINE INSTRUCTION. "Go, stand and speak . . . all the words of this life" (ver. 20). Doubtless the apostles well understood what was the tenor of their commission. They were to speak all those words which would enlighten their fellow-citizens on the great subject of the new spiritual life which they had begun to live. They who stand now in the relation of religious teachers to the men of their own time, may take these words of the heavenly messenger as a Divine instruction to themselves. They are to "speak all the words of this life;" i.e. (1) to explain and enforce the truth, that beneath and beyond the life which is material and temporal is the life which is spiritual and eternal; (2) to make known the conditions on which that life is to be entered upon—repentance toward God, and faith in a crucified and risen Saviour; (3) to make clear the way by which that life is to be sustained—by "abiding in him;" (4) to assure all disciples that "this life" is to be perpetuated in the other world.

III. THE DIVINE DEMAND. "We ought to obey God rather than man" (ver. 29). God demands our first obedience—that is the teaching of his Word; it is also the response of our own conscience. We agree, when we consider it, that God has a claim, transcendently and immeasurably superior to all others, on our allegiance. That Divine One who called us ourselves into existence; by whom we have been endowed with all our faculties; in whom "we live, and move, and have our being;" from whom we have received every single blessing we have known; who is the righteous and holy Sovereign of all souls throughout the universe of being; on whose will absolutely depends our future destiny;—to *him* we owe our allegiance in such degree, that any claims man may have upon us are "as nothing, and less than nothing." There are many reasons why we should yield ourselves to his service—the example of the worthiest and the best of our kind; the excellency, dignity, exaltation of that service; the present and future advantages we gain thereby; the awful issues of disloyalty and persistent rejection, etc. But there is one thought which should weigh the most, and be of itself sufficient—"we ought to obey God." We cannot decline to do so without violating the plain teaching of our moral judgment. When we do yield ourselves to him, we put ourselves in the right and have the strong and blessed sanction of our conscience. We should hear the voice within, saying daily, hourly, in tones which will not be silenced, "You ought to obey God."—C.

Vers. 30—32.—*The cross and the crown.* In this address which Peter delivered to the Sanhedrim we have another epitome of the gospel.

I. THE LOWEST DEPTH OF EARTHLY SHAME. "Whom ye slew and hanged on a tree" (ver. 30). The Son of God was "made a little lower than the angels," even a Son of man, "for the suffering of death" (Heb. ii. 9). He stooped to the level of our humanity, in order that he might "taste death for every man." And he underwent that experience in its most dreadful form—in darkness, pain, shame, desertion, inexpressible agony of soul. He went deliberately down to the very lowest point to which he could stoop, that he might finish the work the Father had given him to do.

II. THE HIGHEST SUMMIT OF HEAVENLY HONOUR. "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus . . . him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour" (vers. 30, 31). "From the highest throne of glory to the cross of deepest woe" he had come; now he reascended from the grave to the throne, to the seat of heavenly power

and blessedness. He has become an enthroned Redeemer, a sovereign Saviour, (1) occupying the foremost place in heavenly rank, (2) dispensing salvation to the lost children of men, and (3) receiving the willing homage, the affectionate service of the multitude he has redeemed. What more honourable, enviable, blessed position can we conceive than that of One who, seated in the very highest post of honour, is conferring the best of all imaginable boons, and is receiving, in return, the freest, richest, most rejoicing worship and service of his redeemed, both of those who are about his person "in the heavens," and of those also who are serving him and striving to follow him below?

III. THE METHOD OF THE REIGNING SAVIOUR. He is a Prince and a Saviour, "to give repentance . . . and forgiveness of sins." How does the exalted Lord carry on his great work as he reigns in heaven? By giving repentance and remission. 1. He gives to human souls a sense of the heinousness of their sin. 2. He dispenses to them, through his atoning sacrifice, full and free forgiveness of their sin. Thus he leads men everywhere away from their iniquity, and restores them to the favour and so to the happy service of the Supreme.

IV. THE BLESSED CERTAINTY WE HAVE OF THE FACT OF HIS ELEVATION. (Ver. 22.) The apostles could assure the council that these things were so; they could place it beyond all doubt, inasmuch as (1) they themselves were witnesses of the facts, and (2) the Holy Spirit had confirmed their testimony by the signs and wonders he enabled them to work. We too have testimony, both human and Divine. 1. The human testimony of the apostles of our Lord; also of all Christian souls in all succeeding generations, who have witnessed for him and the power of his grace; and also the assurance of our contemporaries, who rejoice in the liberty with which he has made them free. 2. The Divine testimony of that gracious Spirit of God, who, though he works no signs and wonders *around* us, does work conviction, comfort, sanctity, strength, *within* us.—C.

Vers. 33—42.—*Our attitude towards God.* There are three attitudes it is possible for us to assume towards our Maker and Saviour. They are those of—

I. HOSTILITY. We may "be found even to fight against God." It is, indeed, as new as it is old for men to contend with God and to oppose themselves to those ends for which he is working. 1. Good men do so unwittingly; as when earnest and holy Catholics have persecuted Protestant men and women; as when devout Protestants have thrown obstacles in the way of their more energetic co-religionists who have been evangelizing in ways not considered legal and correct; as when we ignorantly misconstrue the sacred Scriptures, finding out, farther on, that those views we combated were in harmony with truth. 2. Bad men do so deliberately and guiltily: (1) when they endeavour positively to overturn influences which they know to be holy and remedial; (2) when they practically encourage that which they feel to be wrong and hurtful.

II. NEUTRALITY. We may take the position which Gamaliel advised with so much policy on this occasion: "Let these men alone" (ver. 38). When any sacred cause comes up before us, challenging our approval and asking our aid, we may determinately stand aloof, declining either to befriend it on the one hand or to withstand it on the other: we neither bless nor curse. 1. It is impossible to take a neutral position, upon the whole, in relation to Christ. "He that is not with him is against him," as he has said to us. Our influence is either telling in favour of his holy service, of Christian truth, of eternal life, or else against these sacred things. 2. It is possible that we may assume a neutrality toward particular institutions, usages, movements, habits; and this neutrality may be (1) necessary, because we have not the means of arriving at a judgment at all; (2) wise, because we have not yet had the opportunity of coming to an intelligent decision; (3) culpable, because cowardly, selfish, unfaithful.

III. CO-OPERATION. (Vers. 40—42.) When they had beaten the apostles—an act of severe bodily castigation was a grim method of "letting them alone;" it was probably a concession to the party of hostile action—they did let them go, with strict prohibitions in their ear. We are to be "co-workers with Christ," "workmen together with him;" and we shall become this by: 1. *Speaking for Christ.* "Daily in the temple . . . they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ" (ver. 42). In the Church, in the school, in the home,—anywhere, everywhere, we too may speak for him; uttering the truth which he has taught us to prize, more especially upholding him himself as the

one great Teacher, almighty Saviour, Divine Friend, and rightful Lord of the human soul. 2. *Suffering for him.* The apostles endured suffering and shame for his Name; they did so gladly, rejoicingly. We may be "counted worthy" to do the same. Many thousands of men, in heaven or on earth, have had this high honour (Matt. v. 10—12; 1 Pet. iv. 13). And if we are thoroughly true and unflinchingly faithful to our Lord, serving him to the full height of our opportunity, we shall surely (1) suffer bodily inconveniences, fatigue, exhaustion, if not pain and sickness, for his sake; (2) endure the dislike and ridicule, if not the blows and imprisonment, of the ungodly. In such ill treatment we shall find occasion for heavenly joy, as they did.—C.

Vers. 1—11.—*The sin of heart: untruth and its punishment.* As the shadow follows the light, so Christianity has been marked in its progress by a deep and broadening shadow of hypocrisy. After the glorious picture of sunny days of the Spirit's life in the preceding chapter, a dark view of human deceit is presented. The root of bitterness springs up amidst the Divine delights of the time, and many are troubled.

I. THE SIN OF ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA. Essentially it was the *acting of a lie*. The part of the produce of the sale was put before the apostles as if it had been the whole. Many will act lies who will shun to articulate them. But the value of actions in a moral point of view lies in the expression they give to feeling. The *motive* cannot be left out of consideration. This action was intended by the guilty pair to pass with others as having a moral quality it had not. The understanding was that the whole and unreserved produce of the sale of property should in every case be given in. The act of the couple was intended to be received in this meaning while that meaning did not exist. We are responsible for the constructions which we know will in certain cases be put upon our actions. And the action of Ananias and Sapphira is typical of all those by which we dishonestly compromise with conscience, or seek to pass under false colours. There are times when it is a duty to abstain from action, if we know that our action will convey an impression that is false, have an appearance to which no reality corresponds.

II. PETER'S EXPOSURE OF THE SIN. His words are deep and mysterious. Let us not pretend to fathom them. 1. *The dark source of crime*—"Satan filling the heart." The deeds of sin are dark in every sense: they excite shame in the doer; they shun the light; they are lying in their origin, process, and consummation. 2. *The struggle involved in sin.* The opposition of the good, the striving of the Holy Spirit, is ever felt. No man lies to his fellow-men until he has first lied to the truth revealed within. Discussions about the personality of Satan and of the Holy Ghost are foreign to the spirit of the simple New Testament language, and only divert the mind from the solemn truth of immediate inner experience. The meaning of these dread figures of speech is sufficiently clear without any dialectics. 3. *The peculiar aggravation of this sin.* It had not the excuse of overwhelming temptation. They need not have sold the property at all. There was no law or special apostolic edict requiring it. The free spirit of love alone set the practice on foot. Certainly those sins which men commit under no pressure of necessity or of sudden and strong coincidences of opportunity with desire, are the worst. Gratuitous sin, so to speak, shows so diseased a moral state that it infers a person will require a temptation to do right, will go wrong without temptation at all. It was a fixed and deliberate determination, this act of Ananias, taken in the full daylight of conscience. In all probability it was the crowning act of a life long directed to counterfeiting goodness. For how true the proverb, that no one falls suddenly into the extreme of baseness! His life in Judaism had been a counterfeit, his conversion a sham, his participation in the joy and power of the time a mockery; the act which he intended to seal his Christian reputation fixing on him the damnation of the devil-led impostor. And through all or much of this there doubtless ran a vein of profound self-deception. 4. *All moral offences are irreligious.* This is important, for the craft of the heart would often separate morality from religion. But a lie to men is a lie to God under all circumstances; it is he whose light is in the breast which falsehood confuses, his truth which is practically denied. There is no genuine morality which is not founded on reverence for the living God. And no security that men will speak truly or act rightly when the pressure of fear or the mechanical action of habit is not felt, except in the sense of the eternal imperative of God. 5. *The complicity of the wife*

in the guilt adds another element of aggravation. The one should have restrained the other. The guilt of their joint act was like a mutual agreement of unfaithfulness. The sanctity of marriage rests on the recognition of the covenant between each soul and God; it is broken down and defiled by the common consciousness of a crime.

III. THE JUDGMENT. It was sudden, marking the interposition of God. It was received in both cases in silence—a tacit confession of its justice. Thus did sin long nourished in the heart at last come forth, full-born, only to meet death. “Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.” Great dread fell, as well it might, on all who heard and on the whole Church. It was like a bolt out of a clear and serene sky. And we should learn the solemn lessons that suggest themselves for every time. 1. Moral dangers lurk near every scene of spiritual manifestation. 2. The highest features of spiritual character and action will always find false imitators, and this in the very bosom of the Church. 3. Hence the need of heart-searching for ourselves (for we may be hypocrites without knowing it), of constant prudence and vigilance. “Our enemy goeth about.” “Behold, I have told you before.”—J.

Vers. 12—16.—*The healing personality of Christ's servants.* I. THEY ARE VEHICLES OF DIVINE POWER. The lips and the hands are consecrated to the service of doing good. Here especially the hands. It is a beautiful organ, the human hand, and may stand in Christian thought as the very symbol of beneficence. Signs and wonders are wrought, betokening that God is in immediate connection with the agency of man, that his presence is loving and healing, that Christianity brings in an era of deliverance from pain and sickness.

II. THE REPELLENT FORCE OF HOLY PERSONALITY. False souls are scared by the presence of a true man. They are in polar antagonism to him. They cannot bear his direct glance, his clear tones, his undefinable influence. There are those whose presence silences the ribald jest and scoff. The holy man awakens dread and love wherever he goes. Society seems to divide into its elements as he approaches. He is magnetic. Hence the slander of some is an equal testimony to moral greatness with the admiration and love of others.

III. ITS ATTRACTIVE FORCE. The multitude love goodness and revere it in their inmost heart. And not for long can the sympathies of the multitude be held except by goodness. In this case Divine power set its seal too plainly upon the character and work of the apostles to be resisted. In the vast concourse of sick and suffering in the streets and open places of Jerusalem we have the picture of the effects of Christianity. It is and ever has been the religion of the poor and the suffering. It remains the Divine will that the Christian minister should be the healer, the comforter. His pattern is to be found in the description Christ gave of his own mission in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv.), and it is surely a sign of weakness somewhere when the public organs of Christianity fail to command the attention and to supply the heart-wants of the lowly and the suffering. By the ordinary laws of mind to work for the spiritual help of such is better than all the power to work signs and wonders. Let every Christian minister be like “Peter's shadow,” a refreshment and a rest by his spirit and teaching to weary souls.—J.

Vers. 17—26.—*Arrest of the apostles.* I. THE TEMPER OF THE RULING POWERS 1. Zeal. It is good or evil in its effects, according to the objects to which it is directed. There is no mood of which more opposite descriptions have been and may not be with justice given. In the excitement of feeling, the fire and fervour which zeal implies, egotism may be so easily mistaken for public spirit. Our self-passion may and must mix with those of a purer kind. Resentment against injury to our interests or indignity to our party, or contempt for our opinions, is constantly mistaken for pure zeal for the kingdom of God and the cause of goodness. 2. Whenever anger and violence break out it is a proof that the dangerous force of zeal is at work. The only way to correct its mischief is by denying any personal interest which is apart from that of the truth. It is the clear calm gaze at truth which cools the undue heat of zeal, or gives the force its true direction. Here violence showed that egotism was the principle of priestly zeal, and passionate interest, divorced from truth. The apostles are seized and put in prison.

Zeal is blundering, thinks that force is a remedy for moral feebleness, believes that truth and spirit can be put down.

II. **THEIR VIOLENCE DIVINELY REBUKED.** The angel of the Lord comes as an emissary of freedom, for the Word of God cannot be bound. And freedom means new scope for duty. God does not give liberty to tongue and hand for nothing.

“If our virtues go not forth from us,
’Tis all as one as though we had them not.”

Freedom imposes duties. If God sets us free from the fear of man, which muzzles the tongue, then let us go and publicly speak to the people “all the words of this life.” Again, with freedom courage is given. The apostles go at daybreak to the temple, and in the teeth of ecclesiastical prohibition proceed to teach. How truly is courage the gift and grace of God! Too often we think of it as a mere pagan virtue founded on pride. Far otherwise with the true courage of the Christian soldier. “It was a great instruction,” said Mrs. Hutchinson, in her ‘Memoirs,’ “that the best and highest courages were beams of the Almighty.” As every passion and energy of the soul contains its opposite, so moral courage contains fear of God, moral cowardice contains the false courage to be untrue to God. The apostles, having chosen the fear of God and obedience for their guide, knew no other fear.

III. **RENEWAL OF OPPOSITION.** (Vers. 22, etc.) Here is another study of the human heart. When men are blinded by passion, the strongest arguments and warnings of God seem only obstacles on which wrath breaks with the greater vehemence. The news comes that the prison is empty, and under significant circumstances. The guard stands as before at the door, unconscious of the prisoners’ escape. The tidings are confirmed from another source. The prisoners *have* escaped and are again in the temple, teaching. Was not this the finger of God? Would not men in their senses, free from the madness of passion, have argued that they did wrong to offer violence to a power so majestic and so contemptuous of the fetters of force and the ordinary laws of nature? Yet once more the foiled attempt of human force against the will of God is renewed, and the apostles are brought with a gentleness due to the fear of their captors before the tribunal.

IV. **THE CONTEST OF WORLDLY AUTHORITY WITH SPIRITUAL.** The Sanhedrim are at the outset again baffled and defied. 1. *Authority weak without moral support.* The judges can only helplessly repeat themselves. They refer to their former command and ask why it had not been obeyed. As if the apostles had not warned them it should not be obeyed. Might without right can only repeat its experiments and its failures; is no match for right which rests upon eternal might. 2. *Physical weakness mighty in moral support.* Here were but a few unarmed men, without armed following, only temporarily backed up by the uncertain sympathy of the crowd. What is the secret of their immovable bearing? It is moral. Obedience to the higher law is the secret of all command over the minds of others. Here again is the coincidence of opposites. The servant of self-interest is weak, though he sits on a throne and is surrounded by guards; while one moral will, one divinely determined personality, suffices to set a city in commotion and to overturn established order. 3. *Truth irresistible.* The truth of the place, time, persons, circumstances, launched from firm lips, is certain to go home. This is infallible. If we fail with the truth, it is because of want of respect to some of these conditions. (1) The act of God in raising Jesus is again insisted on. Fearful fact in its grandeur, disquieting in its stubbornness, illustrated now by the events of every hour. (2) The guilt of the crucifiers again emphasized. Their own dark passions are reflected in the cross of wood, and at the same time God’s rebuke of them and disappointment of them. (3) The exaltation and dominion of Jesus again set forth. At the right hand of God; at the apex of the moral universe, he now draws men unto him, changing their hearts and pardoning their sins. (4) The living evidence again appealed to. We, living, acting men, working works that by the confession of one of your number (Nicodemus) no man can do unless God be with him; we, not in our independent name and personality, but as vehicles and agents of a holy power, are the evidence that these things are so. And if they are so, then is the power of the Sanhedrim, with all its support in Roman arms, the mere shadow and ghost of authority. It is superseded by that of Jesus the true King of Israel. Well may the priests and rulers be cut to the heart by a conviction, all the more penetrating because it is in the minds of all, yet avowed by

none. (1) The root of courage, energy, moral influence, and command lies in conscience, or obedience to God. (2) Where men combine against conscience and conspire against truth, they undermine the foundations of authority and prepare their own ruin.—J.

Vers. 34—42.—*Power and weakness.* I. INNOCENCE AN OBJECT OF HATE TO THE UNJUST. No wound is more deadly than that inflicted by words of truth upon false hearts. If the heart will not receive the truth, the truth will pierce through it. And murderous counsels show that truth has been denied in the heart. Instead of answering the witnesses with reason for reason, the Sanhedrim seek to stop their mouth with earth and put them to death. A cause is lost when it can be no longer argued in the court of reason, when its only argument is the sword, or the stake, or the rod, or the prison-cell.

II. SUGGESTIONS OF NEUTRALITY. Gamaliel is the type of common sense undisturbed by zeal—of clear judgment unbiassed by prejudice. It is pretty evident that he did not sympathize with the apostles; still less, probably, did he sympathize with the fears or the fanaticism of his colleagues. He is perhaps “old and cold.” Seldom do men of strong reflective habit feel much interest in novelties in religion. Seldom do the observers of life, the students of human history, expect much from sudden popular movements or popular teaching. Such was Gamaliel’s character. But where so little is said there is much room for difference of opinion as to what that character really was, how far really inclined to Christ’s doctrine, possibly believing in his mission, or a disciple in secret. In the absence of further knowledge of the man, we may consider his counsel, and draw the following lesson:—1. Prudence and caution are ever reasonable and especially so where there is a temptation to violence and repression of others’ freedom. We should never act without a clear call to do so. The alternation of inaction is best in doubtful cases. 2. Experience shows that movements which have no vitality in them come to an end if left alone. They die for want of fuel, while persecution supplies that fuel on which they live. Such had been the case with the insurrection of Judas and that of Theudas. 3. Time is required that the true nature of a movement be clearly seen. Many a seed springs up that cannot live; many a threatened man lives long. A new force cannot be judged by the first appearances and manifestations. 4. There is always a danger in repression. The force you seem to have quelled for the moment only bursts forth in a new direction. You may, while you think to be putting down your enemy, be rousing up a more formidable one, or exposing yourself to attack in some unguarded quarter. Above all, you may be contending against Divine power and will, and inviting its vengeance. 5. Faith in truth, utter contempt for falsehood and imposture, is our safest temper. This gives calmness under every emergency. The truth can never harm us if we are on its side, nor can it be defeated by any power on the other side. After all, this true attitude was Gamaliel’s. He was a man who understood and believed in the moral laws. Well would it have been had the Sanhedrim shared his intelligence and honesty. And had his advice been followed at similar crises of religious history, much bloodshed and retardation of the good cause would have been avoided. In private life, how many an occasion when there is a restless desire to act, to fetter the free action of others, to stop the course of moral laws, when the simple question is pertinent!—“Can you not—let it alone?”

III. WEAK VIOLENCE. Threats—prison—rods; to this the Sanhedrim in its might resorts against helpless and unarmed men. Rods are for the backs of those who are not amenable to reason. The chastisement which is appropriate to the fool is absurdly applied to the man who acts from deliberate counsel and proved determination. Blows are no match for prayers. The martyr is never in the tyrant’s power. He clings to God’s skirts, and malice cannot touch his soul.

IV. THE MARTYR’S JOY. Joy of the purest quality and most triumphal power starts from the very seed-bed of pain. Pain may be to the soul the expression of God’s displeasure or of his love. If it is incurred in obedience to him, the soul wears it as a testimonial of his goodness. The honour of suffering for God’s sake is one of peculiar worth. There is a natural feeling that any great suffering entitles the patient to some respect. The consciousness of being selected for suffering in the noblest cause ennobles the soul. It feels crowned and throned. Our capacity is enlarged both for thought and feeling and for joy by such an experience. It is strengthened, and every fresh trial,

faithfully endured, prepares for new effort, goes to perseverance, and so defeats the persecutor by the very means of his own weapons.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*The death of Ananias.* Raphael's cartoon manifestly founded, not on the simple narrative of Acts, but on the corrupt Church's falsification of it. The apostles represented on a throne, from which with despotic decree they command men to death. Our object is not to terrify men into religion and ecclesiastical submission, but to win them to Christ; to save men's lives, not to destroy them. Solemn and awful as the facts are, they are yet beams from the Sun of Righteousness.

I. A revelation of THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. 1. As the kingdom of *light*. Wisdom in discernment of spirits and judgment of human character. Distinction between pure and false fellowship. Exaltation of the great *light-principle* of self-sacrifice. 2. As the kingdom of *righteousness*. The act of Ananias was an act of rebellion against the first law of the gospel, both as a lie and as selfishness. 3. As the kingdom of *order and peace*. The rising brotherhood was the germ of a new human society, in which all men should be blessed. Ananias sinned against the Holy Ghost, *i.e.* defied and insulted the Spirit in his new work, trampled on the rising life. As a vindication of the kingdom, the sentence, though it looks at first sight unduly severe, was merciful, as a sign, not merely threatening, but inviting. It cleared the light of clouds.

II. An instructive example of HUMAN WEAKNESS AND SINFULNESS. A Judas among the apostles, an Ananias among the first believers. We must expect such things always. 1. The work of the Spirit is thus shown to be necessary. The deceit of the heart. The power of temptation. The influence of a multitude in hiding us from ourselves. The possibility of being carried away by a wave of excitement. The lure of ambition. Man and wife encouraging one another; Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. The gospel needed to lift up even the ties of nature and renew and strengthen them in the grace of God. 2. The Christian Church must be prepared to encounter the facts of human fallibility and sin. We must rest upon the supernatural guidance and support. We must leave judgment in the hands of God. Peter pronounced no sentence. He simply, by spiritual power, proclaimed the truth, and left conviction to work its own work. A great lesson in the exercise of discipline. In the case of the wife, the *fact* became a *prophecy*, by inspiration, in Peter's mind. He saw the work of God beforehand. No assumption.

III. A PRACTICAL ADMONITION. 1. Against *selfishness and dishonesty*. They kept back for themselves part of the price, intending to deceive. 2. Against *untruthfulness*, which was deliberate, prompted by meanness mixed with ambition and desire of display, daring against the manifest signs of the Spirit. Not a mere lie unto men, but a defiance of God. 3. Against *trifling with holy things*. They, perhaps, thought that what they kept back would not be needed, but they made light of the Spirit's evident demand. They did dishonour to the infant Church and to the apostles. 4. *Rebellion against the Holy Ghost*. He put it into their heart to sell their property and join the Church. They recognized his command to give up all for Christ. They saw what he had done and could do. Yet they did violence to his order and might have produced endless confusion in the Church. Fighting against God is perilous work.—R.

Vers. 7—11 (or ver. 11).—*Conspiracy against God.* While much in the previous paragraph repeated here, a new phase of sin presented. It was distinctly on the ground of deliberate agreement to tempt the Spirit of the Lord that Sapphira's death was added to that of her husband.

I. The intimate connection of the proclamation of gospel truth and mercy with THE RENOVATION OF HUMAN SOCIETY. 1. Family life, domestic intimacy, the root of public life. We must choose all our relations with the light of God in Christ. 2. The conspiracy of Ananias and Sapphira was a blow at the work of the Spirit in raising up a new spiritual life on the basis of self-sacrifice and absolute truthfulness. 3. The awful judgment was a proclamation of mercy—Come and hide under this Divine power and be safe.

II. A marvellous display of THE SPIRIT OF PROPHECY poured out on the apostles. The words of Peter an example: 1. Of the Spirit of truth and grace in him; he proceeded with the utmost care, publicity, tenderness, pity. The wife had the opportunity

of repentance, while the appeal was made, not on the ground of terror, for she knew nothing, but on the ground of simple truth—Tell me the *truth*. 2. Of the spirit of discernment and, in the Name of the Lord, of prediction. Had not Peter under supernatural impulse foreseen the death of the woman, he would not have dared to utter such words. As it was, it was a responsibility which none but an inspired man would have assumed. Such a fact speaks volumes on the supernatural state of the Church at that time.

III. A GRACIOUS APPLICATION of extraordinary facts. 1. To the *Church itself*. The solemnization of fellowship. God thus said, "Take heed how you join my people." The ethical set in the light of the spiritual. "Be ye holy." The sins of falsehood, presumption, avarice, self-confidence, set forth. The Divine kingdom clearly revealed. If God is so near, and yet to all who trust in Christ near to bless, how glorious this time! What is he not doing? and how little need we fear the world's opposition when he can strike dead our enemies? "Stand still and see the salvation." Compare the Israelites looking back on Pharaoh's host and forward to the promised land. 2. To the *world*. "All that heard these things." Such facts preached, loudly and widely, where the preacher's voice did not reach. We must remember that grace and providence go hand-in-hand. Fallow ground broken up by the ploughshare of terrible events and warning dispensations. "Judgment begins at the house of God; what shall the end be," etc.? Yet the "fear" was a fear mingled with the light of hope; for these deaths pointed to the way of life. The Church was the more conspicuously revealed as a refuge opened by God for all. So in the terrible times of human history religion has gone forth with special power. What message has philosophy at such times? Where are the rationalists and the doubters in the great crises of the world? Press home the facts upon those who tempt the Spirit of the Lord by untruthfulness, rebellion, indifference, worldliness.—R.

Vers. 12—16.—"*Clear shining after rain.*" The blessed effects of what at first is not fully understood. The outpouring of judgment may be a preparation for the outpouring of mercy. The Church has to be made and kept pure; then the deeper work of grace among God's people becomes the larger work of the gospel in the world. Notice—

I. An increase in the manifestation of THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT. 1. In the working of *miracles*, which had their special value in rousing attention and proving the nearness of God's kingdom. 2. In the separation, and magnifying in the eyes of the people, of the *true Church*. The rest durst not join them; the people magnified them. 3. In the solidifying of the Church as a *society*. Solomon's porch; one accord. 4. In the work of *conversion*. Multitudes—men and women; notwithstanding the awful deaths. 5. In the *diffusion* of the glad tidings in the surrounding neighbourhood, not as mere idle rumour, but as a practical appeal which brought the needy and suffering to the feet of Christ.

II. THE UNFOLDING GRACE OF GOD to mankind. *Solomon's porch* the place of meeting still. The centre of new life in the midst of the old corruption. *Invitation* to both Jews and Gentiles. Public place, yet connected with the temple. The Divine society inviting all to new life—a life that healed, that cared for the sick and dying, that drew the multitudes, the miracles giving confidence and pointing out the way. The manifest testimony of the world to the Church, speaking of man's preparation for the gospel. The marvellous progress of the truth in the growth of the Church a sign that the grace was being abundantly bestowed. A time of great awakening and many conversions is a time of tremendous responsibility. At least the shadow of the messenger falls upon us, as he passes by. It is not said that the shadow healed, but it may help to the faith which is a prerequisite. The people magnify the work, though they may not receive the blessing. God works generally from the lower to the upper strata of society. All great moral changes have begun among the people. The rich will resist, for it is hard to them to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The Church must look well to itself if it is to be the power of God in the world. The circle of grace will widen if only the force keeps going out from the centre. We must avoid the fatal mistake of enlarging that circle by mere human methods. Let God do it in his way. What we want is not large Churches as communities or wealthy societies, or great signs and wonders wrought in our cities, but "believers added to the Lord, multitudes both of

men and women ;” and they will be “the more added” because the rest dare not join themselves unto them because the Spirit of God is manifestly among them. Our great danger is impatience and unbelief. Resorting to our own expedients, because we think God’s methods fail. Out of the dark cloud of Ananias’s and Sapphira’s sin broke forth a new baptism of zeal, devotion, and spirituality.—R.

Vers. 17—42.—Second persecution of the Church. Notice: 1. It was the result of marvellous success. We must expect such opposition when God gives us power among the people. The proud and formal have no liking for that which can be set in contrast with their own inefficiency. 2. It proceeded from the sect of the Sadducees, *i.e.* the heretical school. The league between the high priest and the scoffers was a sad sign of religious degeneracy. So it is. When religion decays it becomes the food of unbelief. The latitudinarians hate spiritual earnestness. 3. It was weak and timid, evidently because there was a reproaching conscience and a growing apprehension in the background. The apostles were put into the public ward or prison, but probably not very jealously guarded. 4. The empty form of justice and wisdom was maintained—the council was summoned, that the weight of ecclesiastical authority might be used to crush the feeble apostles, that the people might be awed by the fear of great dignitaries. They often are, but the Spirit of God can overcome such fear. 5. Divine wisdom is more than human craft. The public trial or examination of the apostles was a public proclamation of the weakness of their enemies and the heavenly sanction given to their cause. The angelic deliverance of the prisoners became a notorious fact through all Jerusalem. The effect on the council, on the captain of the temple, on the populace, must have been immense. Evidently there was great excitement. “They feared the people, lest they should be stoned.” 6. The two weak apostles in the presence of the council, boldly challenging the contradiction of facts and appealing from man to God—a striking manifestation of spiritual power. “We are witnesses, . . . so is the Holy Ghost.” 7. The division in the council between the furious fanatical party and the temperate Gamaliel party, reminding us of the division in the nation itself; some dead to the voice of God, others ready to follow it though not recognizing it. The influence of Gamaliel a sign of hope; there was a remnant still according to the election of grace, and it promised a future restoration of Israel. 8. The whole occurrence a great help to the Church, to feel its power, to deepen its devotion, to rejoice in hope of victory, to trust in the gracious providence of God.—R.

Ver. 20.—The Church’s mission to the world. “Go, stand and speak,” etc. Acts of apostles the model for acts of God’s people always. Lessons on relation of the Church and the world. Gospel began to lay hold of the masses. Envy and hatred of the Sadducean party, because a religion which lifted up the people, they thought, would lower the wealthy and ease-loving. We must expect social difficulties as the kingdom of righteousness spreads, but the angel’s message is the rule of all times; while opportunity offers, stand and speak, not your own message, but “all the words of this life.” While we listen to the angel’s words, we should keep our eye fixed on the unveiled secret of Divine strength delivering and protecting all true-hearted preachers of Christ’s truth.

I. THE GREAT COMMISSION. “Speak . . . to the people.” 1. Copy the example of the Master. “Common people heard him gladly.” 2. Rest on the adaptation of the gospel to the people’s wants. They are deceived by false teachers, run after false remedies. 3. Take courage by the facts of the early history of Christianity. All moral progress from the people. Illustrate in the course of Christianity in the Roman empire—from the cottage to the throne. In the Reformation, especially in England. Lollards. Luther. Preaching of the revivalists in the eighteenth and present centuries. 4. Note the events. The future in the hands of the people. Speak to them of Christ; for their power is great, and they may abuse it to the destruction of society. Babel-greatness must end in confusion and misery. 5. Consider the responsibility of Christians. Believe, and therefore speak; silence is shame. Activity is the hope of the Church, the cure of its strifes and the uprooting of its doubts.

II. THE GREAT MESSAGE. “All the words of this life.” 1. *Reality—life.* Men’s daily struggle is about life. Yet the world full of delusions about life. *This life!*

That life! We invite the people to live *the true life*, Christ's life, the life that death cannot touch. 2. *Announcement.* "Words of this life." We proclaim facts, a Divine Person, a life that can be described by example, confirmed by testimony, studied in the written pages. Religion no dream of enthusiasts, no mere sentiment floating like a cloud in the air, no empty ritualism, but words of life translated into action. 3. *Philanthropy.* "All the words." Different from mere human teachers with their reservations and selfishness. Philosophers taught for money. Christ says, "Speak all to the people freely." Religion in the hands of priests has made the people enemies, but this new message in the temple would shake down the walls of superstition, prejudice, and pride, and build up a new humanity. In our message we must put so much heart that the people see we give them all that we have, because we love their souls first and their earthly interests as included in their spiritual welfare. 4. *Aggression.* "Go, stand . . . in the temple;" "Be not afraid of their faces." Bold policy always the wisest in spiritual things. Special necessity that the desecrated temple should witness the faithfulness of Christ's messengers. False religion the great obstacle to progress of the gospel. People misunderstand the message; think of priests as their enemies; have reason to think so. The gospel does not reject what is good in other systems, but plants itself in the midst of the world as it is; finds in the temple of the old religion a standing-place from which to preach the new tidings. Every fresh instance of Divine interposition should embolden us. You are free now, go to the work again. In all fields of labour discouragement must be absolutely excluded. Follow the angels of God, and they will point to new platforms. We shall speak with fresh power if we refuse to be thwarted by opposition or put out of countenance by suffering.—R.

Ver. 29.—"We ought to obey God rather than men" (or, "we must," Revised Version). A great *principle* requires to be seen in the full daylight before it can be made the foundation of great *action*. Fanaticism borrows its strength from the night of ignorance, not from the noon of truth. Persecution may vindicate itself on the ground of obedience to God, but it proves itself to have no title to such a principle because it destroys freedom.

I. THE GREAT REQUIREMENT. Obedience to God. 1. It is a requirement abundantly *set forth* in the Scriptures, in conscience, in the teaching of providence in connection with revealed truth, and especially in that inspired guidance which no true and earnest man is left without. 2. *Enforced* by the work of the Church, by the dangers of the world, by the deceitfulness of the heart, by the promises of God's Word. 3. *Rewarded* by the sense of inward strength, by superiority to circumstances, by successes in Christian effort—if not in this world fully, in eternity.

II. THE GREAT TRIAL. 1. Human laws, human requirements, human errors, human passions, all may say, "Obey the voice of man rather than of God." 2. Compromise the great danger of the Church. Under its new disguise of a pantheistic submission to inevitable law of development, specially subtle. 3. Lack of moral courage and conviction, obscuring principle and magnifying the strength of surrounding obstacles. We need the Holy Ghost, upholding the work of God in our own hearts, penetrating the deceptions of the world, arming us with spiritual preparation against inevitable assaults from without. 4. Individually the same great question to be settled between ourselves and God. His controversy. "Yield yourselves to God."—R.

Ver. 31.—*The throne of mercy.* "Him hath God exalted," etc. The Jewish temple a material symbol of the Divine method of grace. The chief chamber was the place of God's glory—the innermost presence-chamber of the great King; its chief feature, the mercy-seat, a proclamation of love to all. Yet access to the blessedness only by the appointed way, through the consecrated rites and persons; thus the will and righteousness of God sustained at the same time as his mercy. Compare heathen ideas of Divine favours—slavish, cruel, degrading, capricious, destructive of righteousness both in God and in man. Moreover, no heathen system appealed to a universal humanity.

I. THE COMMON WANT. 1. Deliverance from sin, both by remission and moral elevation. Show that the conscience regains satisfaction, the life security, the heart peace. 2. A free and unpurchased forgiveness, lest we should be burdened by their inequalities, destroyed by their despair, seduced by their errors, enslaved by their super-

stitution. 3. Confidence without fanaticism, peace of mind without inertia, and a sense of righteousness without pride.

II. THE DIVINE SALVATION. 1. It is built upon facts—a personal history, an accumulation of historic evidence, an ascent from Bethlehem to the heavenly throne. The supernatural absolutely necessary to hold up the human spirit in its greatest emergency. God's right hand must be seen, must be conspicuous. We cannot depend on mere human sympathy, wisdom, or strength. 2. The twofold character of Christ meets the twofold demand of the soul, for the greatness of the King and the compassion of the Saviour. The exaltation of Christ was both human and Divine. We recognize the great fact of mediation and reconciliation. 3. The one supreme test of sufficiency, the gift of the Holy Ghost. We do not appeal to men on the ground that God *can* save them, or that there is in Christianity a satisfactory theory of the atonement, but on the ground that the Spirit of God is saving them, that the gift is there—repentance and remission.

APPLICATION. What was true of Israel is true of us. The state of the Jewish world was the condemnation of all men. If God so wrought for us, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The gift has all God's heart in it. Return his love.—R.

Vers. 38, 39.—*A study of Jewish character: Gamaliel.* "And now I say unto you," etc.

I. REGARD IT AS THE PRODUCT OF JEWISH EDUCATION. 1. Reverence for the Word and will of God—in truth and in providence. The Jews possessed in their Scriptures a good philosophy of history. Taught that God must triumph. 2. Sense of humanity and righteousness deeply pervading all the Jewish system. "Refrain from these men." 3. Yet evidence of the corrupt and formal state of the Jewish teachers—temporizing policy, weakness of conviction, unwillingness to face truth, the ecclesiastical spirit in its mildest form.

II. CONSIDER IT IN ITS RELATION TO CHRISTIANITY. 1. The influence of Gamaliel on Saul of Tarsus (see Conybeare and Howson; Farrar) and so on the history of the gospel. 2. The contrast between Gamaliel and his fellow-counsellors in the Sanhedrim. They agreed to him then, but how about their former action and what followed? The Gamaliel character was then exceptional. 3. The contrast between Gamaliel and the apostles. He was prudent, they were earnest. Consider the necessity of following conviction. Sweetness and light are not means but ends; they have to be fought for, not rested in, before they are fully obtained. 4. The great appeal: "Least haply ye be found . . . fighting against God." All must acknowledge it. How easily ignored! The position of the soul is here indicated; it is either fighting with God or against God. Though Gamaliel did not see it, there is no middle position. "A fearful thing to fall into his hands."—R.

Vers. 41, 42.—*The true witnessing spirit.* "And they departed," etc.

I. THE NAME OF CHRIST the source of it. No such spirit in the world. Heroism may sustain strength, but does not give joy, unless it is like the apostles'. Had not the Name been Divine, how could it have produced such fruits in such men?

II. THE TEACHING AND PREACHING, both in the temple and at home, must be in the martyr spirit. We must expect to suffer some dishonour. But such a spirit invincible and victorious.

III. THE HONOUR OF THE CHURCH over against the honour of the world. "Counted worthy." God's reckoning. Spiritual worthies. The joy was not only a secret joy. It was the foretaste of heaven. Enforces the example.—R.

Vers. 12—16.—*Jerusalem's second summer.* While we read these fewest verses of what was going on in Jerusalem, and of how "multitudes from the cities round about Jerusalem" thronged that "mother of them all," to seek, not in vain, healing virtue, we seem to be removed by a world's diameter from the Jerusalem that was stricken to the heart and its very sky darkened by the Crucifixion. And we also seem removed by centuries from the time when certain lips (which could not open but to speak truth whether simplest or deepest) had said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . behold, your

house is left unto you desolate!" and when Jesus "wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." On the contrary, we are in fact separated only by weeks from the dread solemnities of the Crucifixion, and scarcely by months from the lamentations of Jesus over Jerusalem. Yet the sun is shining again; storm, darkness, and nothing less than the chill of severest winter are passed over; and summer days, with striking similarity to the best of those of Jesus himself, burst on Jerusalem. Surely it is second summer with Jerusalem. Reminiscences of bright days, indeed, these were, and they were bright in their own brightness; yet, alas! to linger but for a while. Meantime what a touching evidence they were, for Jerusalem, of the unrevengefulness of Jesus, of his forgivingness, of the very *wisefulness* of his loving-kindness! Let us notice the distinguishing features of these days.

I. THEY ARE A GLORIOUS REPRODUCTION OF SOME OF THE GRANDEST OF THE DAYS OF CHRIST'S OWN MINISTRY. That such a thing could be said with literal truth was part (1) of the condescension of Jesus; again, it came (2) of the genuine reality contained in the profession that he wore human nature; and (3) of the one absorbed interest of his heart in the work of man's salvation. The point is surely worthy of attention, so beautiful in its own moral bearings; so significant of the intention of Jesus to share his ultimate triumph and glory with his own people, and their captains and princes not last; and so great a contrast to the methods and the "inward thoughts" of the "world" and "the kings of the earth." Jesus is not of those who would cut off from the followers in his train those who might be successful imitators of his career, sharers of his renown. He is exactly the opposite of this. He calls, invites, incites us all to seek to be in every best sense imitators of him, and promises that so we shall not fail of a just share of his renown. The likeness between these days and days in the ministry of Jesus Christ is patent in respect of: 1. The miracles which found a place in them. 2. The beneficent character of those same miracles. 3. The abundance and the variety of them—ranging from the healing of "the sick" to the healing of those "vexed with unclean spirits." 4. The very methods by which the friends of the afflicted compassed the bringing of them within the reach of the "virtue" which in some way "came out" of the apostles. The "touch of the hem of the garment" must be allowed to be equalled by the device of securing the chance for some impotent man of the "shadow of Peter . . . overshadowing him." 5. The eager, longing, thirsting appropriation of such blessings on the part of the masses of the people. Crushed by want, by suffering, by sin; hope, light, nay, almost the mind crushed out of them;—with what irresistible, unceremonious tide do these ever press forward, and sweep round or over every obstacle, when genuine help, precious, precious, precious salvation proffers itself! What care *they* for Sanhedrim and Sadducee? *They* are the rulers, and the others are cowed and cover before them. 6. The widespread practical success of the miracles—"they were healed every one." 7. The moral triumph which "the people" accord to the authors, or those who appear as the authors, of their blessings. They repudiate sophistication, and "render honour to whom honour is due." Indeed, there are not wanting very satisfactory and sufficient indications now that "the people," on the one hand, rendered to the apostles the distinction justly due to them as the trusted servants of their vanished Master, and, on the other, recognized the fact that "the power was of God." Infidelity was not altogether either the prevalent or the hardened fact in some directions then that in some directions it is now. "The people" had a great idea of the impregnability of the position of the man who did "works such as none other could do," and "such as no man could do save God were with him."

II. THEY GIVE NOW WITH UNCHALLENGEABLE AUTHORITY THEIR PROPER DIGNITY AND STATUS TO THE COMPANY OF THE APOSTLES. Peter and John are the two apostles whose names and whose work had hitherto received prominence. Of these Peter has been with evident and with *just* design by far the more prominent. Till Paul shall come upon the scene he will also remain similarly conspicuous. But during these days the whole college of the apostles seem to receive the baptism of their *work*, as on the day of Pentecost they had received the baptism of the Spirit for it. They are "all with one accord in Solomon's porch." And the chief evidence of the dignity and status, not artificial but real, which were now given to them, may perhaps be best expressed in a somewhat antithetical mode of statement, viz. that (1) while "the people magnified

them" with hearty acclamation for instant and grateful acknowledgment, (2) "no man of the rest" (i.e. presumably of those who would not care to be classified altogether among "the people," and who would have been quite prepared to snatch at any possible dignity at which they could "dare" to snatch) "durst join himself" to those apostles. They did not dare this, because their abilities could be immediately put to the proof. They did not dare it, because of the warning, so fresh, of the end of Ananias, when he had tampered with the sacredness of the society organized by the apostles. And likely enough, in many cases, they did not dare it from a sincere awe and an intelligent, respectful reverence for men who were doing the things that the apostles were now doing. Any way, the result was obtained that round these apostles was drawn the cordon of a moral regard and a moral support, which would be a strong comfort to the believers and a strong condemnation to the unbelievers. A very few hours were to find the use of this. And a very few hours would show that it inferred no danger of the access of superficial vanity or the incursion of deeper pride.

III. THEY GO BEYOND OTHER MOST SACRED DAYS OF MIRACLE IN THE DIRECT SPIRITUAL RESULTS WHICH THEY RECORD. (Ver. 14.) It is quite possible that, among the "multitudes both of men and women" who now were "added to the Lord," some may have proved apostates as time went on. On the other hand, the supposition would be most gratuitous that any disproportionate number turned thus away. The fair inference from what is said here and from the tenor of the history that follows would be, if anything, in a contrary direction. Assuming this or contenting ourselves readily with the other and lower estimate, in either case we are justified in noting the kind of use to which at this time miracle was ordained to be subservient. It is not to be disputed that the fervent attachment which bound not a few to the person, yes, and to the character and truth, of Jesus during the days of his flesh was awakened and fixed by some miracle that he had wrought for them or theirs. Nor need it be denied that that attachment answered to a genuine spiritual change, a change of heart, evidencing itself in a change of life. Nevertheless, it can scarcely be said that this was the clear rule in the operation of the miracles of Jesus, or that this was their aim. Neither, perhaps, now was this the primary object of the miracles and "the many signs and wonders wrought by the hands of the apostles." But the miracles were distinctly the pioneers of those spiritual results. In the track of miracle went a most efficacious working of the convincing and converting Spirit! The miracle drew many together; it awakened and held the attention; it undoubtedly did have this practical and so far forth moral effect, viz. the effect of compelling many to say, "*Lo, God is here!*" and to feel it. To deny the possibility of a miracle falls nothing short of denying a personal God. To allow the fact of any individual miracle is to allow that God is offering to the help of a poor memory, to the help of a struggle always arduous enough against sense and the numbing sway of habit, to the help of conviction itself, the enlivening touch of his personal presence. Sophistry has a vanity in weaving its web to snare miracle, but vainly weaves. The faith that inheres in the world's great heart is too strong for it, and sweeps away that vanity with equal ease and contempt. In the track, then, of miracle viewed for a moment *thus*, it is quite optional what follows. The miracle, like all other mercy, may be to condemnation, as Jesus said, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin" (John xv. 22, 24). The miracle may be what it so often was in the very dearest specimens of it, those of Jesus himself, to the great gratification of curiosity—that of people, of priest, and of ruler, and after a while to their deeper sleep and their more reckless disbelief. But it may also be all the blessed contrary. In the track of what or of whom would the quickening, enlightening, convincing, converting Spirit himself rather follow? And this is what was seen now. When Jesus himself wrought his own mightiest works, the Spirit's course seemed restrained. But, wonderful grace! when his disciples and apostles are facing the world and encountering the inevitable dangers involved in doing so, mighty miracles are brought home by the mightier Spirit, and *spiritual results* follow such as may be described in terms unknown to the lifetime of Jesus himself. "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." Nevertheless, then were plainly fulfilled the words of Jesus to his disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He

that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do: because I go unto my Father" (John xiv. 12).—B.

Vers. 17—40.—*A grand victory for the truth along the whole line; all the positions of the enemy taken.* The few hours that were covered by this portion of the history must have been hours charged with confirmation of the faith for the apostles. It is not merely that they are again attacked and again get in the end the victory, but that every position is carried for them by some strong arm invisible. It is not altogether the force of the truth, at least of the truth as spoken and spoken by them; still less is it their own force that gains this glorious and memorable day, although doubtless both of these are involved in the day's achievements. But there was a "fighting from heaven" for them, "and the stars in their courses fought against" their enemies. And as nothing so much daunts an enemy as the impression of this latter, so nothing can be conceived more reinforcing to the faith and courage of the army or the general who have evidence of the former. While, then, the bold and faithful utterance of "all the words of this life" was now the loving care of the apostles, God's watchful providence and the living Spirit whom Christ sent made the "heaven that fought for" them. We may view the present portion of the Church's history under this light. It is the history of a succession of incidents, every one of which shows the foe as the party signally discomfited. The apostles are still the representatives of the Church. They sustain the brunt of any attack. And it is noteworthy that at present, so far as we read, no private member of the Church is exposed to any similar treatment. Notice, then—

I. THE INCIDENT OF A NEW TRIAL OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IMPRISONMENT. The high priest and those who were acting with him had not, it appears, learned the lesson which their former failure might well have taught them. It had been attended by circumstances and followed by a sequel which should have made a lasting impression on their memory. But memory's good offices were scorned, and wisdom's lessons set at nought and lost. The experiment is to be tried again, whether certain facts to which the word of the apostles gives great notoriety, with certain comments upon them and explanations of them, can be hushed up, and a prison's doors be mightier than miracles. This very point was soon settled, and in the shape that should have carried conviction and reproof in equal proportions. It is to be remembered that the imprisonment policy stands condemned, not altogether necessarily in itself, but emphatically, in this case, because the facts to which the apostles gave the notoriety so unwelcome to the authorities were facts within the knowledge of those same, and because the whole action of the apostles had the abundant attestation of surpassing miracles. Mouths can be stopped by imprisonment, no doubt. And the method may, no doubt, be a legitimate method, even though there be allowed to be *primâ facie* a likely moral danger attaching to it. That danger has shown itself so repeatedly and so malignantly—in matters of religion to the oppressing of the conscience, in matters of science to the clouding of the prospects of truth and the growth of knowledge. But the point of interest and at the same time the hopelessness of the present conflict turned on the fact that the method of imprisonment attempted to stop the mouth of *God's Word* and truth. The enemy was confounded signally. An "abundant door" of exit from the prison for the apostles made a more than ever "abundant door of entrance" for the truth, and it occasioned "great boldness" of utterance of "all the words of this life" in the temple of temples, and before the enemy was so much as awake.

II. THE INCIDENT OF A SECOND TRIAL OF ARRAIGNMENT BEFORE THE COUNCIL. 1. In this proceeding embarrassment awaited the council; they stumble upon the very threshold. The prisoners are duly sent for, but they are not to be found. The prison is there; the keepers are there; the doors were shut with all appearance of safety, and if they had been opened, there is not a sign of it nor of any violence that might have effected it; the keys are neither lost nor injured; and the locks are not disobedient to their own keys, as though they had been tampered with. Yet to what all this, when the prison itself proves as empty as ever place was? The officers return with tale and face, no doubt, equally blank; but blankest of all was the astonishment of those in authority under these new circumstances. That "they were in doubt concerning them" (*sc.* the apostles) was no unnatural, no unlikely account of the case in which "the high priest,

and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests" found themselves. And perhaps it might have suited them and their reputation about as well if all had ended here. But this was not to be. They had meddled with strife, nay, had not "forborne them meddling with God" (2 Chron. xxxv. 21); and they shall not "leave off contention" before it has worsened them signally, decisively. For: 2. A sudden relief from undignified bewilderment leaves them no choice but to go on with a prosecution, hazardous much more to those who prosecute than to those who are prosecuted. That by this time they began to feel this there are not wanting certain indications. (1) Though the narrative is very concise, very condensed, it does not omit to describe the tender handling of the prisoners found speaking in the temple—a tender handling the more notable because they were escaped prisoners. "The captain and officers went and brought them without violence; for they feared the people, lest themselves should be stoned"—an unfavourable predicament, all things considered, certainly. (2) Presumably because the narrative is very condensed it asks a second thought on our part as to what is the precise meaning when it is said, "The high priest, and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests . . . doubted concerning *them* [i.e. the apostles], whereunto this would grow." We take it that their innermost darkness began to be harassed with dawning day; their innermost mind with dawning convictions that they had a very new sort of men to deal with; their conscience with dawning of a fear very unfamiliar to their hitherto manner of hearing themselves toward that same conscience. Possibly, more than possibly afterwards, the same messenger who brought word as to where the apostles were and what they were doing stated also *the* apostles' account of how they had got out of the prison. He would have ample time to do this while the captain and the officers went to bring them. That awkward interval must have been filled up *somehow* by the dismayed court. Nor can there be a doubt that it was filled up with abundant talk and question and discussion. This or some such view is, it appears to us, essentially corroborated by the apparent silence of the court, when the apostles were at last ushered into its presence, as to their escape, and by its sedulous abstinence from any interrogations upon the matter. *Silence* absolute on that subject were certainly their best wisdom when they had heard the real facts, and, hearing, had seen them with eyes forced open. The silence of the narrative is one thing, and is a token of historic accuracy and fidelity. The silence of the court is another thing, and is a touch true enough to nature, in fact, a great demonstration of nature, which sometimes, in the supreme effort to cover defeat, then most convicts itself of defeat. What, therefore, with a certain underswell and muttering of conscience first, and then with the uneasiness wrought by the plain discovery of how things had been, it may be reasonably imagined that the high priest and those associated with him wished already that they were well clear of the whole matter. 3. But the moment has come for the arraignment itself. It is at all events plain, its meaning and its implications not obscure. "You have disobeyed our strict command, have filled Jerusalem with the doctrine we disapprove, and are going far to fix on us the responsibility and possibly the vengeance of the blood of this man." Probably a spirit of contempt and an intention to express it thinly veiled growing fear, when they use the words, "this name," and "your doctrine," and "this man's blood," instead of naming the Name that was already "above every name," and naming the doctrine which was certainly not "the doctrine nor after the commandments of men" (Col. ii. 22), and naming "the blood which speaketh better things than that of Abel." 4. But the challenge is at once accepted by the apostolic band. They admit their disobedience to human command. They assert their obedience to Divine command, and assert the necessity of it—its moral *ought*. They at once honour, by a firm and repeated utterance of it, the Name which had just been *sorrily* flouted, but which, in very deed, designated One who had known the unprecedented transitions of resurrection and ascension, and who owned to the titles of Prince and Saviour of mankind. His princely gift is the power of "repentance," his saving gift is the "remission of sins." Occupying a position of vast moral purchase over their judges, the apostles do not propose to shield these from an iota of their responsibility. *They* had declined to name the Name of Jesus; the apostles do not shrink at all from naming the name of their sin and guilt, nor forbear to describe them as the persons answerable for the blood of Jesus. "Whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree." And so they make out their text. We "ought to obey God." And as God,

the God of *our* fathers, was he who "raised" Jesus, and who "exalted" him, *we* are *his* "witnesses," in these glorious wonders, of the history of his Son Jesus. And Peter adds, in one of the most pronounced of the claims of inspiration peculiar to revelation, that, in saying so much, he means that "the Holy Ghost" in them is the real Witness, that Holy Ghost whom God gives to those who obey him. That *God is to be obeyed*, probably the now judges of the apostles would not presume to deny. Peter and the apostles have made out their case when they have proved that this is all to which their censured and imprisoned conduct amounts. So the close of their defence clenches the opening of it.

III. THE INCIDENT OF A FRESH EXPERIENCE OF HELPLESS INCAPACITY IN THE COUNCIL. This experience was ushered in, indeed, by one of a far more pronounced character. In a word which itself expresses an intensity of suffering, we are told that they of the council "were cut" to the quick, and in the first paroxysm of agony saw no option but to slay their prisoners. The apostles were again called upon to retire from the court (ch. iv. 15) while the state of things was deliberated. And "in the multitude of counsellors was found safety" of some sort at least, and of some brief duration, thanks to the sage prudence that dwelt in one of them, and apparently only one. Note here to what different issue men have been cut to the heart. 1. Some to deep penitence, contrition, conversion; so Peter (Luke xxii. 61, 62), and the first converts (ch. ii. 67). 2. But other some to deeper condemnation, and suicide either actual or moral; so Judas (Matt. xxvii. 4, 5), and those here described, with many an ancestor, many a descendant. The blindness of intense anger and the malignant action of intense chagrin may be ranked among the certain precursors of incapacity, but here they reveal it too. And that we read under these conditions, "they take counsel to slay them," serves little more than to make assurance doubly sure that helpless floundering is the present order of things at the ostensible seat of justice.

IV. THE INCIDENT OF A FRESH UNDIGNIFIED ESCAPE FROM AN UNDIGNIFIED POSITION. A Pharisee—save the mark!—leads the way out. And the way out leads just *back* by the way they came in. That the members of the council put themselves as far as possible just where they were before they stirred at all in the matter is the policy which Gamaliel propounds. It comes to this, that he forcibly argues it were by far the best thing to eat their own, both words and deeds. The conservative shrewdness and blandness of this advice, and of the courteous way in which it is advanced, are equally unmistakable and in a sort admirable. It were uncharitable, however, to deny that it is open to intrinsic commendation also. 1. Gamaliel has noted and treasured and now uses well the lessons of history. 2. Evidently he is before his time, and has a large and open eye for the principles of even civil liberty. 3. More remarkably still, he seems to have grasped the principle and the *very basis* of the principle of religious liberty. "These men" (ver. 35) are to be looked at, as some possibly sacred thing should be looked at. "These men" (ver. 38) are to be "let alone," as men possibly doing "the work of God." And their present would-be judges are to "refrain from" them, because they ought themselves to shrink, *for their own sake*, from incurring even the distant responsibility of "fighting against God." The principle of religious liberty always postulates these two aspects—one presenting the view of the harm that may be done to others by hampering their moral convictions or nature; the other the harm that may be done to self in challenging the most solemn and critical responsibilities which even "angels might fear." 4. It is difficult to resist the impression that Gamaliel was one of those who were "not far from the kingdom of God." The narrative scarcely warrants our saying that he had a leaning to "these men" himself. But this "doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people" (ver. 34), does seem to have had this of religion in him, that "he feared God," and that he dared to say it in connection with taking a very unpopular side. To the advice of Gamaliel his fellow-councillors "agreed," glad to escape the position in which they again found themselves. They retreated from it for reasons which Gamaliel takes the credit of putting before them, but which should have been before them long before, and should have saved them from being where they now were. They do retreat, they know they are in the wrong, they are morally again beaten; but the only thing which would have taken from their retreat the description *undignified* is withheld, for they do not *confess* their error. On the contrary, we notice—

V. LASTLY, THE INCIDENT OF A GRATUITOUS BEATING OF THE APOSTLES AND A BARREN COMMAND LAID UPON THEM. Whatever may be thought or charitably hoped of Gamaliel, the adviser in this crisis, very clear it is that those whom he had influenced had no deeper sympathies with the grounds of his advice. Against these they now as much sin in principle as if they had laid violent hands on the apostles, according to the first dictates of their rage. And so again do these men drop awhile from our sight. They drop into the ignominious shade, while it fares far otherwise with their beaten, commanded, but withal released prisoners. Cruelty is the covering with which cowardice now chooses to take its unavailing chance of concealing defeat already too shameful, but which rather adds to it and to the revealing of it. They disappear from view, "beating" the apostles, and "commanding them not to speak in the Name of Jesus." But it is a token of the literal fact that they themselves have been ignominiously beaten along the whole line of battle, the apostles and the truth and "the Name of Jesus" winning the day.—B.

Ver. 20.—*The theme of themes: the angel's charge.* "Go, . . . speak . . . of this life." There can be no doubt as to what is essentially the reference in *this* expression used by the angel. But whence the angel, so to say, borrowed it admits of a thought and a question. The angel speaks of the *life* involved in the fact of the Resurrection—that fact so unwelcome to the pinched, impoverished Sadducees, who now were the leading persecutors of the apostles. However great the single fact of the resurrection of Jesus, its greatness is magnified by some infinite number, when we regard it as an earnest and "firstfruits" of very much in its train. Had it been a *unique* fact, and been designed to remain so, it would have been shorn of the crown of its glory. *Solitary* grandeur and majesty must necessarily have robbed it of its power to thrill unnumbered millions with hope and joy, and to point all humanity to the one quarter from which light arises to it. And probably the simplest will be the best account of the angel's naming it "*this* life." "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of *this* life," viz. the life which has been the unceasing theme now for some days, of your thought, your one unbroken affection, and your testimony. We have here an angel's charge. Let us notice of what it is made up. The angel urges—

I. THAT THE LIFE WHICH IS TO SUPERSEDE THE PRESENT LIFE OF EARTH IS NOW TO BE THE BURDEN OF THE APOSTLES' PREACHING. Some persons object to the prominence given in preaching to what is to come and the circle of subjects involved therein. They think it unnatural, artificial. However, *not* to do this is to put off again the unspeakable advantages of revelation. That the practical duty of the present life should be preached by the Christian preacher is a truism. That it should be preached without the light of the eternal future, and what is most *distinctive* of it revealed in Scripture, is to turn the back on the priceless gift of revelation. Hence come the mightiest of living practical impulses for right, for elevated, for holy life on earth. The mind stirs with a new and wondering gaze; the imagination is divinely tempted—not to be either deluded in the nature of what it takes hold upon or defrauded in the measure of it; and the heart is reached to its deepest wants. The infinitely enlarged horizon that comes of the revelation of eternal life does neither affect nor for a moment wish to alter the foundations of moral truth and of duty. But it does throw a light and colour and interest into the very midst of them, and for the mass of mankind first brings them into the class of acknowledged practical forces. At any time machinery is one thing, and motive force another. Christ's destruction of the boundary view death, and his illimitable extension of the boundary view onward to eternal life, legitimately make the very essence (not at all of the foundations of morality, but) of a very large part of the force of his appeal to mankind. The angel's charge is dead contrary to anything looking in the direction of affecting to be able to dispense with his method or to throw it at all into the shade. And the centuries that have passed since the angel released the apostles at early dawn from prison, and bade them go and preach "the words of this life," have vindicated his charge. The preaching that has been filled with moral aphorisms has been dead and barren of force. That which has reverently but confidently dealt with the tremendous realities of the great future unseen—unseen except by the light of revelation and faith—has been

the preaching that has been fruitful of influence and has shown changed hearts and changed lives.

II. THAT "THIS LIFE" SHALL BE THE SUBJECT OF UNIVERSAL APPEAL TO "THE PEOPLE." The distinguishing facts or doctrines of Christianity know no distinction of *esoteric* and *exoteric*. They are what may be understood of the people, and they are what may be trusted to the people. Sadducees and others, not a few who would profess themselves conversant with these higher matters of life and its outlook, are putting from them their grand opportunity. But to "the people," "the gospel," "the words of this life," are preached. The gospel is to try its genius and its force among them, and then it tries it ever, not altogether in vain. It is to be noticed that this crowning doctrine or fact of the future life or eternal life is (1) to be announced in closest connection with the personal history of Jesus Christ—with his Resurrection; and (2) that it is to be announced with all the fulness and variety of which it may admit—"All the words of this life" are to be enlarged on without stint: (a) what it is in its own intrinsic self, (b) what it is as gained for man by Christ, (c) what it is as illustrated by Christ's own resurrection.

III. THAT THE APPEAL SHALL BE FEARLESSLY MADE BY MEN, MERE MEN, MEN UNASSISTED BY ANY EARTHLY POWER AND EXPOSED TO ALL EARTHLY DANGERS. Jesus Christ has done his work, so far as the part of it on earth was concerned. Angels, it clearly appears, have their share too in furthering the work of Christ on earth. But their share is of a more indirect kind. When Jesus goes, *men*, feeble, erring, sinful *men*, are called to take up the work, are honoured to take it up. Let this mean what it may, and harmonize with what it may or may not, the fact merits probably more thought than all it has yet received. And if it is to be rightly estimated, equal regard must be paid to two facts—(1) that man is to be the worker, and that (2) *the man* who is thus to work is to be one "called" and one qualified by the Holy Spirit. Thus called and thus equipped within, he is to "go, and stand," *as though* in unassisted strength, and to stand in the place of courted and solemn observation, in the publicity of "the temple," and to take heed that he "speak to the people *all* the words of this life."—B.

Ver. 41.—*Joy in the fellowship of shame.* "And they departed . . . for his Name." The great types of Christian character begin to show themselves. The appearances which we have here before us are unusual. They mean something very *unreal* or else they begin to speak something true to a higher nature than that commonly found among men. It is against the grain of nature to rejoice in suffering and pain; it is yet more against the grain of a high nature to rejoice in "shame." There must have been potent causes at work when men are to be found rejoicing in suffering shame, and in being "counted worthy to suffer shame." Neglecting the supposition, which could not be sustained in this case, that there was any affectation on the part of the apostles, it would be still open to question whether this attitude were a justifiable one, whether it were a lovely one, whether it did not betray a disdainful tendency, looking toward haughtiness, with regard to their fellow-men. Perhaps these considerations will be best met by simply asking on what grounds and moved by what influence the apostles now rejoiced.

I. THEY REJOICED IN A CERTAIN FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING. They are not of those who stoically glory in "suffering." They are not of those who cynically or self-relyingly glory in "shame." They have not courted the one nor flippantly encountered the other. And these facts shelter them from blameworthiness, which might otherwise have very possibly lain at their door. It is a shame already existing, and which has already dragged a long suffering with it and after it—a shame unoriginated by themselves or by anything in themselves—that they are willing, glad, proud to share. This at once lends a character to their rejoicing, and lifts it above a common kind of joy. There has, indeed, been an abundance of shame in the world, and of suffering consequent upon it, that could not in the very nature of things have shed any glory on the principals concerned in them. Yet that abundance of shame and suffering has found a very field of glory, new untrodden paths of glory, and lofty heights of glory for not a few, who, having no part in the guilt, have voluntarily entered into fellowship with the suffering, and the suffering of shame, which it has involved. And

here may be said to glimmer forth one of the greater moral facts of our nature. To offer to share and to be permitted to share the joy and prosperity of another can yield little praise to him who offers, may yield some to the person who permits; but to volunteer to share, while innocent one's self, the ignominy and suffering of another is all honour to him who volunteers—in *ordinary* cases mostly humiliation to him who receives the advantage of that fellowship. To him, however, whose suffering of shame the apostles now rejoiced to share, humiliation of this kind there was none.

II. THEY REJOICED IN A FELLOWSHIP OF SHAME WHICH, BY THE MEMORIES ATTACHING TO IT, WAS TURNED FOR THEM INTO HONOUR AND GLORY. 1. It "gathered round" Christ himself, One whom they knew to be supremely great, supremely good. The centre of this fellowship was their own old matchless Friend, who had been such a Teacher, such an Example to them; whom they had seen do so many mighty and gracious works for others; whom they had watched for three years, and more and more wondered at, admired, and loved; whom they had seen tried for no offence, and condemned with no guilt on him, and crucified for sins not his own; whom a self-denying grave had restored, and a self-opening heaven had received; and of whom a descending omnipotent Spirit had given abundant and most touching attestation that he had not forgotten those same disciples, nor the word of his gracious promise to them. 2. It "gathered round" One of whom each of those apostles had, no doubt, his own individual and most precious remembrances. Take *one* example—Peter. What memories he had of Jesus! And now that, beyond all he believed of Jesus, before he suffered death, being "the Son of the living God," he *knew* him to be such, how intensified in significance many of those memories must have become!—but not least that of his own at one time great reluctance to share his suffering Master's shame, and his thrice-repeated denial of him! What a blessed revelation for Peter! And what a forgiving condescension of the great Master, that he permits Peter now to take the lead of his fellow-disciples, and gives him the opportunity of showing how he would, if he could, *fairly* repair his old grievous transgression! Personal experience of Jesus Christ brings any one of us to a much more hearty and thorough readiness of surrender to him than all that mere description of him avails to do, though you add to it a willing admiration. 3. It "gathered round" One whose suffering and shame the apostles specially knew to be so unmerited, so absolutely uncaused by self and unendured for any necessity of discipline, improvement, or punishment to self. And yet the suffering and shame had been extreme, and, they well knew it, had been borne so patiently, so meekly, and so forgivingly. How thinking, grateful hearts must have longed, when now at last they were fully enlightened, to share ever so small a portion of his unmerited shame, though he himself had passed on and up, if it should serve his cause! We wonder nothing at the true devotion of those released apostles, but is there no room left for a wonder at the rare reproduction amongst ourselves of the same devotion? Evidently the Spirit had wrought in those apostles a real *sympathy* with the heart of Jesus, so that they felt this an honour, not such as the world giveth, that they were permitted, were "counted worthy," to stand in any sense on the same level of suffering and of shame with him. Though they might not, could not, suffer the same intensity of suffering as Jesus, yet they could suffer for the same sort of reasons.

III. THEY REJOICED IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF SHAME WITH ONE WHO OWNED TO A NAME IN THE FUTURE GLORY OF WHICH THEY HAD UNQUALIFIED FAITH. "For his Name." Doubtless it has been these eighteen centuries the mightiest force and motive of all. The apostles did not rejoice to suffer with Jesus or in the track of him merely because of their grateful memories, but also because of their exulting *faith* in him and the career that awaited him. Their very love to "his Name" did not feed only on past mercies and pensive memories; these, indeed, were dainty and tender pasturage for it; but it fed also on the stronger food of faith. "For his Name" was equivalent to an assertion of all he would do and all he would be to the world, as well as all he had done and suffered for it. And hence we are immediately told with what redoubled energy, with what gladdened courage, the apostles did not cease to teach and to preach Christ "in the temple, and in every house." Well might men rejoice to be "counted worthy to suffer shame for *his* Name," when that Name means all that *has* been in living form most loving and most beautiful, and all that *is* to be greatest and most powerful in the world's onward history, till its glory shall culminate in the day

of triumph in heaven. The apostles loved the Name of Jesus; they had come to have a perfect faith in it; they had been divinely endowed with a full sympathy with all they could understand of it; and now they were learning, in practical work and in suffering, the things which would make them really like to him who bore that Name. The "Name" of Christ turned the cross from shame into glory. It now does yet more—it turns living men's estimates right round from the false and the unreal to the real and the true. That in which they once gloried becomes their shame, and the reproach of Christ their riches, honour, and glory. So did this Master of men's hearts, sympathies, and lives, among other things that he did by the humiliation and shame to which he bowed, secure also disciples and servants of inflexible fidelity and quenchless devotion and love.—B.

Vers. 3, 4.—The conviction of Ananias. St. Peter was, by natural disposition and the general consent, spokesman and interpreter for the Church. He could not have uttered these words to Ananias without a painful recalling of his own sin in the three-fold denial of his Lord, and his own conviction of his sin at the sound of the cock-crowing. But compare St. Peter's sin with that of Ananias, and show why recovery was possible in his case, but only overwhelming judgment in the case of Ananias. We must also understand that the Holy Spirit gave St. Peter special knowledge of Ananias's deception, and guided him in what was said and done. Compare Joshua's dealing with Achan.

I. THE CONVICTION AS EXPRESSED BY ST. PETER. He urges: 1. That evil, in the shape of temptation, had been unresisted. The question "Why?" implies that resistance to the temptation had been possible. Had he resisted the tempter, he would have fled from him (Jas. iv. 7). 2. That Ananias was under no kind of compulsion. He was not bound by any rule of the Church. If he had brought, and called it, part, or if he had brought nothing, he could not have been blamed. If he was moved to sell he should honestly set forth what he had done with the money. Man from his fellow-man at least looks for sincerity and truthfulness. 3. And that while Ananias had only purposed to deceive the apostles, he had really been trying to deceive God, who dwelt, by his Spirit, in the apostles and in the Church. "Or, to state it as Peter stated it three hours after to the woman, this couple put God, the all-knowing Spirit, to the proof, tried him whether he would let himself and his Holy Church be taken in with a lie."

II. THE CONVICTION AS FELT BY ANANIAS. Throughout he must have borne an uneasy conscience, and in response to St. Peter's words it smote him hard. Shame and guilt overwhelmed him, and may even in part be allowed to explain his sudden death. Dr. Plumptre says, "In such a case we may rightly trace that union of natural causation and Divine purpose which we express in the familiar phrase that speaks of 'the visitation of God' as a cause of death. The shame and agony of detection, the horror of conscience not yet dead, were enough to paralyze the powers of life."

III. THE CONVICTION AS CONFIRMED BY GOD. In the death of Ananias, and in the death taking place in such a sudden and awful manner. "In this case it is plain that the death of Ananias is an event supernaturally arranged by a higher power, because it is connected with the penal sentence of the apostle, which was spoken in the power of the Spirit." It may be pointed out that the Divine judgment here concerns only the sudden death, and the veil is not lifted to show us the eternal judgment, the secret Divine dealings with this so sadly erring disciple. Compare the teachings of such passages as 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Pet. iv. 6.

Impress that, however our sin may be covered over and hidden from our own view now by self-delusions, the time of conviction must come sooner or later. A man must presently see his sin as it is, and see himself as he is. The conviction may come wholly by *Divine inward leadings*, it may come through *providential circumstances*, or it may be started by the *word of some teacher or friend*. Happy, indeed, is he who is brought to conviction *in time*—in time to seek pardon and eternal life in that living Saviour who is "exalted to give repentance and remission of sins."—R. T.

Vers. 7—10.—Helpers in sin must be sharers in judgment. The share taken by Sapphira was manifestly a *prominent* and an *active* one. She and her husband were

at full accord in the matter; and her sin is the more aggravated as she had a longer time to think it over, and had evidently planned what she would say and do if any remarks were made by the apostles or the brethren as to the gift of the land. "The question asked by St. Peter gave her an opening for repentance. It had been in her power to save her husband by a word of warning protest. It was now in her power to clear her own conscience by confession. She misses the one opportunity as she had misused the other. The lie which they had agreed upon comes glibly from her lips, and the irrevocable word is spoken."

I. THE COMMON JUDGMENT. The same fate overtook both, as they had joined together in the sin. Compare the cases of Dathan and Abiram. There was union: 1. In the slow judgment of the deteriorated and debased soul. And this is ever the first form of the Divine judgment on the sinner. Hardening of heart, deadening of conscience, cherishing of blinding and fatal delusions, are as truly direct judgments of God, ever working, as sudden death. This truth needs to be seen more clearly and impressed more constantly. 2. In the swift and immediate judgment of the sudden death, which, in the second case, was prophetically declared to be God's witness to the exceeding heinousness of their sin. The life of all men is in God's hands, and we may well "fear him who can cast body and soul into hell." "The lives of all men are in his hand. Daily he is cutting them off in a moment—even hot with lust or red-handed from crime. His doom now and then antedates the slower processes of human law. The time and fashion of all our deaths are with him. If one day his mercy turned to judgment, and he took from the earth two forfeited lives for the warning and the bettering of many, who shall say either that the lesson was dearly bought or that the penalty was undeserved? It is well that men should be taught once for all, by sudden death treading swiftly on the heels of detected sin, that the gospel, which discovers God's boundless mercy, has not wiped out the sterner attributes of the judge" (Dr. Dykes).

II. THE MORAL MISSION OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. A solemn awe fell on the minds of all present. Illustrate by impressions now made by a case of sudden death in a congregation, or by such a case as that of Alexis, smitten by lightning at Luther's side. It is said that "great fear came upon all the Church." The Scripture meanings of the word "fear" may be given and illustrated. Here it is a solemn sense of the severity and power of God, and of the strictness of his demands. The members now felt, as they had never done before, what a serious thing it was to make a Christian profession. Dwell on two things. 1. *Fear as solemnizing other professors*, filling them with new thoughts about insincerity, hypocrisy, and covetousness. Reminding them that no man should enter Christ's kingdom without first "sitting down and counting the cost." "The true *ecclesia* must be free from such hypocritical professors, or its work could not advance." "God fills our hearts with the spirit of reverence, truthfulness, and godly fear, lest another spirit fills us with lies, with greed, with vain-glory, and with presumptuous impiety." 2. *Fear as deterring would-be professors*. Persons in all ages are too ready to take up the mere profession of Christ's Name, and such need to be shown that such profession involves *responsibilities* as well as privileges. There is grave danger of our estimating our responsibilities too lightly. The vows of Christ ought ever to be a solemn and a holy burden. "What manner of persons ought we to be?" God is "known by the judgments that he executeth." We still need to recognize his hand, and we must be careful not to lose the impression of his *personality* in the modern sentiment about *law*.—R. T.

Ver. 13.—*Hindrances to belief*. These are suggested by the expression, "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them." It seems that the first body of Christian converts made Solomon's porch their place of assembly. This they did, probably, for the convenience of its situation and arrangement, and possibly for the sake of its association with the teachings of their honoured Master. The historian records that while the opposition of the Sanhedrim was feared, "none of the other people who had not yet joined the new community ventured to attach themselves intrusively to the Christian body." Whatever conviction may have been wrought by the apostolic teaching and miracles, it was repressed, and men were hindered from full confession of their faith in Christ. This is the simplest explanation of the expression, but some think that

reference is intended to the "multitude of those who were not yet converted, but whose attention was at the same time arrested by the spiritual power of Christianity;" or to the "Pharisees, who resorted to the portico, but had not the courage to attach themselves to those with whom they really sympathized." It is evident that there were many *lookers-on*, who, from one cause or another, were hindered from belief. Dr. Dykes says, "To the friendly attitude of the common people there stood contrasted, exactly as during Jesus' ministry, the displeasure of the official and educated classes. . . . Somewhat later a number of the rank-and-file even of the priesthood went over to the new faith. At this period, however, all the sacred and ruling orders appear to have been kept aloof from the Church by a public opinion of their own, so strong that no individual member of these orders had as yet the courage to oppose it." The term, "Of the rest," may include—

I. THE SANHEDRIM PARTY. This partly consisted of Sadducees and partly of Pharisees. Both were hindered from belief in Christ by *prejudice*. Doctrine blinded the Sadducees; pride of ritual holiness blinded the Pharisees. Sadducees were offended by our Lord's miracles and spiritual demands, and hopelessly enraged by the report of his resurrection, which they regarded as a mischievous absurdity and an impossibility. Their doctrines prevented their being persuaded. Pharisees were prejudiced to a ritual system in the observance of which alone could salvation come. To their notions salvation by faith in a person, and such a person as the Nazarene impostor, was, on the face of it, unworthy of intelligent beings. These classes are but examples. Still the prejudice of doctrinal notions, and the delusion that somehow salvation must be *by works*, keep men from Christ.

II. THE ADHERENTS OF THE SANHEDRIM PARTY. All great parties in a state have adherents, hangers-on, people who watch and take their cue from them, and hope to get their own benefit through the party. These men are always ready to avoid what their party avoids, and to shout what their party shouts. Such men there were in Jerusalem at the time of the apostles, and, whatever might be the force of conviction and persuasion brought to bear upon them, they were hindered by *personal interest*. Joining the Christians would not answer their ends, and they could not see their way to offending the party that was in power. Time-servers never can believe until they put away their time-serving. Self-interest and faith cannot dwell together.

III. THE OFFICIALS OF THE TEMPLE. Priests, Levites, door-keepers, singers, etc. These were hindered by the spirit of *officialism*, one of the most narrowing and conservative forces acting on men. The new is always suspected by the official mind. The routine and order must not be touched. There was much, both in our Lord's teaching and in that of his apostles, that could not fail to grieve and alarm the temple officials. And still, stiffened creeds and rigid ecclesiastical forms are often fatal hindrances to those who teach the creeds and minister the forms.

IV. THE RICH MEN OF THE COMMUNITY. These were hindered by observing what a *poor* lot the first Christians were, and class pride kept them from Christ. It was the constant sneer of the enemies of the early Church, and is fully expressed by Celsus, that the Christians were drawn from the very dregs of society, from the publicans and the slaves. Yet we glory in this, that "God hath made the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom."—R. T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Bodily healings may prepare for spiritual ones.* Comparing apostolic miracles with those wrought by our Lord, it should be noticed that he showed power over nature by stilling storms, walking on waters, multiplying food, and withering trees; but the apostles' power was limited to various forms of bodily danger and disease. In each case the miracles illustrated the higher work of those who wrought them. Christ's miracles illustrated his Divine claims and mission as the revelation to men of the Father. Apostolic miracles illustrated their mission to preach Christ to men as the Healer of the soul's disease, Redeemer from sin's penalties, and Saviour from sin. The question is often discussed whether the power of miraculous healing has been lost to the Church. Claim to such power has been made in every age, with more or less confidence, and such claims are made now. Singular and interesting instances of bodily healing in response to faith and prayer are narrated by sober witnesses; and it may be admitted that there are certain classes of diseases

which can be affected and relieved by the strong will and faith of a fellow-creature. But it is difficult for us to recognize the properly *miraculous* character of such cures. We may consider—

I. HEALINGS ALONE. God has provided in nature sufficient and efficient healing agents for all man's diseases. He has given to some among men healing skill, to be used in the service of others. No nobler ministry is entrusted to men than that of healing. A vast and almost overwhelming mass of human suffering calls for the healer's art. Though some forms of bodily disease are beyond human cure, few, if any, are out of the reach of relieving agencies. Apostolic healings materially differed from those of the ordinary doctor. 1. They were immediate. 2. They were without the use of medicinal agencies. 3. They were complete, without peril of any return of the disease. 4. They were wrought by spiritual power—and that not the apostles' own, only operating through them—reaching the very springs of vitality and giving new life. How such healings illustrate the Divine work in sin-sick souls may be fully shown.

II. HEALINGS WITH TEACHINGS. This was the special feature of the apostolic ministry. The end was not reached when a suffering man was cured; that was but the means to a further and higher end, even that *soul-healing* which comes by the reception of Christ the Saviour, whom apostles taught. Illustrate how medical missions are made the agency for winning the attention of the heathen to the gospel message. Point out what are the particular points of spiritual teaching which gain effective illustration from bodily healings; e.g.: 1. The assertion of a necessary relation between sin and suffering. Suffering is no accident, no mere calamity; it is the divinely appointed fruitage and consequence of sin. It is designed to fix the character of sin, to give men conviction through *feeling, vision, and sympathy, of the evil* of sin. When more clearly understood, suffering is seen to be the corrective agency through which man may be delivered from sin. 2. The assertion of the Divine relation to suffering. God does not pass aside of the diseased or disabled; every day he is working gracious works in sick-rooms and hospitals. Of this his constant work Jesus gave full illustrations in his miracles, when he came to "show us the Father;" and of this apostles renewed the assurance when they healed, in Christ's Name, all the sick and suffering ones that were brought unto them. 3. The consequent assertion of the Divine relation to sin. God would not concern himself with the mere effects; we may be quite sure that he deals with the cause. The great Physician is concerned about our *sin*. He would not that any of us should perish in our sins. And, therefore, when the apostles healed a sufferer they preached unto him Jesus, who is precisely this, "God saving men from their sins."—R. T.

Ver. 19.—Angel-help. Angels are constantly referred to in Holy Scripture. The angel-Jehovah, or angel of the covenant, who appeared in human form to the patriarchs as a sign and foreshadowing of the Incarnation, must be distinguished from the ordinary angelic appearances. The Old Testament conception of angels is that they were agents or executors of Divine missions to individual men or to communities. Thus we have angels visiting Sodom; angel of the pestilence; angels guarding Jacob, etc. From the earlier poetical and imaginative point of view, the angels were veritable beings, belonging to other spheres but able to communicate with men in the earthly spheres. To our more formal and scientific notions, angels are regarded as the personification of material agencies, as used by God for moral and religious purposes. "He maketh winds his angels, and flames of fire his ministers." Very little can be really known about angels, and no doctrine of angelology can be pressed on universal acceptance. The New Testament conception of angels is given in Heb. i. 14 (Revised Version), "Are they not all *ministering spirits*, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" The precise work of *ministry* is that entrusted to them, and apostolic assertion of the fact of their ministry is probably designed to oppose the Sadducees' teaching that "there is neither angel nor spirit."

I. ANGEL-HELP AS GIVEN TO CHRIST. The principal instances are: 1. Angel-announcements and preparations for his birth. 2. Angel-comfortings in the time of his desert temptations (Matt. iv. 11). 3. Angel-strengthenings in the moments of his conflict and agony in Gethsemane. 4. Angel-attendance upon his resurrection. 5. Angel-announcements concerning his ascension and his coming again. From these instances we may

learn the kind of help which angels may be expected to give to Christ's tempted and tried disciples.

II. ANGEL-HELP AS REALIZED BY APOSTLES. This took several forms. 1. As deliverance from prison (see text, and incident narrated in ch. xii. 7). 2. As communicating Divine messages (see ch. viii. 26; x. 7). 3. As ensuring safety in times of peril (see ch. xvii. 23). It may be observed that what may be called the *materiality* of the angel began gradually to fade away, and the *visionary* realization of the angel-help took its place. In this we trace the transition to the form in which we now may apprehend the help of the angels. No man may expect such actual working in the physical spheres as St. Peter knew when his prison doors were opened. Even in St. Paul's time this work was done by the natural shakings of the earthquake.

III. ANGEL-HELP AS GRANTED TO US. And we may distinctly affirm that it is granted. The only question is—In what manner do we realize the help? Spiritual forces are around us. We are influenced, for good and for evil, by unknown agencies. This is as yet almost an unstudied Christian phenomenon; one, however, which often brings comfort as a sentiment to pious souls. Such angel-help is very properly put into a secondary place in our consideration when we have a full and strong conviction that the Lord Jesus Christ himself is with us, the Inspiration, Guard, and Guide of our whole life and thoughts. They who consciously realize the presence of the Master will make comparatively little of the presence of the Master's ministers and servants working out his gracious purposes for him. Show *with what limitations* we may properly cherish the idea of angel-help in everything that is good.—R. T.

Vers. 21—24.—*The hopelessness of fighting against God.* The narrative indicates that the Sanhedrim had fully entered on the work of checking and crushing the party of Christ's disciples. Gamaliel expressed what the nature of their action might possibly prove to be—it might be even a "fighting against God." Some effort should be made to realize what they thought about their work, and how they deluded themselves with the notion that they alone were guardians of the truth of God, and in opposing the Christian party were really fighting for God. It is one of the saddest effects of cherished exclusiveness and self-confidence that these things actually blind men, and make it impossible for them to receive truth as newly presented to them. A little self-criticism, a little skill in testing their own motives, would have revealed to these men the low and unworthy passions and prejudices by which they were permitting themselves to be ruled. So often we need to "see ourselves as others see us," and may thankfully welcome any light that reveals ourselves to ourselves. These men were really "fighting against God."

I. IN FIGHTING AGAINST GOD MAN MAY WIN APPARENT AND TEMPORARY SUCCESSES. Only apparent, because they always lead men on to attempt further schemes, which involve them in utter ruin. Only temporary, because God has the long ages in which to secure the outworking of his purposes. Illustrate by the success of the Sanhedrim in the conviction and death of our Lord, and in the imprisonment of the apostles.

II. IN FIGHTING AGAINST GOD MAN DEALS WITH FORCES BEYOND HIS REACH. And they are sure to master him. Compare man's range of power with God's. Illustrate from the treatment of Christ; death was man's limit, resurrection was in God's power. So with apostles; imprisonment was man's limit, angel-deliverance was in God's power. God's miracles then, God's providences and overrulings now, surely mate and master man's utmost antagonism. This is true of persecutions, infidelity, or other forms of attack on Christian men, the Christian faith, or the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—*The present royalty and rights of Jesus.* It is interesting to notice how the Jewish conception of Messiah, as a conquering King of the house of David, gave form and tone to the earlier ideas which the apostles had of their risen and ascended Saviour. He proved, indeed, to be a King in quite another sense than that in which they had regarded him, and at first they felt much disappointment in the crushing of their national hopes; but still they knew that he was a King, they gradually gained clearer notions of the spirituality of his kingdom, and they freely asserted his present royal rights, demanding the immediate submission of men to his authority. The

claim of sovereignty is closely joined to the promise of salvation. "If Christ seeks to rule over men it is that he may save them." It is usual to note the meanings of the Resurrection viewed in its relation to the redemptive scheme; but it is not so usual for Christian teachers to dwell on our Lord's office, dignity, commission, authority, and active operations as exalted to the right hand of the Father. The circle of the Christian doctrine is by no means complete on this side, and the mystery of the Ascension is but very imperfectly unfolded. A sentiment has been allowed to prevail that Christ is practically absent now from us; the affairs of Christ's Church are delegated to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and Christ is coming some day to assume place and power, and establish an everlasting kingdom here on earth. The apostles declare that the Lord is exalted *now* to his royal princely place. They affirm not only that he now has, but also that he now claims, his royal rights. It is not their way of putting it to say that "He *will* take to himself his great power and reign;" they say, "Him hath God exalted," or, as Revised Version, "Him did God exalt." This is a truth which the modern Church needs to have more fully and frequently presented to it. Due attention to it would relieve the tendency to exaggerated representations of salvation by faith in our Lord's *work*. The salvation is revealed to faith in the Lord Christ himself, the Prince and Saviour. Christ is actually *now*—

I. THE PRINCE, OR THE RULING ONE. Explain the ancient *theocracy* as the direct rule of Jehovah, and show that the idea is realized spiritually in our Lord's present relation to his Church. It should be no disability to regenerate and spiritual men that he is *unseen*. The quickened soul can have spiritual communications, and the secret soul-life of the Christian man is his real life. Whoever controls it controls the whole bodily life and relations too. In the line of the text it may be shown that, as Prince, Christ's law and claim, brought home to men's souls, bow them down to penitence; and Christ has in full commission the expression of the Divine mercy in forgiveness and restoration.

II. THE SAVIOUR, OR THE SAVING ONE. Salvation is not declared to be a result of man's faith in Christ's redemptive work, but of man's faith which opens his soul and life to the present redemptive workings of the living Saviour. The moral forces now actually working at the subduing, and persuading, and renewing, and sanctifying of men are the present and active forces of Christ, the exalted and glorified Saviour. So apostles preached unto men "Jesus," bade them open their hearts to his love and power, carry to him the burden of their sins and needs, and expect that he would as really—though in a spiritual manner—deal with them as he dealt with the sorrow and the sins of men while he was with them in the flesh. This is the great glory of the gospel message, and the point of it to which prominence should be given in these our times—"Jesus lives." He is exalted, he holds his commission. His "Father worketh hitherto, and he works." As the *Prince*, he demands our submission and our obedience. As our *Saviour*, he takes our whole case upon him, and delivers, redeems, and sanctifies.—R. T.

Vers. 33—42.—*The advice of the cautious.* Such was Gamaliel. See expository portion for an account of him, and of the rabbinical school to which he belonged. Interest attaches to him as the teacher of Saul of Tarsus, but how great is the contrast between the calm and prudent Gamaliel and the intense and impulsive Saul! The scene in the Sanhedrim when this honoured teacher rose to calm the prevailing excitement, and plead for what he would call a "masterly inactivity," may be effectively pictured. The situation in which the Sanhedrim was placed was an exceedingly difficult one, and certainly one which could not be dealt fairly with while the council was under the influence of roused prejudices and religious excitement. The cautious temperament should be described. Those who have this characteristic quality have their place, their influence, and their work; they are often valuable drags on wheels driven too hurriedly; but they have also their disability, and lack the capacity to enjoy much that appeals to other natures. They know nothing of emotion, enthusiasm, self-forgetfulness, or rapture. Such a one was Gamaliel, and his advice is quite a model of that always given by the cautious man.

I. THE CAUTIOUS MAN FALLS BACK ON PRECEDENT. Gamaliel finds some instances

that had recently occurred and argues from them, much as a modern lawyer does from the "cases" he can cite. Precedents are often very *valuable*. They are often sad *hindrances* to enterprise. They are always most *annoying* to those who are of impulsive temperament. They are a *very doubtful good* to men of faith in a living God, who may be pleased to work in fresh and surprising ways.

II. THE CAUTIOUS MAN HAS CONFIDENCE IN THE WORKING OF NATURAL FORCES. Gamaliel says—Wait and watch the working of these things. Religious excitements tend to exhaust themselves. Mountebanks have no staying power. Leaders of sects want money support, and as soon as this is made apparent their followers dwindle away. There is little need for any interference, the natural process of exhaustion will effect all you want. So, still, the cautious man often checks the energy that would deal vigorously with social and moral evils, such as drinking and vice. Earnest men cannot wait for the long outworking of natural forces. With faith in the God of righteousness, they must enter and deal with the evils as a new redeeming force.

III. THE CAUTIOUS MAN RELIES ON THE EFFECTS OF TIME. Though allied to the previous consideration, this somewhat differs from it. Time allays excitement; time tests the value of all things. And the very heads of the Jewish religious system might surely be satisfied that time would be on their side. But men are "perishing in their sins" while we wait; and the earnest man hears God inspire him to active endeavour when he says, "*Now is the accepted time.*"

IV. THE CAUTIOUS MAN FEARS TO AROUSE OR TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC EXCITEMENT. And no doubt much evil attends such excitement, but worse evils attend stagnation. Public excitement only alarms those who do not want anything *done*. The cautious among us are always seeking to repress special missions, revivals, and reformations, and fear that the blaze blown up so high will soon burn out, and leave only bare cold ashes. Men of faith will ever plead that, maybe, the fire so lighted will burn on for ever. Cautious men may sometimes do good work by wisely checking over-impulsiveness and unduly considered schemes. But they may also check enterprise. They who would do noble work for God must often do as did the great general—land on the enemy's shores and burn the boats.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VI.

Ver. 1.—*Now in these for and in those, A.V.* (it is not *ἐκείνας*, answering to *בְּיָמֵינוּ*, but *ταύτας*); *multiplying for multiplied, A.V.*: *Grecian Jews for Grecians, A.V.* The Grecian Jews; the *Hellenists*, for this is the appellation of them in the Greek; it means properly those who spoke Greek or otherwise followed Greek usages, applied to foreigners, here of course to Jews. Of a similar form and meaning is the word "to Judaize," translated "to live as do the Jews" (A.V., Gal. ii. 14), and the forms "to Demosthenize," "to Platonize," "to Atticize" etc. The Hellenists were those Jews of the dispersion who lived in countries where Greek was spoken, and who themselves spoke Greek. It was for the sake of such that the Alexandrine Version of the Scriptures, commonly called the LXX., was made. Hebrews; Palestinian and other Jews, who spoke Aramaean (2 Cor. xi. 21; Phil. iii. 5; ch. xxi. 40), as opposed to the Hellenists. Their widows. We learn incidentally by this phrase that one of the earliest Christian institutions was an order of widows, who were maintained

at the common cost. We find them in the Church of Joppa (ch. ix. 41), and in the Church of Ephesus (1 Tim. v. 3, 9, 10, 11, 16). They gave themselves to prayer and to works of mercy. Daily; *καθημερινός* only occurs here in the New Testament, and rarely in Greek writers; *ἐφημερίως*, of a daily fever, is used by Hippocrates, and may possibly have suggested the use of this rare word to Luke the physician.

Ver. 2.—*And for them, A.V.*; *fit for reason, A.V.*; *forsake for leave, A.V.* It is not fit; literally, *pleasing*; *ἀπειρόν* is often the rendering of *עַלְמָי* in the LXX.; e.g. Gen. xvi. 6; Deut. xiii. 28. In Exod. xv. 26, Deut. vi. 18, etc., it stands for *עַלְמָי*, that which is right. *Serve tables*. The English reader should remember that the "ministration" of ver. 1, the "serve" of this verse, and the "deacon" which was the name of the new officers, are all forms of the same Greek word (*διακονία, διακονεῖν, διάκονος*). In ver. 4 "the ministry of the Word" is opposed to "the daily ministration" of meat. The passage gives a necessary warning to the ministers of God's Word not to spend too much time and strength upon any secular

work, even though it be a work of charity. They must give themselves to the Word of God and to prayer. There are Christian laity to serve tables.

Ver. 3.—*Look ye out therefore, brethren, from for wherefore, brethren, look ye out, A.V.; good for honest, A.V.; Spirit for Holy Ghost, A.V. and T.R.; of wisdom for wisdom, A.V.* Good report; literally, *borne witness to*; i.e. well spoken of. So in Heb. xi. 5 it is said of Enoch that "he had witness borne to him that he pleased God," and in Heb. xi. 4 of Abel that "he had witness borne to him that he was righteous;" and so in ch. x. 22 Cornelius is said to be a man "well reported of by all the nation of the Jews." In ch. xvi. 2 Timothy is said to be "well reported of (*ἐμαρτυρεῖτο*) by the brethren." The Spirit. The number seven was, perhaps, fixed upon with reference to the exigencies of the service, some think because there were seven tables to be supplied; and partly perhaps from seven being the sacred number, the number of completeness—seven Churches, seven spirits, seven stars, seven children (1 Sam. ii. 5), seven times (Ps. cxix. 164). From seven having been the number of the first deacons arose the custom in some Churches of always having seven deacons, which continued some centuries in the Church of Rome. One of the Canons of the Council of Neocæsarea (A.D. 314) enacted that "there ought to be but seven deacons in any city," and St. Mark is said to have ordained seven deacons at Alexandria (see Bingham, 'Christ. Antiq.,' vol. i. p. 232). But the needs of the Churches gradually superseded all such restrictions. Whom we may appoint. The multitude elect, the apostles appoint. The apostolate appears as the sole ministry of the Church at first. From the apostolate is evolved first the diaconate, afterwards the presbyterate, as the need for each arose (ch. xiv. 23).

Ver. 4.—*Continue stedfastly in for give ourselves continually to, A.V.; in (the ministry) for to, A.V.* Stedfastly. The verb *προσκαρτερέω* is of frequent use in the Acts (see ch. i. 14; ii. 42; v. 46; viii. 13; x. 7; see also Col. iv. 2). It is used of persons and things to which any one adheres closely and perseveringly, which are put in the dative case, as here. But sometimes it has the prepositions *εἰ* or *εἰς* after it, as in ch. v. 46; Hist. of Susann. 7; Rom. xiii. 6.

Ver. 5.—*Holy Spirit for Holy Ghost, A.V.* The mention of Stephen, and the narrative which follows leading up from Stephen's martyrdom to St. Paul (ch. vii. 60), show to what the writer is tending. He selects the incidents in the history of the Church at Jerusalem which connect themselves most directly with that after history which was the object he had in view. It has been

thought by some that the Greek character of all seven names is an indication that they were Hellenists. Such a conclusion, however, is not warranted, as many Jews who were not Hellenists had Greek or Latin names, e.g. Paul, Sylvanus, Aquila, Priscilla, Marcus, Justus, Petrus, Didymus, etc. At the same time, it is likely that some of them were. One, Nicolas, was a proselyte. The object, doubtless, was to ensure perfect fairness of distribution of the Church charities. Stephen and Philip (ch. viii. 5, etc.; xxi. 8) are the only two of whom we know anything beyond their names.

Ver. 6.—When they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. They did not pray without imposition of hands, nor did they lay hands on them without prayer. So in the sacraments, in confirmation, and ordination, the outward sign or rite is accompanied by prayer for the thing signified. And God's grace is given through the sacrament or rite in answer to the prayer of faith (see ch. viii. 15, and the Office for Baptism, the Prayer of Consecration in the Office for Holy Communion, and the Confirmation and Ordination Services). (For the laying on of hands as a mode of conveying a special grace and blessing, see Numb. xxvii. 3; Deut. xxxiv. 9; Matt. xix. 13—15; Luke iv. 40; ch. viii. 17; xiii. 3; 1 Tim. v. 22; Heb. vi. 2.)

Ver. 7.—*Exceedingly for greatly, A.V.* Were obedient to the faith. Compare the phrase, "obedience of faith" or "to the faith" (Rom. i. 5; xvi. 25). The addition of a great multitude of priests was an important incident in the Church's history, both as they were a higher order of men, and a class very liable to be prejudiced against the faith which would rob them of their importance.

Ver. 8.—*Grace for faith, A.V. and T.R.; wrought for did, A.V.; signs for miracles, A.V.* Power (ch. i. 8, note); power to work miracles especially, but also other spiritual power beyond his own natural strength (see ver. 10). This power showed itself in the signs and wonders which he wrought.

Ver. 9.—*But for then, A.V.; certain of them that were for certain, A.V.; of the Cyrenians and of the Alexandrians for Cyrenians and Alexandrians, A.V.; Asia for of Asia, A.V.* Of the synagogue, etc. There were said to have been four hundred and eighty synagogues in Jerusalem alone in the time of our Saviour (Olshausen, on Matt. iv. 23). But this is probably a fanciful number; only it may be taken as an indication of the great number of such places of Jewish worship. Tiberias is said to have had twelve synagogues. Ten grown-up people was the minimum congregation of a synagogue. It seems by the enumeration of synagogues in our text that the foreign

Jews had each their own synagogue at Jerusalem, as Chrysostom supposes, where men of the same nation attended when they came to Jerusalem; for the construction of the sentence is to supply before *Κυρηναίων* and again before *Ἀλεξανδρέων* the same words as precede *Λιβερτινῶν*, viz. *καὶ τῶν ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τῆς λεγομένης*, so as to mean "and certain of them that were of the synagogue called of the Cyrenians," and so on. The very numerous Jews of Cyrene and of Alexandria would doubtless require each a synagogue for themselves. The Libertines were, as Chrysostom explains it, "freemen of the Romans." They are thought to consist chiefly of the descendants of the Jews who were taken prisoners by Pompey, and deported to Rome, who were afterwards emancipated and returned to Judæa, though some (Meyer, i. 1) settled in Rome. Tacitus, under the year A.D. 19, speaks of four thousand Libertini, infected with Jewish or Egyptian superstitions, as banished to Sardinia ('Annat.,' ii. lxxxv.). Many of these must have been Jews. Josephus, who tells the same story as Tacitus, though somewhat differently, says they were all Jews ('Ant. Jud.,' xviii. iii. 5). The Cyrenians. Cyrene was the chief city in North Africa, and a great Jewish colony. Numbers of Jews were settled there in the time of Ptolemy Lagus ('Cont. Apion.,' ii. 4), and are said by Josephus (quoting Strabo) to have been a fourth part of the inhabitants of the city ('Ant. Jud.,' xiv. vii. 2). Josephus also quotes edicts of Augustus and of M. Agrippa, confirming to the Jews of Cyrene the right to live according to their own laws, and especially to send money for the temple at Jerusalem (xvi. vi. 5). Jews from "the parts of Libya about Cyrene" are mentioned in ch. ii. 10; Simon, who bore our Saviour's cross, was "a man of Cyrene;" there were "men of Cyrene" at Jerusalem at the time of the persecution that arose about Stephen (ch. xi. 19); and "Lucius of Cyrene" is mentioned in ch. xiii. 1. It was natural, therefore, that the Cyrenians should have a synagogue of their own at Jerusalem. Of the Alexandrians. Alexandria had a Jewish population of 100,000 at this time, equal to two-fifths of the whole city. The famous Philo, who was in middle age at this time, was an Alexandrian, and the Alexandrian Jews were the most learned of their race. The Jews settled in Alexandria in the time of Alexander the Great and Ptolemy Lagus. The LXX. Version of the Scriptures was made at Alexandria primarily for their use. We may be sure, therefore, that they had a synagogue at Jerusalem. And of them of Cilicia. The transition from the African Jews to those of Asia is marked by changing the form of phrase into *καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ Κιλικίας*.

There were many Jews in Cilicia, and this doubtless influenced St. Paul in preaching there, as well as the fact of its being his own native province (see ch. xv. 23, 41; Gal. i. 21). Josephus makes frequent mention of the Jews in the wars between the Ptolemies and Antiochus the Great, with whom the Jews sided, and in consequence were much favoured by him. And it is thought that many who had been driven out from their homes by the wars, and others who were brought by him from Babylonia, settled in his time in Cilicia, as well as other parts of his Asiatic dominions. Seleucus also encouraged the Jews to settle in the towns of Asia in his kingdom, by giving them the freedom of the cities and putting them on an equal footing (*ισοτέλους*) with Macedonians and Greeks ('Ant. Jud.,' xii. iii. 1, 3). Asia; meaning the same district as in ch. ii. 9 (where see note). Evidence of the abundance of Jews in Asia crops up throughout the Acts (xiii. 16, 24, 42, 45; xiv. 19; xvi. 13; xviii. 26, 28; xix. 17; xx. 21). That the Jews of Asia were very bigoted we learn from ch. xxi. 27 (see also 1 Pet. i. 1).

Ver. 10.—*Withstand for resist*, A.V. This was a part of the "power" mentioned in ver. 8.

Ver. 11.—Then they suborned, etc. The resource of those who are worsted in argument is violence or treachery. Blasphemous words against Moses. It must be remembered that at this time the whole Jewish people were in a state of ill-suppressed frenzy and most sensitive jealousy for the honour of the Mosaic institutions—feelings which broke out in constant revolts against the Roman power. The accusation against the apostles of speaking blasphemous words against Moses was therefore the most likely one they could have pitched upon to stir up ill will against them.

Ver. 12.—*Seized for caught*, A.V.; *into for to*, A.V. And they stirred up; i.e. by means of the reports spread by the men whom they suborned, and by working upon the feelings of the people and the elders and scribes, these men of the synagogues so excited them that they obtained permission to arrest Stephen and bring him before the Sanhedrim.

Ver. 13.—*Words for blasphemous words*, A.V. and T.R. Set up false witnesses. The similarity of Stephen's trial to that of our Lord is striking. The same set purpose to silence a true-speaking tongue by death; the same base employment of false witnesses; the same wresting of good words into criminal acts; and the same meekness and patience unto death in the righteous martyrs. Blessed servant to tread so closely in thy Lord's steps! (comp. Matt. v. 11, 12; 1 Pet.

iv. 14—16). This holy place; the Sanhedrim sat in one of the chambers of the temple, called Gazith. This had been prohibited by the Romans, but the prohibition was in abeyance in the present time of anarchy (Lewin).

Ver. 14.—*Unto us for us, A. V.* We have heard him say, etc. These false witnesses, like those who distorted our Lord's words (Matt. xxvi. 61; John ii. 19), doubtless based their accusation upon some semblance of truth. If Stephen had said anything like what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria (John iv. 21) or to his disciples (Mark xiii. 2), or what the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews wrote (viii. 13), or what St. Paul wrote to the Colossians (ii. 16, 17), his words might easily be misrepresented by false

witnesses, whose purpose it was to swear away his life. This Jesus of Nazareth. The phrase is most contemptuous. This (*οὗτος*), so often rendered in the A. V. "this fellow" (Matt. xxvi. 61, 71; John ix. 29, etc.), is of itself an opprobrious expression (comp. ch. vii. 40), and the *ὁ Ναζωραῖος*, the Nazareno, is intended to be still more so.

Ver. 15 —*Fastening their eyes for looking stedfastly, A. V.* (see above, ch. iii. 4). The council would naturally all look at him, in expectation of his answer to the evidence just delivered against him. In his face, illuminated with a Divine radiance, they had an answer which they would have done well to listen to (for the brightness of an angel's face, comp. Matt. xxviii. 3; Dan. x. 6; Rev. x. 1, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Wise counsels.* The prosperity of the Church was great. The first hypocrisy had been plucked up by the roots and burnt, so to speak, in the presence of the whole congregation. A holy awe had mingled with faith and love to give intense reality to the religion of the disciples. The Spirit of God had borne active witness to the word of the apostles by signs and wonders; and the healing of many sick had conciliated multitudes and attached them to the Church. The apostles had been strengthened and encouraged by the supernatural ministration of an angel bringing them forth from prison, and bidding them preach afresh in spite of their enemies; and at length their very enemies were silenced, and one of the chief of them had advised his fellows, "Leave these men alone." With a fresh burst of zeal, the preaching of Christ had been carried on, and the number of the disciples was greatly multiplied. But now a new danger arose. One of the first institutions of the growing body had been to supply the wants of the most desolate class—the widows—and to gladden their hearts by a daily ministration of food out of the common fund. But, in the rapid increase of numbers, the steps taken at first to secure abundance and fairness in the distribution had proved insufficient. The apostles, who hitherto had been the sole rulers and officers of the Church, had greater things to attend to than even the distribution of Church charities, and in their absence abuses had arisen. While the widows of the Hebrew converts, so called, were well cared for, the Hellenist widows, through some partiality on the part of those who had the management of the tables, were neglected. They were put off with worse places and scantier fare than their Hebrew sisters, or, maybe, found no place at all provided for them. Naturally their friends felt aggrieved, and murmured at such inconsiderate treatment. And the Christian body, before so closely united in the bonds of love in Jesus Christ, showed signs of being split into two bodies, Hebrews and Hellenists. What was to be done? Was the danger to be despised, and were the complaints to be slighted because they only related to the meat that perisheth? Were the widows and their friends to be told that they ought to be occupied only about that meat which endureth unto eternal life, which the Son of man would give them freely and impartially, and their grievances to remain unredressed? Or, taking a juster and graver view of the matter, should the apostles diminish their spiritual labours, and give up their time and strength to the organization of the public charities and the distribution of the daily bread? They did neither. But with conspicuous wisdom they at once founded a new order of men, whose special business it should be to attend to the daily ministration, and see that none were favoured and none left out. And, to conciliate confidence in the thorough impartiality of the distribution, they invited the whole Church to elect seven men of approved wisdom and piety, to whom this important trust should be committed. The plan seems to have been eminently successful, as we hear no more of murmure and

complaints. The practical lessons to be learnt are these. 1. Never despise other people's grievances or make light of them because they do not affect you. Especially let no pastor of a flock underrate the temporal and personal vexations of any parishioner who may lay them before him. To poor people even small losses seem very serious things. And if to the sense of loss there is added a sense of injustice or unfairness, the murmurs are very real, and represent deep-seated wounds. They must be kindly and judiciously attended to. 2. Again, all, and especially the clergy, should feel the full importance of impartiality in dealing with their people. Favouritism in dispensing charity or even pastoral care must be resolutely eschewed. Nobody must be "neglected" because others are preferred. Murmurs are not always loud; but be sure that any unfair or supercilious treatment will rankle in the breast; that, if extended to classes, it will make a serious crack in the unity of the Church; and that it effectually prevents those who think themselves unfairly treated from reaping any profit from the ministrations of those by whom they think themselves so treated. 3. Lastly, the example of the apostles in this matter teaches those in authority not to attempt to do everything with their own hands, and not to be jealous of having able coadjutors to do the work thoroughly which they themselves of necessity can only do imperfectly. In leaving the choice of the new deacons to the congregation at large, instead of selecting them themselves, they showed a thoroughly liberal and wise spirit, and have left a lesson to the Church in all ages to trust the laity with all fitting power, and to evoke the latent energies of the body, by giving to every capable person some work to do for the glory of God and the welfare of his people.

Vers. 9—15.—*Fanaticism.* Fanaticism has one respectable feature, that it is sincere. The fanatic believes what he asserts to be true, and he is earnest and zealous in the maintenance and propagation of his belief. But when we have said thus much we have said all that can be said in his favour. In fanaticism there is a culpable neglect of the reason which God has given to man to be his guide. The fanatic shuts his eyes and closes his ears, and rushes on his way with no more reflection or discrimination than a wild bull in its fury. Fanaticism, too, has a fatal tendency to deaden all moral considerations and to blunt a man's perceptions of right and wrong. It is in vain to look for justice, or fairness, or truth, or mercy, from a fanatic. There is no violence of which he is not capable if he thinks his faith is in danger, no wiles and baseness to which he will not stoop if he thinks it necessary for the defence of his cause. Murder, perjury, bribery, subornation of witnesses, and defamation of opponents by lies and slander, have constantly been the weapons by which fanaticism of various kinds has ever defended itself. The end justified the means. It is, however, a curious feature in the history of fanaticism that it is often so closely allied with self-interest. And this is a feature which derogates considerably from its only merit, that of sincerity. In a pure love of truth there is no thought of self-interest. Truth is a holy, Divine thing, loved for its own sake. But the fanatic's creed is not pure truth; and so it seems it cannot be loved with the same pure, disinterested love with which truth is loved. Hence it has often been the parent of crime; and hence it is, as we have just said, often allied with self-interest. It is so with Mohammedan fanaticism; it has been so and still is with Romish and specially Jesuitical fanaticism; it was so with Puritan and fifth-monarchy fanaticism; it is so with other existing forms of fanatical and unreasonable zeal. In the case before us in this chapter we need not doubt that these Hellenistic Jews had a very strong and ardent attachment to the Law of Moses, and that their dread and dislike of Stephen's teaching arose from their apprehension that Christian doctrine was in its nature destructive of their own tenets. But if their attachment to the Law of Moses had been intelligent and pure, they would have welcomed the gospel of Christ as being the fulfilment of the Law. If they had been actuated by a holy love of God's truth, they would not have sought to uphold the Mosaic institutions by violence, by injustice, and by fraud. Nor can we doubt that, as in the case of the chief priests and scribes and elders, who conspired to take away the life of Jesus Christ, so in the case of these heated partisans, the fear of losing their own places of influence and power, and having to yield the place of honour to the Galilæan teachers whom they hated and despised, had much to do with the unrighteous zeal of the members of the Hellenistic synagogues. The Christian should strive to have a zeal

for Christ and his glory quite as ardent as that of any fanatic, but at the same time to keep the eyes and ears of his reason always open for the correction of any error into which he may inadvertently have fallen, and for the addition of any truth which he may not hitherto have known. Above all, he will never seek to bear down reason by violence, or to defend truth with the carnal weapons of unrighteousness, whether violence or fraud.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—Prosperity and peace within the Church. These opening verses prove to us that a condition of exceptional virtue may abruptly pass into one of common infirmity. From the height of holy enthusiasm the Church falls down, by steep and quick descent, into the depth of unlovely wrangling. From all the verses of the text we gather—

I. THAT PROSPERITY BRINGS DANGER TO A CHRISTIAN CHURCH AS WELL AS TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. “When the number of the disciples was multiplied there arose a murmuring” (ver. 1). Enlargement often brings with it pride, or false confidence, or sloth, or worldliness. It is a “slippery place,” where there is great danger of falling. It is frequently the condition of disagreement and even serious discord. When the number is small and the band feeble, each member of the community feels that he must stand by the rest, and let all his strength be put out in advancement of the common cause; but when there is a consciousness of strength, the sense of responsibility is lessened, and men permit themselves to indulge a spirit and to manifest signs of impatience, querulousness, complaint. But no Christian Church can afford to have any of its members introduce the discordant note. It may, indeed, be lost and silenced in the harmonies which prevail; but it may throw everything out of tune and be the beginning of endless dissonance and dire confusion.

II. THAT THE HARMONIOUS ACTION OF THE CHURCH IS LARGELY DEPENDENT ON THE WISE APPOINTMENT OF ITS FUNCTIONS. “It is not reasonable that we [the apostles] should leave the Word of God and serve tables” (ver. 2). It was altogether undesirable that the apostles of Christ, who were charged with such high functions, should expend their strength and time in small monetary arrangements. They would probably do that ill when they might be doing their own proper work admirably. They wisely divided the duties of the Church into two different parts, of which they would take one, and leave the other to those whose habits and faculties made them suitable for its discharge: then all went well. If we do not assign functions with discretion, all affairs will speedily be out of joint; the machinery will work with the maximum instead of the minimum of friction. Let the minister take his post or posts, and there be found in full activity; let the other officers have theirs, and keep them. Let activity be well directed, and there will be peace as well as fruitfulness.

III. THAT THE OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH OFTEN DO WELL TO CONSULT THE COMMUNITY INSTEAD OF SETTling EVERYTHING THEMSELVES. “The twelve called the multitude . . . and said, . . . look ye out,” etc. (vers. 2, 3). The members of the Church should remember that affairs are greatly expedited, order maintained, and peace preserved by their delegating much business to a few chosen men; on the other hand, the leaders should remember that even the inspired apostles of our Lord did not stand upon their dignity as such, but consulted “the multitude of the disciples,” and that what they did with propriety we may do with advantage.

IV. THAT EVEN FOR THE HUMBLER DUTIES OF THE CHURCH SOME STERLING CHRISTIAN GRACES ARE NEEDED. The seven men now appointed “to serve tables” were to be “men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom” (ver. 3); *i. e.* they were (1) to enjoy a good reputation; (2) to be spiritual men in whom God dwelt by his Spirit; (3) to be men of prudence and capacity. They who do not possess these qualifications have no right to expect any position in the Church of Christ. Without the confidence and esteem of their brethren they could not make a good beginning; without Christian character they would be out of place altogether; without requisite gifts of the understanding and disposition they would certainly not make a good ending.

V. THAT WE MAY EXPECT MINISTERIAL FIDELITY TO BE FOLLOWED BY ABUNDING

AND EVEN SURPRISING TRIUMPHS. When the apostles were relieved of other more secular duties, and "gave themselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (ver. 4), then "the Word of God increased" (ver. 7); then came *abounding success*—"the number of the disciples multiplied greatly"; *surprising success*—"a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." It does not necessarily follow that ministerial faithfulness will be attended with such results; prayerlessness, or discord, or inconsistency on the part of the members may defeat the exertions of the holiest and ablest minister of Christ. But, nothing being in the way, the Church itself being in sympathy, an earnest, faithful ministry will witness very blessed spiritual results—(1) some that will *rejoice*, (2) and some also that will *surprise* the hearts of the holy. There will be added unto the Church many, and of these some who seemed utterly and hopelessly removed, by their prejudices, their temporal interests, the heinousness of their wrong-doing, or their long continuance in sin.—C.

Vers. 8—15.—*The service of the lip and the glory of the countenance.* The wise step of appointing seven deacons "to serve tables," and thus to liberate the apostles for prayer and preaching, like other good causes, had results which reached beyond the first object of it. It led to the formation of a most useful body of men, who have served Christ and his Church in other things beside mere "tables" or temporalities. It brought out Stephen; and who shall say how much that had to do with the conversion of Saul, and so with the evangelization and enlightenment of the world? We learn—

I. THAT THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF THE LOWER DUTY WILL LEAD TO ENTRUSTMENT WITH A HIGHER ONE. (Vers. 8, 9.) Stephen, having acquitted himself well as a deacon, and showing powers of speech and argument, was encouraged to visit the synagogues, and there "dispute" on behalf of Christian truth. And not only so, but God honoured him as the channel of his Divine healing power, and he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." It is always wise to begin at or near the bottom of the scale; to do the simplest thing well, and then rise to that which is next above it. It is well, in Christian service as in secular callings and in the affairs of state, to go through the various grades until the higher and perhaps the highest are reached. Faithful work in a humbler sphere will fit for useful and honourable service in a higher; this is true of our life on earth, and will doubtless prove true respecting the life which is to come (Matt. xiii. 12; Luke xvi. 10).

II. THAT IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST WE MUST DEPEND FOR POWER WITH MEN ON GRACE FROM GOD. Stephen was full of "grace and power" (ver. 8); full of power with men *because* full of grace from God. From the Divine resources there came down heavenly influences into his soul—illumination, sanctity, zeal—and he was strong to interest, to instruct, to convince, to persuade. We shall remain unsuccessful as workers for Christ, however great our natural gifts may be, except we have grace from on high to penetrate and possess our soul, and we be endued "with all might by his Spirit in the inner man."

III. THAT CHRISTIAN CONTROVERSY HAS ITS PLACE IN SACRED SERVICE. Stephen "disputed" with the Hellenistic Jews in the synagogues (ver. 9), and so effectively that "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Statement of Christian doctrine and enforcement of Christian truth may take higher rank, in usefulness, than the defence of Christian theology; but the latter has its place in the field of sacred service, and those who work elsewhere should not disparage or decry it. Everything in its time and in its turn.

IV. THAT ERROR, WHEN IT IS SEATED IN THE SOUL, IS OFTEN ONLY AGGRAVATED BY THE EXHIBITION OF THE TRUTH. (Vers. 11—14.) These men who were in the wrong, instead of being enlightened and benefited by Stephen's forcible exposition, were led into folly and sin. They hired others to give testimony which was virtually if not literally false, and they did their best to compass the violent death of the man who was seeking to lead them into the kingdom of truth and life. When men are not only wrong in theory, but also bad at heart, interested in maintaining that which is false, any endeavour to enlighten them will often fan the flame of their folly and rouse to its fullest exercise the perversity which is in their souls.

V. THAT DEVOTEDNESS IS SOMETIMES RADIANT WITH HEAVENLY BRIGHTNESS. (Ver. 15.) We may continue to dispute whether the "angel-face" of Stephen was natural or

supernatural radiance. It matters little; but it is of consequence to know that the higher Christian graces will write their sign upon our countenance. As sin makes *its* sad and shameful traces on the frame, so purity, faith, love, devotion, will make the face to be aglow with heavenly light. Nothing but a devoted Christian life could give us such angel-faces as some of those which we see worshipping in our sanctuaries and labouring in our holy fields of love.—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*The appointment of deacons.* I. THE SPIRIT OF STRIFE. 1. It arose between the Hellenists and the Hebrews, members of the same nation, of the same blood, of the same Church, but of different places of birth, education, and, above all, of different languages. Language is, perhaps, the greatest divider between man and man. So many of those associations which govern the mind are rooted in the sound of our native tongue. We may notice that Christianity reconciles the difference of the Palestinian Jew and the Greek-speaking Jew; the Book, the New Testament, is the thought of the Jew in the tongue of the Greek. 2. It was on a question of pecuniary benefit. Most disputes of the bitterest kind in the family life turn on questions of money, property and its distribution. Hence the Christian duty of strict justice and exactitude in all dealings with the goods of this world. 3. Jealousy was at the root of the strife. No feeling more painful than the sense of neglect and of the preference of others. All Christian principle is rooted in love, which alone can conquer jealousy. All Christian graces are but forms of the "love that seeketh not its own." Love must seek to remove this "root of bitterness," which otherwise will trouble many and pollute the pure flow of peace in the Church.

II. THE CALLING TOGETHER OF THE CHURCH. To the sense and piety of the multitude the appeal of wisdom and of justice may ever be safely made. But without strong leading, even Christian congregations may become scenes of anarchic passion. It is composed of many wills. If none is present to represent with conscientiousness and firmness the will of the Head of the Church, nothing but confusion can be expected. When that will is clearly apprehended, and the duty thence arising firmly laid down, the majority, if not the whole, will be found ready to obey. Such was the case at Jerusalem.

III. THE COUNSEL OF THE APOSTLES. 1. The division of Christian functions is necessary. It is not "pleasing," either to the Head of the Church or to the judgment of its enlightened members, that callings and duties should be confused; above all, that the higher calling should suffer in efficiency from being joined with a lower. The "Word of God," or thought and utterance in the Church—the Christian ministry in the special sense—was the special function of the apostles. The "serving of tables" was another kind of function, evidently important and necessary. But for the two to be fixed in the same persons would have been a want of *congruity*, or of harmony. For the ministry of the Word freedom from the distractions of business is peculiarly necessary. 2. The central function in the Church is that of the teacher. If this languish or be in any way fettered, the life of the congregation must suffer. It demands a whole man and whole energies. The resolve of the apostles is, therefore, to persevere in prayer and in the ministry of the Word. These two words sum up the life of the preacher. By prayer he draws from the fountain of truth and Divine strength; and in preaching he gives forth that which he has thus received. Without the inner communion with God there can be no power to prevail over the hearts of men. 3. Directions for the appointment of deacons. Seven are to be selected; the number has sacred associations, which were doubtless helpful to the mind. A sevenfold band symbolizes strength, Divine presence and assistance. (1) They are to be "full of the Spirit"—an expression which cannot be defined, but the meaning of which can be felt. Divine presence in the soul is ever indefinable, and is known by its effects on the tone of the man, and on the energy, the gentleness, and persuasiveness of his speech and action. (2) They are to be *wise men*—who are always needed for tasks so delicate as that here assigned them. Goodness and sense: these are the great qualities needed in Church officers every day. Neither weakly good men nor merely shrewd men fulfil the desired qualifications.

IV. THE ELECTION. The counsel of the apostles is approved unanimously; and seven brethren are chosen out and presented to the apostles, who ratify the choice

of the Church by the devout ceremony of the imposition of hands. 1. The eminence of Stephen. He is specially mentioned as "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." Faith, a most comprehensive word in the New Testament, may mean here either constancy, fidelity, or the habit of the living and strong believer. But really the two meanings unite. The believing man in the genuine Christian sense is alone the *true*, the steadfast man. The *trustworthy* man is so because he himself is a truster in God. He who has no certain faith in the Divine is no object of human confidence. 2. The obscurity of useful lives. Except of Philip, of whom we have an after glimpse, nothing is known of these worthies (ch. viii. 5, 26; xxi. 8). "He has not lived amiss whose life and death have escaped the notice of the world," said the Roman poet. The "path of a hidden life" is the lot of most Christians. A niche in the temple of fame is not set as an object of Christian ambition; but the approval of the Divine Master is. 3. There may be good service without the title of servant. These men had no official designation of "deacons." They were simply "the seven." It is good to resist the weakness for titles and for status in the Christian Church. Good men and useful are sometimes spoiled when these imaginary distinctions are placed upon them. So susceptible is our fancy that, as dress seems to magnify our personality, so does the consciousness of office and rank. We cannot crush vanity by the singularity of dropping titles; it will nestle just as well under the affectation of plainness. But the simplicity of this example may remind us that there is a danger in vanity for the ministers of Christ of every degree.

V. THE SUBSEQUENT CONDITION OF THE CHURCH. It is sketched in three features. 1. *The growth of the Divine Word.* The *Logos*, or Word, of God is a very wide expression. It includes all spiritual activity and all expressions of it. The meaning, then, is that there was a great growth of spiritual thought and life. And this by the Divine favour as human means. When the affairs of any Church are conducted in the spirit of wisdom and love, this blessing may be expected. It is foolish to expect manifestations of growth and prosperity where these have not been sought and wrought for. 2. *Growth of numbers.* Which is one of the most obvious marks of success. The popular reception of a new creed is a mark of its adaptation to the wants of the many. But we must not infer that the unpopularity of a principle, or a person, or a teaching condemns it. There is a popular and an unpopular side to all truth. The divinely winning aspect of Christianity is not always to be seen; and there are days when the faithful must struggle with discouragement. The prophets with their lofty teaching complained that their report was not believed. The gospel, when seen to be the source of peace, prosperity, and wealth, is readily believable; not so widely so when it asks for sacrifice and leads to suffering. 3. *The submission of the priests.* This was most significant of all. Ecclesiastical orders are the most stubborn in resistance to change; priests the most conservative of religionists, as prophets are the friends of advance and of freedom. The giving way of the priests was indeed a remarkable triumph of Christ and his gospel. The evidence of the *facts*, the present facts, was too strong to be resisted. The evidence of a religion lies at last in its power to help and bless the life of society. So long as this evidence is presented by the Church "apologies" for Christianity will for the mass of men be quite unnecessary.—J.

Vers. 8—15.—*Stephen's work and witness.* I. HIS SPIRIT DESCRIBED. "Full of grace and power." We can feel rather than define the force of those words. Grace is first the favour of God felt in the man's soul, then manifested in his whole bearing, tone, conversation, and way of life. The effect is like the cause; the recipient of Divine favour makes a deeply *favourable* impression upon others. Power, again, is the Divine will making itself felt in the man as his will; and the effect is powerful upon others. Thus Stephen was a man felt to be *spiritually original*.

II. HIS ACTIVITY DESCRIBED. He wrought "signs and wonders" of an extraordinary kind among the people. The Jew craved signs and wonders, and from long habit and education was accustomed to see in these the great evidence of a Divine mission. But true faith is never without power to work some kind of wonders. Moral wonders are the most impressive and the most evidential.

III. THE RISE OF OPPOSITION TO HIM. Jealousy as usual, and envy, must have prompted it. The most fruitful lives invite most criticism. "Stones are not thrown

except at the fruit-laden tree," says the proverb. 1. *Its character*: disputatious. School wit and wisdom are brought to bear against him. When *facts* cannot be denied, nor made the foundation of charges, *fancies* are found to be convenient as material of attack. The man who is mighty in deed shall, if possible, be shown an imbecile in argument, a tyro in knowledge. But there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in school philosophy; and the power of God and wisdom of God in his servants set at naught the "disputer" of the world. 2. *Its failure*. The dialecticians were met by simple spiritual wisdom. It was a plain story that Stephen had to tell; its very simplicity and dignity foiled these debaters.

IV. FALSE ACCUSATIONS. From sophistry to positive lies it is an easy step. If dishonesty is in a man's use of words and arguments, he will be likely to carry it out in deeds. If we bribe our reason in the interests of passion, why should we hesitate to corrupt the minds of others? Bribed testimony may produce a great effect for a time. It can craftily be made closely to resemble the truth. If a teacher upholds the spirit of Scripture, he may be represented with the ignorant as despising its letter. The charge of "speaking evil against Moses and God" must have been made colourable. Stephen taught that the old dispensation was in decay, and that the temple must pass away. This was easily misrepresented as speaking *against* the temple and the old institutions. The institutions of God are living, therefore must grow, and change their forms from age to age. To assert the necessity of change may be perverted to mean the assertion of the necessity of overthrow. The highest teaching is ever most liable to misrepresentation. It cannot respect men's vested interests. And interest, with all the "hell-deep instincts" which rally in support of it, can ever find plausible arguments against the innovator. Stephen's experience repeats that of Jesus and anticipates that of Paul.

V. SUCCESS OF THE PLOT. The people were deeply moved; the temple and all its sacred associations in religion and national feeling were threatened, as they thought. The Sanhedrim, the "elders and scribes," trembled for their power. Stephen was apprehended and brought before them. The false witnesses repeat their story. Though doubtless verbally true, it was in spirit false. That Jesus of Nazareth should "dissolve the sacred place and change the old religious customs" was indeed the sublime truth in a sentence. Christianity dissolves Judaism—by fulfilling it. To break up one home to found another is not to destroy the first home. To cast off an old garment because a new one is needed and at hand, is not to discredit the old. Destruction absolute and final is different from abolition with a view to progress. The witnesses were thus near to the truth, yet far from it. When opposites meet, the idea of dissolution and that of life, the half-truth may be the most malicious of lies.

VI. THE DEMEANOUR OF STEPHEN. It was a moment of great trial. The people were now again united with their rulers. The Sanhedrim no longer feared to go against the general feeling. It was "Stephen against the world." Among all the eyes fastened upon him there was probably no friendly glance. Yet at this moment, like the sun breaking through the blackness of a thunder-cloud, a glory of unearthly splendour irradiated the brow of the witness. In such moments God chooses to show his love to his chosen. Forsaken—not forsaken; cast down—not destroyed; fettered and hemmed in on every side—yet free; such is the experience of the soul that confides in God. It throws itself in the extremity of its helplessness at the feet of God—nay, upon his very breast. Never do we know what heights and depths are in the kingdom of spirit, till we are thrust into them by the frowns or the force that bars all other ways. The spirit touches its height of triumph and joy in the very moment when the man to outward appearance is lost. And there are brief moments when God reveals his presence in a manner not to be forgotten on that noblest of his mirrors, the human countenance. God's eagles rise in the storm; his stars shine in the darkest night. Compare the face of Stephen with that of Moses (2 Cor. iii. 7, 8). We learn from Stephen: 1. The might that comes to man through faith and the Holy Spirit; ability to work, to witness, to suffer. 2. The glory of the martyr. Accused, God favours him; slandered, the truth is illustrated by him; overcome and overclouded, he rises and he shines like the sun in his strength.—J.

Vers. 1—6.—*Institution of deacons.* Notice: 1. The increase of officers was the

natural outcome of increase in number of disciples, illustrating the great principle that the life of Christianity develops the organization and not depends upon it. 2. The spirit of charity was the underworking cause of the need of more rule. Had there been little to distribute, there would have been no ground of complaint. 3. The Jewish element was still uppermost in the Church. It was as yet an unordered community; but the two principles of care for the weak and equality among brethren were there to be appealed to. 4. The apostles, while guiding the Church with inspired wisdom, usurped no authority as rulers, claimed distinction only as servants of the Lord, called the whole body of believers together, and committed this first distinct act of constitutional appointment to the free vote of the Church as a whole. 5. The men elected were the best men spiritually as well as in adaptation to the special office. 6. The whole transaction was an appeal to Divine direction, being carried through in the spirit of prayer and in dependence on the apostolic superintendence of the Church which was instituted by Christ himself. 7. The deacons' office was instituted for the relief of the spiritual officers of the Church. The ministry of the Word is chief in importance. The "serving tables" requires character, wisdom, spiritual gifts, but is separated from the higher offices of prayer and preaching. The deacons are "business" officers. 8. Nothing should be done in the Church except by spiritual men, in dependence on Divine direction sought by prayer, and in harmony with that form of Christian life already appointed.—R.

Ver. 1.—*The first note of strife.* "There arose a murmuring," etc. Good and evil mingled everywhere. Multiplication of disciples means multiplication of interests and dangers. Prosperity in Churches has its attendant difficulties. Learn a lesson of wisdom and safety from the narrative. Money matters cannot be too carefully and spiritually controlled in all Churches.

I. THE NECESSARY INFIRMITIES OF CHURCH LIFE can be made opportunities of great blessing. 1. Let nothing be neglected, either wants or murmurs, but all promptly and wisely considered and prayed over. 2. Call out the gifts of the people. No one knows what he cannot do. A Church's extremity is often God's opportunity. 3. Keep the spiritual and the secular as far as possible in their right places. Let not the business claims oppress the minds which should be free to study the Word of God. Aim at the development of the Church's knowledge and devotion as supreme.

II. GOD'S WONDERFUL CARE OF HIS PEOPLE; overruling; inspiring; by means of individual instances and comparatively trivial occasions, providing great precedents and rules and guiding facts, which extend their influence over the whole world. So in the order of his providence throughout. As humanity develops new capacity and function manifested.—R.

Ver. 4.—*An earnest ministry the greatest need and blessing of the Church.* "But we will give ourselves," etc.

I. FUNCTIONAL FAITHFULNESS. "Each in his office wait." 1. Apostles held an exceptional position, but in all main respects examples of singleness of mind and wisdom. 2. Distinguish between faithfulness in office and officialism. Special gifts adapted to special work; should be stirred up. 3. The hope of the Church is in the spirituality of its ministers. If they lower the conception of their office and regard themselves as mere popular leaders, they let in a flood of evils both into the pulpit and into the Church.

II. THE WORLD'S CONVERSION IN THE HANDS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. The chief agency—prayer and the ministry of the Word. Charity secondary, not primary. Philanthropy is not a substitute for Christianity. The apostles put their own office as preachers before that of the deacons. In these times a temptation to put the "tables," the bodily necessities, before the spiritual wants. We must wait for results, but Christ understood the work of his Church. Stand by the apostolic method, and the end will vindicate it. The world must be changed by spiritual forces. The Church must use all the material and social advantages supplied, but not as though they were sufficient by themselves; "By my Spirit, saith the Lord."—R.

Ver. 7.—*The fruits of faith.* "And the Word of God increased," etc. Connect with

the preceding description of a prayerful, obedient, spiritually minded Church. How different the result might have been had the murmuring gone on to increase and become a strife which would have broken up fellowship, dishonoured the Name of Jesus, and stopped the mouths of the preachers!

I. THE FIELD in which such fruits were gathered—Jerusalem and neighbourhood. 1. In some measure prepared for the new seed. God works by a deeply laid method of orderly progress. The gospel the beginning of the new world because it was the end of the old; taking up into itself all that was really Divine in Judaism. 2. Broken up by the new ministry, so different from that of scribes and Pharisees. 3. A continuation of Christ's own work, upon the basis of the great facts of his history.

II. THE LABOURERS. 1. *Apostles*. Their spirit and method adapted to achieve spiritual success; informal; earnest; devout; inspired. Accompanied with miraculous attestation. 2. *The multitude of believers*. All spoke more or less. Their fellowship was an eloquent fact. Their order and self-denial and separation from the world.

III. THE HARVEST. 1. *Large*. Immense population of Jerusalem; continually changing. 2. *Representative* of the future. The centre of religious life, sending streams of light over the world; devout men of all nations. Special adaptation of the Jewish mind to preaching. Knowledge of the Old Testament. Connection with Greek through Alexandria, with Latin through Rome. 3. *Wonderful*. Overcoming Jewish prejudice; winning many of the priests, notwithstanding opposition and persecution; foretelling the downfall of Judaism. Multiplication of disciples a spiritual fruit. Let God add to the Church. Preserve the distinction between the Church and the world.—R.

Vers. 8—15.—*Stephen before the council*. The conflict between the spirit of Judaism and the Spirit of Christ. Show the importance of this conflict in the early Church, lasting for more than a whole generation, lingering into the second century. But chiefly brought to an end through one (Saul of Tarsus), himself a trophy of the Spirit, exalted out of the very midst of the fiercest fire of Jewish bigotry.

I. THE DIVINE WITNESS. *Stephen*. 1. Natural gifts; Jewish training; Hellenistic. Union of faith and freedom. 2. Special gifts of the Spirit. Leader of the seven. "Grace and power." Wrought wonders and signs. The wisdom and spirit; raised the highest by Divine affluents.

II. THE OPPOSING JUDAISM. 1. From the foreign synagogues. Therefore probably not so much on the ground of a narrow Pharisaism, but as a resistance of the Holy Spirit's manifestations in the spirit of rationalism and literalism. 2. The resort to the Sanhedrim, already leagued with the Sadducees, and therefore kindred with the Alexandrian latitudinarians. Instructive as showing that Judaism was going off into rationalism, as it still does. 3. The falsehood and the violence which wrought in the persecution. Suborned men. Appeal to the Pharisaic party, though the synagogues had no real sympathy with them. They were not really guardians of the Mosaic customs. People, elders, scribes,—all stand up by the Alexandrian party.

III. THE MIRACULOUS TESTIMONY OF GOD TO HIS SERVANT. His face "as the face of an angel" (cf. the similar manifestation on the face of Moses). 1. Spiritual manifestation appealing to faith. 2. Testimony to the purity and angelic character of Stephen. 3. Contrast between the heavenly and the earthly in the men, the methods, the doctrines, and the final results.—R.

Vers. 1—6.—*The first crystallizings of ecclesiastical institution*. This short section has much to say, more to suggest, to us. The day of Pentecost had receded no distance whatever into the past; the holy enthusiasm of the days when new-born disciples sold their individual property in order to turn it into common property was literally but of yesterday; and Jerusalem, Christianity's cradle of associations the venerable sacredness of which was now superseded by a new, a young, a surpassing sacredness, had not yet been left of the apostolic missionaries. If other things were to date their "beginning from Jerusalem," things of brighter and more blessed omen, so also the Church's earliest acquaintance with division and strife was to be made and in part provided against within the precincts of that same city, centre of cities, and "mother of all." However, the strife was not fierce at present, nor the division malignant in its type. Yet, looked at under the light of the centuries that have succeeded, there

can be now no doubt of the significance of the symptoms which then appeared. Let us notice in this passage—

I. What may be called THE FIRST EFFORT OF THE CHURCH TO PUT ON FORM. Effort though it was, there can be little doubt that it was most unconscious of its nature. The occasion, interesting from a merely historical point of view, is much more so from a moral point of view. Hitherto the brief and wonderful career of the Church had been all “spirit and life”—stem and bough and twig all concealed beneath flower and fruit. Suddenly, however, the rudiments of organization commence to be seen; and it was a consequence of some of the less lovely aspects of human nature. These do not fail to thrust themselves into notice at a time one would have most desired their absence, and while they labour under the rebuke of many a faithful suggestion of Christian feeling and principle. Plainly up to this time the apostles had themselves distributed the offerings that had been laid at their feet (ch. iv. 35; comp. with ch. vi. 2), availing themselves of just such help as might offer. Inspired apostles could not do everything. Though “murmuring” might not be lovely, and very probably was not so now, yet, as they recognize some foundation for it, they proceed to propose a remedy (cf. Exod. xviii. 13—26).

II. HOW IT WAS GUIDED BY APOSTLES INSPIRED. 1. They summon the whole body of the disciples together, and point out to them the aspects of the case. 2. They throw upon this body of disciples the responsibility of choosing those helpers who shall serve the needs of the occasion. 3. They insist on the moral, nay, more, the high spiritual, qualifications of these. Though they are only “to bear the vessels of the Lord,” yet must they in high sense be “pure” and “clean;” for they must be men “of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” 4. By a service most simple, of prayer and laying on of hands, they set them apart for what might seem their comparatively humble and business kind of duties. Christian dignity and honour are set upon the work of these men, as dignity and honour belong to it, in the Name of the Master for whom and for whose Church it was to be done.

III. SOME SUGGESTIONS OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES ARISING FROM THIS OCCASION. I. Division of labour is a principle to be observed within the Church as without it. 2. A gradation in importance of work (though not necessarily of the workman) is plainly implied by the words of the apostle (ver. 2). 3. The character of Church organization, whatever of it there might come to be, seems plainly shadowed forth. It is not to be place and office and dignity for the sake of them, or for the show of hierarchy. The offices of the Church are not to be the filling up of an *à priori* constitution. They are only justifiable in the interests of the use of the Church, and are to be assigned in faithful analogy with the illustrious model-principle of “the sabbath made for man, not man for the sabbath.” 4. The possession of the Spirit is the foundation-qualification of every order of Christian workman. Men “of good report, and . . . of wisdom” may be the manifest qualifications of men of business, whether Church business or not. But the apostles require that those who are “appointed over this business,” i.e. “to serve tables,” shall be also “full of the Holy Ghost.” 5. The discretion of the Spirit is still reserved—unfettered in each order and in each individual. For of these seven “deacons,” now elected and with solemn service set apart, we hear no more, except of two of them; and both of these are doing distinguished work, not as deacons, but as “preaching Christ,” and doing “great wonders and miracles” (comp. vers. 8, 13—15, with ch. vii. and viii. 5—8). The conclusion of all may be understood to be that the truest Church will be that which earnestly bids for life and movement, and allows only so much form as the tide of life and the directing of that life may fairly require.—B.

Ver. 7.—*Convincing testimonies to the force of the new faith.* “And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” The obedience of “a great company of the priests to the faith” was beyond a doubt, in the nature of things, a commanding witness to the force of that faith. When that faith made its successful assault upon the serried ranks of such “a company,” and persuaded the throwing away of weapons so peculiarly their own, and endeared to them by an almost inveterate attachment, a great victory was won. The glory and especially the moral impressiveness of victory will often be proportioned in the directest manner, not to the strength

only, but to the very *nature* of the opposing forces. Special mention is made of the triumph of the gospel over this "great company of priests," not without good reason. In addition to the usual causes of the enmity of the human heart to the "faith" of Jesus Christ, and which must in all cases be triumphed over, *others* were present here, and such as asked a strong hand to overmaster them. Notice, therefore, that "the obedience to the faith" of those here spoken of was—

I. A TRIUMPH OVER THE DIFFICULT FOE THAT GOES BY THE NAME OF PREJUDICE. It is very clear that, let alone any of the forms of *class* prejudice, prejudice itself, *pure and simple*, was at the root of a very large preponderance of the enmity shown to Christ and his "faith" on the part of all those who would make any assumption of superior knowledge or position. Settled on the lees of self, they had no relish for anything that tended to disturb their opinion of self. And this bred more of prejudice toward Christ and his truth than of anything else, while the mischief of prejudice answers to no name more appropriately than the name Legion. The assumption of knowledge, of goodness, of superiority, was the native element of the priest in the days of Christ's flesh and of his apostles. Against assumption of this kind any one or anything that dared self-assertion dared at the same time the prompt encounter of prejudice the most unreasoning.

II. A TRIUMPH OVER THE JEALOUS FOE OF PROFESSIONALISM. 1. The simplicity alike of the life and of the doctrine of Christ would sin, from a priest's point of view, against his own faith in professionalism. 2. The unmistakable language of Christ, in reference to the overthrow or the superseding of an order of religious officers, forms, ceremonies, and sacrifices, would clearly sin against the same. 3. The very *genius* of the character of Christ would be felt to militate unerringly against it, however feebly that genius might be appreciated.

III. A TRIUMPH OVER THE BIGOTED AND MALIGN FOE OF PRIESTISM. The love of the priest's office was one of the devoutest feelings with the true priest. As the office lay with an appointed class in the constitution of the Jewish people, we cannot say that individual preference or bent of disposition decided who should bear it. While no constitutional predilection determined the Jew's choice of the ecclesiastic profession, it makes perhaps more distinctly visible the *effect* of the office upon him and his character. And very visible for bad was this effect in the time of our Saviour, when an earnest and devout priest was the exception. The love and simplicity and devoutness of the true priest was indeed "precious in those days." And certain it is, for whatever reason, that "chief priests and elders" led the opposition to Jesus, *created* it, and for the most part utterly *constituted* it. The same parts they sustained towards the apostles now from day to day. Moral blindness and moral insensitiveness are the constant avengers of the temper. Two things go far to explain why it should be so. 1. The confident and familiar tampering with unseen realities is one. The conventional temper will dogmatically pronounce upon the things which ask for the more reverent touch in that they *are* unseen and *must* be largely unknown. 2. Its pride is to intrude into that most sacred domain, the domain of the innermost life of others. The saying might have been made for it that it "rushes in where angels would fear to tread." And for a bold challenge like this, no one who has at all observed the phenomena of man's moral nature can for a moment doubt that the recoil must be perilously dangerous. "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?" was a question that came, in point of fact, from the lips of a Pharisee (John vii. 48), but for all that was the unwitting tell-tale of saddest and surest facts, deep down in the moral nature of himself and of his most intimately related associates, the priests. And they amounted to self-blight's confession—the self-blight that *came* of profane presumptuousness towards Heaven and arrogant assumption towards the spiritual life of their fellow-men, and that *consisted* of ingrained inveteracy of prejudice, infolded affections, and shrivelled sympathies. To throw life and a healthy beat into the hearts of such men has ever been beyond human resources. They have been hopeless of the hopeless, and despair has been most familiar with their face. The sovereign touch alone can reach their case. Great, then, was the victory of the faith on this occasion, for they were "priests," and they were "a great company of priests" over whom it prevailed. The force of Jesus prevails betimes over every worst form and every worst degree of evil in human nature. Why it does not *always* is a question to which man knows not the answer.

or at all events not the explanation of the answer. But that force did prevail now, and it made a great day and great joy. Greatest of all, however, was the mercy that sped not by, but now rested on the wing and alighted with the gift of salvation for this unlikeliest company. Let it be the light of hope and the encouragement of effort for those who work, amid the darkest, blankest, hardest material. Not less should this touch of history warn with most ominous suggestion all those whose native bias; whose solemn profession, whose self-undertaken series of duties, charge them with the dreaddest responsibility, not in its bearing on others only, but "chiefly" and "first" on themselves.—B.

Ver. 15.—*The logic of heavenly lustre.* "And all . . . saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." The two occasions of the mention of Stephen have already apprised us of an exceptional spirituality marking his character, and it cannot but be that the exceptional splendour and luminousness of his countenance here spoken of are more or less connected with that fact. The hour of martyrdom is drawing on apace for Stephen, and he is already raised to that little company which numbered in it—Moses in one of the most critical portions of his history (Exod. xxxiv. 29, 30; 2 Cor. iii. 7), and Jesus himself (Matt. xvii. 2; Luke ix. 29) on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is being given to Stephen to ripen into an "angel of God" even on earth. The fact of the distinct record of Stephen's appearance now justifies our paying even some additional attention to what in itself would naturally have attracted our interested inquiry. The interest gathers round this central inquiry—Why was such special and such peculiar kind of distinction vouchsafed to Stephen? "His face was as it had been the face of an angel."

I. A HIGHLY SPIRITUAL FORCE OF CHARACTER MARKED HIM AS AT LEAST FIT OBJECT OF THIS LUSTRE. It is not open to us to say that this was the *cause* in any sense, but much less the one cause, of the lustre with which the countenance of Stephen shone. But we must remark on it as showing the presence of one essential *condition*. In a biography almost as brief (omitting his defence) as that of Enoch, three things are reiterated, intimating to us the highly developed spirituality of Stephen. 1. He was "full of faith." Every true disciple of Jesus Christ must, no doubt, be "rooted in" faith. He must "know whom he believes." But to be "*full of faith*" probably signifies something beyond this. A man may truly have faith, and if he have it he will live and "walk" by it, yet may be the very man who will need to have full allowance made for him as respects the distinction of faith and *sight*. Not just so the man who is "*full of faith*." For him faith has come to be such an "*evidence of things not seen*," and such an embodied "*substance of things hoped for*," that his "conversation is in heaven" already, and his countenance more really fitted to shine with celestial radiance. In fact, we may rest assured there is a great difference between even a *very genuine possession* of faith and a being "*full of faith*." The former is true of very many who are exceedingly far removed from the latter. That faith which scripturally and apostolically postulates the distinction of sight has in its *fulness* the power to efface the very distinction itself has made, and throws two worlds into one. We do not at all doubt it was so now with Stephen, who for the *fulness* of faith now lived and thought, spoke and worked, "as *seeing* him who is invisible" (Heb. xi. 27); and that was in itself the earnest of a radiant countenance. 2. He was "full of the Holy Ghost." It must be allowed on all hands that this fact justifies us much more in an affirmation of the presence now of something in the nature of a predisposing qualification. In the modern Church the work and the fruit of the Spirit is grievously underrated. Hence its weakness, hence its want of enterprise, hence its comparative deadness. We have ample Scripture warrant for distinguishing degrees in the Spirit's operation; nor can we forget how, while to others according to measure the gifts of the Spirit are vouchsafed, of One it is said, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure" to him (John iii. 34). How intensely full was St. John of the Spirit, when as he rather puts it, "I was *in the Spirit* on the Lord's day" (Rev. i. 10)! What the *countenance* of St. John then was we know not, nor was there one to see it and tell us; but we are in no ignorance of what his rapt *state* of mind was, and to what the Spirit exalted him. It is not, therefore, the *unwarranted* thing to think that the Spirit's force in the nature of the man in whom he largely dwells should betoken itself in physical

manifestation. The legitimate conclusion would rather lead us to a conviction that restraint is self-imposed on the Spirit, in order that his blessed manifestation should neither overpower the individual in whom he largely may dwell, nor supersede moral attraction and moral evidence for all who stand by. How humiliating, how unspeakably mournful, to think how seldom it appears true of any in these ages that they are "full of the Holy Ghost," or that in their case the Spirit needs to shade off any of his effulgence! 3. He abounded in zeal. The zeal of Jesus and his truth, of Jesus and "this life" that came through him, went far "to eat him up" (John ii. 17). Though Stephen was *not* an apostle, and though he *was* and had only just been formally elected and appointed a deacon, yet he did the works of an apostle, and, if we may judge from appearances, did much more than the more part of them. He was first to be chosen deacon (ver. 5), a circumstance which marks probably not his high spiritual character alone, but also his repute for practical diligence. It is then distinctly testified of him (ver. 8) that he "did great wonders and miracles among the people." Nor this alone. He stood to his position, did not refuse to maintain by disputation the truth he had spoken, and *did* so hold his own that, unscrupulous though his opponents were, "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." This was to be a thorough believer and a thorough-going champion. Argument will often fire the passions and light up the countenance; and *holy* argument will fire *noble* passions and will make a lustre dawn upon the face. Yet still it is God's sovereign act to select his "chosen vessel," and his surpassing mercy that fits any one to be such.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A HIGHLY CRITICAL OCCASION NOW LAY WITH STEPHEN. 1. From our modern point of view, interest in watching him now would have been possibly not a little increased by the thought that we were watching the first *layman* on his trial. Though the thing would not have been so *worded* then, yet we may readily imagine a quickened gaze on the part at least of all the apostles, and probably of many others. It was gradually dawning upon the Jewish nation and the world that a prophet, a priest, an apostle, was what he *did*; and Peter begins to be impressed with what leads him soon to say, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but . . . he that feareth him and *worketh righteousness* is accepted with him." Neither Peter nor any of his fellow-apostles was an hereditary or trained priest, but they were all conscious that they were "called to be apostles." The vast circle of the true Christian preachers and prophets begins further still to enlarge when Peter and the apostles fall behind a while, and Stephen, just now a plain man and only most recently titled *deacon*, fills up the whole foreground, in an episode of almost unsurpassed interest in the whole of the Acts of the *Apostles*. Since, then, Stephen was not "called apostle," the lustre which now lighted up his countenance was in part his Master's gracious and bountiful substitute. God does not forget the special needs of special occasions, and if, as is probably the case, Stephen was not aware of his own appearance, there cannot be a doubt that it secured for him, from the first word of his opening defence, a special attention. The occasion was one of special responsibility, therefore, for Stephen, inasmuch as he is employed to bring into uncommon prominence, in one aspect of it, the dawning comprehensiveness of Christianity. 2. The number of those present, the very various description of them that they were led on to the attack by a very confederacy of infuriated synagogues, the determined and excited tactics resorted to of false witnesses, wresting words and statements of Stephen out of their connection,—all these contributed to give (1) a violence to the occasion, that asked for something unusual to hold it for some moments at least in check. It was an occasion to which the interrogatory fits, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" And it meant mercy to the maddened in heart, far more than respite to Stephen. Against themselves they shall hear, and if needs be that they may hear, they shall also first see. If thereafter they will still refuse, it is more than ever their own deed that proffered mercy turns into judgment. So upon the madness and fury of Saul's persecuting journey to Damascus gracious check was placed by the directest Divine interference. And in *this* case that interval of calmed time was sanctified to the saving of Saul, and of many others through him. Even beyond what we very clearly read, it may be that there were peculiarities in the occasion, and in the excited audience that Stephen had now to address, which should explain this peculiarly gracious—we had almost said graceful—and considerate interposition of the super-

natural. For certainly (2) the event proved that the occasion *was*, in point of fact, one of the most supreme sort. Most remarkable and most fatal *was the chill* taken by "the people." It had looked as though Jerusalem would not have been in vain "begun with in the" preaching of the gospel. It had *looked* as though that "great company of priests" who became "obedient to the faith" decided the tide of victory and made the day one ever notable and glorious. But the prospect terribly clouds over, and fair hopes are dashed to the ground. This the *event* proves. But the foreseeing eye, the foreknowing great mind, heeded not the *event*, yet treats that oncoming decisive struggle as though there were still hope, and gives it every help, if haply Jerusalem may be still snatched from its self-chosen destruction. It is so constantly, that God, though he foreknows, still lengthens out the opportunity and the offer of grace and help. Behind the fact lies, doubtless, one of the great mysteries, as yet unapprehended, nay, untouched, by the apprehension of man. Certain it is that foreknowledge with us would peremptorily strip off from us alike impartial conduct and courage, whether for what awaited ourselves or for what awaited others. We should never keep a steady hand or hold on a steady way. But is Jerusalem in the *very act* of sealing her fate?—still to the last the hand, the voice, the features of Divine pity and love, continue or redouble their appeal.

III. THE SEALING OF HIS FAITHFUL TESTIMONY WITH HIS LIFE-BLOOD WAS NOW IMMINENT FOR STEPHEN. And this is like the grace and free liberality of the Master. Has Stephen's career been very short?—yet he has run bravely the race, he has fought well the fight. And even before the crown above, and before the glorious witness there, he shall have a telling and to-be-remembered witness here also, on the very scene of his conflict, and in the very eyes of those whom he sought to save, but who sought to destroy him. Either we do often call that a miracle which needs not the name, or we very often fail to call that a miracle which begs the name; for tender analogies to the thing wrought now for Stephen have been even frequent since and up to the present. When the end comes very near for the faithful, how mellowed his feeling and how calmed his temper and how serene his countenance! When the last hour approaches, how often does physical pain resign her hitherto implacable tyranny, and mental aberration subside into a resumption of childlike instead of childish disposition and docility of thought and feeling! When the last moments arrive for those who have "struggled long with sins and doubts and fears," but who nevertheless have been faithful both to work and to love, how often does the actual countenance speak of the peace that reigns undisturbed within, and sights *are seen* and songs *are heard* which nothing but the callousness of the infidel can possibly deny or throw doubt upon! This very thing was going to be so for Stephen, while he is being stoned. But it is anticipated by—shall we say—a brief half-hour. For his last argument he shall have more light within than ever before—the logic of *very* light, and in his last gazing and impassioned looks turned on the gainsaying people his face shall reflect the *light of God*.—3.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The call for order in his Church.* It arose out of the very fact of increase. The association of people together demands organization and order. A few persons may have such an interest in each other and such a knowledge of each other as will enable them to dwell together in peace without formal rules, and this is abundantly illustrated from family life; but large aggregations of people, mostly unknown to each other, that are based only on some common sentiment on a particular subject, must be set under rule and order; society, as distinct from the family, requires organization and government. The first occasion of difficulty arose out of the party spirit, and out of the jealousy some felt on account of others getting undue advantages. These two verses suggest two subjects for consideration.

I. THE CALL FOR ORDER AS MADE BY THE PEOPLE. Sooner or later, society, clubs, and nations find out that *order* is necessary to secure both the general and the individual well-being, comfort, and success in life. Illustrate by the consequences of civil commotion, class conflicts, or society jealousies. The same is true within Christ's Church. Offences will come. Jealousies and envies do arise. But Church members soon cry out for the order and rule which alone can ensure peace, growth, or prosperity. Every man who joins a community has to learn that he must give up his independence

to some extent, and fit into the order if he is to enjoy the benefits of the communion. As against the ambitious and aggressive man, and as against the man who overpresses his individuality, the Church, as a whole, calls for order. And in view of the practical difficulties that arise when numbers meet, or worship, or dwell together, orderly arrangement, and even a central and acknowledged authority, are demanded. It may be shown that order need never unduly repress life, and that exactly the order which men ask for, in Church and in state, is that which will efficiently repress all forms of evil, but leave the freest possible room and scope for the due and useful expression of individual character and individual gifts.

II. THE CALL FOR ORDER AS MADE BY THE CHURCH LEADERS. The difficulty that arose was viewed by the apostles from quite a different side. They felt the increasing pressure of the claims which the enlarging Church made upon their interest, their care, and their toil. And they further felt that the work demanded was both beyond their power to compass, and unsuited to their apostolic mission; nay, to concern themselves with formal things of money and provisions and daily meals was to imperil that very spiritual life and culture on which the due fulfilment of their true mission depended. So they called for order in the arrangement of the work demanded, and such order would at once meet their need, giving them due relief, and meet the people's need, assuring that each class received due attention. It is interesting to note that the apostles consulted the Church in their scheme for the removal of the difficulty, and it has been found wise, both in the Church and in the state, to adopt methods by which the people can be made to share in the responsibility of keeping order, and the dignity and impulse of a conscious *self-government* can be assured.

Impress that both theoretically and practically the Church still needs order and government. But these must be secured on two conditions. 1. That order shall never crush, only guide, the expressions of life. 2. That order shall secure efficiency, comfort, and peace for all who come within its rules. The Church has in each age known peril in two directions. (1) Resistance to all organization in the supposed interests of the individual life. (2) Over-organization giving no room for the natural and healthy expressions of life.—R. T.

Ver. 3.—*The true fitness for Church offices.* Much interest properly attaches to the first instance of election to Church office, and according to educational or ecclesiastical bias prominence is given to one or other of the leading features narrated. It may be going too far to assert that here is given an absolute model of all Church elections. The details of Church management may well be left to the guidance of Christian wisdom and prudence, and need not be made matters of faith. The apostles acted upon their best judgment in the difficult circumstances that arose, but in later times we find that their experience led them to adopt other modes in filling Church offices. In this case the multitude exercise the right of selection, and the apostles retain the right of ratifying the choice. The democratical element prevailed, but from the first it was put under wise limitations and restraints. "So long as the Christian spirit continued to display itself vigorously in the Church, the public voice might well be consulted; but when this spirit afterwards disappeared, it would have been ruinous to the Church if the plurality of voices had been allowed to decide. A glance at the rudeness of the masses in the Middle Ages may convince us of the necessity of their being guided by those above them" (Olshausen). We turn from the controversial aspect of the subject to observe what the apostles regarded as constituting true fitness for any place of service in Christ's Church. Here we may find principles that will be of permanent application and interest.

I. PERSONAL CHARACTER. The men selected must be of "honest report;" "good report;" "good repute;" held in general esteem; attested; well reported of. Their private character must be such as to win confidence and respect. Their integrity must be unquestioned. The importance of personal character may be urged in view of the trusts that would be committed to them—trusts of money, trusts of *impartial dealing*, trusts of *just decisions* in cases of difficulty, etc. Christian officials must be beyond suspicion of interested motives, unfaithfulness, or time-serving. Guarantee of fair and honourable dealing is found in established and acknowledged integrity. This is the first requirement for all who would serve Christ in the lesser and material, as well

as in the higher and spiritual, offices of the Church. In public esteem they must be blameless.

II. ACTIVE PIETY. The persons selected are to be "full of the Holy Ghost," or "full of the Spirit." The Church, to be enabled to judge who had such a baptism, must observe some things which were recognized signs of a fulness of the Divine indwelling and sealing. They would be two: 1. A high fervour of religious feeling, seen in rapidly developed Christian experience, advanced Christian knowledge, and unusual prayerfulness. 2. Active and energetic and self-denying labours for the welfare of the fellow-Christians and for the spread of the gospel. Men of the self-indulgent type are mischievous in Church offices; men of the retiring and monastic type are unfitted for Church offices; men of characteristic energy and business activity, if these are combined with warmth and fervour of devotion, are the men "full of the Holy Ghost," who still may nobly serve the Church and the Master.

III. PRACTICAL FITNESS. The persons selected are also to be "full of wisdom;" i.e. of practical sagacity and skill for the management of the particular work to which they are called. The Church must seek fitness. Each man must be set in his right place and given his right work. Each can serve best in the sphere for which natural disposition and Divine endowment have fitted him. Such men have always been provided in the Church, but they usually need to be *sought out*. The best men are very seldom found forward to press themselves into office, but when their fitness is made plain to others, and leads to their selection and appointment, it is no true humility on their part to refuse the service. Impress that *counted worthy to serve* is the Christian's supreme honour.—R. T.

Ver. 4.—*The work of the ministry.* In no age of the Church has it been more necessary than it is in this to exalt the ministry of the Church, to secure its freedom from secular cares, and to culture its spiritual life and efficiency. Thousands of Christian clergy long to be able to say the words of our text, and hopelessly repeat after Dr. Chalmers, "I am hustled out of my spirituality." We may help to a better understanding of the work of the ministry if we consider—

I. ITS PRIVATE AND PREPARATORY FEATURES. "Give ourselves continually to prayer." The term "prayer," as here used, is a comprehensive one, and includes all that belongs to private piety and soul-culture, the nourishing of the Christian vitality, and enriching of the personal spiritual stores of thought, feeling, and truth. Ministers know, by a constant experience, how immediately their pleasure and their power in their work depend on their personal spiritual conditions. The soul must be full of God that is to speak well for God; and Christian congregations should take it upon them, as a burden of duty, to free their pastors from care, both in his family and in the temporal matters of the Church, so that he may "give himself unto prayer." Prayer may here be taken to include: 1. *Self-culture*—the full mastery of a man's own disposition and habits. 2. *Mental culture*—a sufficient training of the intellectual powers to ensure full and wise teaching of the people. 3. *Scripture-culture*—adequate acquaintance with the actual contents of God's revealed Word, and quickness of spiritual insight into its deeper meanings, suggestions, and mysteries. 4. *Soul-culture*—that kind of sympathetic, persuasive force which seems to bring God near to man, in us, and man near to God, through us; the kind of power that only comes to us through "prayer and fasting." These things are the absolute essentials of true and successful ministerial work to-day. The men of prayer are the men of power.

II. ITS PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL FEATURES. "The ministry of the Word," or the service of the revealed Word. This may be set in two forms. 1. *The ministry of the Scriptures*; not merely in their contents, but in their *applications*, their examples, warnings, counsels, comfortings, etc. "Our ministers are the teachers of a Book, and each has more than a lifetime full of labour if he sets his heart upon declaring the whole revealed counsel of God." 2. *The ministry of the Christ*, as the very essence of the Scriptures. In this bringing out the special *redemptive* features of the Divine relation, and claiming personal surrender to, personal obedience to, and personal homage to, the risen, glorified, and reigning Lord. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." It may be further pressed that: (1) The Word, or message of salvation, needs a human ministry; "by the foolishness of preaching God would save them that believe." (2) That it

also needs the entire devotion of men's time and talents and influence. If apostles needed to step aside from common cares to keep their efficiency for spiritual work, much more do the modern clergy in this busy and anxious age. It should seriously be considered how far the modern ministry has become weakened, especially in spiritual power and prophet-like energy, by becoming crowded with worldly cares, so that private soul-culture is neglected and prayer-preparations are crowded out. Only from the "secret place of the Most High" can Christian teachers come forth in power. "While they are musing the fire burns;" and then they can "speak with their tongues."—R. T.

Vers. 5—8.—Stephen, the proto-martyr. Very little is known of his history. And, except for the sake of introducing Saul of Tarsus, and indicating the influence that Stephen's teachings and martyrdom exerted upon him, it is difficult for us to trace why the brief record of his work and death are preserved for us by St. Luke. We judge that he was a Hellenist, by his name; but it is not known from what country he came. He is represented by Epiphanius as one of the seventy disciples chosen by Christ. Others think that he was one of St. Peter's converts on the day of Pentecost. Dr. Dykes fixes on the point most demanding our attention when he says, "The elevation of Stephen to official rank had this for one of its results, that the spiritual and intellectual gifts with which God had endowed this man found at once a wider and more public sphere. Stephen was more than an almoner. He was a deep student of the Old Testament, a theologian of unusual insight, a powerful reasoner and an advanced Christian. In him, too, we find that promise fulfilled which had hitherto been fulfilled to Peter, the promise of such wisdom in speech as no adversary could gainsay. His manner of speech, however, was unlike that of Peter. Peter was a witness, and preached by witness-bearing. Stephen was a student, and preached by exposition and controversy." We dwell on the mission of Stephen as suggested by the terms of the above passages.

I. HE WAS A MAN OF FAITH. It is twice noticed that he was "full of faith"—an expression which may be taken to mean: 1. That he was unusually open and receptive to the Christian truth and grace; for some manuscripts read, "full of grace." 2. Or that he was unusually zealous and active in proclaiming Christ. Faith is sometimes the equivalent of piety, sometimes of activity. The man of faith is, from one point of view, the man of piety; from another point of view he is the man of activity, who readily overcomes hindrances, and, relying on Divine help, goes on in his work, consecrating himself wholly to it. Faith is too often thought of as a cherished sentiment; it is for Christians the inspiration of practical life and duty. They should be earnest in service, and find the earnestness maintained by their trust. Faith evidently kept very near to Stephen the vision of the exalted and living Christ.

II. STEPHEN AS A MAN OF POWER. This was shown in (1) the influence of his personal character; (2) in his indomitable energy and perseverance; (3) in his stores of scriptural knowledge; (4) in his intellectual gifts; (5) in his unanswerable arguments; (6) in his ability to add miraculous attestations. Men could not resist the "wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake."

III. STEPHEN AS A MAN MOVED BY THE HOLY GHOST. Not simply endowed with intellectual gifts, but under special constrainings of the Holy Ghost; called to a special work, and suitably enriched and inspired for that work. Where there is a full consecration of heart, and an entire openness of life, there the Holy Spirit will come, making the man his agent, and assuring to his labours full success.

IV. STEPHEN AS A MAN BEFORE HIS TIME. Only gradually did the true relations between Judaism and Christianity dawn upon the apostles. But Stephen saw them, and boldly announced them, putting them on men's thoughts, if he might not win for them a present acceptance. Perhaps, as a Hellenist, he had not so great prejudices to overcome as had the Palestinian Jews. Stephen paid the penalty which usually comes to those whose thoughts and teachings are in advance of their age. His enemies were quite right. From their point of view he was a most dangerous man—no one of the Christian band was so dangerous. But he was one of the noblest of men. He is a sublime example. His brief life is an abiding witness. Being dead, he speaks with a martyr's voice, bidding us do noble things for Christ, and trust him to give us strength for the doing.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The laying on of hands.* This is the first mention of the custom in connection with the Christian community. It does not appear that our Lord set apart his apostles to their work by any formal ceremony. A little while before his passion he “breathed on them, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” The imposition of hands was an instance of carrying over and adapting a Jewish custom. “It had an analogous meaning in the ritual of Israel (Numb. xxvii. 23) in acts of blessing (Gen. xlviii. 13, 14) and the transmission of functions.” It appears to have been used in the Jewish schools on the admission of a scribe to his office as a teacher. “Its primary symbolism would seem to be that of the concentration for the moment of all the spiritual energy of prayer upon him on whom men lay their hands; and so of the bestowal of any office for which spiritual gifts are required.” For other Scripture references, see ch. xiii. 3; 1 Tim. v. 22; Heb. vi. 2. “The origin of this rite is to be looked for in patriarchal times, when it seems to have been a form simply of solemn benediction, as in Gen. xlviii. 14. In the New Testament we find the laying on of hands used by our Lord both in blessing and in healing; and again he promises to his disciples that they too should lay hands on the sick and they should recover. At the time when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written, the doctrine of the ‘laying on of hands’ was one of the elements of Christian teaching” (Dict. of Christian Antiquities;’ see art. “Imposition of Hands” for the ceremonies in which the Christian Church has adapted the custom). This is an illustration of the importance of preserving valued ancient practices. It cannot be said that we have any Divine commands in regard to the laying on of hands, but the Church has found the practice to be significant and useful. It may be regarded as—

I. A SIGN OF SELECTION. For some reason the individual is singled out. For some particular office he is chosen. The selection is made by the whole Church. It is represented by the act of imposition done by one person, or by several, in the Church’s name. The public nature of the act sets the individual forth prominently before the whole Church as the selected one.

II. A SIGN OF UNITED CONFIDENCE. This is more fully indicated in the form of imposition practised by what are known as the Free Churches. At their ordination services the laying on of hands is done by the assembled presbyters, each laying a single hand on the head of the selected one, and the custom is mainly valued as an expression of mutual confidence in the Divine call of the selected one, and in his spiritual fitness for the office which he is about to undertake. It becomes an important part of an ordination service as a comforting assurance given to the candidate for office; and with this simple meaning of the rite some of the Free Churches are satisfied.

III. AS A SIGN OF COMMUNICATION. “It was connected with other acts that presupposed the communication of a spiritual gift. Through well-nigh all changes of polity and dogma and ritual, it has kept its place with Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, among the unchanging witnesses of the Church’s universality and permanence.” Hackett takes it as “a symbol of the impartation of the gifts and graces which they (the deacons) needed to qualify them for the office.” Olshausen says, “The idea embraced in the laying on of hands was really just this, that by means of it there was effected a communication of the Spirit from the individual consecrating to the one ordained.” Two questions need treatment. 1. Was the imposition an actual impartation of Divine gifts or the Divine Spirit? or was it only the outward symbol or sign of a Divine impartation which was beyond man’s control? 2. If there was apostolic power to communicate the gift or the Spirit, have we sufficient ground for assuming that the power is retained by the teachers of the Church whom we regard as the successors of the apostles? Decision on and treatment of these questions must depend on our ecclesiastical bias. No earnest Christian need fail to realize the spiritual value and suggestiveness of this custom. It may, no doubt, be made to serve purely ritual purposes; but it may also be an important and useful Church ordinance, when it is observed on due consideration, and with suitable solemnity and prayer.—R. T.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The weakness of persecutors.* Attention is drawn to the fact, which has received frequent illustration through the martyr-ages, that men only resort to persecuting tactics when they become conscious of their moral helplessness and theological inefficiency. The persecutor is like the swearer. No man ever needs to curse

if his word is known to be truthful. No man ever needs to persecute if he has the right on his side, and faith in those moral forces which ever uphold the right. As the line of thought is directly based on the incident as narrated in the verses, a brief outline will suffice. We find these advocates of strict Judaism—

I. DEFEATED IN ARGUMENT. (Ver. 10.) Observe that, in Stephen, there was not merely controversial skill, adequate knowledge, and a good theme; there was a spiritual power which made him irresistible. Perhaps nothing rouses anger more readily than defeat in discussion. Few men can retain self-control at such times. And the permanent value of religious public disputations may be very seriously questioned. Happily the tone of religious controversy in our times is greatly improved.

II. APPEALING TO PHYSICAL FORCE. Always a sign of weakness. Sadly illustrated in Calvin and Servetus, and similar cases of condescending to use the power of the magistrate in purely intellectual and moral disputes. Properly, the public magistrate has only to do with the breaking of the social order, but it has always been found easy to fashion charges cognizable by the magistrate when the real purpose has been to silence a triumphant intellectual or religious foe. Truth-lovers never need ask aid from the world's coarse government weapons. *Magna est veritas, et prevalebít.*

III. MAKING ALLIANCE WITH LIARS. Suborning bad men and prompting false witnesses. So did the prejudiced Sanhedrim in dealing with our Lord. Honourable men descending to the lowest depths to carry out their malicious schemes. Their spirit and conduct are fully shown up by the company they keep. Loyalty to the right and to God cannot endure fellowship with false witnesses.

IV. TRUSTING TO POPULAR EXCITEMENT. "They stirred up the people." The fickleness of the populace is proverbial. Their susceptibility to excitement makes them the easy tool of the demagogue. And Jewish crowds were remarkable for their sudden impulses. Theudas and Judas and Barchocheba played their purposes on this tightly strung string. When Stephen's enemies had no fair charge to urge against him before the courts, their only hope of accomplishment for their malicious purposes lay in the violence of a popular uprising. Their utter weakness and their shameful badness are revealed in their schemes. Seeming to succeed, they really failed more utterly than with their arguments. They could kill the body, but what more could they do? They could not fly after the winged words which, like seeds, had found their lodgment in the minds and hearts of Barnabas and Saul, and would surely spring up and bear blossom and fruitage to the dismay of all Stephen's enemies. Let the persecutor do his weak and foolish work, for "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."—R. T.

Ver. 15.—The angel-face on man. Something of a proverbial character rests on the expression, "Saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (comp. Esth. v. 2, Septuagint). Some think that this description "may be traced to the impression made at the time on St. Paul and reported by him to St. Luke." There was "calm dignity," but there was something more and better; there was the vision of Christ as present with him, and the radiant face was the response he made to the vision. Compare the skin of Moses' face shining, and the glory of the Saviour on the Mount of Transfiguration. "The face of Stephen was already illumined with the radiancy of the new Jerusalem." "The words describe the glory that brightened the features of Stephen, supported as he was by the consciousness of the Divine favour." Illustrate the truly wonderful power of varied expression which is found in the human face. It responds at once to the moods of the spirit, changing suddenly at changing moods, and gaining fixity of form and feature according to the settled character and habit of the mind. What a man is can be read from his face. How true this was of Stephen may be shown by dwelling on the following points:—

I. THE CHANGE IN STEPHEN'S FACE WAS THE SIGN OF CHERISHED FEELING. It tells us the tone and mood of his mind—what he was thinking about, and what he was feeling. Reveals to us the man of God and man of faith and man of prayer, who lived in communion of spirit with the glorified Saviour. Lines of care come into faces of worldly Christians. Heart-peace, rest in God, absorbing love to Christ, make smile-play over the face. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and so is he in expression of countenance. And the pleasant, the angel, face makes holy witness for Christ before men, winning them to the love of him who thus can glorify his saints.

II. THE CHANGE IN STEPHEN'S FACE INDICATED SUPERIORITY TO HIS SURROUNDINGS. Describe them, and show how reasonably we might have looked for alarm and fear. Well Stephen knew that all this wild rage and tumult and false witnessing meant his death. But there is no quailing. It might have been a day of joy and triumph, to judge by Stephen's face. Compare St. Paul's words, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself." Outwardly a man may be tossed, tempted, tried, imperilled, tortured, but inwardly he may be kept in perfect peace, having his mind stayed on God. Such mastery of circumstance is just as truly the great Christian triumph now, though our circumstances are rather those of perplexity and pressure than of peril to life and property. Overcoming the world, as Stephen did, we too may win and wear the "angel-face."

III. THE CHANGE IN STEPHEN'S FACE WAS A RESPONSE TO THE CONSCIOUS NEARNESS OF JESUS. Of this we have intimation in ch. vii. 56, but we are apt to regard Stephen's exclamation as indicating a sudden and passing vision. It is much more probable that it kept with him all through the wild and exciting scene. When they set him before the council, the "angel-face" was there, and the vision of the Christ was in his soul. While he spoke his defence, the Lord stood by him and strengthened him; and when the stones flew about him and struck him down, the vision kept in his soul; the blinded eyes saw it, and it never passed until it became the enrapturing and eternal reality—his bliss for evermore to be *with Jesus*. The light on Stephen's face was the smile that recognized the best of Friends, who was so graciously fulfilling his promise, and being with his suffering people always. That smile told on the persecuting Sanhedrim. They would not forget it or ever get the vision out of their minds. It would secretly convict, if it did not openly win. Can there be still, and now, in our milder spheres, the angel-face on man—on us? And if so, then on what things must the winning and the wearing of that angel-face depend?—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VII.

Ver. 1.—*And the high priest said for them said the high priest, A.V.* The high priest spoke as president of the Sanhedrim (see ch. ix. 1 and Matt. xxvi. 62). Theophilus the son of Annas or his brother Jonathan is probably meant.

Ver. 2.—*Brethren and fathers for men, brethren, and fathers, A.V.* *Haran for Charan, A.V.* Brethren and fathers. The Greek is ἀδελφοὶ ἀδελφοί (i.e. "men who are also my brethren") καὶ πατέρες. He adds "and fathers" out of respect to the elder and more dignified portion of the Sanhedrim. It seems probable that Stephen, as a Hellenist Jew, spoke in Greek, which is borne out by the quotations being from the LXX. (see Alford), though Meyer and others think he spoke in Hebrew. Greek was generally understood at this time by all educated persons (see Roberts, 'Discussions on Gospels,' ch. ii.—vii.). The speech itself is almost universally admitted to bear strong internal marks of genuineness and originality. But different estimates have been formed of its excellence, and different explanations given of its scope and object. "Difficult but striking;" "long and prolix;" "at first sight absurd and out of place;" "wonderful but difficult;" "of inestimable

value;" "a speech containing many things which don't seem much to the point;" "a powerful speech;" "a speech combining "the address of the advocate and the boldness of the martyr;"—are some of the estimates that have been formed of it by modern commentators. As regards its scope and object, the two main clues to it are the accusation which Stephen rose to rebut, and the application with which he ended in vers. 51—53. If we keep these two things steadily in view, we shall not be very far wrong if we say that Stephen sought to clear himself by showing, (1) by his historical summary, what a true and thorough Israelite he was in heart and feeling and fellowship with the fathers of his race, and therefore how unlikely to speak blasphemous words against either Moses or the temple; (2) how Moses himself had foretold the coming of Christ as a prophet like himself, to enunciate some new doctrines; (3) how at every stage of their history their fathers had resisted those who were sent to them by God, and that now his judges were playing the same part. Perhaps it may be further true, as Chrysostom explains it (Hom. xv., xvi., xvii.), that his intention in the early part of the speech was to show "that the promise was made before the place, before circumcision, before sacrifice, before the temple," in accordance

with St. Paul's argument (Gal. iii. 16—18); and that therefore the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant could not be dependent upon the Law or the temple. The God of glory. This unusual phrase identifies God, of whom Stephen speaks, with the God whose visible glory was seen by the patriarchs (Gen. xii. 7; xviii. 1; xxvi. 2; xxviii. 12, 13; xxxv. 9; Exod. xxiv. 16, 17; Numb. xvi. 19; Isa. vi.; John xii. 41). St. Paul uses a similar phrase, "The Lord of glory" (1 Cor. ii. 8). Our father. He thus identifies himself with his judges, whom he had just called "brethren." In Mesopotamia, which would be in Hebrew "Aram of the two rivers." The exact place, as we learn from Gen. xi. 31, was "Ur of the Chaldees;" whence the Israelites were taught to say (Deut. xxvi. 5), "An Aramean ready to perish was my father." That this appearance was in Ur, before he dwelt in Haran, is manifest from Gen. xi. 31, because it is there said that they went forth from Ur "to go into the land of Canaan," which makes it quite certain that the appearance of God to Abraham had preceded their leaving Ur, and was the cause of it. And this is confirmed by Gen. xv. 7; Neh. ix. 7; and Josephus ('Ant.' i. vii. 1). Moreover, the very language of the call shows plainly that it came to him when he was living in his native country, among his kindred, and in his father's house, i.e. at Ur, not in Haran, where they were only sojourners. There is nothing the least unusual, in Hebrew narrative, in the writer going back to any point in the preceding narrative with which the subsequent narrative is connected. Gen. xii. 1 precedes in point of time Gen. xi. 31; similar examples are Gen. xxxvii. 5, 6; Judg. xx., *passim*; 1 Sam. xvi. 21 compared with 1 Sam. xvii. 28; 1 Sam. xxii. 20, 21, compared with 1 Sam. xxiii. 6; and many more. It is, however, of course possible that a fresh call may have been given after Terah's death, though it is by no means necessary to suppose it. Another imaginary difficulty arises from the statement in Gen. xii. 4 that Abraham was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran, that Terah lived seventy years and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran, and that Terah died at the age of two hundred and five; and from the statement in ver. 4 of this chapter that Abram did not leave Haran till Terah's death. From which it is concluded that Terah must have lived sixty years after Abram's departure ($70 + 75 + 60 = 205$). But the whole difficulty arises from the gratuitous supposition that Abram was Terah's firstborn because he is named first. If Terah were a hundred and thirty at the birth of Abram, he would be two hundred and five when Abram was seventy-five.

Now, there is absolutely nothing to forbid the supposition that such was his age. It does not follow that because Abram is named first he was the eldest. He might be named first as being by far the most illustrious of the three. He might be named first because the subsequent genealogies—Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve Patriarchs—were deduced from him. There may, too, have been other sons of Terah, not named here because nothing was going to be said about them. Nahor is mentioned because Rebekah was his granddaughter (Gen. xxiv. 15, 24) and Rachel his great-granddaughter. And Haran is mentioned because he was the father of Lot. Others, whether sons or daughters, would not be mentioned. If Terah, therefore, began to have children when he was seventy, it is quite probable that Abram may not have been born till he was a hundred and thirty. That the son named first need not necessarily be the eldest is clear from the order in which Shem, Ham, and Japheth are named, whereas it appears from Gen. ix. 24 that Ham was the youngest, and from Gen. x. 2, 21 (according to the A.V. and the LXX., Symmachus, the Targum of Onkelos, and the old Jewish commentators), that Japheth was the eldest. In Josh. xxiv. 4 God says, "I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau," though Esau was the elder; and so Heb. xi. 20. So again in Exod. v. 20 we read, "Moses and Aaron" (see also Exod. xl. 31; Numb. xvi. 43; Josh. xxiv. 5; 1 Sam. xii. 6; etc.), though it appears from 1 Chron. vi. 3 that Aaron was the eldest. So again we read in Gen. xlviii. 5, "Thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh," and in ver. 20, "God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh," though in ver. 1 of the same chapter they are named according to the true order of birth—"Manasseh and Ephraim." It is, therefore, an unwarrantable inference that Abram was the eldest son because he is named first; and with the removal of this inference the difficulty vanishes; and Stephen was quite accurate when he said that God appeared to Abraham in Ur, before he dwelt in Haran, and that he did not move from Haran till the death of Terah. Haran. *Charran* in A.V. marks the difference between *Haran* (חָרָן), Lot's father, and the name of the place (חָרָן). It is called "the city of Nahor" (Gen. xxiv. 10 compared with Gen. xlvii. 43). It still exists as an Arab village, with the name of Harra'n (see 'Dictionary of Bible').

Ver. 3.—*Thy land for thy country, A.V.*

Ver. 4.—*Haran for Charran, A.V.; God removed for he removed, A.V.* The land of the Chaldeans. In Gen. xi. 28 Ur is called "Ur of the Chaldees." When his father was dead (see note to ver. 2). God removed.

That *God* is the subject appears from the following verbs, "he gave," "he promised." The verb *μετόκησεν*, he removed, is the technical word for planting a colony. Wherein, etc. (*εἰς ἧν*); into which ye came and dwelt.

Ver. 5.—*And for yet*, A.V.; *in for for a*, A.V. He gave him none inheritance, etc. (comp. Heb. xi. 8, 9).

Ver. 6.—*In a strange land*; a land belonging to some one else (Heb. xi. 9, *γῆ ἀλλοτρία*, as here); a land in which he had none inheritance, not yet become the possession of his seed; for as the writer to the Hebrews says, he dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob; not applicable, therefore, in the first instance to Egypt at all. And this sojourning as strangers and pilgrims lasted altogether four hundred and thirty years, viz. two hundred and fifteen years in Canaan, and two hundred and fifteen in Egypt; which agrees exactly with St. Paul's reckoning in round numbers of four hundred years from the giving of the promise to Abraham to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai (Gal. iii. 17). The "four hundred years" must not be taken in connection with the "bondage" and the ill treatment which characterized the last half of the period, but as spoken of the whole period during which they had not possession of the promised land. Bring them into bondage. So the LXX.; but the Hebrew, as rendered in the A.V., has "and they shall serve them." But some (see Gesenius, 'Thea.') render the Hebrew as the LXX. do. Four hundred years. This is a round number, as in Gen. xv. 13. The exact time, as given in Exod. xii. 40, 41, was four hundred and thirty years.

Ver. 7.—*Which for whom*, A.V. And serve me in this place. These words are not in Gen. xv., from which the preceding words are quoted. Instead of *καὶ λατρεύσουσι μοί ἐν τῇ τόπῳ τούτῳ*, the LXX., following the Hebrew, have *μετὰ ἀποσκευῆς πολλῆς*, "with great substance." The words "serve me in this place," seem certainly to have been suggested by Exod. iii. 12, "Ye shall serve God upon this mountain;" but they give a perfectly correct account of what happened in this case.

Ver. 8.—*Jacob the twelve for Jacob begat the twelve*, A.V. He gave him the covenant of circumcision, subsequently to the gift of the land by promise. The argument suggested is apparently the same as St. Paul's in Rom. iv. 10—17.

Ver. 9.—*Moved with jealousy against Joseph, sold him, for moved with envy sold Joseph*, A.V., more correctly, and in accordance with Gen. xxxvii. 11, LXX.; and for *but*, A.V. Moved with jealousy, etc. Here breaks out that part of Stephen's argument which went to show how the

Israelites had always ill-used their greatest benefactors, and resisted the leaders sent to them by God.

Ver. 10.—*Before for in the sight of*, A.V. And delivered him, etc. And even so had he delivered his servant Jesus from the grave, and raised him to eternal life.

Ver. 11.—*Famine for dearth*, A.V.; *Egypt for the land of Egypt*, A.V. and T.R.; *Canaan for Chanaan*, A.V.

Ver. 12.—*Sent forth for sent out*, A.V.; *the first time for first*, A.V.

Ver. 13.—*Race became manifest for kindred was made known*, A.V. "Kindred" is a much better word here, because Joseph's "race" was already known to Pharaoh (Gen. xli. 12); "was made known" is a far better phrase than "became manifest."

Ver. 14.—*And Joseph sent for then sent Joseph*, A.V.; *called to him Jacob his father for called his father Jacob to him*, A.V. Three score and fifteen souls. In Gen. xli. 26, 27, the statement is very precise that "all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three score and ten," including Joseph and his two sons. Moreover, the accuracy of the number is tested in two ways. First, the names of the sons and daughters of each patriarch are given, and they are found, on counting them, to amount to exactly seventy. And then the totals of the descendants of each of Jacob's four wives is given separately, and again the total is exactly seventy (33 + 16 + 14 + 7 = 70). It is true that the computation in ver. 26 does not agree with the above, for it makes the number of Jacob's descendants, exclusive of Joseph and his two sons, sixty-six instead of sixty-seven, which is the number according to the two above computations, and consequently the total number (when Joseph and his two sons are added) sixty-nine instead of seventy. But this is such a manifest contradiction that it seems almost a necessity to suppose a clerical error, *εἴς* for *πενή*, caused perhaps by the preceding *εἴς*. It is also a singular anomaly that, in the enumeration of Leah's descendants, as well as in the genera enumeration, Er and Onan are distinctly reckoned as well as mentioned. Jacob himself is nowhere reckoned in the Bible, though he is in the commentaries. But when we turn to the LXX., we find that in Gen. xli. 20 there are added to Manasseh and Ephraim Machir the son and Gilead the grandson of Manasseh; and Suthelah and Taam the sons, and Edom (meaning Eran, LXX. Eden, Numb. xxvi. 36) the grandson, of Ephraim, making the descendants of Rachel eighteen (it should be nineteen if *Huppim*, Gen. xli. 21, is added) instead of fourteen; the number sixty-six of ver. 26 is preserved; the number of Joseph's descendants is given as nine

(Huppim apparently being now reckoned), which, added to sixty-six, makes seventy-five; and accordingly in ver. 27 the LXX. read ψυχὰς ἑβδομηκοντάεπτε ("seventy-five souls"), instead of "three score and ten." But except in the addition of these five names of Joseph's grand and great-grandchildren, the LXX. support the Hebrew text, even in the strange *sixty-six* of ver. 26. Stephen, as a Hellenist, naturally follows the LXX. But the question arises—How are we to understand the lists? Gen. xlv. 8 says, "These are the names of the children of Israel, which came into Egypt;" and one naturally expects to find the names only of those who are described in vers. 5—7 as the migratory party from Canaan to Egypt. This expectation is somewhat disturbed by Er and Onan being included in the enumeration. This may, however, be accounted for by Pharez and Zerah being reckoned as their seed. But is it likely that Hezron and Hamul the sons of Pharez, and the other great-grandsons of Jacob, were born before the descent into Egypt? The answer to this is that, as Jacob was a hundred and thirty years old when he came down to Egypt (Gen. xlvii. 28), there is no improbability in his having great-grandchildren (allowing forty years for a generation); on the contrary, every likelihood that he should. But on the other hand, as Joseph could not have been above fifty when Jacob came down to Egypt (30 + 14 + X.), Gen. xli. 46, 29, 30, it does not seem likely or possible that Joseph should have had grown-up grand-sons and a great-grandson, as the LXX. make him have. Indeed, to all appearance Manasseh and Ephraim were unmarried young men at the time that Jacob blessed them (Gen. xlviii. 11, 16; 1. 23). Therefore we may conclude certainly that the additional numbers of the LXX. are incorrect, if understood literally, of those who came down with Jacob from Canaan to Egypt. But there is nothing improbable in Benjamin having ten children. Judah, to whom grandchildren are attributed, was Jacob's fourth son, and might be forty or fifty years older than Joseph and Benjamin. Asher, to whom also grandsons are attributed, was the eighth son, and might be twenty years older than Joseph and Benjamin. Still, considering that Er and Onan are reckoned among those who came down to Egypt, it would not be surprising to find that some of those mentioned in the list were born after Jacob's arrival, but included on some principle which we do not understand. In other words, a literal interpretation of the statement of the Hebrew Bible involves no impossibilities, but a literal interpretation of the statement of the LXX. does.

Ver. 15.—*And for so, A.V.; he died, himself for died, he, A.V.*

Ver. 16.—*And they were for and were, A.V.: unto Shechem for into Sychem, A.V., i.e. the Hebrew for the Greek form of the name (Gen. xxxiv. 2); tomb for sepulchre, A.V.; a price in silver for a sum of money, A.V.; Hamor for Emor, A.V. (Hebrew for Greek form); in Shechem for the father of Sychem, A.V. and T.R. As regards the statement in the text, two distinct transactions seem at first sight to be mixed up. One, that Abraham bought the field of Machpelah of Ephron the Hittite for a burial-place, where he and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah, were buried (Gen. xxiv. 16, 17, 19; xxv. 9, 10; xxxv. 27—29; xlix. 29—31); the other, that Jacob "bought a parcel of a field, . . . at the hand of the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money," where the bones of Joseph were buried by Joshua (Gen. xxxiii. 19; 1. 25; Josh. xxiv. 32), and where, according to a tradition still surviving in the days of St. Jerome, the other patriarchs were also buried ('Epistol.' 86, "She came to Sichem, now called Neapolis (or Nablous), and from thence visited the tombs of the twelve patriarchs"). See also Jerome, 'De Optimo Genere Interpretandi.' "All Jewish writers, however, are wholly silent" about this tradition, perhaps from jealousy of the Samaritans (Lightfoot, vol. viii. p. 423). And Josephus affirms that all but Joseph were buried at Hebron ('Ant. Jud.,' ii. viii. 2); and that their beautiful marble monuments were to be seen at Hebron in his day. In the cave of Machpelah, however, there is no tomb of any of the twelve patriarchs except Joseph; and his so-called tomb is of a different character and situation from the genuine ones (Stanley's 'Lectures on Jewish Church,' 1st series, pp. 498—500. See also 'Sermons in the East': 'The Mosque of Hebron'). But on looking closer at the text it appears pretty certain that only Shechem was in Stephen's mind. For first he speaks of Shechem at once, And were carried over unto Shechem. And adds and were laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a price in silver of the sons of Hamor in Shechem. Except the one word "Abraham," the whole sentence points to Shechem. What he says of Shechem is exactly in accordance with Gen. xxxiii. 18, 19. And what he says of their fathers being carried over and buried at Shechem is exactly true of Joseph's bones, as related in Josh. xxiv. 32. So that the one difficulty is the word "Abraham." It seems much more probable that this word should have been interpolated by some early transcriber, who saw no nominative case to ἄνθρωπο, and who had in his mind a confused recollection of Abraham's*

purchase, than that Stephen, who shows such thorough knowledge of the Bible history, should have made a gross mistake in such a well-known and famous circumstance as the purchase of the field of Machpelah, or that Luke should have perpetuated it had he made it in the hurry of speech. It cannot be affirmed with certainty that Stephen confirms the story of the other patriarchs being buried at Shechem, though possibly he alludes to the tradition. The plural, "they were carried," etc., might be put generally, though only Joseph was meant (as Matt. xxvii. 44; xxvi. 8 compared with Luke xxiii. 39; John xii. 4), or "the bones of Joseph" might possibly be the subject, though not expressed. Lightfoot—followed by Bishop Wordsworth, who thinks that Abraham really did buy a field of Ephron in Sychem, when he was there (Gen. xii. 6)—would thus be right in supposing that the point of Stephen's remark was that the patriarchs were buried in Shechem.

Ver. 17.—As for when, A.V.; vouchsafed unto for *ἠὰδ εὐωρν το*, A.V. and T.R. Vouchsafed; *ἠμολογεῖν*, in the sense of "to promise," as in Matt. xiv. 7, and not unfrequently in Greek writers, for *ἠμνέειν*, to swear.

Ver. 18.—Over Egypt, R.T.; there arose another king for another king arose, A.V.

Ver. 19.—Race for kindred, A.V., as in ver. 13; that they should cast out for so that they cast out, A.V.; babes for young children, A.V.

Ver. 20.—At which season for in which time, A.V.; he was nourished three months in his father's house for nourished up in his father's house three months, A.V. Exceeding fair (*ἀσπεῖος τῷ θεῷ*). In Exod. ii. 2 it is simply *ἀσπεῖος*, "a goodly child," A.V., and so in Heb. xi. 23, rendered "a goodly child," "a proper child," A.V. Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' ii. ix. 5, 7) describes Pharaoh's daughter as captivated by the size and beauty of the child, and as speaking of him to Pharaoh as of Divine beauty. And Justin (quoted by Whitty) says that the beauty of his person was greatly in his favour.

Ver. 22.—Instructed for learned, A.V.; he was mighty for was mighty, A.V.; in his words and works for in words and in deeds, A.V. and T.R. The statement of Moses being instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, though not found in Exodus, was doubtless true. Josephus makes Thermenitis speak of him as "of a noble understanding;" and says that he was "brought up with much care and diligence." And Philo, in his life of Moses (quoted by Whitty), says he was skilled in music, geometry, arithmetic, and hieroglyphics, and the whole circle of arts and sciences.

Ver. 23.—Well-nigh for full, A.V. When he was precisely forty years old (Meyer).

The exact meaning seems to be "when he was in the act of completing forty years." The account in Exod. ii. 11 only says, "When Moses was grown" (*μέγας γενόμενος*, LXX.); the age of forty years, and the number of years, forty, that he sojourned in Midian, as given below, ver. 30, are traditional. "There are that say that Moses was forty years in Pharaoh's palace, forty years in Midian, and forty years in the wilderness" (Tanchum, in Exod. ii.). "Moses was forty years in Pharaoh's court, and forty years in Midian, and forty years he served Israel" (Beresh. Rabb.), both quoted by Lightfoot ('Comment. and Exercitations upon the Acts'). The sum total of the three periods of forty years is given as the length of Moses' life, viz. a hundred and twenty years (Deut. xxxiv. 7).

Ver. 24.—Smiting for and smote, A.V.

Ver. 25.—And he supposed that his brethren understood for he supposed that his brethren would have understood, A.V.; was giving them deliverance for would deliver them, A.V.

Ver. 26.—The day following for the next day, A.V.; he appeared for he showed himself, A.V.

Ver. 28.—Wouldest for wilt, A.V.; killedst for diddest, A.V.

Ver. 29.—And Moses fled for then fled Moses, A.V.; became a sojournner for was a stranger, A.V.; Midian for Madian, A.V.

Ver. 30.—Fulfilled for expired, A.V.; an angel appeared for there appeared . . . an angel, A.V.; an angel for an angel of the Lord, A.V. and T.R.; Sinai for Sina, A.V.

Ver. 31.—And when for when, A.V.; behold for behold it, A.V.; there came a voice of the Lord for the voice of the Lord came unto him, A.V. There came a voice. The A.V. is surely right. The Lord has only one voice; and *φωνή Κυρίου* is that voice. The grammatical effect of *Κυρίου* upon *φωνή* is to make it definite, as in *ἄγγελος Κυρίου* (see ch. v. 19, note).

Ver. 32.—Saying, A.V., is omitted; of Isaac and of Jacob for the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, A.V. and T.R.; and for then, A.V.

Ver. 33.—And the Lord said unto him for then said the Lord to him, A.V.; loose the shoes for put off thy shoes, A.V. Loose the shoes, etc. In Exod. iii. 5 it is *ἄσται . . . ἐκ τῶν ποδῶν σου*. Iamblichus, quoted by Meyer, refers the Pythagorean precept, "Sacrifice and worship with thy shoes off," to an Egyptian custom. The custom of Orientals to take off their sandals on entering mosques or other sacred places, as existing to the present day, is noticed by many travellers (see also Josh. v. 15).

Ver. 34.—I have surely seen (literally, seeing I have seen—the well-known Hebrew idiom for emphatic affirmation) for I have seen, I have seen, A.V.; have heard for I have

heard, A.V.; and *I am* for *and am*, A.V., the change is in accordance with the A.V. of Exod. iii. 7, 8.

Ver. 35.—*Him hath God sent for the same did God send*, A.V.; *both a ruler for a ruler*, A.V. and T.R.; *with the hand for by the hand*, A.V. and T.R. (*ὅν* for *ἐν*), but giving no clear sense in English. The meaning seems to be that Moses was to rule and save with the strength given him by the angel. But it is much simpler to take *ἐν χερί* as equivalent to the common Hebrew phrase *בְּיָד*, meaning instrumentality, “by means of,” “through,” and to join it with “did send.” The angel who spake to Moses in the bush in the Name of God was God’s instrument in sending Moses. When an angel gives a message from God, the words are always given as spoken by God himself (see e.g. Josh. ii. 1—3). In this verse Stephen, having with great oratorical skill entranced their attention by his recital of God’s marvellous revelation of himself to Moses, now takes them off their guard, and shows how their fathers treated Moses just as they had treated Jesus Christ; and how God in the case of Moses had chosen and magnified the very man whom they had scornfully rejected; just as now he had exalted Jesus Christ to be a Prince and a Saviour, whom they had crucified.

Ver. 36.—*This man for he*, A.V.; *led them forth for brought them out*, A.V.; *having wrought for after that he had showed*, A.V.; *Egypt for the land of Egypt*, A.V. and T.R.

Ver. 37.—*God for the Lord your God*, A.V. and T.R.; *from among for of*, A.V. The R.T. omits the words *him shall ye hear*, which follow in Deut. xviii. 15, and seem to be referred to in Matt. xvii. 5 (*ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀκούετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀκούετε*). The addition of the words adds much to the point of Stephen’s application (see above, ch. iii. 22).

Ver. 38.—*Sinai for Sina*, A.V. (Hebrew for Greek form); *living oracles for the lively oracles*, A.V. In the church. St. Stephen probably used the word *ἐκκλησία* without any reference to its special meaning, “the Church.” It is used in a secular sense in ch. xix. 32, 39, and of the congregation of Israel in the LXX. of 1 Chron. xiii. 2; 1 Macc. ii. 56; Ecclus. xlv. 15; and elsewhere. In Stephen’s time it could hardly have become widely known as the designation of the flock of Christ. On the whole, the marginal rendering, “the congregation,” seems best, but with the idea attached that it was the Lord’s congregation. The angel which spake. It may be doubted whether the phrase, “the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai,” refers to the angel spoken of in ver. 30, or to the angel by whose mouth God spake the words of the ten commandments on Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exod. xx.

1—17; Deut. v. 1—22. Chrysostom and most commentators seem to understand it of the angel who gave the Law; but Whitty, not without reason, thinks the reference is to the burning bush. Living oracles. In like manner, St. Paul calls the Holy Scriptures “the oracles of God” (Rom. iii. 2), and in Heb. v. 12 we read again of “the first principles of the oracles of God,” and St. Peter says, “Let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. iv. 11). For the force of the *living* or *lively* oracles, see 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. Stephen magnifies Moses by reminding his hearers how he had received the Law from God to give to the people.

Ver. 39.—*Obedient for obey*, A.V.; *turned back in their hearts unto Egypt for in their hearts turned back again into Egypt*, A.V. Our fathers would not be obedient, though God had bestowed such signal marks of favour upon them. Turned back in their hearts. A striking instance of their rejection of God’s chiefest mercies.

Ver. 40.—*Which shall go for to go*, A.V.; *led us forth for brought us*, A.V.

Ver. 41.—*Brought a sacrifice for offered sacrifice*, A.V. (see Exod. xxxii. 6, with which the A.V. agrees best); *hands for own hands*, A.V.

Ver. 42.—*But for then*, A.V.; *to serve for to worship*, A.V.; *did ye offer unto me slain beasts and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel for O ye house of Israel, have ye offered*, etc., by the space of forty years in the wilderness? A.V. The passage which follows is nearly *verbatim et literatim* the LXX. of Amos v. 25, 27, except the well-known substitution of “Babylon” for “Damascus” in Amos. This, according to Lightfoot, with whom most commentators agree, was in accordance with a very common practice of readers in the schools and pulpits of the Jews, to adapt and accommodate a text to their own immediate purpose, keeping, however, to historical truth. Here Stephen points to the Babylonish Captivity as the punishment of the sins of their fathers, thus warning them of more terrible judgments to follow their rejection of Christ.

Ver. 43.—*And for yea*, A.V.; *the god Rephan for your god Remphan*, A.V. and T.R.; *the figures for figures*, A.V. The god Rephan. Rephan, or Raiphan, or Remphan, as it is variously written, is the LXX. translation of the Hebrew *Chium* in Amos v. 26. The best explanation of this is that Rephan is the Coptic name of the planet Saturn, well-known of course to the LXX., and that Chium is the Hebrew and Arabic name of the same star, which they therefore translated by Rephan. With regard to the difficulty which has been felt by many that there is no mention of any such worship of Moloch

and Chion in the wilderness, and that sacrifices were continually offered to the Lord, it seems to arise from an entire misconception of the passage in Amos. What Amos means to say is that because of the treacherous, unfaithful heart of Israel, as shown in the worship of the golden calf and all their rebellions in the wilderness, all their sacrifices were worthless. Just as he had said in v. 22, "Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts;" "I hate, I despise your feast days;" "Take away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols" (Amos v. 21, 23): just as Isaiah also says, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? . . . I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts . . . Bring no more vain oblations; . . . it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting" (Isa. i. 11—13, etc.); and again, "He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood" (Isa. lxvi. 3): so all the sacrifices offered up during forty years in the wilderness were no sacrifices at all, and their hypocrisy was clearly seen when they reached the land of Canaan, and, according to Moses' prophetic declaration, "forsook God which made them . . . and sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not" (Deut. xxxii. 15—18), such as Chion and Moloch, Baalim and Ashtoreth. This later idolatry was the fruit and the judicial punishment of their first declension and apostasy in the wilderness, and led to the Captivity in Babylon. It was on seeing their unfaithfulness in the wilderness that "God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven."

Ver. 44.—*The testimony for witness, A.V.; even as he appointed who spake for as he had appointed, speaking, A.V.; figure for fashion, A.V.* Chrysostom calls attention to the mention of the wilderness, as showing that God's presence and service were not confined to Jerusalem.

Ver. 45.—*In their turn for that come after, (διαδεξάμενοι), A.V.; Joshua (the Hebrew form) for Jesus (the Greek form of the name), A.V.; when they entered on the possession of the nations for into the possession of the Gentiles, A.V.; which God thrust for whom God drove, A.V.* In their turn; more literally, *having received it in succession*. It only occurs here in the New Testament. Meyer quotes 4 Macc. iv. 15, "On the death of Seleucus, his son Antiochus received the kingdom in succession;" and classical writers. When they were led, etc. There are three ways of con-

struing the words ἐν τῇ κατασχέσει τῶν ἐθνῶν—(1) as the A.V., taking ἐν in the sense of *eis*, and making the phrase synonymous with the land of Canaan, the land which the Gentiles then possessed; (2) *in* (their) *taking possession* (of the land) *of the Gentiles*, i.e. when they took, taking *κατάσχεσις* in a transitive sense, which seems to be the sense of the R.V.; (3) with Meyer, *during the holding or possession by the Gentiles of the land*, that, viz., *into which their fathers brought the tabernacle*. The first seems the most simple and in accordance with the Greek of the New Testament, and with what follows of the expulsion of the nations before the Israelites.

Ver. 46.—*In the sight of for before, A.V. (ἐνώπιον); asked for desired, A.V.; habitation for tabernacle, A.V. (σκήνωμα). Habitation.* In Deut. xxxiii. 18 σκήνωμα stands in the LXX. for ἕβρα, and in 2 Pet. i. 13, v. 14, for the human body as the tabernacle or temporary dwelling of the soul or spirit. And the idea of a temporary or movable dwelling seems to suit Stephen's argument better than that of a fixed one. The חֲבֻצֶת of Ps. cxxxii. 5 (to which perhaps, as well as 2 Sam. vii. 1—6, Stephen refers) is equally applicable to a tent.

Ver. 47.—*A house for an house, A.V.* The οἶκος (the house) of ver. 47, which Solomon built, seems to be almost in contrast with the σκήνωμα (the tabernacle).

Ver. 48.—*Houses (in italics) for temples, A.V. and T.R.* The word ναοίς (here, but not in ch. xvii. 24) is omitted in the R.T. In Isa. xvi. 12, LXX. (quoted by Meyer), χειροποιήματα (plural) is used without a substantive for the "sanctuary" (שְׁרָפָה) of Moab. For the sentiment that the infinite God, Creator of heaven and earth, cannot be contained in a house built by the hands of men, see also 2 Chron. vi. 18, as well as the passages above quoted. Stephen justifies himself from the charge of having spoken blasphemous words against the temple by citing Isa. lxvi. 1.

Ver. 49.—*The heaven for heaven, A.V.; the earth the footstool of my feet for earth is my footstool, A.V.; what manner of house for what house, A.V.*

Ver. 50.—*Did not my hand make for hath not my hand made, A.V.*

Ver. 51.—*Stiffnecked; hard of neck, inflexible.* The word σκληροτράχηλος only occurs here in the New Testament. But it answers in the LXX. to the Hebrew קָרְקָרִית (hard of neck); see Exod. xxxiii. 3, 5, and elsewhere. In applying this expression to his hearers, Stephen was using the identical language of Moses when he conveyed God's rebuke to them. Considering that they professed to be standing on Moses' side

against Stephen, this must have made his words doubly outting to them. Uncircumcised in heart; *ἀπερίτμητος* only occurs here in the New Testament, but it is found in 2 Maco. i. 51; ii. 46; and in the LXX. of Exod. xii. 48; Judg. xiv. 3; 1 Sam. xvii. 26, and elsewhere for the Hebrew *לֵב*. The word, in its application to his Jewish audience, contains a whole volume of rebuke. They prided themselves on their circumcision, they trusted in it as a sure ground of favour in the sight of God; but all the while they were on a level with the heathen whom they despised, and were to be reckoned among the uncircumcised whom they loathed. For they were without the true circumcision, that of the heart. Here again Stephen was teaching in the exact spirit and even words of Moses and the prophets. See Lev. xxvi. 41; Deut. x. 16 (where Stephen's two reproaches occur together); Jer. ix. 26; Ezek. xlv. 7; and many other passages. Compare the teaching of St. Paul (Rom. ii. 28, 29; Phil. iii. 2, 3; Col. ii. 11; and elsewhere).

Ver. 52.—*Did not . . . persecute for have not . . . persecuted, A.V.; killed for have slain, A.V.; righteous for just, A.V.; have now become for have been now, A.V.; betrayers for the betrayers, A.V.* The close resemblance of Stephen's words to those of our Lord recorded in Luke xiii. 33, 34; Matt. v. 12; xxiii. 30, 31, 34—37, lend some support to the tradition that he was one of the seventy, and had heard the Lord speak them. But the resemblance may have arisen from the Spirit by which he spake, "the Spirit of Christ which was in" him.

Ver. 53.—*Ye who received for who have received, A.V.; as it was ordained by angels for by the disposition of angels, A.V.; kept it not for have not kept it, A.V.* Ordained by angels. This phrase, thus differently rendered (*εἰς διαταγὰς ἀγγέλων*), is one of extreme difficulty: *διαταγή* means properly "appointment," or "ordinance," as in Rom. xiii. 2; and *εἰς*, which has a great variety of uses in the Greek of the New Testament, means "at," or "upon," or "on the occasion of," as Matt. xii. 41, "At the preaching of Jonah." So here they received the Law "at" or "on the occasion of," the "ordering" or "appointing" of angels. When the angels, who were commissioned by God and spoke in his Name, gave the Law, the Israelites so received it. The A.V., "by the disposition of angels," very nearly expresses the true sense. Another sense of *εἰς*—"in view of"—comes to nearly the same thing. St. Paul speaks of the part taken by the angels in the giving of the Law, and in language strikingly resembling the text. He says of it, that it was "ordained through [by, A.V.] angels." God ordained or appointed the Law, but the angels were the

instruments or ministers of its promulgation. And it is also distinctly referred to in Deut. xxxiii. 2, where the LXX. read, "On his right hand the angels were with him." In the foregoing verses the application which Stephen had all through been contemplating is hurled with accumulated force at the consciences of his hearers, and cuts them to the heart, but does not bring them to repentance.

Ver. 54.—*Now when for when, A.V.* They were cut to the heart (see ch. v. 33 and notes).

Ver. 55.—*Looked up steadfastly (ἀνέβλεπας);* see ch. vi. 15; iii. 4, and note. The glory of God; *i.e.* the visible glory which surrounds and proclaims God's near presence (see Exod. xxiv. 10, 16, 17; Isa. vi. 1—3; Ezek. i. 28; Rev. xxi. 14, 23, etc.). Jesus standing. Sitting at the right hand of God is the usual attitude ascribed to our Lord in token of his victorious rest, and waiting for the day of judgment. Here he is seen standing, as rising to welcome his faithful martyr, and to place on his head the crown of life (Rev. ii. 10). Whether Stephen saw these glorious things in the flesh or out of the flesh he probably knew not himself.

Ver. 56.—*The Son of man. Our Lord's* usual designation of himself (see Matt. viii. 10; xxvi. 64; etc.; and also Dan. vii. 13), but nowhere but here spoken of Jesus by any other.*

Ver. 57.—*But for then, A.V.; rushed for ran, A.V. (ὄρμησαν).*

Ver. 58.—*They cast for cast, A.V.; garments for clothes, A.V.; the feet of a young man for a young man's feet, A.V.; named Saul for whose name was Saul, A.V.* They cast. We have here the identical phrase of Luke iv. 29. The witnesses. According to Deut. xvii. 7, "the hands of the witnesses were to be first upon" the idolater "to put him to death." They took off their clothes, their outer garments, so as to be free to hurl the stones at their victim with greater force. The feet of a young man. The word *νεανίας* is found only here and in ch. xx. 9; xxiii. 1, 18, 22; and frequently in the LXX. for the Hebrew *נָעָר*. A man might be called a *νεανίας* probably to the age of thirty. This appearance of Saul upon the stage of St. Luke's narrative is an element which will soon change the whole current of the narrative, and divert it from Jerusalem to the whole earth. Nothing can be more striking than this introduction of the young man Saul to our view as an accomplice (albeit "ignorantly in unbelief") in the martyrdom of Stephen. Who that stood there and saw him keeping the clothes of the witnesses would have imagined that

* Rev. i. 13 is scarcely an exception.

he would become the foremost apostle of the faith which he sought to destroy from off the face of the earth?

Ver. 59.—*The Lord* (in italics) for *God* (in italics), A.V. The A.V. is certainly not justified by the context, because the words which follow, "Lord Jesus," show to whom the invocation was made, even to him whom he saw standing at the right hand of God. At the same time, the request, *Receive my spirit*, was a striking acknowledgment of the divinity of Christ. Only he who gave the spirit could receive it back again, and keep it safe unto the resurrection. Compare "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke xxiii. 46).

Ver. 60.—Cried with a loud voice. Com-

pare again Luke xxiii. 46, and with Stephen's prayer, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge, compare Luke xxiii. 34. He fell asleep. Blessed rest after life's toilsome day! Blessed contrast with the tumult of passion and violence which brought him down to the gravel! How near, too, in his dying was that likeness to his Lord advanced, which shall be perfected at his appearing (1 John iii. 1)! "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, . . . that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." St. Augustine ('Sermons in Festo Sti. Stephani'; Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. p. 82) attributes Saul's conversion to the prayer of Stephen: "Si Stephanus non orasset, Ecclesia Paulum non haberet."

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—60.—*The first martyrdom.* When we look at the Lord Jesus as our Exemplar, though we are conscious that all his excellences of life and character were strictly human, and within the range of those human faculties which we possess in common with our Lord, yet are we also conscious that the transcendent perfection of his human life is what we can never reach. Our Lord's goodness was the goodness of man, and yet it is a goodness that we never can attain to. Where his feet stood firm, our feet will slip. Where his love triumphed, ours breaks down. Where his will moved on undaunted in obedience to his Father's will, ours faints and halts and stumbles to its fall. The temptations that he crushed, crush us; where his spirit was clear as sunlight, ours is clouded and mixed. Where he soars in glory, we are heavy with sleep; and where he wrestles in an agony of prayer, we fall asleep for sorrow. His courage, his faith, his humility, his meekness, his constancy, his patience, his firmness, his love, his zeal, his self-consecration to God, his loving obedience, his transparent truth and purity,—we see them, we look upon them with adoring wonder, but when we try to imitate them, it is like trying to climb up to the stars; do what we will they are at an immeasurable distance above us, inaccessible and unapproachable. It is, therefore, a great help and encouragement to us that, besides the infinite perfection of Christ's human nature, we have other examples of saintly men set before us in the Word of God, which we may hope to follow more closely, treading even in their very steps. The apostle, the evangelist, the martyr, the holy woman, the faithful disciple, all stand out before us on the pages of Scripture, and we ask ourselves why should not we be like them, seeing we have the same Holy Spirit which dwelt in them to sanctify us also. The chapter before us invites us to study the character of a true martyr, as exemplified in St. Stephen. The model martyr thus is—

I. A WISE MAN AND ONE OF GOOD REPORT. Not an empty fanatic catching up every folly that is started, and carried away by every blast of doctrine; but a man of solid and approved wisdom, discerning things that differ, holding fast that which is good, and rejecting the pernicious error though it be the fashion of the day; one whose steady and quiet walk in the paths of godliness has earned him a good report among his neighbours. He is well spoken of because he does good quietly, and seeks not the praise of men. He is of good report because he is never hurried into ill-advised action under the influences of temper or self-will, or the contagion of example, or any corrupt or selfish motive, but is known constantly to do the thing that is right.

II. HE IS ALSO A MAN OF HIGH SPIRITUAL ATTAINMENT. He is not only wise and upright in all his dealings with men, has not only wisdom and discretion in the affairs of this life, but, being filled with the Holy Spirit of God, he has all spiritual wisdom likewise. His enlightened reason and his elevated affections soar above the world, and are deeply engaged in the things of God and the affairs of the kingdom of Christ. He lives a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.

III. HIS MARTYR'S SPIRIT DOES NOT ALLOW HIM TO LEAD A LIFE OF EASE AND INDOLENCE. He is ready at the call of the Church to undertake any office or work, however burdensome or responsible, for the good of the whole body and the comfort of the brethren. He does not seek dignity, or emolument, or the praise of men, as the price of his labour, but simply gives himself as Christ's servant to work for Christ and for Christ's people. Impartial, fair, equal, and kind in his administration, he soothes irritation, allays jealousy, and promotes peace and love.

IV. HIS SPIRIT KINDLES WITH HIS WORK. Being placed on a higher platform, he sees more of the spiritual wants of men around him. Having received higher gifts, he looks for wider opportunities of exercising them. Every soul won to Christ is as fuel to the flame of his love. Every victory over Satan stirs him up to war more resolutely as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Failures do not daunt him, and success cheers him on. Nothing seems impossible with Christ on his side. Everything must be attempted which may snatch the prey from the destroyer and enlarge the kingdom of light.

V. BUT SOON THE RISING OPPOSITION OF THE ADVERSARIES OF CHRIST BARS HIS ONWARD PROGRESS. The wisdom of the world crosses swords with the wisdom of the spirit. Formalism, Pharisaism, priestcraft, superstition, self-righteousness, self-importance, ignorance, combine to resist the gracious teaching which would strip men of selfishness to clothe them with Christ. At first it is argument against argument and reasoning against reasoning. But when the sword of the Spirit begins to cut through the shield of carnal disputation, and the sword of the worldly logic becomes blunted against the martyr's shield, and the Word of truth becomes too strong for the lying lips to answer, then begins a new form of contest. The defeated disputant throws aside his reasonings and his cavillings, and takes up the weapons of force and fraud. Prison and rack, fire and faggot, the wild beast and the sword, shall answer the arguments which were too strong for the reasoner. And how then will the martyr act? Will he be silenced and dismayed, or will he stand to his truth and die? He gathers up his courage, he looks up to God, he confronts his accusers, he lifts up his calm voice, and his speech is as the song of the dying swan. For—

VI. IN THAT HOUR OF DANGER AND TRIAL HIS CLEAR AND UNTRoubLED MEMORY GATHERS UP THE TESTIMONIES TO THE TRUTH OF HIS DOCTRINE WHICH ARE SCATTERED ON THE PAGES OF HOLY SCRIPTURE. Has he preached Jesus Christ whom they denied? Did not their fathers deny Moses their lawgiver and deliverer from Egypt? Had he said that the majestic presence of the living God was not confined to the walls of temples made with hands? Did not Isaiah say the same? Had he denounced the vanity of sacrifices and offerings when offered by uncircumcised hearts and unclean hands? Had not their prophets done so likewise? He could not retract what he had spoken according to the oracles of God. He had spoken the truth, and by the truth he would stand. But were they there to judge him? Nay, but he would judge them. They had, indeed, received the Law, but they had broken it. The Holy Ghost had spoken to them, but they had resisted him. God's Christ had come to save them, and they had betrayed and crucified him. Let them fill up the measure of their fathers; he was ready to receive death at their hands.

VII. And then comes THE CLOSING SCENE. The faith as firm as a rock with the waves dashing upon it; the vision of invisible glories swallowing up all things in its brightness; the rapturous confession of Jesus Christ; the calm committal of his spirit to his safe keeping; the free forgiveness of his cruel murderers; the devout prayer of his parting breath; the peaceful death like an infant's sleep; earth exchanged for heaven;—and the martyrdom is complete. Complete, but not ended; for the witnessing voice is still ringing in our ears, and tells us that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that we have life through his Name.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Living faith.* Abraham is well called "the father of the faithful;" nowhere, in the Old Testament or in the New, do we meet with any one whose life was such an illustration of implicit trust and holy confidence in God as was his. If faith be

not merely the acceptance of a creed, or the utterance of sacred phrases, or the patronage of religious institutions; if it be a living power in the soul, it will manifest itself in—

I. **CHEERFUL OBEDIENCE.** (Vers. 2—4.) God bade Abraham leave his home and kindred, and he left them. He did not know whither he was going (Heb. xi. 8), but at the call of God he set forth promptly and willingly. So Matthew at the summons of the Saviour (Matt. ix. 9). So many thousands since his day; men and women who have heard the Master say, "Go," and they have gone, relinquishing all that is most cherished by the human heart. When God distinctly speaks to us, whatever he may bid us do, at whatever cost we may be required to obey, it behoves us to comply instantly and cheerfully.

II. **TRUST IN THE DARKNESS.** (Ver. 5.) There is little faith in trusting God when everything is bright and hopeful. When we can see our way we can easily believe that it is the right one. Living faith shows itself when we "do not see and yet believe" (John xx. 29). Abraham was promised the land of Canaan "for a possession," yet God "gave him none inheritance in it." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country" (Heb. xi. 9). This might have seemed to him as a "breach of promise" (Numb. xiv. 34) on the part of him who brought him out of Chaldea, but he does not seem to have entertained any doubts or misgivings. Moreover, he believed that the land would be the property of his seed, though "as yet he had no child." "By faith also he offered up Isaac," etc. (Heb. xi. 17). Even in the thick darkness, when he could not see one step before him, Abraham trusted God. We profess to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. v. 7), but we are often fearful and doubtful when the way is clouded. But it is in the night of adversity that the star of faith must shine.

"When we in darkness walk,
Nor feel the heavenly flame,
Then is the time to trust our God
And rest upon his Name."

III. **CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE.** (Vers. 6, 7.) God told his servant that, after being in bondage four hundred years, his seed should serve him in that country. It was a long time to look forward to. But the believing patriarch rested in God and was satisfied. We are impatient if our schemes do not come to maturity in a very brief time; we cry "failure" when only a small fraction of four centuries is passed without the redemption of our hope. We are bound to remember that we "have to do" with the Eternal One. We must wait his time, whether it be a day or a thousand years.—C.

Vers. 8—19.—*Israel and Egypt: Divine providence.* The connection of the people of God with the land of Egypt is profoundly interesting, and suggests valuable lessons for all time. We are reminded by the text of—

I. **THE UNDULATORY CHARACTER OF OUR HUMAN LIFE.** This in the eventful experiences of Joseph (vers. 9, 10). First rejoicing in his father's peculiar favour, then sold into Egyptian slavery, then rising to a position of trust in the house of his master, then cast into prison, then raised to the premiership; up on the height of comfort, down into the depth of misfortune, up again on the crest of honour, then down again into the trough of shame, etc. So with Israel the man and Israel the people (vers. 11—19). The patriarch at first in a position of relief and advantage, then in one of distress and disadvantage; the nation falling into the dark gulf of bitter bondage until raised up "with a strong hand and stretched out arm" into liberty. Thus is it with men and with nations. With none does the course of things prove to be a straight line, either of ascent or of descent. It is always undulatory. Light and shadow, sweetness and bitterness, hope and fear, joy and sorrow, alternate from the cradle to the grave.

II. **THE OVERRULING PROVIDENCE OF GOD.** How clearly Joseph felt that his distresses had been overruled by the Divine hand, we know (Gen. i. 20). We can also see how the descent into Egypt and even the long slavery in that land of bondage were a discipline which wrought ultimate good, of the most solid and enduring kind, to Israel. By the sufferings which they endured together in those broiling brickfields, under those cruel taskmasters, and to which in happier times their sons looked back with such intense emotion; by the marvellous deliverances which they experienced

together in the land of the enemy and in the "great and terrible wilderness," and of which their descendants sang with such reverence and such rapture;—by these common sufferings and common mercies they were welded together as a nation, they became rich in those national memories which are a people's strength, they became a country for which, through many a succeeding century, patriots would cheerfully risk all their hopes and proudly lay down their lives. We learn these lessons. 1. Be prepared for coming changes in circumstance. No man has a right to feel secure in anything but in a wise and holy character, in that which makes him ready for any event that may happen. At any hour human prosperity may pass into adversity, joy into sorrow, honour into shame; or at any hour straitness may be exchanged for abundance, lowliness for elevation, gloom for gladness. We all urgently need the fixed principles, the rest in God, the attachment to things eternal and Divine, the heritage in the heavenly future, which will keep us calm in the most agitating vicissitudes of earthly fortune. 2. Trust God when things are at their worst. In the first days of Egyptian slavery, and still more in Potiphar's prison, things must have looked dark indeed to Joseph. "But God was with him" (vers. 9, 10). It was a terrible time, too, for the children of Israel when the king "which knew not Joseph" dealt subtly with and evil entreated them, slaying their young children at their birth (vers. 18, 19); but God saw their affliction (vers. 34, 35; Exod. iii. 7), and was preparing to send the deliverer in due time. And to the upright in any scene of disappointment and distress there will arise "light in the darkness" (Ps. cxii. 4). Trust and wait; the longest and severest storm will pass, and the sun shine again on the waters of life. 3. Realize that God has large and long purposes in view. Jacob died far off from the promised land, but his bones were to rest there in due course, and there his children were to have a goodly heritage. It matters little what happens to us as individuals; enough if we are taking a humble share in working out his great and beneficent designs.—C.

Vers. 20—39.—*The Divine and the human.* I. DIVINE INTERVENTION. The hand of God is sometimes visible though it is usually unseen. We see the Divine working in (1) the creation of such a mind as that of Moses; (2) the fashioning of such a frame as was his (ver. 20; Heb. xi. 23); (3) the deliverance of the child from the dangers of the river; (4) his being confided to the guardianship and instruction of Pharaoh's daughter, where he would learn "all the wisdom of the Egyptians" (ver. 22), and thus be prepared for future work. We can have no doubt as to the operation of Divine wisdom in such a case as this. May we not say—*Ex uno disce omnes?* May we not conclude that there is the handiwork of God in all our lives, if we could but discern it; that he is directing our course; and that, though it is evidently best for us that we should not see so much of Divine intervention as to be unwisely waiting for it or injuriously dependent on it, we may console ourselves with the belief that "we are not driftwood on the wave," but rather as noble ships which a heavenly hand is steering to the desired haven?

II. HUMAN NOBLENES. (Vers. 23—28; see Heb. xi. 24—26.) It was "in Moses' heart to visit his brethren," and he took their cause in hand in a very practical and decisive way (ver. 24). He may have been mistaken in the method which he adopted, but that is of very small moment. The great thing is that it was in his heart to sympathize with and succour his brethren. The temptation to become naturalized as an Egyptian must have been great indeed. High honours, great wealth, abundant gratification of the lower instincts,—these prizes and pleasures, which are dear to men in general, were well within his reach. He deliberately chose to forego them all that he might play a nobler and braver part. Well has the event justified his choice. For as a rich and powerful Egyptian, he would have achieved nothing of any value to mankind; he would long ago have been forgotten; but as it is, he has rendered a service to the human race second to none that lived before the Saviour, and has a name that will never die while the world has any place in its memory for its heroes and its martyrs. Not on the same splendid scale, but in the same estimable spirit, can we emulate his nobility, preferring an honourable affliction to unholy pleasure, a sacred and useful life among the lowly to ungodly distinction among the great, the service of Christ anywhere to the smiles and favours of the world.

III. DIVINE MANIFESTATION. (Vers. 30—33, 38.) God there revealed himself to

the bodily senses in a wondrous form; in such form that Moses felt that, in a very unusual degree, he stood near to his Creator. Jesus Christ now manifests himself to us as he does not unto the world: (1) in the privileges of his house and table; (2) in the inspiration and indwelling of his Spirit; (3) in the spiritual wonders he works in the hearts and lives of men with whom we have to do.

IV. DIVINE COMPASSION. (Ver. 34.) To the toiling and suffering Israelites God must have seemed very far away. It must have appeared to them as if he were blind to their miseries, deaf to their sighs and groans, indifferent to their wrongs. But they were mistaken. All the while he was observing and pitying them, and was ready to interpose at the right time on their behalf. When to our fainting and distrustful heart it seems as if our Divine Lord were unobservant or unmoved, we may rest assured that he sees, that he compassionates, that he holds himself ready to put forth his redeeming strength on our behalf when the hour for our deliverance has struck.

V. HUMAN INAPPRECIATIVENESS. (Vers. 35—39.) If we were to contend that the best and noblest men who have rendered the most signal and splendid service to our race are certain to be appreciated according to the height of their virtue and the value of their help, we should go in the teeth of human history. Some of the very best and wisest have been least understood, most despised and ill used. Moses, one of the very greatest, "attaining to the first three," most eminent in privilege, in character, in accomplishment, was one "whom they refused" (ver. 35), "whom our fathers would not obey" (ver. 39). We may work, hoping to be appreciated and honoured of men, accepting gladly and gratefully the esteem and the love they award us; but we must not build upon it as a certain recompense of our endeavour. We must be prepared to do without it, to be able to say, "I will work on, 'though the more abundantly I love the less am I loved.'" Our true reward is in the smile of the Saviour, the approval of our own heart (1 John iii. 21), the consciousness that we are serving our generation, the blessing which awaits the faithful in the land of promise.

VI. HUMAN RESEMBLANCE TO THE DIVINE. (Ver. 37.) The Christ that should come was to be "like unto" the faithful servant in the house of God (Heb. iii. 5). As he was to be like one of us, so we are to strive to be "like unto him." And we may bear his image, breathe his Spirit, live his life, do in our sphere the work he did in his: "As he is, so are we in this world." "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."—C.

Vers. 39—50.—Sin and righteousness. These verses suggest to us some thoughts on the nature and the award of sin and of righteousness:

I. THAT SIN LIES IN THE WRONG ACTION OF THE SOUL. (Vers. 39, 40.) Stephen says that the children of Israel "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt;" they were as guilty before God as if they had actually faced round and marched back into bondage. The sin was in the spirit of disloyalty and disobedience which dwelt within them. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, . . . blasphemies" (Matt. xv. 19). "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7). It is the secret thought, the hidden motive, the cherished purpose, the lingering desire, the burning passion, that constitutes the essence of the evil in the sight of him who looketh on the heart, and not on the outward appearance. Beneath a fair exterior some men hide a false and guilty heart; beneath a broken and faulty behaviour others have a soul that is struggling on and out—on to a better life, out of the entanglements of an evil but regretted and repudiated past.

II. THAT SIN'S WORST PENALTY IS PAID IN THE SPIRITUAL DETERIORATION IN WHICH IT ENDS. (Vers. 41—43.) For their rebelliousness the children of Israel were punished by being made to wander in the wilderness, instead of being at once admitted to their inheritance; also by being subjected to the rule of foolish and faulty kings like Saul, instead of wise and righteous prophets like Samuel; also by being sent away into captivity, even "beyond Babylon." But the worst effect of their sin was in their being led into darker and more aggravated evil. Their culpable impatience—"We wot not what is become of him"—led them to an act of positive idolatry: "Make us gods to go before us;" and "they made a calf . . . and offered sacrifice unto the idol;" and this act of theirs led on, in course of time, to idolatrous actions more flagrant and heinous still (ver. 42); and their wrong-doing culminated in the worship of Moloch, an iniquity of the very deepest dye. This is the course and penalty of sin. One wrong

act leads to another and a worse; one sin to a number of transgressions; and these to a habit of iniquity; and this to a dark, baneful life and a hateful and odious character. By far the worst penalty which sin has to pay is the spiritual damage and deterioration to which it leads—the blinded eyes of the understanding, the weakened will, the enfeebled conscience, the masterful unbridled passions, the foul soul. Suffering of body, exile, loss of worldly prospects, the death of the body,—all these are nothing to this spiritual ruin.

III. THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS IS AN EARNEST ASPIRATION AND ENDEAVOUR AFTER GOD AND GOODNESS. (Vers. 44—46.) It does not consist in the *possession of privilege*; otherwise the fathers of the Jewish race—having “the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness” and afterwards in the land where the Gentiles were driven out before them (ver. 45), all things having been made “according to the fashion” which Moses had seen—would assuredly have been godly and holy men. True human righteousness is rather found in such *Godward aspiration and endeavour* as we find in David, the man “who found favour before God” (ver. 46). And how came he to enjoy this Divine regard? Not because he was faultless in behaviour—we could wish he had been far less blame-worthy in certain particulars than he was—but because he strove earnestly to worship and serve God, repenting bitterly when he sinned, struggling on again with contrite spirit, continually seeking to gain God’s will from his Word, and honestly endeavouring, spite of inward imperfection and outward temptation, to do what he knew to be right. This is human goodness; not angelic purity, not flawless rectitude, but earnest seeking after the true and good, hating the evil into which it is betrayed, casting itself on God’s mercy for the past, facing the future with a devout resolve to put away the evil thing and walk in the paths of righteousness and integrity.

IV. THAT THE CONSOLATION OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS IN THE NEARNESS OF GOD TO OUR SPIRIT. (Vers. 47—50.) David was not permitted to “build an house for the Lord.” It was a deep disappointment to him, but he had a very real consolation. God was near to him everywhere. Was he not, indeed, much nearer to the father who did *not* build the house, than to the son who did? David might have written (if he did not), “I am continually with thee” (Ps. lxxiii. 23). “The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands” (ver. 48), and though we do not build him costly and splendid sanctuaries, though we should be deprived of the opportunity of meeting him in his house at all, yet when we survey “all these things” his hand has made and is sustaining, we may feel that he is at our right hand, and that we stand “before the Lord.” Nay, if we be “in Christ Jesus,” we know that, though no magnificent temple can contain him, he dwells abidingly within our hearts, to sustain and to sanctify us.—C.

Vers. 51—60.—*Illustrations.* We have some of the best and one of the worst things illustrated in this passage.

I. FAITHFULNESS FINDING UTTERANCE IN VEHEMENT REPROACH. (Vers. 51—53.) Stirred (as we suppose) by the impatient interruptions of the senators, who at this point showed themselves unwilling to listen, Stephen rebuked them in the strong and stringent language of the text. They who imagined themselves to be “the cream of the cream,” the very best specimens of the holiest people, were setting themselves to resist the gracious dealings of God, who was willing to bless them with his fullest blessing; they were resisting the “Holy Ghost” and injuring, in the worst of all ways, the people they were chosen to serve. Unqualified condemnation is sometimes the duty of the servant of God. Not often, indeed; for usually it is our wisdom and our duty to hold our feelings of indignation in check. But there are times when holy resentment should overflow in words of unmeasured indignation, when we shall not “deliver our soul” unless we denounce the wrong that has been done and warn against the evil which impends.

II. SIN IN THE MOMENT OF EXASPERATION. (Vers. 54, 57, 58.) Sometimes sin is checked and cowed by the strong voice of holy censure, and it holds its hand if not its tongue. At other times it is only driven by exasperation to say and do its very worst. So here, it (1) yielded to frenzy; (2) proceeded to unmannerly exhibitions of rage—“they gnashed on him with their teeth;” and (3) ended in brutal and fatal violence—“they stoned him.” There is something, not only painful and horrible, but also contemptible in this resort to physical violence. It seems to say, “We cannot answer your

words; we cannot resist your influence. We will do the only thing we can do; we will break your bones and draw your blood." Such a fearful sight is sin driven to its worst. How needful to keep clear of its dominion!

III. DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS IN THE HOUR OF TRIAL. (Vers. 55, 56.) To his devoted servant in this trying hour God vouchsafed an exceptional manifestation of himself, an extraordinary proof of his Divine favour and assurance of support. We do not look for anything of this kind. But to us, if we are true and loyal to our Saviour's cause, when the time of special trial comes, our Lord will grant some tokens of his presence and of his sympathy. He will not leave us alone; he will come to us. And if the heavens be not opened, and if a vision of the Son of man be not granted us, we shall have "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," and the strong inward assurance that he who was with Stephen at this solemn scene is laying beneath us "the everlasting arms."

IV. CHRISTIAN MARTYRDOM AND MAGNANIMITY. (Vers. 59, 60.) "They stoned Stephen . . . and he cried . . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We can hardly conceive a nobler end than this: a man sealing his testimony to Christian truth with his life-blood, and with his last breath praying for mercy to be granted to his murderers. To few of us is it *thus* given, "not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." But in the course of every Christian life there are offered many opportunities of (1) showing the martyr spirit, and of (2) acting in the spirit of large-heartedness. Though we may gain no applause for so doing, and expect no notice to be taken of it by any chronicler, we may remember that "great is our reward in heaven," that we have the approval of the Divine Master, when in any sphere and in any degree we cheerfully "bear his reproach" and show a generous spirit toward those who do us wrong.

V. A CHRISTIAN EXODUS. (Vers. 59, 60.) In the midst of such agitating scenes Stephen was perfectly trustful; he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." In the midst of such tumult he was calm; it seemed natural to the historian to write of his death as if he were going to rest—"he fell asleep." We often look on to the time of our departure, and perhaps wonder what will be the manner of our "going out into the light." If we nourish our faith in Christ as we have the means of doing, by use of sacred privilege and seizure of manifold opportunity, then when the end shall come, in whatsoever form it may appear, our hearts will be (1) *trustful* in our Divine Saviour—we shall tranquilly resign our spirits to his charge, as into the hands of our Almighty Friend; (2) *peaceful*—our death will be to us as a pleasant sleep. Weary with the toil and strife of earth, we shall lie down to die as those who commit themselves to the darkness of the night, to the restfulness of the couch, in sweet assurance that the eyes which close on this side the grave will open on the other side, to be filled with the light and to behold the glories of immortality. Live in Christ, and you will die in reverent confidence and unbroken serenity of soul.—C.

Vers. 1—17.—*Stephen's address: lessons of the patriarchal time.* Stephen's view of Jesus and his mission rests, as every sound and thoughtful view must do, on the whole past history of the nation—as a nation called to a spiritual destiny in the purposes of God.

I. THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL IS ROOTED IN DIVINE REVELATION. Her God is the "God of glory." Power, holiness, perfect freedom, are included in this idea of the "glorious God." History is a Divine revelation, because it unfolds his counsel. In times of doubt the rulers of a nation, the guides of a community, should retrace the past to its beginnings, for a Divine idea lies at the basis of the national life and of every sacred institution. 1. *The self-revelation of God to Abraham.* Every new epoch in religious history starts with a fresh self-revelation of the spiritual nature and attributes of the glorious God. Amidst idolatrous scenes, the depths of Abraham's spirit were stirred, and a light from above shone in. From idols, from Sabæan fetish-worship, he turned, "to serve the living and the true God." 2. *The call to Abraham.* He was to be the reformer of religion, the founder of a nation, whose life was to root itself in the acknowledgment of a living and a holy, spiritual Being as their God. (1) Such calls involve ever sacrifice. Home must be quitted; its loved associations in fancy and feeling torn up; kindred left behind. It is the type of those moral changes and those

consequent sacrifices which accompany God's call to souls at every time. (2) They involve the exercise of faith. Future good, in the shape of a new home and land, are promised to the patriarch, but the *when* and the *how* of their possession are left—as we say, to *imagination*; as the Bible says, to *faith*. "He went out, not knowing whither he went." It has been said that life is an education by means of "illusions;" were it not better to say that life is an education by means of ideals? They are of their nature *future, indefinite*, must be left for time to unfold, as with the prospect of good vaguely shadowed forth before the mind of Abraham. (3) They require unquestioning obedience. Such was that of Abraham. He had nothing to rely on but the promise of God; all else was against him. When he came to the "land," he found no inheritance in it, no resting-place for his foot. Spiritual trials consist in the perplexity of the will, caused by the contradiction between the unseen truth and the opposition of appearances to it. Facts stubbornly resist our ideals; the world, perhaps, scoffs at the ideals themselves. To "endure as seeing him who is invisible," is part of the certain calling, and at the same time the high joy, of the called soul. And faithfulness is certain to know repetitions and confirmations of the assuring promise. (4) The light of promise ever leads on. It is to be remarked that the Divine forecast of the future is not of unmixed brightness. A sorrow and a struggle for the young nation is to prepare for its enjoyment of freedom. It is to be cradled and rocked in slavery. By the stern and cruel knowledge in itself of the tyrant's oppression, Israel will learn to fly to Jehovah its Deliverer, and find in his service emancipation from every secular yoke. (5) Divine institutions confirm Divine promises. Israel had its peculiar sacramental institution of circumcision. A sacrament is a species of religious language, the more impressive because addressed to the eye than merely to the ear. In it an act of God and an act of man are expressed; surrender on the side of man, acceptance and blessing on the side of God. Thus the sacrament becomes the channel of tradition; the tribe and the nation have a common and visible bond of union. Such were the Divine beginnings of Israel's life.

II. THE STORY OF JOSEPH. His career was in many points typical of that of Jesus. 1. He was the object of envy and unnatural hatred on the part of his brethren. So was Jesus envied and hated by the rulers of the nation, and on the like grounds—the manifest favour of God which was with him. Such is the law—superior spiritual energy at first arouses opposition (2 Tim. iii. 12). And especially from those nearest of kin (Matt. x. 36). Such, too, was the experience of Jesus. Nothing is more painful to the heart than to see one, hitherto supposed an equal, rising to eminence above our heads. The best will suffer from jealousy; how much more those whose evil is thus set in the light of contrast, exposed and condemned! 2. But he enjoyed Divine compensations. "God was with him," "delivered him from all his troubles," imparted to him grace and wisdom in the presence of the earthly great. So was it with Jesus. Hate and envy may be defied by force or intellect; but better is it when the envious and hateful are themselves revealed in their hideousness by the bright shining of God's grace upon the good man's life. 3. Again, the wrath of men is often made the instrument of good to them. The force which would undermine is made to exalt. Joseph becomes prime minister to Pharaoh; the crucified Jesus is, through his cross, exalted to be Prince and Saviour. 4. The living soul will find an opportunity of overcoming evil with good. The famine in Canaan gave Joseph the opportunity of a glorious revenge. The account of his recognition of his brothers, and forgiveness of them, is most touching and rich in typical suggestiveness. Those who love allegories may find much food for fancy in the details. Those who prefer broad spiritual lessons may also find in the figure of Joseph the very ideal of the gentle side of Israel's national character, which was fulfilled in the suffering Saviour, who triumphs over his foes by the might of forgiving love. 5. The result of the chain of events. The settlement of Israel in Egypt. How strangely is the web of destiny spun! How deeply laid the train of causes and effects which result in great histories and revolutions! Any course of events is highly improbable beforehand, which after it has taken place unfolds a providential logic and profound design. So with Christianity. Nothing can seem beforehand more improbable than the whole story of its foundation. At Athens the story of the crucified One was folly, and at Jerusalem a scandal. Yet in it lay hidden the wisdom and the power of God. Hatred to Joseph was the first moving spring of a long religious history and triumph. Hatred to Jesus was now being proved the spring of his triumph and the mighty prevalence of his religion.

God works through the evil passions of men as well as through the good; and all powers in rivalry with love must sooner or later be brought submissively to follow in the wake of her eternal progress of blessing. In humiliation and in exaltation Joseph presents a lively type of Jesus. And the Sanhedrim must have felt this as they listened to the old familiar story of the origin of the nation. They are face to face with the fact of a new origin. Will they learn the lesson of the past for the present? Do we learn the lessons of the past for our present?—J.

Vers. 17—29.—*Israel in Egypt: the rise of Moses.* We may view these events as typical of the Christian time or as expressive of an inner meaning, a Divine logic of history. We may learn, then, from this passage—

I. THAT DIVINE BEGINNINGS IN HISTORY ARE NEVER WITHOUT STRUGGLES. The people grew and increased, but a sudden check was given to their prosperity by the accession of a new king. Israel might have settled in Egypt and have achieved no great thing for the world, had not persecution compelled her to struggle for existence and for liberty. Times of national danger throw the nation back upon its true consciousness. They vivify and purify that consciousness. It was England's struggle against a tyrant two centuries and a half ago which made England. So the War of Independence made America into a nation. The truth applies to the individual also. We may depend upon it that permanent good must sooner or later be struggled for—either that it may be gained, or, if gained, that it may be kept.

II. THAT THE EXTREME HOUR OF HUMAN NEED IS THE HOUR FOR DIVINE INTERPOSITION; or, man's extremity is God's opportunity. "When the tale of bricks is full," says the proverb, "then comes Moses." Great stirrings among the people, movements towards liberty and purity of religion, seem to produce at the right moment the patriotic leader and the reformer. When the hour comes the man is not wanting. It may be argued that until the leader appears the movement is not ripe. God reveals his will for change in the words and work of great men.

III. THE SIGNIFICANT PERSONALITY OF GREAT MEN. The child was divinely fair. He was wonderfully preserved from death; rescued by the very daughter of the persecutor, and cradled in the very house of his foes. His education among one of the most richly civilized of ancient peoples was complete; and the influence of his person was most commanding. God does not bestow such graces for nothing. Whenever we see such a one marked out by beauty, knowledge, intellectual power above his fellows, we are entitled to ask—What is his significance for the world? What does God mean to do with him for the good of mankind? Again, the life-ideas in such great men are often of slow ripening. Not till he was forty years of age did his thoughts turn to the condition of his nation, and the delivering purpose come to fruit in his heart. Some men conceive much earlier the ambition and the call of their life, and move toward the goal with extraordinary velocity and energy. Others appear to be long dormant, like the oak that tarries to put forth its leaf in the woodland. Great careers have been run, great works achieved, by the age of thirty-seven: Alexander, Raphael, Byron, are well-known examples. Cromwell, on the other hand, was about the age of Moses when God called him from the fens of Huntingdon to save our nation. The age matters little; men in this respect resemble plants—"Ripeness is all."

IV. GREAT TRAINS OF EVENTS SPRING FROM SLIGHT VISIBLE CAUSES. A single spark is sufficient to fire the train of powder which is to explode the mine. When the mind is full of an idea, a trifling circumstance may stimulate all its energies to action. A forming purpose waits only for the decisive action to fix and crystallize it. Thus the act of Moses in delivering the individual Israelite from his oppressor fixed him in his national design. In everything let us follow the lead of God. Let us remember that we are here first to be acted upon by him, that we may then act from him upon others. If we are really in earnest, the opportunity will never be wanting. God makes his servants ready for great enterprises by first inspiring them for lesser duties. The large and distant project may hold the mere visionary's view; but the practical and really useful man begins with his neighbour next door. The man who actually helps his friend in need is the man who may be trusted to help a community or a nation. But how many dreamers are there whose projects of amelioration begin and end with eloquent speeches or articles in newspapers! The old lesson comes back from Moses' life to all

who would do and be something in the world : "Do the thing that lies nearest to thee ; the second will have already become clearer."

V. MOSES' EXAMPLE WAS THAT OF LOYALTY UNDER MISCONCEPTION. There is much pathos in the simple word that he thought his brethren understood that God was delivering them by his hand ; but they did not understand. So mighty is the strength derived from the sympathy of numbers, the common soldier becomes a hero at its electric touch. So chilling is misconception and want of sympathy on the part of friends, it damps the spirit of the Heaven-born leader. For this reason, when we sift the examples of moral courage presented by any time, those are the bravest and the greatest, and most prove their call of God, who show that they can go on, if needs be, not merely in spite of their open enemies, but in spite of their friends. The misconception of friends will be most felt when the action is in the conscience known to be most disinterested and sincere. Moses aims to reconcile contending brethren ; unity among themselves is now above all necessary. His action is misconstrued as ambition (ver. 28). Thus does the sick man turn on the kindly physician, the subject on his prince, the slave on his deliverer. Man often ignores the day of his salvation. Moses, like his great Antitype, was baffled in his saving designs by the ignorance and folly of those who would not be blessed. But he simply uses prudence and waits for a future opportunity. We can hardly construe the flight of Moses otherwise than as an act of prudence. He saw his life and with it his design endangered. To have remained would have been foolhardiness, often confounded with true courage. He took the course of prudence, which is the course of the higher courage. Far easier to rush on an heroic death than to nourish a noble purpose under disappointment, solitude, and exile. The history of a nation's greatness is summed up in that of its great men. And in the life trials and struggles of great men God reveals himself from age to age as the persevering, unvanquishable, and loving Saviour of mankind. His undying purpose, manifested in all his heroes, is to set us free ; and this in the knowledge of him and obedience to his laws.—J.

Vers. 30—34.—*The call of Moses.* I. THE MESSAGE BY FIRE. Fire is the sign of the presence of Jehovah. It denotes spiritual agency in its intensity. Fire penetrates and it purifies. It is, therefore, inimical to evil and conservative of good. Darkness of mystery is round about God, and when he comes forth from it to reveal himself to men it is in the form of fire. It is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. In the bosoms of men he glows, and the musing poet bursts forth into inspired song, and the prophet into "words that burn and thoughts that breathe of truth and power." When we ask that God will answer us by fire, we ask that he will make known his presence in the most vivid manner in feeling, and with the most mighty effect on the life. Specially the vision of the burning bush was a type of Israel unconsumed notwithstanding its fierce persecution in Egypt ; of the glory of his great Representative, the Messiah—a bright flame springing from the lowly bush ; of the Church amidst its age-long conflicts and trials ; lastly, of all truth, which "like a torch, the more it's shook, it shines ;" the more the breezes of controversy blow about it, the purer and clearer its illumination.

II. THE LIVING VOICE OF THE ETERNAL. The sense of hearing as well as that of sight is addressed. So ever in the disclosures of the Divine. What we have felt in part through the hearing of the ear is illustrated and confirmed by the evidence of the more sceptical organ, the eye. Or what we have witnessed with a certainty not to be gainsaid, in actual fact is presently interpreted and connected with the great principle to which it belongs by some similar voice of teaching. The utterance here is simple. It is a declaration that the God of history is the ever-present God. He who was with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is here with Moses. Faith has always its past to fall back upon ; it can renew its life in moments of weakness out of the living fount of memory.

III. THE WONDER AND THE TERROR OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE. First, Moses wonders at the burning bush. Wonder is the reflection in feeling of the extraordinary, and it is the parent of curiosity. Why and whence, the spirit asks, this irruption into the course of nature ? It is the appearance of the living God, is the only answer to the question. Here wonder passes into fear and trembling, which betray man's sense of utter

dependence in the presence of the Almighty and the All-holy. The sight of the unspeakable glory is shrunk from. In ordinary life nature and custom conceal God, and mercifully; for how could one glimpse of absolute truth, of Divine perfection, be endured? But terror passes into reverence, which is the blending of fear with love and confidence as the mind becomes more inured to the experience. The sandals are thrown off, as in the presence of an august sovereign. How good to feel that nature, the daily scene of a wondrous drama, the occasional theatre of magnificent spectacles, as in the tempest, the thunder-voices and fiery revelation betokening the presence of creative might,—is holy ground! But the mind becomes deadened by custom. And well is it, therefore, that in those places specially consecrated to meetings with God—the church, the private oratory—habits of outward submission and reverence should be cultivated which may have their right influence on the whole moods of the soul.

IV. THE CALL. 1. The call of man by God is ever to service on behalf of the suffering. All human suffering has an echo in the heart of God. He is the God of all compassion. He is not merely love, but love as an active *will*. He determines to save. Now it is a nation from outward captivity, now a generation from bondage to ignorance and fear. Light and health are the images of his energy and influence. 2. The called man is a man sent. He has a mission, and it is ever a mission to the lowly and the meek. So has it been with all the great prophets; so above all with the Christ. "I send thee into Egypt." "Where lies the Egypt to which I am sent, and where the fulfilment of my life-call must lie?" the Christian may ask. John Howard found his Egypt in the prisons of Europe, and "trod an open but unfrequented path to immortality." Our Egypt may be close at hand. Wherever we see an obsolete custom, a corrupt habit of thought, an ignorance of any kind, a spell laid upon the imagination, or a vice tyrannizing over the will of others, there is a house of bondage. God needs the co-operation of many finite deliverers that his design of an infinite deliverance may go forward. If we, like Moses and like Elijah and Isaiah, are ready with our "Here am I; send me," it will not be long before we receive our directions and our marching orders.—J.

Vers. 35—43.—*Moses, and Israel's bearing towards him; a figure of Christ.* I. THE REJECTED OF MEN WAS IN EACH CASE THE HONOURED OF GOD. The Israelites refused Moses as their ruler and judge; and God sent him as ruler and as emancipator to the people. Moses went into exile, and there was honoured by a revelation of the glory of God; and with a special mission Jesus had been slain in Jerusalem, and in that very city had come back in the power of the Spirit, to clothe the disciples with fiery eloquence, to vibrate through their hearts with power, and to put forth mighty power to heal through their means—thus being proved Leader and Saviour of the people. Human blindness and folly only bring a new reaction of the power and mercy of God. So often with us all. We resist the leading thoughts of the day. We hate the new truth which brings change with it, the fresh revelation which calls us to larger freedom. We think to silence the new teacher by contempt. But lo! in some unexpected quarter power breaks forth to seal the teacher and his message, and we are silenced.

II. THE CAREER OF MOSES AND THE CORRESPONDENCE IN THAT OF CHRIST. Grandly the figure of the desert lawgiver rises before us in the sketch of Stephen. 1. *His mighty works.* Those in Egypt, when he outdid the profound magicians, and established the supremacy of Jehovah over Pharaoh and all the gods of Egypt, were one of the originating causes of Israel's freedom. The memory of those deeds lived in the heart, could never be forgotten. They laid the foundation-stones of the great structure of their history. So did Jesus lay the foundation of his kingdom in works, the power of which and the purport of which he could appeal to as evidence of his Divine mission. 2. *His prophetic forecast and its fulfilment.* The memorable prophecy of the great Teacher to come, found in the Book of Deuteronomy, was one of Israel's lights shining in a dark place. Though Stephen does not identify the prophet to come with Jesus in so many words, his meaning is evident to all the Sanhedrim. Was there a hint in that prediction which was wanting in the actual character of Jesus? And if the Sanhedrim had rejected him, how could they fail to incur the judgment threatened in that great passage of the Law? Some of the later parables of Jesus (as that of the wicked husbandmen) were also, perhaps, fresh in the recollection of many,

Thus did the lines of ancient and recent evidence converge upon the present, and give to it a solemn significance. 3. *The renewed contrast of the divinely accepted and the humanly rejected.* (Vers. 38, 39.) Moses was the channel of ancient revelation. He received loving words to give to the people. And Jesus had said that the words he spake were not his, but the words of him that sent him. Yet Israel in the desert and Israel now were found alike unwilling to obey. The Divine presence was manifestly with Moses. In the desert the angel of God was ever at his side. So had it been with Jesus. Had not one of this very Sanhedrim confessed to Jesus that God must be with him, seeing the works that he did? Yet both Moses and Jesus had been rejected. And in both cases, when the voice of God said, "Forward!" the heart of Israel turned back. In the one case they longed for the comfort and the luxury of Egypt, in the other for the sensual joys of an earthly kingdom. Better to retain power and position than to go on the idle chase after the ideal and the spiritual; so the low mind, the carnal heart, argues in every age. It was the choice of the flesh and the denial of the Spirit that was in each case the cure of the sin, as it is everywhere and always. 4. *The lapse into idolatry.* The worship of a visible form is far easier than the lifting of the spirit to an invisible God. Idolatry is the making to one's self a god; spiritual religion is the constant exertion to rise to him who cannot be reproduced in finite forms of the intelligence or of art. The element of self-denial or of self-pleasing predominates in each and every form of worship. An upward and a downward movement is always proceeding in the religious life of a people. Some are ever trying to bring God into the service of their passions and interests; while true religion tries to mould all life into conformity with God's will. Idolatry brings penal consequences. Men are given up to their hearts' desire. The moral nerve decays. Spiritual energy being lost, they become weak in the presence of their enemies. Those touches of reminiscence from the past were enough to touch tender chords in the minds of Stephen's hearers. Well they knew idolatry had been the curse of the nation. Defeat, slavery, exile,—all came in its train. All might be traced back to the bitter root of disobedience, as that to unbelief in the living God. And what if now a similar vista of calamity were opening; if history were to repeat itself, and disobedience to the voice from heaven in Jesus should lead to a final downfall? Our history mirrors our sins and our mistakes. If we do not heed its warnings, nothing can avert our fate. No act of disobedience to conscience has passed unpunished in our lives. The worst of madness is deliberately to repeat old errors and stereotype our moral failures. If the ghosts of the past, as they appear in memory and reflection, do not deter us, what will or can?—J.

Vers. 44—53.—*Lessons of sacred history.* I. THE SACRED PLACES OF ISRAEL.

1. *The tabernacle.* It was the tent of witness or of attestation; otherwise the "tabernacle of the assembly," or of the congregation. It was the visible centre of Israel's natural and spiritual life, the hearth and home of the people and the altar of God. He met with them to declare his will, to make known his laws, and they with one another as a community having a *common weal*. Religion is the true foundation of society. She is the "oldest and holiest tradition of the earth." When a house of God is erected in the wilds of Australia or of America, a centre of civilization is fixed. It is the earthly representation of a heavenly reality. Moses made the tabernacle after a Divine archetype or model given to him. So worship on earth must ever aspire to and reflect the "life above," the risen life, the life of spiritual freedom and victory. God is ever saying to new societies, as to the new society in the desert, "Make me a house after the pattern you have seen;" that is, have a place and a recognition in your life for the holiest ideals, the most sacred purposes of life. 2. *The temple.* Both the tabernacle and the temple were designed and constructed after the analogy of human dwellings; the tabernacle was but a more richly furnished tent. As the wealth and power of the nation increased, it was fitting that this should be reflected in the greater magnificence of the house of God; and as they became settled in the Holy Land, that the tent of the nomad should give way to the palace of a King. The temple of Solomon represented in its magnificence the greatness of the victorious kingdom of David. The outward institutions of religion in a people should keep pace with its growth in material prosperity. It is miserable that the church should be worse furnished than the ordinary dwellings of the wor-

shippers, or that the minister of religion should fare in poverty while he supplies their spiritual wants. A rich man can surely afford to contribute as much to the pastor's necessities as he pays in stipend to his cook. But there are higher truths. The tabernacle passed away; the temple, as Stephen had predicted, was to pass away; the spiritual verities eternally remain.

II. THE TRUE SACRED PLACE IS EVER THE SOUL OF MAN. 1. The dwelling of God in visible temples is a symbolic thought, the reality to which it points is his intercourse with the soul of man. This was the great truth of prophetic teaching. The prophets were themselves living illustrations of it. God dwelt in them, spake through them, breathed upon them, turned their hearts unto his shrine, communed with them face to face, as a man with his friend. "The true Shechinah is man," said a great Father of the Church. 2. It is the spiritual indwelling which is at the heart of all true religion. When it is once grasped, great consequences follow. The priest and the ritual and the fixed place are no longer necessary. Every one who has a truth from God, and feels that it must be spoken, is a prophet. New oracles may be opened at any moment, new witnesses may arise, the truth find a fresh utterance from unexpected lips. If this truth be not recognized, the sacred building becomes an empty shell, the priests mere mummets, the ritual a pantomime. To believe that God can care for splendid temples and ritual, for themselves, is imbecile superstition. To believe that he values all the expressions of living and loyal hearts is a part of rational piety. But at the highest point of religious intelligence it may be well asked, "What need of temple, when the walls of the world are that?" 3. The denial of the spiritual truth is the source of error, superstition, and crime. The earlier Jews killed the prophets, leaving posterity to find out their value and raise their monuments. Posterity did the like. The very men who waved the torch of truth more brightly in darkened ages, and those who had the best news to tell their times, were silenced and suppressed. The culmination of all was the betrayal and murder of Jesus. Such a story of miserable persecution and suicidal hatred of the good carries its deep and permanent warnings. How dishonest if we take occasion from this passage to form an idle opinion of the peculiar bigotry of the Jews! Was ever a corporation, a body with vested interests, or a Church, known to act otherwise towards the new truth and the new teacher? Has any great teacher in the Christian Church been received at first with welcome and owned as "sent from God"? Grudging toleration is the most he can expect. Only those who know that religion is an affair of the individual soul, not of the Church or the formal confession, will welcome him in whom religion now embodies itself, and through whom, in the decay of systems, God speaks with freshness and power to the world.—J.

Vers. 54—60.—*The martyrdom of Stephen.* I. THE RAGE OF CONVICTED CONSCIENCES. Pierced to the heart with the pain of the sense of guilt, though judges, they gnashed with their teeth upon Stephen, "like chained dogs who would bite those who would set them free." "Contempt pierces through the shell of the tortoise," says the Indian proverb. On their high seat they were reached by the stinging words of the servant of Jesus; their obstinacy exposed, the contradiction between the part they were playing as the representatives of the Law and outwardly, while their spirit and aims were deadly opposed to its spirit, brought into the most glowing light. The most hellish of wrath is that where the mind is felt to be at variance with itself and seeks a victim on which to discharge its fury. If the truth does not convert men, it turns them into its foes.

II. THE INNER JOY OF THE MARTYR. The martyr is he whose life-interests are bound up with the truth, to whom nothing in the world can afford satisfaction in which truth and reality are not. He cannot separate his consciousness of life and its sweetness from his consciousness of God's light and love in him, which are dearer than life. With this clear light within his breast, he "sits in the centre and enjoys clear day." "No greater thing can man receive, no more august boon can God bestow, than truth," said one of the noblest of heathen writers, Plutarch. This is the feeling in which the martyr lives, in which he is willing to die. And he may be and doubtless is often favoured with peculiar visions, which foretell the triumph of truth and of faith. Stephen sees the heaven opened, and the crucified One, the "Son of man," standing in the place of glory and power, at God's right hand. There are secrets in the life of individual piety which, if known, might go far to explain the cheerfulness with which privation or persecution

has been borne. God opens an inner door into heaven to others inaccessible, and speaks of things which cannot be uttered, and offers visions which cannot be described. We know little more than the outside of others' lives. The bad man in power, the good man in weakness and suffering, each has another side to his life.

III. CONVICTION STIFLED IN VIOLENCE. Here are two resources of hypocrisy. 1. To pretend indignation against the person of an opponent. It is easy to feign a pious horror of sentiments we do not care to examine, and to cast obliquely the reproach of blasphemy upon one who utters truths which are evil in their bearing upon us, Jesus, Stephen, Paul, and in their turn all reformers, have had to incur this reproach. 2. To end the matter by violence. Cast the offender out of the synagogue; hand him over to the civil power; or put him to death under the show of law and justice. So was Stephen done to death. The worst crimes have been done in the name of law and under the cloke of religion.

IV. THE MARTYR'S END. In many features it repeats that of the Master. 1. Stephen is *thrust out of the city*, like him who suffered "without the gate." Nor can any man expect to live at all places and times the true life, without having to suffer some form of social expulsion. In suffering for our convictions we come to know the deeper fellowship of the spirit of Jesus. Better to go with Jesus "without the gate" and suffer, than to tarry within the city and to purchase ease at the expense of compliance with evil. 2. *Life is yielded up in prayer.* As he had sighed, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," so his servant, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." As he, "Father, forgive them," so Stephen, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Love, the animating principle of the Christian in life, the secret energy which prompts all his words and deeds in the cause of truth,—love is the temper in which he dies. Christ's religion, in teaching us this love and making its practice possible, proves itself Divine. And this active love is rooted in the sense that we have been loved and sought of God. He who has once found us and blessed us with fatherly hand, gives courage for struggle and resignation in defeat. 3. *The effect on others.* We think of the young man Saul who stood by. What effect upon him had not this spectacle of love in death? And what evidence amidst wild scenes of savage life has not the end of the good man blessing, not cursing his foes, given to the love of God and what it can accomplish in the human heart! The red Indian, as he binds his captive to the stake, expects him to prove his manhood, when escape is hopeless, by bitter taunts and blasphemies to the last. And this is the fruit of cruelty in many lands. It is the marvel in human nature, the appearance of the lamb where we looked for the lion—the reaction of love against hatred, which betokens the presence of a power and a will beyond experience. The life of the world had passed into a new phase when men could die in the very arms of love and fall asleep with the smile of blessing on their brow.—J.

Vers. 1—53.—*Stephen's address in the Sanhedrim.* The charge was blasphemy and revolution against consecrated authority. The answer was, God by his Spirit has been preparing for this time. Jesus is the Messiah. As in former days our fathers resisted the Holy Ghost, so now this highest manifestation of his grace in "Jesus Christ." An appeal to repentance and faith. Notice—

I. THE TESTIMONY TO THE WORD OF GOD. Christianity is no novelty discarding the past. Yet not a mere development, but a new gift in Christ. A great lesson on the study of the Old Testament, which is too much neglected. A help to trace the line of the spiritual manifestations. A warning against unbelief. A declaration of the grace of God, apart from human merit.

II. THE BOLDNESS OF THE INSPIRED PREACHER. Fearlessness of man. Courage of deep conviction. Freedom from Jewish prejudice. Gospel liberty not rationalistic licence. Spiritual conception of God and his worship. Charge of the Jews.

III. THE POSITION OF CHRISTIANITY plainly set forth as the final revelation, and the challenge founded upon it. Receive the gospel or you resist the Spirit. This position evidently rested on the person and work of Christ, "the righteous One," whose message was above that "ordained by angels" (see Heb. i., ii.). The circumcision of the Old Testament was declared worthless in view of the new circumcision of the "heart and ears," otherwise the sign of the new covenant, the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Although evidently broken off by the murderous riot which ensued, the

address was advancing to an appeal to faith on the basis of the new outpouring of the Spirit: "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." A great example to us to lead men through conviction of sin to acceptance of grace—through the sense of what they are to the hope of what they may be in Christ.—R.

Vers. 54—60.—*The proto-martyr.* I. AN EXAMPLE. 1. Distinguished *faith* overcoming the world, the flesh, the wicked one. 2. *Spiritual vision.* Heaven opened. New world under the government of Christ. 3. *Patience and love*, after the example of Jesus. The influence of Christ's martyrdom on all other martyrs. The sermon on the mount exemplified.

II. A new Divine SEAL upon the truth. 1. Sufferings and death in their relation to testimony. Necessity of martyrdom in a world like ours. Effect on the popular mind. 3. Contrast of the old and the new in the scene. The weakness of the persecutors, the strength of the persecuted. The two kingdoms must be set face to face. Righteousness against falsehood and violence. Argument is renounced, therefore the martyr's death is a public exhibition of the enemy's weakness; he is *compelled* to resort to violence. Show that all through Church history this is the case. The conversion of Constantine quickly followed the persecution of Diocletian. The cruelty of Rome brought about a reaction in the popular mind which paved the way for the Reformation. 3. In every darkest hour of God's people there is some point of light which holds the future within it. *Saul* is in that scene. His conversion partly the fruit of it. The Spirit began to work, goading him with conviction. So the blood of martyrs has always seed of truth to water: the blood of Stephen watered conviction in Saul's heart. 4. A wonderful testimony to the reality of the work of the Spirit. How the signs increased! From the gifts of Pentecost to this manifestation of Divine glory to a dying man, calling upon Jesus to receive his spirit, and so confirming, as with a light coming down directly out of heaven, all the facts of the gospel—a risen and glorified Redeemer, able to forgive sins, receiving the spirits of his disciples into heaven, giving them complete victory over the sufferings and darkness of their last hour. May we die the death of the righteous!—R.

Vers. 1—53.—*The recital of a nation's spiritual pedigree—its leading suggestions.* Technically the description of a *defence* may very justly be applied to the long stretch of these verses. They no doubt do stand for Stephen's formal defence. He has been very mildly challenged by the high priest to say whether the "things" laid to his charge "are so." And he loses not a minute in replying. He replies, however, in his own way. That way is somewhat indirect. His tone betrays some sense of his being in some sense also master of the situation. He tempts us much to feel that much may be read between the lines, and we soon come to convince ourselves that the real drift of the personal defence is laid on the lines of a national indictment—and that national indictment very little else than the barest recital of the pedigree of the nation in question. Stephen does not make it too apparent at first—any more than once on a time Nathan did, when he appeared to condignly judge David—but he puts before himself and hearers the nation of Israel as it *now is*, and takes in hand to say what it came from and along what way it *has* come to this present. The places of judge and judged almost seem turned, both in the matter and the manner of Stephen. It is very possible that (as Stephen never lived to put in writing nor to repeat what he now said) there is some disjointedness in the language as it is now before us, and some *lacunæ*, and (though many doubt the suggestion) that interruptions, especially just at the close, determined the form of some parts of Stephen's strong accusation. On the other hand, we have to remember that probably nowhere do we read language fresher from the dictate of the Holy Spirit. The recital of the spiritual lineage of this nation reveals—

I. A SERIES OF PROVIDENTIAL INTERPOSITIONS OF THE MOST MARKED CHARACTER. These occur in more *shapes* than one. 1. There is the originating sovereign choice and sovereign call of Abraham (ver. 2). 2. The express command to him whither he is to go and where awhile to dwell (ver. 3). 3. Express promises vouchsafed to him and his seed, and covenant made with him (vers. 6—8). 4. An unfailing, providential guidance of him and his linear descendants, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. This name Joseph does not fail to lead Stephen to recite (1) the providence that wonderfully

overruled the worst of the work of envy; (2) the providence that exalted Joseph, an alien, to Egypt's highest place; (3) the providence that was aiming at and that did secure the more remote result of settling awhile the nation in Egypt. 5. The providential saving of the life of the infant Moses, educating of him, endowing him with a spirit of both goodness and power, preparing him well by chastening delay and discipline, and finally calling him to see and know and take up his *mission*, after an interval of forty years (vers. 23, 30, 34). The name of Moses, again, does not fail to lead Stephen to commemorate (1) the chief features of his work, in leading the people of Israel out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, and in his own life's remaining *forty-years'* wanderings with those people in the wilderness; (2) the distinct prophecy with which his lips were charged, relating to the "*Prophet*," the Messial, the late well-known Jesus (ver. 37); (3) the typical "tabernacle in the wilderness," so carefully and in minute detail designed in heaven, yet so temporary in its use for the service of the wilderness and the early settlement under Joshua in "the possession of the Gentiles." 6. By two hurried touches, the reason of which is scarcely far to find, Stephen implies rather than mentions the providence which raised up David to conceive and Solomon to execute the building of the temple (ch. vi. 14; ver. 48); when, for whatever exact reason, the climax of the occasion is reached. The moment has come for the dropping of the mere recital of history, every step of which, however, was telling its own very plain and very significant tale. In words of flame and impassioned thrusts, the solemn, unanswerable, conscience-stinging charge is flung at the packed body of accusers and sympathizers. And the force came, not of bad spirit, but of *the Spirit*, the Spirit of truth and conviction, of light and life, and, when needs be, of "consuming fire." So far Stephen's recital of the moral lineage of the people is crowded with the tokens of providence. Nay, it is *one chain* of tokens of Divine love and Divine care. But on reading again the recital we find—

II. A SERIES OF PERVERSE THWARTINGS AND "CONTRADICTIONS OF SINNERS." To us the things working in the mind of Stephen are not obscure, but even to those who heard him, light must have glimmered in before the final disclosure. When this came, no man doubted what it meant nor to what it was equivalent. Not *exactly* side by side, and not exactly *pari passu* with the originating, directing, overruling, and protecting "*dispositions*" (ver. 53) of Heaven, but certainly in many a most mournful and untoward conjuncture appeared the perverseness of human insubjection and ingratitude and presumptuous opposition. The worst growths of ingratitude sprang up where had fallen the richest showers of heavenly grace. The worst forms of resistance assorted themselves in front of the kindest and most distinguished of heavenly leading. And it had been thus too systematically. It had been so once and again, and the indications were to the effect that, "*So my people love to have it.*" Thus the whole length of exceptional and most beneficent grace was disfigured by the intrusion of surprising ingratitude and rebellion; and of late, Stephen has to show, things have grown worse, nay, they are come to a climax. The seed of evil grew up into plain sight. 1. In those "patriarchs, moved with envy," who "sold Joseph into Egypt" (ver. 9). 2. In the two cases, that grew upon one another in degree of blindness, when Moses himself was so taken by surprise in that his own brethren did not perceive his mission, and that it was one for *their* benefit, at whatsoever risk to himself (vers. 25, 28, 35). 3. In the rebellion and fickleness of Israel under "Mount Sina," and their patent idolatry there, a career of crime, Stephen implies, which begun there never got purged out of their system, but brought on the crushing punishment of the Captivity. This was a marvellous stroke of Stephen's just rhetoric—suggestion of the Spirit's light and force—to run up in the compass of one sentence that initial act of idolatry into the flourishing continuation of it which both courted and caused the captivity of ever-memorable shame (vers. 38—43). 4. But never so plainly, never so terribly as *now*; the present generation complete the circle of the evil works of their fathers. They "resist the Holy Ghost;" they are "the betrayers and murderers" of him for prophesying of whom men were both persecuted and slain by their fathers; they have not honoured their own "Law," so boasted in, in the only acceptable way of honouring it, viz. in the "keeping" of it; and they have branded themselves with the names "stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and in" their very "ears." These are the formidable interruptions to the purity, honour, nobility of their lineage. They are stains on their scutcheons—

ineffaceable in themselves. But even all this is as nothing, for they now drag their glory in the dust, and are for flinging it away for ever. The recital shows—

III. A SERIES OF SUGGESTIVE RETRIBUTIONS. This aspect of his subject, it may be supposed, Stephen purposed to keep in some check for a time. Yet: 1. It is *imp/iel*, for those who certainly well knew all the history of Joseph and his brethren, in the allusion to the exaltation of Joseph, and his brethren's repairing to him for corn, and finally his father and family becoming as it were his permanent guests (vers. 9—14). 2. It is again implied (see the manifest hint of *some* kind of ver. 35) in the justifying of Moses' unconscious taking up of his *rôle* as reformer and deliverer of his brethren (vers. 24—26), and in the parallel condemnation of those whose blindness, *not* seeing it, led them to say tauntingly, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" 3. It is most emphatically stated of the idolatrous Israelites. God "*turned, and gave them up*" (ver. 42). And the fact of this being able to be viewed either as one long-continued course of retribution or retribution frequently repeated shows that, as Stephen approaches the end of his speech, he is preparing to give greater prominence to this matter. So far, then, the striking moral features of this history consist of unparalleled opportunity, reckless disregard of it and Heaven's own distinctest and most impressive *kind* of warnings. But the whole case of Stephen is not over till it is observed how he either purposely exhibits or is *made the means* of exhibiting—

IV. THE AIM, THE USE, THE LESSONS OF THAT FAMILY LINEAGE, MADE TO BE ILLUSTRIOUS, ALL MISERABLY FORGOTTEN, AT LEAST FOR THE FAMILY ITSELF. For: 1. The aim and use of all, if they had *not* been absolutely lost, would have obviated the necessity of any defence at all on the part of Stephen; and in particular would have rendered unnecessary his allusion to David, to Solomon, and to the nature of the dwelling-place of the "Most High," as also his quotation of the prophet's rapt, inspired, and foreseeing language (vers. 46—50). It seems evident that Stephen was far from being supremely anxious on the subject of his own personal defence; he is bent on something far beyond and above this. But so far as he was at all anxious about it, it was *here* that the point of it lay. Whatever he had said about "this place," and about "the customs of Moses," and about "this Jesus of Nazareth," who had power to "destroy this temple and build it up in three days," and who was the end and aim and substance of all "the Law and the prophets," was near to finding its solution, for those who had "ears to hear," at the point at which Stephen is found quoting that prophet (ver. 50). But all was lost on those whose nation had been educating fourteen hundred years if haply they might see this very thing and *not* lose it. 2. The lessons of a moral and individual nature are now to be yet more shown spilled on the ground. Yes, spilled, as Stephen's blood itself was spilled. Instead of having learnt or now learning, they are "cut to the heart;" they gnash with their teeth; they cry out with a loud voice; they *stop their ears*; they run upon Stephen with one accord; they cast him out of the city; they stone him. It was the evening of hope for many of that audience when Stephen began to speak. When he has ended evening has declined into a mournful, dark, despairful night. A hundred times they have been warned in their own *family history*, and their fathers cry to them from the very tombs. But what can they hear who "stop their ears"? And what can any hear who do likewise?—B.

Vers. 23—29.—*Marks of the born reformer.* Conversion does not by any means purport to create new powers of mind or to substitute new qualities of heart, but to direct aright the powers which are already the gifts of nature or creation—to direct them to right and worthy objects, and to fill them with right and worthy energy. So also inspiration does not purport to override natural sources of knowledge and natural gifts, so as to obliterate the prevailing marks of individual character and even individual peculiarity. So neither, once more, do what we often call *special* providences purport to make the forces of native character hide themselves, and supersede them by what is artificial and in a sense even superficial, *though* it comes from heaven. It is, indeed, doubtful whether we have a very happy phrase in the expression "special" providence. Perhaps we rather mean that providence occasionally strikes us more because it does what is unexpected or what seems to us specially remarkable for some reason or another. In any other sense, there certainly was a time when the most "special" providence might have seemed to be found in the fact that "not a sparrow falleth to

the ground without" God's "notice," or in the fact that "all the hairs of our head are numbered" of God. While, therefore, we may believe readily that Moses was "raised up" of God, "called of God," watched over and graciously trained by the providence of God, this will none the less yield us the opportunity of observing the illustrations of the *born reformer* which he affords, and of noticing, for important uses, how parallel they run to those of one whom we might hesitate to describe as in any similar sense at all events "raised" or "called of God." That we may, therefore, the more clearly feel how little of the mere made and artificial there was in Moses, we may stop and note how the very brief sketch before us reveals some of the plain marks of the born reformer, whether for the better or the less good.

I. A MOMENT ARRIVES, CHARGED WITH A STRONG IMPULSE TO FIND A NEW POINT OF DEPARTURE FOR LIFE AND WHATEVER IS ITS CHIEF MEANING. 1. The impulse comes. It "came into his heart." It comes, and it comes very much as matter of feeling—*out* of his heart as surely as into it. 2. It comes under some comparatively unpretentious guise. Moses has a prompting to "visit his brethren the children of Israel." Out of sight is not out of mind with him, where it would have been so in a million of cases to one. He does not despise, forget, or ignore as much as possible poor relations. His heart is toward them, and perhaps at the time conscious of nothing else, he will "visit" them and throw in his lot with them. 3. The impulse is of uncommon strength. (1) It asked for the decision of a moral question, and "refusing to be called" what he was not (Heb. xi. 24); he quickly settled that. (2) It encountered the adopting of a lot of "affliction," and a share of suffering, in place of pride, wealth, luxury, and power (Heb. xi. 25); and the choice was unhesitatingly made. (3) It asked force and perspicuity of spiritual vision, and that far sight that can not merely see afar, but that will find "a hand to reach through time," to catch the "far-off interest of tears"—that genuine "recompense of reward" (Heb. xi. 26). (4) Lastly, it dares to face the wrath of a foster father king, a despot, whose will, whose whim, whose passion, whose cruelty would not stop at anything that crossed his purposes; but "he feared not" (Heb. xi. 27), for "he endured as seeing" the King eternal, immortal, and "invisible." These things all help to speak a reality and a strength in the impulse, which promise well to make the prophet master of the man, and which will fit the theory of a born reformer, while yet it is matter of theory.

II. TWO SUCCEEDING DAYS REVEAL MOSES—THE ONE IN THE CAPACITY OF A WRESTLER, AND VERY SUCCESSFUL ONE; THE OTHER CLOTHING HIMSELF IN THE AUTHORITY OF A JUDGE AND ARBITER; IN BOTH CASES UNSOLICITED. His action on either day is spontaneous. It was doubtless as great a surprise to the brother he would befriend as to his adversary for the time. Yet in either case Moses steps into the various arena, as though to the manner born. 1. This stepping boldly into action is very noticeable. How wide often the gulf that separates thought, feeling, wish, conviction, and even resolution from action itself! 2. Much more significant is the stepping from Egypt's court and palace and lap of luxury into practical conflict of this kind. It meant something unusual, and something *unworldly and of the right sort* unusual. It was the kind of thing to hold men who didn't like it spell-bound for at all events twenty-four hours. It provoked the question, "From whence hath this man" this authority and these mighty deeds (vers. 22, 28)? It meant a "new man" (Luther's hymn) on the spot.

III. A GREAT MARK OF A BORN REFORMER APPEARS NOW IN MOSES, IN THE ABSENCE OF SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH HE BETRAYS. What he did, what he said, what he tried to work, all came to thought, heart, and hand, as things under existing circumstances the most natural in the world. He saw himself only in the light of an instrument in the hand of God, and took for granted that his brethren would see him and all else in the same light. Probably his eye did not look on himself at all at the time; probably at the time, even what "he supposed" about his brethren understanding his mission on their behalf, was an utterly unconscious supposing. For it is the historian *afterwards* whose language is here read, and it was probably when Moses first received a check, and was taken aback by it, that his "supposing" precipitated itself. Circumstances, opposition, persecution, do not fail soon to open the eyes of almost any reformer, specially of any reformer in matter moral, but it is of the born reformer to plunge prompt, fearless, nothing hesitating, *in medias res*. And Moses did just this. The pain and the smart and their useful lessons were yet to come.

IV. IT REMAINS NO POOR SIGN OF THE BORN REFORMER THAT AT FIRST MOSES OVERSTEPS THE MARK. For *exceptions* to this experience are few. Even in a delicious unconsciousness and simplicity and naturalness lurks that very thing *nature*, human nature, and too much of it; *self*, and too much of it. God would not have overstepped the mark—never does. All his work fits perfectly to time, to place, to issue. Yet he who holds the threads of all human things in his fingers, and rules the mysterious vicissitude of human history, makes allowance beforehand for their error in his most faithful, most willing servants. Their pace must be moderated, and his purpose will not be lost, nor so much as suffer. More haste, worse speed for Moses—for the precipitancy of two days relegates him to forty years' absence from the scene and the holy enterprise into which he had flung himself with zeal so passionate. What will forty years do for him? What will they make of him? They will temper him, subdue much the confidence of self, and will make him more meet for the Master's service, at the very time that he shall appear less zealous for it.—B.

Ver. 54.—*Rebuke, and the ill fruit that comes of just rebuke, refused.* In the brotherhood of human society there is a place for advice, for persuasion, for encouragement, for gentlest reproof, for vehement remonstrance, for beseechful expostulation, for all the energy of urgent exhortation, and for *rebuke*. It must be confessed, however, that the place which belongs to rebuke is (if comparison may be given to the word) far more *unique* in its character. Whatever it may *intend*, it is nothing better than the merest impertinence, except under certain very definite conditions. In connection with the ill reception, ill even to fatality, given on this occasion to the vigorous rebuke of Stephen, let us take opportunity to consider—

I. THE RIGHTS AND JUST GROUNDS OF CHRISTIAN REBUKE. 1. All rebuke must *mean* the assertion of authority, and naturally presumes some footing of *rightful* authority. The rebuke of parent, of teacher, of master, of age, of experience, of knowledge, each rests on its own special authority. We are, therefore, justified in demanding the authority of Christian rebuke or what may claim to be such. And we may ask of what sort its authority professes to be. 2. While some may be prepared most unhesitatingly to answer these questions, others, and those the very persons most nearly affected by the answer, may refuse to defer to them or to accept their *dicta*. Still, this will not *disprove* the authority claimed for the exercise of Christian rebuke, nor put it in any other position than some other cases of disputed authority. The decision for such persons may be deferred till the dawn of eternity; and the person who exercises rebuke of this solemn sort must be prepared, and will readily acknowledge himself prepared, to await also the same date and abide its issue. 3. The authority of the man who honestly exercises Christian rebuke is of the same sort and in part of the same origin with that which bids him, for his own sake and for the sake of all others, "have no fellowship with ~~whosoever~~ with evil," "but rather reprove" it. It is his native right, if he will but do this very thing, to war ceaselessly with evil. Reason *might* have been supposed equal to teaching this. Conscience certainly teaches it. The light of revelation, where it is possessed, *says* it, and the only thing remaining to clinch the rightful act of the person who rebukes is present in the fact (*where least confessed*) of the *amen*, uttered in some way or other by the conscience of the person justly rebuked. The honest Christian rebuke claims to rebuke that which is bane, misery, curse, to all the world; which, because it is the duty of every one to discountenance and do his best to destroy it, infers no presumptuousness in the few who do this, but does infer *lashes*, and most criminal *lashes*, in those who do it *not*. Men may doubt, disbelieve, deny the written authority of revelation, and are answerable for the consequences of doing so. But still they are held; and they are held by a bond they cannot break or rid themselves of, when, being rebuked, their conscience either honestly owns to the justice of the rebuke, or owns to it no less conclusively though in a more painful manner by a certain violent refusal of it. And it is evident that the true Christian rebuker is not to wait till such time as the person rebuked is ready to confess his faith in things to come and his apprehension of things unseen: no; he is to speak because of *his own* calm, firm, yet modest and tenderly compassionate apprehension of eternal verities, the things of God, of Christ, of the soul, and of eternity. No end of other responsibility lies with him who poses as the Christian rebuker; but *if he be truly this*, then and then first is

his responsibility rightly met. So souls are quickened, and death is startled into life. So the messages of revelation are spread with their sterner significance, and the tender words of Jesus are multiplied. So hearts that have been touched themselves, and souls that own to the earnest of salvation within them, *illustrate* the one compassion left to them when, other means having failed and *the right moment of rebuke* having arrived, they utter forth the burden with which they are charged. And Stephen now spoke before men many times himself in number, and in repute and worldly estimation—many of them—far placed above himself; yet he assumes the tone and place of authority, and plainly speaks the words of authority. Moreover, the character of that authority is that which beyond a doubt is most offensive to others. It deals in censure, reflects on the motives and conduct of men, and of a long line of their ancestors as well; and yet, *provided his indictment is true* and not slanderous, Stephen is right. Let alone the fact that he is fired with the light and the fervent flames of the Holy Spirit, he is right on the broadest ground of humanity, on the simplest principles of Christianity, in the name of truth, and in that service so often forgotten, the kind and faithful service of fellow-man. It is by no means a frequent thing to find the man who is ready to sacrifice himself in order to say and do those things of truth which have for their present reward loss even of life to him, but for their remoter fruit the highest benefit of mankind. 4. But lastly, none who are believers in great leading doctrines of the Christian religion, and in particular in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the force and the principle of life in that dispensation, will for a moment doubt that, *in the last analysis, his authority is the beginning and the end of the rightful exercise of moral and spiritual rebuke*. He finds the right for all those whom he moves in his own *sovereign right*. And his light, knowledge, and impulse conferred, submit to no limit except that which is *self-imposed*. His uncreate freedom, which so often blesses men to make them even sons of God, will yield none of its right, nor be robbed of its prerogative. When resisted, alighted, "grieved," it freely reproves through human lip; or when on the point of being "quenched" for any, it comes freely to *rebuke*, as now though by human lips only in words and suggestions, which "cut to the heart" men to whose heart nothing but the qualities of hardness and resistance seemed left. The rebuke of God's Spirit, albeit coming forth only from man's lips, can no more be restrained than the scathing lightning can be stopped in its mid-career. The rebuke of God's Spirit carries *legitimately* the credentials of its right in its might. And *Christian rebuke*, in the highest sense, postulates just this authority, *ought* to postulate it, and needs no other.

II. THE ILL WORK THAT COMES OF JUST REBUKE DETERMINEDLY REFUSED. 1. It certainly does not necessarily lose aught of its power to pain. "When they heard these things, they were *cut to the heart*." That certainly means pain, whatever the character of the pain. 2. The character of that pain is inevitably all-malignant. It is not of the pain that, sudden and sharp, lends itself also to the *salutary* use of calling attention to symptoms of inmost danger. It is a foregone conclusion that it shall *not* have any beneficial operation of this sort, and in *this sad* sense too to be forewarned proves to be forearmed, namely, against what might be the best of friends. It is left to such pain to work all it can, according to its own evil pleasure, purposed in its own self, without a single redeeming feature. 3. It stirs up anger's muddiest depths. It excites anger to the turn of insanity. Anger rages first, then raves. What else is said, what less is true, when it is testified that "they gnashed on him with their teeth." Anger so mastered them that it would not let them heed or even hear its own best Mentor,—*"Be ye angry, and sin not."* This anger is *all sin*. It is sin in its causelessness; it is sin in its excess; it is sin in its character of a demonstration of opposition so unequal as against one undefended man; it is sin against conscience and against that Spirit whose mightiest office is to touch livingly the conscience; it is sin in its blind, tumultuous desperation of conduct. 4. According to the intrinsic seriousness or otherwise of the individual occasion, the inevitable tendency of the determined refusal to hear rebuke is either to that stricken heart and conscience that are equivalent to moral paralysis, or to an activity equally frantic and disastrous. The revenge which rebuke, unheeded, though it be just, takes is found to vary within many degrees. Sometimes its work is slow and secret, sometimes it is even "open beforehand" in the force of its demonstrations, and these "go before to judgment." It can scarcely be otherwise now. The present instance is typical. When arrived at a certain point,

human nature seems to have it *in it*, rapidly indeed, "to fill up the measures of its iniquities." "How much better" is reproof listened to than rebuke resented! But if instead we have resented reproof, then how much better is it to listen to rebuke, to kiss the rod that smites, and, though it smite severely, while still there is left us time to pray, "O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure!" For pain and anger in concert know no compassion, and show mercy least of all and last of all to those who court their company and soon find themselves their driven slaves. Ill is the promise of fair entrance to haven for the vessel that is tossed in storms of anger, lashed by those blasts of pain, which are the avengings of an insulted, an aggravated, and disobeyed conscience.—B.

Vers. 55—60.—*The glory of the martyr.* It is not impossible that the foregoing defence of Stephen may own to some slight ellipses; if so, to be accounted for partly by the fact of his immediate martyrdom, which prevented his rehearsal of it to any penman. But if it be not so, and if we have here in due connection all that Stephen said that is material to a right apprehension of the exact position of things, then his outburst recorded in vers. 51—53 is indeed full of suggestion, hints at much that lay behind, and invests itself with great additional interest. For we must suppose that his discernment, all on fire at that moment, enabled him to see, both in the eyes of the council of judges and in some of their movements, perhaps of the most unconscious and involuntary character, that the crisis had arrived when, without another minute's delay, he should deliver himself of truth's scathing rebuke. And this superior illumination and quickened intelligence was, perhaps, but the stealing on, and with no very stealthy pace either, of the dawn of heavenly light itself. Whatever might be coming upon the enraged persecutors, to the brave and dignified persecuted was near at hand the lustre of the perfect day, the perfect truth, the perfect love. Let it be that the "age of miracles" has passed, how often all along up to the present have last moments of the servants of Christ, specially of his suffering ones, been visited in sight and sound by quickened perceptions of the eternal realities! With those realities Stephen is already in company in a degree beyond, possibly not in a manner altogether different from, manifestations vouchsafed in later days. The circumstances surrounding the death of Stephen have ever attracted special attention. The death is a martyrdom; it is the first distinct martyrdom for the name of Jesus. It is in some aspects of it not an altogether unworthy or unfaithful copy from the great original, and it is, on the other side, a type of many a close to earthly life which should hereafter come to pass. The surroundings of the death of Stephen well justify the gaze of all who pass by the way, the breathless listening of all who have an ear to hear, the deeper inquiry of all who are moved to deeper faith. And they *reward* these, abundantly reward them. There can be no mistake as to where the closing scene *began*. It began from the point at which the enemies of Stephen "gnashed their teeth on him." And from this beginning of what may well be called here "the pain, the bliss of dying," we may notice the things which shall seem chiefly to distinguish the death of the first Christian martyr—a death which is plainly offered for an open vision to all the world.

I. THE "FULL" POSSESSION "OF THE HOLY GHOST" ON THE PART OF THE MARTYR. This had long commanded life for Stephen and for his work. This had made him "full of faith" and "full of power," and able to "work great wonders and miracles among the people." This *commands* all Christian life, energy, and usefulness. It is the secret of life, but, more than that, the strong, sure force of it. And as the Holy Ghost had been the mighty Quickener of spiritual life and "work and wonder" for Stephen while he lived, so he is with him the strong Director and Supporter when he must face death. None can tell all the force of the Holy Spirit. He who has *most* only knows *up to what* he has; *but* is it not very plain, as the more a man has of him so he is the more strong and the more full of spiritual life and work, that we may therefore safely conclude that with him rests the complete transforming of our nature, no doubt, as well body as soul and spirit? Well may it be that we need not to "fear them who kill the body only," when we have with us One, the Holy Spirit, who can, who does vanquish their killing work, even while they are yet in the act, himself pouring fuller streams of life into the soul. Is it not greatly to be feared that the modern Church is guilty (though unconsciously, yet guilty in *that very thing*) of dishonouring the Spirit? We dishonour the

Spirit (1) in not owning our entire dependence on him for spiritual life; (2) in not taking far higher views than we generally do of the *circle* of his influence and of the *degree* of it; and (3) in not obeying, and that both *sensitively* and *trustingly*, such impulses as he does graciously vouchsafe.

II. A POWER OF THE EYE TO SEE BEYOND THE USUAL HUMAN POWER OF SIGHT. Glorious is the contrast, and surely it must have been all designed, when Stephen can turn away his saddened gaze from the vision of malignant, hostile, and infuriate faces, to what an opened heaven now proffers to his sight. But even a more *essential* glory than the substituted *objects* of vision may be said to have been found in the new-born or all but new-born realization of the *power itself* that lay sleeping there so long—sleeping and confined beneath the eyelid of flesh all life's length, till the moment had come before "the last trump" to startle it into proving its unknown gift. So we live daily amid the presence of most momentous realities, nor know by how fine a veil, how frail a partition, they are separated from our sight, while any moment may do one or both of these same things for us—rend open the veil or give the piercing sight to see through, past, and far, far above all the hindrances of sense and matter, let them be what they may. Glory now dawns on the horizon for Stephen; while he is yet in the strangest place and with a repulsive foreground, the distance is most radiant. It is far less of a miracle than a very simple fulfilment of assertions of Scripture and assurances of spiritual natures. The pure—"blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." He "looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God."

III. THE SIGHT OF REALITIES MOST SIGNIFICANTLY APPROPRIATE TO STEPHEN. It may be observed that, alike, the historian affirms the resplendent objects that Stephen's elevated gaze beheld, and also gives in quotation the words of his lips, uttered while yet his eyes beheld the ecstatic sight. We cannot err in understanding that what Stephen said he saw was keenly noticed and thought of by the historian and many a contemporary devout brother. Nor can we miss for ourselves the point—the less that this is the only occasion on which we find Jesus Christ directly styled "the Son of man" by any one but himself (but see Rev. i. 13). For announcing, defending, advocating *these* facts; for preaching them with a zeal and faith in them that would not be silenced and could not be gainsaid,—it was that Stephen was in his present place and position. The facts were these exactly: that (1) the Jesus, whom they were none of them unwilling to call "*Son of man*," and who called himself so, was, though "betrayed and murdered," not only "*Son of man*;" and (2) that he now stood, manifest in the opened heaven, in a position that offered no doubtful evidence of all the rest. This had been the preaching of Peter and the rest of the apostles and of Stephen—that the Jesus whom the Jews had slain was "exalted to the right hand of God." Yes; is Stephen going to seal his testimony with his blood? before that shall be, God will seal *his* testimony, and give to Stephen the vision of what is close awaiting his sacrifice. The "everlasting gates" are already flung "open." The "King of glory" has already gone through. Glory in all its effulgence is there, for God and Jesus, the Light and Glory, the Strength and Love of the universe, are there; and—"an abundant entrance" is about to be given to Stephen. Oh what a sight for Stephen! What a contrast! What an infinite reward! What supreme grace of Heaven! And what a thought for us! Jesus is there, and he is "*standing*" there, to take at the first possible moment the hand of Stephen, and welcome his feet to the golden floor. The correspondence between the work of Stephen and the peril into which he had been brought by it, and the gracious manifestations now made to him, tells its own tale.

IV. A FAITHFUL AND EMPHATIC FULFILMENT UP TO THE LAST MOMENT OF THE RIGHT PARTS OF EARTHLY DUTY. Now literally hurried away by force by his enemies, we are not told of any struggle whatever on his part, nor of any murmur, nor of any expression of instinctive horror and dread. But we are told: 1. How, when the first storm of stones gave him the clear signal of what was to be expected for earth, he "calls upon God," and, by no means forgetting the full meaning of his own "preaching and faith," cries, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The care of his own soul is ever *the first* duty of any man. 2. And how, with marvellous memory, he (1) does not omit to pray for his murderers; nor (2) omits to "kneel down," as he prays, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." We have in all this, not the signs of an enthusiast merely or a fanatic

Here is something very different—a man with the splendour of the glory of God and the realities of heaven and the exalted Jesus bursting on his vision, and yet, amid storms of stones, recalled to prayer for himself and the trustful committing of his soul to the charge of Jesus, and to intercession on bended knees for his murderers. To disregard the suggestions of the patience of Stephen, the dying charge of his spirit, and the prayer for those who kill him, in their power to recall the temper and the trust and the forgivingness of his great Master and Saviour, were to disregard Christ's own grandest achievements. Of such achievements his force, his word, his Spirit, have now wrought in Stephen so early an illustrious and ever-enduring monument. Nor, amid all the rest of the splendour of the surroundings of Stephen's departing from this world, was there any more intrinsic mark of what it all meant than the copy which he himself exhibited of a character and a portrait "after the Master"—the Master Jesus.

V. A WORD APPLIED IN THE NARRATIVE TO DESCRIBE THE DEATH OF THE MARTYR AS SINGULARLY IN HARMONY WITH THE WHOLE WORLD'S IRRESISTIBLE CONVICTION OF THE PERFECT PEACE OF THE SPIRIT, AS IT WOULD SEEM INAPPROPRIATE TO THE SUFFERINGS OF THE BODY. "And when he had said this, he *fell asleep*." The beautiful expression was not unknown nor unused before Christians used it; but men may be pardoned if they felt (perhaps against strict letter of fact) it could never be appropriately drawn upon without Christian revelation. But its use now, its use in the circumstances presented here, is a sign and a mark indeed. This is not some occasion where truth is complimentarily sacrificed, and facts dragged in disgraceful chains in the train of words. On the contrary, *facts*, in spite of all appearances, deeper *facts*, despite the sight and the sounds and stones that are flying about, *facts* that *insist* on giving expression to themselves, triumph over words and over all opposing forces, and demand that, as the last thing we know of Stephen in this world, we shall know *this*—that his death was as though a "sleep," and his yielding to it as though he yielded to Heaven's gracious remedy for nature's deepest need—sleep! "He fell asleep"—in Jesus (1 Thess. iv. 14). "Well done, good and faithful servant"—"faithful unto death." And *in death* also faithful—a faithful witness of the Lord's faithfulness to his own.

"He fell asleep in Christ his Lord;
He gave to him to keep
The soul his great love had redeemed,
Then calmly went to sleep.

"And as a tired bird folds its wing
Sure of the morning light,
He laid him down in trusting faith,
And dreaded not the night."

B.

Vers. 2—53.—*Stephen's defence*. It was usual in the court of the Sanhedrim to allow an accused person to plead guilty or not guilty, and to speak in his own defence. As this address of Stephen's is his defence, we must know of what he was accused. Generally it may be said that he was a blasphemer of God and the Law; but, to understand how such a charge could possibly be made, we must appreciate the intense and superstitious feeling concerning Mosaism which characterized the rulers of that day. The more manifestly that the spiritual life faded out of the older system, the more intensely the people clung to its mere forms and traditions; jealousy of it as a national system had taken the place of faithfulness to it as a revelation of God and a means of grace. Stephen was "the first man who dared to think that the gospel of Jesus was a Divine step forward, a new economy of God, which the existing Hebraic institutions might indeed refuse to accept, but which, in that case, would not only dispense with, but in the end overturn, the Hebraic institutions." So far as a charge was brought against Stephen, it closely resembled that brought against our Lord. The false witnesses declared that they had heard him say "that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place [*i.e.* the temple], and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us." But while this was the definite charge, we find that the real offence must have been his bold and unqualified assertion of the Messiahship and divinity of Christ. Stephen's crime, in the eyes of bigoted Jewish rulers, was his discernment of the

spirituality of Christ's mission; but this Stephen saw on its antagonistic side, and therefore we cannot wonder that he should excite such prejudice against himself. Olshausen well says, "The Jews, with a disposition of mind that looked to outward things, did not rightly comprehend the thoughts of Stephen, but took a distorted view of them. What he had represented as a *consequence* of the operation of the Spirit of Christ, whose design it was to consecrate the world as a great temple of God, and to guide religion from externals to the heart, *that* the Jews conceived as a *purpose* to be accomplished by violence, and thus they ascribed to him the destruction of the temple and the abolition of Jewish usages—things which he had never attempted." We may dwell on—

I. THE FORM OF THE SPEECH AS ADAPTED TO THE JEWISH AUDIENCE. It is a historical *resumé*. With such a Jewish audience is always pleased, and for such marked attention and interest can now be secured. It is remarkable: 1. For the knowledge of Scripture which it reveals—a knowledge not concerned only with facts and persons, but with principles and their permanent applications. 2. For the skill with which he selected his Scripture points; so that not until "he had patiently traversed the whole period from Abraham to Solomon, selecting such facts as made for his own case, and setting them in skilful array, did he suffer one word to escape him at which even his most adverse hearer could take open exception." Stephen illustrates for us the power that lies in (1) command of Scripture; (2) self-command; (3) skill in the art of rhetoric and of argument; (4) spiritual insight of the deeper meanings of Divine revelation.

II. THE RELATION OF THE SPEECH TO THE SPECIFIC CHARGES. He was accused of teaching what would materially change the old Jewish customs. He replies in effect (1) that God had given a new revelation, and that he was only asking them to hear God's message and receive God's Messenger; and (2) that, in rejecting a new message from God, they were only acting as their fathers had done in all the previous generations. This Stephen, in a very subtle way, hinted at by his historical references; but he reserved the full unfolding of it until the close of his speech. Then he presses two points home upon the heart and conscience of his audience. (1) In reference to the charge that he proposed the destruction of the temple and its ritual, he urged that God's direct spiritual dealings with men were and always had been strictly independent of forms, or ritual, or temple. And (2) in reference to the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, he urged that the Jews, under every succeeding form of Divine revelation, had resisted the Spirit. Dr. Dykes says, "As often as it had pleased God, through chosen messengers of his will, to lead Israel forward through a new moment of change into a fresh spiritual epoch of blessing, so often had God's thoughts been misunderstood, his purposes hindered, and his messenger rejected by the bulk of Israel. This had been their national failing—to cling to the present and material, whenever God was calling them to higher spiritual good. This they had done so often that their doing it now, by rejecting a spiritual Christ and idolizing a material temple, was only of a piece with their entire history." We must suppose that the excitement of the Sanhedrim, who detected his point, and the clamour of the crowd, who followed the cue given by the council, reached at last such a height that Stephen could only close his speech suddenly with the few intense words given us in vers. 51—53. It was a noble boldness and a sublime testimony, but we cannot wonder that it fed the flame of excitement and made a violent death for the heroic champion almost a certainty. There are times in life when what colder natures call *imprudence* is the immediate duty to which men are called. Stephen's burning words have carried their conviction to human consciences through the long Christian ages. Literature has no intenser warning against losing the *spiritual* by doggedly clinging to the bare and formal and literal.

—B. T.

Ver. 6, etc.—*The ethics of Scripture quotation.* Much has been said, in modern times, about the importance of quoting from other writers or speakers with the utmost correctness and precision, giving the exact language in which the other mind clothed its thought. And, from the point of view of a somewhat narrow theory of inspiration, it has been urged that all scriptural quotations should give the very words of the Scripture writer. Against making this bondage injurious and painful, two considera-

tions may be presented. 1. It may be noticed that the Scriptures, as we have them, are *translations*, i.e. they are the thoughts of the inspired writers expressed in words chosen by other men, and there is no reason why men nowadays, who can grasp the thought of the original writer, should not give it expression in other, better-chosen, and better-adapted terms. 2. It may be shown that the apostles and New Testament speakers and writers did not put themselves under any such severe limitations. They quoted freely, jealous of the sense, but not unduly concerned about repeating the precise phraseology. Of this we have instances in Stephen's speech, to which we direct attention; premising that our space does not admit of our pointing out every instance of deviation or addition, and that we can only attempt to open an interesting line of study. It is to be noticed that Stephen quotes from the Septuagint translation rather than from the original Scriptures, but even from the Septuagint he makes what seem to be important alterations; and he blends traditional references with Scripture quotations, as if some recognized authority attached to them. It is very probable that "ancient genuine elements were preserved traditionally among the Jews, which received their higher confirmation by admission into the New Testament. If we consider the general prevalence of oral tradition among all ancient nations, and particularly the stationary posture of things which was common among the Jews, such a descent of genuine traditional elements through a succession of centuries will lose the astonishing character which it seems to have." Illustrations may be given of the following points:—

I. TRANSLATION AFFECTS THE LITERALITY, BUT NEED NOT AFFECT THE TRUTH. Show that: 1. Truth must get a form of words if it is to be communicated to and received by men, whose intercourse is so largely dependent on language. 2. A particular truth is not, of necessity, confined to one particular form of words. Each man may give it his own form of expression, and, conceivably, each man's form may adequately represent the truth, and convey it to another mind. 3. The utmost importance would attach to the *ipsissima verba* of Scripture, if they could be recovered. 4. That they cannot be recovered, and can only be known in translation, may be designed to convince us of the comparative unimportance of the mere *form*. 5. The Bible is translated into many languages, and in its varied dress it is found efficiently to retain its spirit and its power.

II. MEMORY AFFECTS THE LITERALITY, BUT NEED NOT AFFECT THE TRUTH. Stephen spoke from memory; St. Paul, in his writings, quotes from memory. Ministers and teachers must often quote from memory. The power of memory is of two kinds—(1) the power to retain exact words; (2) the power to retain the thought, the truth, or the principle, which found expression in the words. It may be easily said that the verbal memory is alone the correct one, but, more carefully considered, we would recognize the superior correctness of the memory that held the truth rather than the words.

III. WITH DUE CARE TO PRESERVE THE LITERALITY, WE SHOULD HAVE MORE CARE ABOUT GAINING SPIRITUAL HOLD OF THE TRUTH. Of this Stephen gives effective example. And it may be shown that a precise and adequate expression of any truth depends, not on the exact remembrance of a form of words or an accepted creed, but on spiritual insight, on the clearness of our visions of the truth: he who sees the truth will never find it difficult to make his brother see it too.—R. T.

Ver. 37.—*A Prophet like Moses*. The reference is to Deut. xviii. 18, and, as introduction, the difficulties which Moses found in executing his mission may be vividly described. In Stephen's day it was the fashion to exalt Moses and the Mosaic system, but this was done in forgetfulness of the facts connected with Moses' career. Again and again his leadership was refused. The stiff-neckedness and unspirituality of the people tried him very sorely; once, to so great an extent, that he spake unadvisedly with his lips, and threw down the tables of the Law. This Moses, in whom now they trusted, they were not really willing to heed, any more than their fathers had been; for Moses had himself prophesied of the Messiah, and any one who chose could make the comparison between Moses and Jesus of Nazareth, and see that the one answered to the other just as the great lawgiver had indicated. Some of the points of similarity between Moses and Messiah may be considered and illustrated.

I. EACH HAD A DIVINE CALL. Both in childhood: Moses in his mysterious preservation; Messiah in his mysterious birth. Both in early manhood (each early relatively to the age they lived): Moses in the vision of the flaming bush; Messiah in the dove-vision and heavenly voice at his baptism.

II. EACH HAD A SPECIAL PREPARATION. Moses in the experience of the Egyptian court and in the solitudes of Horeb; Messiah in the experiences of the carpenter's house at Nazareth, and in the temptations of the Jordan desert.

III. EACH FOUNDED A DISPENSATION. Moses, one which was both an advance and a decline from the older patristic dispensation; an advance as a fuller revelation of God's will, and a decline as imprisoning spiritual truth, for a time and purpose, in stiff religious rites and ceremonies. Messiah, one which was in every way an advance, liberating men from all ritual bonds, and bringing to open hearts the fuller revelations of the Father.

IV. EACH WAS A NEW SPIRITUAL FORCE. As bringing God near to men; exhibiting afresh his claims, and revealing himself. Every man who *sees God* thereby becomes a power on his fellows. Moses, in a surprising manner, saw God on Sinai; and with his vision there may be compared our Lord's vision on the Mount of Transfiguration.

V. EACH WAS A TEACHER. Precisely of that which man could not gain by any studies and inquiries of his own. Both were (1) moral teachers; (2) religious teachers; (3) teachers of a specific Divine truth; (4) each enabled, by the power of miracle, to attest their teaching claims.

VI. EACH CLAIMED A HEARING ON DIVINE AUTHORITY. Moses made it continually known that God sent him and God spake by him. Messiah made it fully known that he did not speak of himself, but the words which the Father gave him he gave forth to men. This claim, based on Divine authority, Stephen presses on the attention of the Sanhedrim, urging that it makes their rejection of Christ positively criminal.

VII. EACH WERE REJECTED BY THEIR OWN GENERATION. See ver. 35 and compare the rejection of Messiah.

Impress that the many-sided and abundant proofs that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour, bring his personal claims closely home to us, and make great indeed the guilt of our rejecting him. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"—R. T.

Vers. 55, 56.—*Visions of the risen Christ.* It is hardly to be doubted that St. Paul preserved the record of these incidents; and we may realize how such a cry from the persecuted Nazarene, as we have in the text, would fix itself in the thought and memory of one so religious and so impulsive as St. Paul. It would be most vividly recalled to mind when he too was smitten down with the glory on the Damascus road, and himself heard the voice of Jesus, the risen and exalted One. Evidently the thing that most impressed St. Paul was Stephen's firm conviction that the crucified Jesus was risen, living, exalted, glorified, Divine. However intensely St. Paul resisted this conviction at first, it had more power on him than he estimated. And the scene is a most impressive one. The howling mob; the reverend officials, borne away from all their proprieties by fanatical excitement; the young Pharisee, too aristocratic to take any actual part in carrying off the victim, or throwing the stones, helping to raise the excitement with stirring words; and amidst all the noise and the violence, the man of God, calm, rapt beyond present scenes, seeing the unseen, and uttering a last splendid testimony to the one truth he had laboured to declare. Say what men may of the Impostor of Nazareth, who was shamefully crucified, Stephen saw him living, and "standing on the right hand of God." We need not think that there was any "external spectacle;" the vision was that kind of internal vision men have had when in a state of ecstasy. The fact of the vision was "inferred partly, we may believe, from the rapt, fixed expression of the martyr's face, partly from the words that followed, interpreting that upward gaze." The vision may be treated as—

I. A COMFORT TO THE PERSECUTED ONE. Recall the promises of the Saviour's presence always with his people, but especially when they should be brought before kings and governors for his Name's sake. Even making due account of the excitement produced by the surroundings of martyrdom, and its power to raise a heroic spirit, it has never been found an easy thing to face torture and death. But the story of the

martyrs provides abundant illustration of the varied ways in which Christ has comforted his witnesses. Stephen was comforted by the vision in three ways. 1. It assured him that what he had testified was true. Christ was living and exalted. 2. It declared that he was not suffering alone. The Christ was in fullest sympathy with him. 3. And it encouraged him to full trust in all his Lord's promises of strength and grace for the enduring and final triumph over his foes. The vision seemed to say, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee."

II. A CONFIRMATION OF THE CHRISTIAN TRUTH. At different times different parts of the Christian truth have been the citadel or the redan round which the chief fighting has raged, and on which the issue of battle has depended. In the early Church the conflict was mainly over the question of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. Two things were seen to depend on this resurrection. 1. Our Lord's claim to *Messiahship*. 2. The *spiritual* character of our Lord's mission. If risen and exalted, his kingly authorities are declared to be no coarse earthly dominion; he is King of souls, Deliverer of sinners, the living One who saves.

III. A WITNESS AGAINST STEPHEN'S PERSECUTORS. And that the witness was effective is shown in its increasing their rage. A dying testimony that was more effective than anything he had spoken in life. But the hated name, spoken of as being at God's right hand in the glory, "let loose the tide of rage which awe had for a moment frozen, and with illegal tumult, councillors and bystanders, turned through sheer passion into a mob, swept him from the chamber with a rush, and hurried him for execution beyond the northern city gate."

The times have brought round again the most serious conflict over the truth of the Resurrection. Show the importance of Stephen's life-testimony to this fact, especially as being given when men would have refuted it if they could, and could if it had not been true. Show how the dying testimony sealed the witness of Stephen's life.—R. T.

Ver. 58.—*Our introduction to the greatest of apostles.* It is only casually mentioned that "the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul," and yet how much is declared in the brief sentence! It is our first sight of the zealous young Pharisee from Tarsus. It is at once an indication of his character and spirit. We see the impulsiveness that has taken up so violent an opposition to the Nazarene impostor and all his followers. If Saul cannot be allowed to throw the actual stones, seeing he was not one of the witnesses, he will do the next thing—he will hold the clothes of the men who have stripped themselves in order to do more efficiently their deadly work. It was the occasion on which Saul gained an impression which he never afterwards lost, and which resulted in what would surprise no one so much as it did himself, in leading him to take up and carry on that very witness and work for which the heroic Stephen died. The age of Saul at this time cannot be certainly known. We may assume that he was under thirty years old. Three points may receive consideration in the picture that our text presents to us.

I. SAUL SHARING BY HIS PRESENCE. He "was consenting unto Stephen's death." "He gave his voice against him." He watched over the clothes. He regarded the scene with satisfaction. A delusion sometimes possesses men that they cannot be guilty of a crime unless they took actual part in it. Saul had nobler moral sentiments. The approver is as guilty as the actor; for he also would have done the thing had opportunity served. But how searching and how serious becomes the consideration that, before God, we may be judged guilty on the ground of our approval and consent! With what limitations and qualifications must this point be pressed? St. Paul does not hesitate to take on himself the guilt of Stephen's death, though he never lifted a stone.

II. SAUL AVOIDING SHARING IN THE EXECUTION. This may be explained on one or other of the following grounds:—1. The law of the execution, which required the witnesses against the victim to effect and complete the death. 2. The position Saul occupied as one of the judges. He gave his vote, and it is never regarded as becoming in a judge to execute his own sentence. Whether Saul was a member of the actual Sanhedrim, or of some committee appointed to deal with these followers of Jesus of Nazareth, does not appear. 3. Aristocratic sentiments might keep Saul from actually engaging in the stoning. Nothing could free Saul from his share of the guilt of Stephen's death.

III. SAUL RECEIVING IMPRESSIONS AS AN ON-LOOKER. Endeavour to estimate his conflict of feeling. While actually watching, rage and hatred may have prevailed, but his mind was receiving its picture of the calm and heroic sufferer; and presently Saul lost sight of judges, witnesses, and crowds, and the vision on his soul alone was before him. He saw the saintly man fall asleep; he heard again those dying cries; he seemed to look through and see what Stephen saw, the Son of man glorified; and, strive how he would to blot out the vision, it was there; rush desperately into persecuting ways how he might, still the vision was there. Stephen, we may fairly say, awakened Saul to anxiety, and prepared the way for that vision of Christ which bowed down Saul's pride and won him to penitence, to faith, and to service. Better than the fable of the phoenix is the truth of Saul. Out of Stephen's death he sprang to a nobler, longer life of witness for the living Christ than Stephen could have lived. Death is often found the way, and the only way, to life. "Dying, and behold we live."—R. T.

Vers. 59, 60.—Noble dying cries. Some account may be given of the mode of securing death by stoning. The practice is first heard of in the deserts of stony Arabia, this mode having been suggested probably by the abundance of stones, and the fatal effect with which they were often employed in broils among the people. Originally the people merely pelted their victim, but something like form and rule were subsequently introduced. A crier marched before the man appointed to die, proclaiming his offence. He was taken outside the town. The witnesses against him were required to cast the first stones. But the victim was usually placed on an elevation, and thrown down from this, before he was crushed with the stones flung upon him. For full details, see Kitto's 'Bibl. Illus.,' viii. 63. It was the mode of execution usual for the crimes of blasphemy and idolatry (see Dent. xiii. 9, 10; xvii. 5—7). Stephen's dying cries should be compared with those of our Lord Jesus Christ, in order that the measures in which Stephen caught the Christly spirit may be realized.

I. THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST TO HIS SPIRIT MADE STEPHEN DEAD TO THE PRESENCE OF HIS FOES. In this we learn the secret of our elevation above the world, care, suffering, or trouble. It lies in our being so full of "Christ and things Divine" as to have no room for them. Our hearts may be so full of God's presence, and so restful in the assurance of his acceptance and smile, that we may say, "None of these things move me," "If God be for us, who can be against us?" One of the greatest practical endeavours of life should be to bring and to keep Christ closely near to heart and thought. If outward circumstances reach to such an extremity as in the case of Stephen, we shall then say with him, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

II. TO HIM WHO WAS SO NEAR, STEPHEN PRAYED FOR HIMSELF. Observe that: 1. His prayer indicates submissive acceptance of the fact that he must die. He does not ask for any bodily deliverance, any miracle-working for his personal release. Compare in this our Lord's submission when his life came to its close. 2. His prayer indicates superiority to bodily suffering. There is no petition for relief from pain or even for speedy release. Exactly what was God's will for him he would bear right through. Compare our Lord's triumph in Gethsemane, and his going forth to bodily sufferings calm and trustful. Stephen fulfilled his Lord's words, that his disciples should drink of the "cup" that he drank of. 3. And his prayer indicates supreme concern, but absolute confidence concerning his soul and his future. There is no tone of questioning; with full faith in the Lord Jesus, he commends his spirit to him—a last and unquestioning testimony to his faith in the *living, spiritual* Christ.

III. TO HIM IN WHOM HE HAD SUCH CONFIDENCE HE PRAYED FOR HIS FOES. Compare our Lord's words, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." In the older days of political execution by the axe, the headsman used to kneel and ask the forgiveness of the victim, before proceeding to place his head upon the block. Stephen knew how blinded by prejudice and false notions of religion his persecutors were, and he gives a beautiful illustration of heavenly, Divine charity in thus pleading for his very murderers. One point should not be lost sight of. Even in this last word of the noble man he asserted his characteristic truth once more. The Lord Jesus is living, and the exalted Saviour, for he controls the charging and the punishing of sin. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"—an unmeaning prayer if he had not fully believed that Jesus had power on earth to deal with, to punish, and to forgive sin.

Close by showing the wondrous calmness and the exquisite tenderness of the words of the narrative, "He fell asleep." We hear the howlings of the people, the whirr and smash of the stones, but amid it all and "in the arms of Jesus," the saint and hero and martyr softly "falls asleep"—asleep to earth, waking to heaven and peace and the eternal smile of the living Christ, for whose sake he died.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ver. 1.—*There arose on that day for at that time there was, A.V.; in for at, A.V.* Saul was consenting to his death. St. Paul's repeated reference to this sad episode in his life is very touching (see ch. xxii. 20; 1 Cor. xv. 9; 1 Tim. i. 13). (For the word *συνηδοκείν*, to consent, see ch. xxii. 20; Luke xi. 48; Rom. i. 32; 1 Cor. vii. 12.) *Arose on that day.* The phrase is manifestly the Hebrew one, *ביום ההוא*, so constantly used in Isaiah and the other prophets, not of a single day, but of a longer or shorter time, and means, as the A.V. has it, "at that time," not the particular Tuesday or Wednesday on which Stephen was killed. If St. Luke had meant to state that the persecution set in the very day on which Stephen was stoned, he would have expressed it much more pointedly, and used a different word from *ἐγένετο*. It is otherwise with ch. ii. 41 and Luke xvii. 31, where the context defines the meaning, and confines it to a specified day; just as the equivalent Hebrew phrase is as commonly applied to a literal day as to a time or period. The context shows which is the sense in which it is used. Here the thing spoken of, the persecution, did not take place on a day. It lasted many days. Therefore *ἡμέρα* means here "time." They were all scattered. Just as the wind blows the seed to a distance to fructify in different places. Except the apostles. They, like faithful watchmen, remained at their post, to confirm the souls of those disciples who for one reason or another were unable to flee (for of course the word *all* must not be pressed strictly), and to exhort them to continue in the faith, as St. Paul did later at Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (ch. xiv. 22), and to keep up the nucleus of the Church in the metropolis of Christendom.

Ver. 2.—*Buried for carried to his burial* (the last three words in italics), A.V. Devout man; *ἀνδρες εὐλαβεῖς*. This word is applied to Simeon (Luke ii. 25), and to the Jews who were assembled at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (ch. ii. 5), and, according to the R.T., to Ananias (ch. xxii. 12); but occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. It is not certain, therefore, that these men were Christians, though they might be. If not, they were pious Jews,

men who feared God, and still loved Stephen as being himself a devout Jew though he was a disciple. Buried. *Συνγκοιῶ* occurs only here in the New Testament; but its common use for carrying corn to a barn or granary seems to indicate that "carrying to his burial" of the A.V. is the most exact rendering. The word is said also to be applied to the acts preparatory to burial—closing the eyes, washing, anointing the body, and so on; but this meaning is less certain than that of "carrying."

Ver. 3.—*But for as for, A.V.; laid waste for he made havoc of, A.V.* From the dispersion of the disciples will flow the narrative in this present chapter. It is therefore mentioned first. From the persecution of Saul will flow the narrative in ch. ix. and to the end of the book. Stephen's burial completes the preceding narrative.

Ver. 4.—*They therefore for therefore they, A.V.; about for everywhere, A.V.* Went about; i.e. from place to place, and wherever they went they preached the Word. *Διέρχουμαι* here is used in the same sense as in ver. 40, and in ch. x. 38; xvii. 23; xx. 25, and elsewhere.

Ver. 5.—*And for then, A.V.; proclaimed unto them the Christ for preached Christ unto them, A.V.* Philip; the deacon and evangelist (ch. vi. 7; xxi. 8), not the apostle. As regards Samaria, it is always used in the New Testament of the country, not of the city, which at this time was called Sebaste, from *Σεβαστός*, i.e. Augustus Cæsar (see ch. xxv. 21, 26, etc.; John iv. 5; and Josephus, 'Ant. Jud.,' xv. vii. 9). Whether, therefore, we read with the T.R. *πόλιν*, or with the R.T. *τὴν πόλιν*, we must understand Samaria to mean the country, and probably the city to be the capital, Sebaste. Alford, however, with many others, thinks that Sychem is meant, as in John iv. 5.

Ver. 6.—*The multitudes gave heed with one accord for the people with one accord gave heed, A.V.; the for those (things), A.V. that were spoken by Philip for which Philip spake, A.V.; when they heard and saw the signs for hearing and seeing the miracles, A.V.* Note St. Luke's favourite word, with one accord (above, ch. ii. 1, note).

Ver. 7.—*From many of those which had unclean spirits, they came out crying with a*

loud voice for unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them, A.V.; that were palsied for taken with palsies, A.V. From many of those, etc. The R.T. is represented by the margin, but it is nonsense. The different rendering depends upon whether πνεύματα ἀκάθαρα is taken as the subject to ἐξήρχετο, or as the object after ἔχοντα. In one case, πνεύματα or αὐτά must be understood after ἐχόντων, as in the A.V., which inserts *with them* in italics; in the other, the same word must be understood before ἐξήρχετο, as in the R.V., which inserts *they*. The latter construction seems right, but the sense is the same, and the A.V. is much the neatest rendering. That were palsied. The purpose and effect of miracles is here clearly shown, to attract attention, and to evidence to the hearers and seers that the workers of miracles are God's messengers, and that the Word which they preach is God's Word.

Ver. 8.—*Much for great*, A.V. and T.R. Much joy. The joy was caused partly by the healing of their sick, and partly by the glad tidings of the gospel of peace (comp. Matt. xiii. 20; 1 Pet. i. 8).

Ver. 9.—*Simon by name for called Simon*, A.V.; *the city for the same city*, A.V.; *amazed for bewitched*, A.V. (here and in ver. 13). Amazed. In Luke xxiv. 22 the same word (ἐξίστημι) is rendered "made us astonished" in the A.V.; and in ch. ii. 7, 12, and elsewhere, in an intransitive sense, "were amazed." It has also the meaning of "being out of one's mind," or "beside one's self" (Mark iii. 21; 2 Cor. v. 13), but never that of "bewitching" or "being bewitched." As regards Simon, commonly surnamed Magus, from his magic arts, it is doubtful whether he is the same Simon as is mentioned by Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' xx. vii. 2) as being employed by Felix the Procurator of Judæa, in the reign of Claudius (ch. xxiii. 25), to bewitch Drusilla into forsaking her husband, King Azizus, and marrying him, which she did (ch. xxiv. 24). The doubt arises from Josephus stating that Simon to be a Cypriot (Κύπριον γένος), whereas Justin Martyr says of Simon Magus that he was ἀπὸ κάμης λεγομένης Γίττων, a native of Gitton, or Githon, a village of Samaria. It has been thought that Gitton may be a mistake of Justin's for Citium, in Cyprus (Farrar's 'Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. pp. 260, 352; Alford, etc.). The after history of Simon Magus is full of fable. He is spoken of by Irenæus and other early writers as the inventor or founder of heresy. (For a list of authorities concerning Simon, see Farrar's 'Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. p. 260, note; Alford, i. 6; 'Bible Dictionary'; and a good article in 'Dict. of Biog. and Mythol.')

Ver. 10.—*That power of God which is*

called Great for the great power of God, A.V. and T.R. That power of God, etc. The revised text inserts καλομένη before μεγάλη. Origen says of Simon that his disciples, the Simonians, called him "The Power of God." ('Contra Cels.,' lib. v. 62, where see Delarue's note). According to Tertullian ('De Anima'), he gave himself out as the supreme Father, with other blasphemies. According to St. Jerome on Matt. xxiv. 5, he speaks of himself in different writings as the Word of God, as the Paraclete, the Almighty, the Fulness of God.

Ver. 11.—*They gave heed to him for to him they had regard*, A.V.; *amazed for bewitched*, A.V.; *his sorceries for sorceries*, A.V.

Ver. 12.—*Good tidings for the things*, A.V. and T.R.

Ver. 13.—*And for then*, A.V.; *also himself believed for himself believed also*, A.V.; *being baptized for when he was baptized*, A.V.; *beholding signs and great miracles wrought, he was amazed for wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done*. Continued with (ἦν προκαρτέρων); see ch. i. 14; iii. 46; vi. 4; x. 7. St. Paul uses the word in Rom. xii. 12; xiii. 6; Col. iv. 2; and the substantive formed from it (προκαρτέρις) once, Eph. vi. 18. Elsewhere in the New Testament it occurs only in Mark iii. 9. But it is found in Hist. of Sus. 6. Amazed (see note on ver. 9). In Simon we have the first example of one who, having been baptized into Jesus Christ, lived to disgrace and corrupt the faith which he professed. He was an instance of the tares sown among the wheat, and of the seed which sprang up quickly being as quickly destroyed. He is an instance also of the truth of our Lord's saying, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Ver. 14.—*The apostles* (see ver. 1). They sent unto them Peter and John. The selection of these two chief apostles shows the great importance attached to the conversion of the Samaritans. The joint act of the college of apostles in sending them demonstrates that Peter was not a pope, but a brother apostle, albeit their primate; and that the government of the Church was in the apostolate, not in one of the number.

Ver. 15.—*That they might receive the Holy Ghost*. Why was it needful that two apostles should come down to Samaria and pray, with laying on of hands, for the newly baptized that they might receive the Holy Ghost? There is no mention of such prayer or such imposition of hands in the case of the first three thousand who were baptized. They were told by St. Peter, "Be baptized every one of you, . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (ch. ii. 38), and they were baptized, and doubtless did receive the Holy Ghost. Neither is there

any mention of such things in the case of the subsequent thousands who were baptized at Jerusalem on the apostles' preaching. Why, then, was it so in Samaria? To answer this question, we must observe the difference in the circumstances. The baptisms at Jerusalem were performed by the apostles themselves. The Holy Ghost was given upon their promise and assurance. But in Samaria the preaching and the baptizing were done by the scattered disciples. There was a danger of many independent bodies springing up, owing no allegiance to the apostles, and cemented by no bonds to the mother Church. But Christ's Church was to be one—many members, but one body. The apostolate was to be the governing power of the whole Church, by the will and ordinance of Christ. Hence there was a manifest reason why, when the gospel spread beyond Judæa, these visible spiritual gifts should be given only through the laying on of the apostles' hands, and by the intervention of their prayers. This had a manifest and striking influence in marking and preserving the unity of the Church, and in marking and maintaining the sovereignty of the apostolic rule. For precisely the same reason has the Catholic and Apostolic Church in all ages (ch. xix. 5, 6; Heb. vi. 2) maintained the rite of confirmation, "after the example of the holy apostles." Besides the other great benefits connected with it, its influence in binding up in the unity of the Church the numerous parishes of the diocese, instead of letting them become independent congregations, is very great. Observe, too, how prayer and the laying on of hands are tied together. Neither is valid without the other. In this case, as at Pentecost, the extraordinary gift of the Holy Ghost was conferred. In confirmation, now that miracles have ceased, it is the ordinary and invisible grace of the Holy Spirit that is to be looked for.

Ver. 16.—*Had been for were*, A.V.; *into for in*, A.V. Into the name. *In* seems preferable (comp. Matt. x. 41, 42). The use of the prepositions in the New Testament is much influenced by the Hebrew, through the language of the LXX. As regards baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus, here and ver. 39, T.B.; ch. x. 48; xix. 5, we are not to suppose that any other formula was used than that prescribed by our Lord (Matt. xxviii. 19). But as baptism was preceded by a confession of faith similar to that in our own Baptismal Service, so it was a true description to speak of baptism as being in the Name of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 18.—*Now for and*, A.V.; *the laying for laying*, A.V.

Ver. 19.—*My hands for hands*, A.V.

Would to God that spiritual powers in the Church had never been prostituted to base purposes of worldly gain, and that all the servants of Christ had shown themselves as superior to "filthy lucre" as Peter and Elisha were! But the particular offence called *simony* has but a very faint analogy to the act of Simon.

Ver. 20.—*Silver for money*, A.V.; *to obtain the gift of God for that the gift of God may be purchased*, A.V. (rightly, *κράσθαι* is the middle voice). *Silver*. This is a change of very doubtful necessity; *ἀργύριον*, like the French *argent*, is frequently used for "money" generally, without any reference to the particular metal of which it is made. Sometimes, indeed, it is used in opposition to "gold," as ch. iii. 6 and xx. 33, and then it is properly rendered "silver." Here the Revisers' reason, doubtless, was to reserve "money" as the rendering of *χρήματα* (vers. 13, 20). St. Peter's answer is remarkable, not only for the warmth with which he repudiates the proffered bribe, but also for the jealous humility with which he affirms that the gifts of the Spirit were not his to give, but were the gift of God (see ch. iii. 12-16).

Ver. 21.—*Before God for in the sight of God*, A.V. Thou hast neither part nor lot. The "covetous shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10; comp. Ps. x. 3; Luke xvi. 14; 1 Tim. iii. 3). The phrase, *ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦτῳ*, rendered in this matter, seems to be more fitly rendered in the margin, "in this Word." i.e. the Word of life, the Word of salvation, which we preach (see ch. v. 20; x. 36; xiii. 26).

Ver. 22.—*The Lord for God*, A.V. and T.R.; *thy for thine*, A.V.; *shall for may*, A.V. Repent. The terrible words, "Thy money perish with thee," had not expressed Peter's wish for his destruction. But they were the wounds of a friend speaking sharp things to pierce, if possible, a callous conscience. In the hope that that conscience had been pierced, he now urges repentance. And yet still, dealing skilfully with so bad a case, he speaks of the forgiveness doubtfully, "if perhaps." The sin was a very grievous one; the wound must not be healed too hastily. "There is a sin unto death."

Ver. 23.—*See for perceive*, A.V. In the gall of bitterness, etc. The passage from which both this expression and the similar one in Heb. xii. 15 are taken is manifestly Deut. xxix. 18, where the Greek of the LXX. has, *δίχα ἕως φθύσσει ἐν χολῇ καὶ πικρίᾳ*. The context there also shows conclusively that the "gall and bitterness" ("wormwood," A.V.) of which Moses speaks is the spirit of idolatry or defection from God springing up in some professing member of the Church, and defiling and corrupting others, as it is expounded in Heb. xii. 15, 16. This, as St.

Peter saw, was exactly the case with Simon, whose heart was not straight with God, but "had turned away from him," as it is said in Deuteronomy. Though baptized, he was still an idolater in heart, and likely to trouble many. "The gall of bitterness" the same as "gall and wormwood," or bitterness." "Gall," or "bile," is in classical Greek and other languages a synonym for "bitterness," especially in a figurative sense (see Lam. iii. 15, 19—*πυπλά και χολή*, LXX.). The uncommon phrase, the bond of iniquity, seems to be borrowed from Isa. lviii. 6, where the LXX. have the same words, *λθε πάντα σύνδεσμον ἀδικίας*, "loose the bands of wickedness." A.V. Simon was still bound in these bands.

Ver. 24.—*And Simon answered for then answered Simon, A.V. : for me to the Lord for to the Lord for me, A.V. ; the for these, A.V. Pray ye, etc. ;* addressed to both Peter and John, who were acting together, and whose prayers had been seen to be effectual (ver. 15) in procuring the gift of the Holy Ghost. In like manner, Pharaoh, under the influence of terror at God's judgments, had asked again and again for the prayers of Moses and Aaron (Exod. viii. 8, 28; ix. 27, 28; x. 16, 17, etc.). But in neither case was this an evidence of true conversion of heart.

Ver. 25.—*They therefore for and they, A.V. ; spoken for preached, A.V. ; to many for in many, A.V.*

Ver. 26.—*But an angel for and the angel, A.V. ; the same is for which is, A.V.* An angel. "The angel," as in A.V., is right, just as *ἄγγελος Κυρίου* (Matt. xxi. 9; xxiii. 39; Luke xix. 38, etc.) and *מַלְאָךְ אֱלֹהִים* in Hebrew mean "the Name of the Lord," not "a Name" (see ch. v. 19; vii. 31, notes). The south, meaning that part of Judæa which was called "the south country;" Hebrew *צָפְרָן* (Gen. xx. 1; xxiv. 62; etc.). This is generally rendered in the LXX. by *προς λιβα* or *προς νότον*. But in 1 Sam. xx. 41, in Symmachus, *μεσημβρία* stands as the rendering of *צָפְרָן*. As regards the words, the same is desert, it is observable that in Numb. xxi. 1 and Dent. xxxiv. 3 *ἐρημος* is the LXX. rendering of *צָפְרָן*, and that part of the country is called "the wilderness of Judæa." The words of the angel, therefore, mean, not that Gaza is desert, nor that the road itself is desert, but that the country to which he was directing Philip's journey was part of that known as the desert; *αὐτή* does not refer to *ὁδός* or to *Γάζα*, but to *γῶρα*, understood as contained in *ἐρημος*. The meaning of the whole sentence I take to be as follows:—"Take thy journey in [or, 'by'] the south [comp. Luke xv. 14; ch. v. 15; xi. 1; xiii. 1] as far as [*ἐπί*, 'notans locum vel terminum ad quem' (Schleusner)]

the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza, where the country is desert." Philip was to proceed from Samaria along the south country till he came to where the Jerusalem road met his road. That district, he is reminded, was desert, part, *i.e.*, of the desert of Judæa. The spot was probably selected for that very reason, as affording the privacy necessary for the eunuch to read in his chariot, and for Philip to join him and expound the Word of God to him. Chrysostom (followed by others) takes *κατὰ μεσημβρίαν* in the sense of "at noonday in the most violent heat," though he also renders it "southwards" (Hom., xix.).

Ver. 27.—*Was over for had the charge of, A.V. ; who for and, A.V.* Candace. According to Pliny, the queens of Ethiopia, who reigned at Meroe, were so named through a long course of years ('Nat. Hist.,' vi. 35—37). Dion Cassius speaks of a warlike Queen of Ethiopia of that name, who was brought to terms by Caius Petronius in the year A.U.C. 732 (liv. 5, 4). Eusebius ('Ecol. Hist.,' lib. ii. cap. i.) says that the custom still continued in his day of the Ethiopians being governed by a queen. Had come to Jerusalem, etc. He was doubtless a proselyte of the gate. Eusebius, in the place above cited, speaks of him as the first Gentile convert, and as the firstfruits of the faithful in the whole world. He adds, as Irenæus before him had hinted (iii. xii. 8), that he is reported to have preached the gospel to the Ethiopians, by which the prophecy of Ps. lxxviii. 31 was fulfilled. Later traditions speak of Candace as baptized by him.

Ver. 28.—*And he was for was, A.V. ; was reading for read, A.V. ; Isaiah for Esaias, A.V.*, the Hebrew for the Greek form. The diffusion of the Holy Scriptures among the Gentiles by means of the Jewish dispersion and the facility given to Gentiles for reading the Scriptures by their translation into Greek at Alexandria, and by the universal use of the Greek language through the conquests of Alexander the Great, are striking instances of the providence of God working all things after the counsel of his own will.

Ver. 29.—*And for then, A.V.*

Ver. 30.—*Ran for ran thither, A.V. ; reading Isaiah the prophet for read the prophet Esaias, A.V. and T.R.* Heard him. He was reading aloud. In Hebrew, the word for "to read" (*קָרָא*) means "to call," "to proclaim aloud." Hence the *keri*, that which is read, as distinguished from the *cethib*, that which is written. Reading Isaiah the prophet. The same providence which sent Philip to meet him in the desert doubtless directed his reading to the fifty-third chapter of the great evangelical prophet.

Ver. 31.—*One shall for man should, A.V.*

and T.R.; *he besought Philip to come up and sit with him for he desired Philip that he would*, etc., A.V. He besought, etc. The humility and thirst for instruction of this great courtier are very remarkable, and the instance of the joint use of the written Word and the living teacher is noteworthy.

Ver. 32.—*Now the place for the place, A.V.; was reading for read, A.V.; as a lamb . . . is dumb for like a lamb dumb, A.V.; he openeth not for opened he not, A.V.* As a lamb . . . is dumb. The A.V. of this clause seems to me preferable as a rendering of the Greek, though the Hebrew has חָמֵס, "is dumb." But this may be rendered "which is dumb." As regards the word περιόχῃ, rendered *place*, and considered as the antecedent to which, the use of it by Cicero (*Ad Attic.*, xiii. 25) for a whole paragraph, and the employment in the Syriac Version of this passage of the technical word which denotes a "section" or "paragraph," and the Vulgate rendering, *Locus* . . . *quem* (Schleusener), as well as the etymology of the word, which means "a circuit," or "circumference," within which something is contained—all strongly point to the rendering in the text. Meyer, however, and others make τῆς γραφῆς the antecedent to ἦν, and construe, "The contents of the Scripture which he was reading," and refer to 1 Pet. ii. 6.

Ver. 33.—*His generation who shall declare for and who shall declare his generation? A.V. and T.R.* The preceding quotation is taken verbatim from the LXX., which, however, varies somewhat from the Hebrew. In this verse, for the Hebrew as rendered in the A.V., "He was taken from prison and from judgment," the LXX. has, "In his humiliation his judgment was taken away," having evidently read in their copy חַסְדֵּי שִׁפְחוֹתָי, or perhaps חַסְדֵּי שִׁפְחוֹתָי, "Through [or, 'in'] his oppression [humiliation] his judgment was taken away." Mr. Cheyne translates the Hebrew, "Through oppression and through a judgment [sentence] he was taken away [to death]." For the Hebrew of the A.V., "He was out off out of the land of the living," the LXX. has, "His life is taken from the earth," where they must have read חַיֵּי, "his life," as the subject of the verb, instead of חַיִּים, the living, taken in construction with אֶרֶץ, the earth. The differences, however, are not material in regard to the general meaning of the passage. His generation who shall declare? The explanation of this difficult expression belongs to a commentary on Isaiah. Here it must suffice to say that the explanation most in accordance with the meaning of the Hebrew words (חַסְדֵּי שִׁפְחוֹתָי and חַיֵּי), with the context, and with the turn of thought in Isa. xxxviii. 10—12 and Jer. xl. 19, is that

given in the 'Speaker's Commentary': "Who will consider, give serious thought to, his life or age, seeing it is so prematurely cut off?" which is merely another way of saying that Messiah should "be cut off" (Dan. ix. 26) "from the land of the living, that his Name be no more remembered" (Jeremiah, as above). It was the frustration of this hope of Jesus being forgotten in consequence of his death that so troubled the Sanhedrim (ch. v. 28).

Ver. 34.—*Other for other man, A.V.* The eunuch's intelligent question gave Philip exactly the opening he required for preaching to him Jesus, the Messiah of whom all the prophets spake by the Holy Ghost (1 Pet. i. 10, 11).

Ver. 35.—*And for then, A.V.; beginning from this Scripture for began at the same Scripture, A.V.; preached for and preached, A.V.*

Ver. 36.—*The way for their way, A.V.; saith for said, A.V.; behold for see, A.V.* Here is water. "When we were at Tell-el-Hasy, and saw the water standing along the bottom of the adjacent wady, we could not but remark the coincidence of several circumstances with the account of the eunuch's baptism. This water is on the most direct road from Beit Jibrin (Eleutheropolis) to Gaza, on the most southern road from Jerusalem, and in the midst of a country now 'desert,' i.e. without villages or fixed habitations. There is no other similar water on this road" (Robinson, 'Bibl. Res.', vol. ii. p. 345). There were three roads from Jerusalem to Gaza, of which the one above described still exists, "and actually passes through the desert" (ibid. p. 514). What doth hinder me to be baptized? This question clearly shows that the doctrine of baptism had formed part of Philip's preaching, as it had of Peter (ch. i. 38).

Ver. 37.—The whole of ver. 37 of the A.V. is omitted in the R.T., on the authority of the best existing manuscripts. But on the other hand, Irenæus, in the third book against Heresies, ch. xii. 8, distinctly quotes a portion of this verse. The eunuch, he says, when he asked to be baptized said, Πιστεύω τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν; and Cyprian, in his third book of Testimonies, xliii., quotes the other part of the verse. In proof of the thesis that "whoever believes may be immediately baptized," he says, "In the Acts of the Apostles [when the eunuch said], Behold water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip answered, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." So that in the second and third centuries, long anterior to the oldest existing manuscripts, this entire verse must have been found in the codices both of the Greek and Latin Churches.

Ver. 38.—*Both went down for went down both, A.V.* Nothing can be more graphic than the simple narrative of this interesting and important baptism. Surely Luke must have heard it from Philip's own mouth (see ch. xxi. 8—10).

Ver. 39.—*Came up for were come up, A.V.; and the eunuch for that the eunuch, A.V.; for he went for and he went, A.V.* The eunuch made no attempt to follow Philip, but went on his road to Egypt, his whole heart filled with the new joy of Christ's salvation.

Ver. 40.—*He preached the gospel to all the cities for he preached in all the cities, A.V.* The sudden rapture of Philip by the Spirit,

and his transportation to Azotus, or Ashdod, reminds us forcibly of 1 Kings xviii. 12, and of the successive journeys of Elijah just prior to his translation. In Philip's case we may suppose a kind of trance, which was not ended till he found himself at Azotus. Passing through. For διέρχομαι (there rendered "went about"), see ver. 4, note. To Cæsarea; where we find him domiciled (ch. xxi. 8). Such coincidences, appearing in the narrative without any explanation, are strong marks of truth. "He journeyed northward from Ashdod, perhaps through Ekron, Ramah, Joppa, and the plain of Sharon" (Meyer).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—8.—*The fruits of persecution.* Persecution is Satan's instrument for checking and, if possible, destroying the truth of God. Our Saviour reminds us, in the sermon on the mount, how the prophets, who spake to the people in the Name of God, had been persecuted of old; and foretold how the prophets and wise men and scribes whom he would send should, in like manner, be scourged and persecuted, killed and crucified. And the history of the Church, from the first imprisonment of the apostles related in ch. iv. down to the present day, shows the truth of the prediction. Some of the springs and causes of persecution were noted in the homiletics on ch. iv. 1—31. Our attention shall now be turned to the fruits of persecution.

I. THE FIRST EFFECT OF THE PERSECUTION THAT AROSE UPON THE DEATH OF STEPHEN WAS THE DISPERSION OF THE DISCIPLES. In accordance with the Lord's directions (Matt. x. 23), they fled, to save their lives, from the city of Jerusalem to the neighbouring cities of Judæa and Samaria. But wherever they went *they preached the Word*. Thus the immediate effect of the persecution raised at Jerusalem for the extirpation of the faith of Jesus Christ was that that faith was carried into cities and districts and countries where it might never have been heard of but for the persecutions. Samaria heard the gospel; it was deposited in the heart of the eunuch for dissemination in Ethiopia. From Azotus to Cæsarea it was proclaimed aloud. It passed on to Phœnicia and Cyprus and Antioch. It took deep root in Antioch, and was passed on from thence through all Asia and on into Europe.

II. ANOTHER EFFECT OF THE PERSECUTION WAS THE BREAKING DOWN OF OPPOSING BARRIERS OF HABIT, OPINION, AND PREJUDICE. If the rulers and priests, the scribes and Pharisees, had accepted the gospel, it might have been a very hard matter to separate it from circumcision and from the temple and from exclusive Judaism. It might have been very long before Jewish Christians would have turned in a spirit of love and brotherhood to their Samaritan neighbours, or sent a messenger to Ethiopia, or planted the first community who called themselves Christians in the great heathen city of Antioch. Endless scruples, hesitations, difficulties, would have barred the way. But persecution quickened with a marvellous impulse the logic of reason and benevolence, ay, and of faith too. By the force of circumstances, the persecuted disciples, expelled from country and home by their own flesh and blood, found themselves drawn into the closest bonds with those who were not Jews, and as it were compelled to tell them of the love of Jesus, and then to feel that that love made them both one. It would have taken generations, perhaps, to do what persecution did in a day. Persecution cut the Gordian knot which the fingers of human reason would, perhaps, never have untied; and the great persecutor himself might never have become the great chief and prince that he was in the Church of the Gentiles, had it not been for the part that he had played in persecuting it in times past.

III. NOR MUST WE OVERLOOK THE INFLUENCE OF PERSECUTION, WHEN ENDURED IN THE TRUE MARTYR'S SPIRIT, IN DEEPENING AND HEIGHTENING THE FAITH, THE

ZEAL, AND THE LOVE OF THE DISCIPLE. The fire of the apiritual life in the soul of the saint burns brightest in the darkest hours of earthly tribulation. The love of Christ, the hope of glory, the preciousness of the gospel, are never, perhaps, felt in their living power so fully as when the lights and fires of earthly joy and comforts are extinguished. Then, in the presence, so to speak, of Christ's unveiled power and glory, charity and boldness, zeal and self-sacrifice, are at their highest pitch, and the making known to others the glad tidings of great joy seems to be the only thing worth living for. So that the fruit of persecution is to be seen in a noble army of martyrs and confessors, qualified to the very highest extent, and eager in the very highest degree, to preach far and wide the unsearchable riches of Christ, and in extraordinary accessions to the numbers of the persecuted Church.

IV. OTHER FRUITS OF PERSECUTION, SUCH AS EXHIBITING TO THE EYES OF THE WORLD THE REALITY OF THAT RELIGION WHICH THEY DESPISE, HOLDING UP TO ITS ADMIRATION THE TRUE CHARACTERS OF THOSE WHOM IT PERSECUTES, AND SHOWING THE HOPELESSNESS OF STAMPING OUT THAT FIRE WHICH IS FED FROM THE LIVE COALS OF GOD'S ALTAR IN HEAVEN, AND MANY MORE, IT WOULD BE EASY TO ENUMERATE. But these must suffice to teach us that the malice of Satan is no match for the power of God; but that the Church will eventually shine forth in all the brighter beauty of holiness for the efforts that have been made for her disfigurement and utter overthrow.

Vers. 3—24. — *The first heretic.* The appearance of Simon Magus in the list of the first converts to the faith, and his enrolment among the baptized members of the Church, must not be overlooked or passed hastily by, if we would profit by the exhaustive teaching supplied by the Acts of the Apostles for the use of the Church in all ages. When the student of Church history begins his studies expecting to find a record of faith and holiness, and to trace the triumphant victories of truth over falsehood through a succession of ages, and to feast his mind with the wise words and the righteous works of a succession of saints, he is soon disappointed and pained to find that Church history brings him into contact with some of the worst phases of human nature. The human mind never shows to greater disadvantage than when its contact with Divine truth stirs up all the foul sediment at the bottom of it, and suggests forms of deceit and duplicity, and varieties of impurity and dishonesty, and specialities of baseness and selfishness, which could have had no existence but for such contact with what is spiritual and heavenly. We might have been prepared for the rejection of truth by the children of the wicked one, and even for those acts of hatred and violence by which unbelief seeks to put out the light of truth. Apostles in prison, and Stephen lying lifeless on the ground, and a Sanhedrim of priests and scribes and elders solemnly forbidding the preaching of the gospel, are events that we might have anticipated, and which, though they shock, do not so much surprise us. But a reception of the truth of the gospel going so far as to lead the receiver to holy baptism, and yet immediately allied with sordid motives, and coexisting with imposture and sorcery, and issuing in a life devoted to the depravation of the gospel and to the hindering of men's salvation, is an unexpected and a perplexing phenomenon. And yet it is the history of most heresies. Even in those days when the profession of the faith of Christ subjected men to persecution, and when the Christian body was a comparatively small one with a strongly defined character of purity and holiness, we find men joining the Church's ranks only to pollute them, and then to separate themselves and to found some accursed heresy. Either the motive was vile from the first, or the restraints imposed by Christianity were found too severe for the half-converted heart, and the heresy was framed to reconcile the claims of the reason which was convinced with those of the passions which refused to be subdued. Simon appears to have been chiefly attracted and overawed by the miracles which he saw wrought in the Name of Christ. It then occurred to him that he might pursue his old career of sorcery more successfully than ever if he could obtain some partnership in the thaumaturgy which had astonished him. He anticipated richer harvests of gain as a Christian conferring spiritual powers by the laying on of hands than as a magician amazing men, by his sorceries. And so he offered Peter money. The frothy levity of his nature was shown as much by his terror at Peter's rebuke as it had been by

his offer of a bribe to the apostle. And this rapid succession of sorcery, belief, baptism, simony, confusion, was the sure index of a heart still held fast by the bonds of iniquity, and the natural prelude to a life of base cunning, using holy things for base purposes of unholy gain. The career of Simon, as of many of the early heretics whom the Fathers denounce with such terrible severity, seems to leave us this lesson—that contact with holy things, if it does not convert, hardens the heart; that the light of Christ, if it does not purify the soul, plunges it into deeper darkness; and that familiarity with spiritual powers, which does not subdue and sanctify, has a tendency to stimulate the intelligence only to give it access into lower depths of intellectual wickedness and more deadly sin.

Vers. 25—40.—*The Word written preparing the way for the Word preached.* The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch is a great text on missionary work. It illustrates with singular force and clearness the double need of the Bible and the preacher to bring men to the knowledge of Christ crucified. Without the evangelist to teach him, this seeker after truth might long have groped in vain after the meaning of the prophet; and if his mind had not been exercised by musings on the prophet, the evangelist would neither have had the opportunity to teach nor would his teaching have had such success. It was the concurrence of the two that brought this illustrious convert within the gates of the city of God. Hence the conclusion that the written Word and the preached Word are concurrent factors in the conversion of men to God; that both are necessary, and that neither of them can safely be dispensed with. The written Word, being "given by inspiration of God," is, as far as it goes, perfect and infallible, and yet it is not of itself sufficient. The preached Word, albeit far inferior, as being liable to error, imperfect and fallible, is yet necessary as the complement of the testimony of Scripture. The written Word stands immovable, the touchstone of truth, the standard of doctrine, the referee in doubt, the pattern and model, the crucible of error, the court of final appeal in all controversies of faith. The preached Word varied, modified, by circumstances of time and place, drawing its colouring, its clothing, its fashion, from its immediate surroundings, presents the eternal truth in the garb most suited to the wants and capacities of those with whom it deals. But in doing this it is liable to err. Then the sole appeal is to the written Word of God. All teaching not in accordance with it, however venerable for age and for the authority by which it is supported, must be mercilessly cut off. Blessed is that Church whose doctors explain but never darken the revelations of Holy Scripture. Blessed are the people whose teachers guide them into the meaning of Holy Scripture, but never turn them from it. Happy is that disciple whose mind, being deeply imbued with the truths of the Word of God, is aided by a faithful evangelist to adjust those truths in their true proportion and relation to each other, and to fill up their interstices with harmonious and homogeneous materials. As regards missionary work, the lesson is, sow the Bible broadcast to prepare the way for the foot of the missionary. Let the version of the Holy Scriptures given to each nation in his own tongue be to the modern world what the version of the LXX. was to the old; so that the evangelist may find the ground already ploughed, and ready to receive the seed of eternal life, when he preaches the salvation which is by Jesus Christ.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Perversion and restoration.* These verses suggest—

I. HOW FAR FROM RIGHT FEELING WILL WRONG THOUGHTS LEAD MEN ASTRAY. "Saul was consenting [rejoicing] unto his death" (ver. 1). "Saul made havoc of [was ravaging] the Church," etc. (ver. 3). The death of the first martyr, which was so utterly shameful to those who compassed it, and so deeply regrettable from a human estimate, was, in the eyes of Saul, a thing in which to triumph with savage pleasure. And this dreadful satisfaction of his grew out of strong religious convictions—he hated Stephen so passionately because he clung to "the Law" so tenaciously. Nor was this his only manifestation of distorted feeling. He was not satisfied with the stoning of Stephen; he joined heartily in the persecution which broke up Christian families and caused their

general dispersion (ver. 2), himself being the most prominent agent of the council; neither ordinary humanity, nor the gentleness which should come with a liberal education, nor the tenderness which is due to womanly feeling, laying any restraint upon him. Every wiser, kinder, more generous sentiment was lost in a violent, relentless, unpitiful fanaticism. So does error pervert the mind and distort the impulses and abuse the energies of the soul. Before we lend ourselves to any cause, before we plunge into any strife, let us very carefully and devoutly weigh the question whether we are really right, whether our traditions are not leading us astray as men's inherited notions have led them astray from the truth, whether, before we act with a burning zeal, we must not alter our position or even change our side. Not till we have an intelligent assurance that we are in the right should we act with enthusiasm and severity; else we may be *cherishing feelings and doing actions* which are diabolical rather than Divine.

II. HOW MUCH HOLY EARNESTNESS MAY BE CALLED TO SUFFER. The Christians of those early times were called: 1. To sympathize, with painful intensity, with a suffering man. If Saul was consenting to his death, with what lacerated and bleeding hearts did his Christian friends see the first martyr die! They "made great lamentation over him" (ver. 2). 2. To be distressed for a bereaved and weakened Church. The cause of Christ could ill spare (so they would naturally feel) such an eloquent and earnest advocate as he whose tongue had been so cruelly silenced; they must have lamented the loss which, as men bent on a high and noble mission, they had sustained. 3. To endure serious trouble in their own circumstances. There was "great persecution . . . and they were all scattered abroad" (ver. 1). This must have involved a painful severance of family ties and a serious disturbance in business life. Holy earnestness has similar sufferings to endure now. (1) Its personal attachments are peculiarly deep and its sympathies peculiarly strong. When injury or death comes to the objects of them, there is corresponding pain and sorrow of soul. (2) It is often deeply distressed for the cause of Christ in its times of loss, weakness, wrong. (3) It suffers, in virtue of its fidelity, from the scorn, the opposition, the persecution, in some form or other, of those who are the enemies of God and truth. But, thus doing, it treads closely in the footsteps of the best of men, and in those of the Divine Master himself. And thus suffering with him, it will be crowned with his honour and joy (Rom. viii. 17; 2 Tim. ii. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 13).

III. HOW WONDROUSLY GOD OVERRULES EVERYTHING. (Ver. 4.) He (1) used the machinations of the enemy and (2) recompensed the faithfulness of the suffering Church by causing the dispersion of the disciples to result in "the furtherance of the gospel." What misguided men hoped would be a death-blow to the new "way" proved to be a valuable stroke on its behalf, increasing the number of its active witnesses, and multiplying its adherents largely. So shall it be with the evil designs of the wicked; they will be made to subserve the gracious purposes of God. 1. How vain and foolish, as well as guilty, is it to fight against God! 2. How confidently may we who are co-workers with him await the issue! The angry and threatening storm which is on the horizon will perhaps only speed the good vessel of the truth and bring her sooner to the haven.—C.

Vers. 5—25.—*Success and disappointment in Christian work.* I. A LARGE MEASURE OF SUCCESS. We must consider: 1. The special obstacles in the way, viz. (1) the people of Samaria were to some extent alien; they were likely to be less friendly than those who were wholly foreign, for their connection with the Jews as their near neighbours had led to the bitterest jealousies and animosities. (2) They were under the spell of a skillful and powerful impostor (vers. 9—11). 2. The means by which success was gained. (1) Philip presented to the people the one great truth which they needed to know: he "preached Christ unto them" (ver. 5). Obstacles must be mighty indeed if there are not found hearts to respond when a once crucified, now exalted Saviour is preached, whose death is the sacrifice for sin, and who offers himself to our souls as our living Lord and unchanging Friend. (2) The preached truth was confirmed by striking and gladdening proofs of Divine power: they gave heed, "seeing the miracles which he did" (ver. 6); and great wonders were wrought in their midst, so numerous and beneficent that "there was great joy in that city." 3. The magnitude of the success. (1) They gave unanimous attention: "with one accord they gave heed" (ver. 6). (2) They believed and avowed their faith: "they were baptized, both men and women."

(ver. 12). (3) The imposter himself made profession of faith (ver. 13). 4. Confirmation of it, both human and Divine. (1) Human: the apostles sent down Peter and John, who witnessed and owned the work as genuine (vera. 14, 15). (2) Divine: the Holy Ghost descended upon them, in (doubtless) miraculous bestowments (ver. 17).

II. A SERIOUS DISCOURAGEMENT. There is no more disheartening blow which can fall on the heart of an earnest Christian worker than to find that his converts have not really changed their mind, but only their creed. Very bitter must have been the cup to the Christian community in Samaria when Simon made the miserable exhibition of himself recorded in the text (vers. 18, 19). Either he had been utterly insincere throughout, or, as is more likely, he was convinced that Philip and the apostles were masters of some great powers he had not been able to gain; but completely mistook the character of their mission, thinking they were out on an errand of self-aggrandizement. Whether Simon's was a guilty simulation or a blasphemous error, it was rebuked with an almost terrible severity (vers. 20—23), which evidently affected and even affrighted the sorcerer (ver. 24). In tones of unwonted sternness, such as the occasion required, Peter rejected the infamous proposal to receive money for the impartation of Divine power, and assured Simon that he was still in the very depth of folly and of sin, from which nothing but repentance could deliver him. 1. We also may have a large measure of success in our work. We have all the materials of success, if we will use them: the needed saving truth; the beneficent agencies which spring from Christian sources, and which commend the Christian cause; the presence in the Church of the Holy Spirit of God. 2. We shall always be liable to disappointment. Some whom we believe to be possessed of the truth and to be brought beneath its vital power will prove to be only just touched by it, or to be mere pretenders and deceivers. 3. Spite of painful drawbacks, we may thank God for good work done. It was with joyous and grateful hearts, we may be sure, that the apostles "returned to Jerusalem" (ver. 25). They had not forgotten Simon's defection; they would never forget that disappointing moment when he made his humiliating offer. But, after all, he was in the dark and far background; in front of him and in full view of their gladdened souls was the testimony they had borne for their Master, the Church they had gathered, the good work they had wrought in Samaria.—C.

Vers. 26—40.—*The Christian teacher and disciple.* We have an interesting and instructive instance of one man submitting himself to the teaching of another, and deriving from him a sudden transforming influence which most beneficially affected his whole after-life. Such teaching might well come ultimately from God, as in truth it did; for we learn—

I. THAT THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER IS TO PLACE HIMSELF CONTINUALLY UNDER DIVINE DIRECTION. Philip had some advantages which we do not now enjoy. "The angel of the Lord spake unto him" audibly (ver. 26), and gave him definite instructions whither he should go: "Arise, and go toward the south," etc. "The Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself," etc. (ver. 29). When his work was finished here, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" (ver. 39). But though we have not now these outward, unmistakable manifestations, we have the "mind of Christ;" we may consult and know his will, if (1) we intelligently and devoutly study his Word, (2) unselfishly regard the leadings of his providence, (3) earnestly ask for the promptings of his Divine Spirit. We are earnestly to desire to go only where we are sent of God, to address ourselves to those whom he would have us influence, and to stay no longer than he has work for us to do there.

II. THAT CHRIST HAS SUBJECTS TO SECURE FOR HIS KINGDOM OTHER THAN THOSE WE SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED. Which of the apostles would have imagined that the next convert to Christianity at this time would be "a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority," etc. (ver. 26)? Yet such *was* the mind of Christ. We are too apt to think we can tell whence the disciples will be drawn, by whom the table will be furnished with guests. But our Master has surprises for us here as elsewhere. We must not, in thought, limit the range of his redeeming love or converting power. It may not be the poor in need of some enrichment, but the rich in need of some higher wealth; not the lowly wanting some honour, but the honourable craving some truer dignity; it may not be the children of privilege familiar with the truth, but the sons of ignorance or superstition, or even the children of infidelity far from the wisdom of God;—it may

be these and not those whom the Lord of love and power means to call and win and bless.

III. THAT GOD HAS MUCH ENLIGHTENMENT TO IMPART THROUGH HUMAN AGENCY. Here is human ignorance and misapprehension (ver. 30): a sense of utter helplessness without guidance from some friendly hand (ver. 31); invitation to him that knows and will explain (ver. 31). Without the enlightenment which some men have it in their power to impart, everything is dark, meaningless, obscure, perplexing,—facts in nature, laws of God, utterances of the Divine Word. Then comes the illuminating flash, and the mists roll away, the objects are clear in the sunlight, the path is plain. How wise to seek, how excellent to render, the light which, by God's kind blessing, one human mind may shed on the highest of themes into the most troubled souls!

IV. THAT THE SACRIFICIAL SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST ARE THE GRAND THEME OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER. (Vers. 32—35.) What passage in all the Hebrew Scriptures could Philip have preferred to this as a text for his teaching? This supreme fact in the history of our race is *the* theme on which to dwell, in which to find a deepening interest, from which to draw motive and inspiration, with which to fascinate the people, to which to be continually returning.

V. THAT THE CONVINCED DISCIPLE SHOULD FORTHWITH AVOW HIS CONVICTION IN THE APPOINTED WAYS. (Vers. 36—38.)

VI. THAT THE FULL RECEPTION OF CHRISTIAN TRUTH WILL BE FOLLOWED BY DEEP AND ABIDING JOY. (Ver. 39.) "He went on his way rejoicing."

VII. THAT THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER MAKES SUCCESS AN INSPIRATION TO FURTHER HOLY ACTIVITY. (Ver. 40.)—C.

Vers. 1—13.—*Incidents of persecution and dispersion.* I. A GLIMPSE OF SAUL THE PERSECUTOR. Though brief and passing, it is very significant. He was a party to the execution of Stephen. Saul was full of ignorance and blind passion. What he afterwards felt about his conduct is expressed in 1 Tim. i. 3. This example should be a standing warning to us against trust in mere feeling and enthusiasm. The fumes of anger and violence are no signs of pure glowing zeal for the truth, but rather of the spirit that is set on fire of hell. It is when we are most passionately excited in the cause of party conflict that we have most need to be on our guard. Bitter was the remorse of Saul of Tarsus for his complicity in the murder of Stephen. Hard was it for him to forgive himself. It was the triumph of Divine love in his heart when he could trust that through it he had been forgiven.

II. THE EFFECTS OF PERSECUTION. It leads to dispersion, and dispersion to the dissemination of the truth. Through the country of Judæa and Samaria the scattered ones went, leaving in every village, in every house and heart, stirring memories, new thoughts. And Saul, like a ravaging wolf, went on his blind course. There is a general historical lesson here. Persecution is ever the symptom of intellectual change. The old dragon is ever ready to devour the child of the woman. The hellish Python would wrestle with the glorious Apollo. Herod would put to death the child Jesus. Saul would slay the infant Church. But the victory of eternal light and love is not doubtful. "They that were scattered in different directions went in different directions evangelizing the world." How beautiful is this! The true weapon with which to meet the sword is the Word. The policy of the persecutor is of all the blindest. He stimulates the movement he aims to crush. In every manly spirit opposition rouses new energy. We love more dearly the truth for which we have to fight and suffer. It is in the laws of the spiritual world that persecutions should ever bring a violent reaction in favour of the principles of the persecuted. When Christianity is patronized it becomes corrupt. When through persecution it is thrown back upon the ground of its first principles, it springs up with new life and vigour.

III. THE WORK OF PHILIP. Well does it stand in contrast with that of Saul in this glimpse of early Christianity. Saul, the wolf amidst the fold, breathing out threats and slaughter; Philip, as the shepherd, feeding and healing and comforting. Again and again we have the repetition of the true effects of Christianity. Good words are spoken, which command attention and do good to the soul; good deeds are done to the suffering body, which are evident "signs" of a Divine presence and power to heal, and therefore of a Divine and loving will. And joy ever breaks out—the reflection of recovered

freedom in the body and the soul—in every city. These, then, are the constant evidences of Christianity. No other “apologetic” can be needed, for this is invincible. Without it the subtlest arguments are unavailing.

IV. THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY OVER SUPERSTITION. Simon the Magus is the type of those who work upon the imagination of the people, as contrasted with the true Christian teacher who appeals to the conscience. What was to decide between the genuine teacher and healer and the eloquent and skilful quack? Close is the shadow to the light in all the course of the gospel. In the individual conscience lies the test. To that God speaks; that in every age is the mirror of the truth. And to the truth and to God the conscience of the impostor bears witness. Simon believed in the word of Philip, and became by baptism a professor of the new creed. It is said that he was astonished at the signs and great wonders which occurred. What we call “sensationalism” in the mind, the craving for the wonder, is the spurious form of a true instinct. Men must see in order to be convinced; when conviction is attained, they can afterwards walk by faith in regions where sight is not possible. We never change the habit of our thought until we find something inexplicable where before all was plain and simple—something wondrous where we only recognized the commonplace. To ask for belief without giving evidence is to insult the conscience, to refuse belief when the evidence is clear is to deny to one’s self the possibility of guidance when the evidence is not altogether clear. Let men take the evidence which is clear to *them*, and act upon it; that is safe for the time, and the rest will become clearer by-and-by. But the case of Simon shows how void is any kind of mere conviction unless it be followed by the corresponding act of will. Simon was convinced, but not converted. The light penetrated his intelligence, but failed to move his heart.—J.

Vers. 24, 25.—*The impostor unmasked.* I. THE MISSION OF PETER AND JOHN, *Samarita*—there is an emphasis on this word—had received the Word of God. There was something significant in this conversion. The gospel was already proving itself a power to reconcile and break down distinctions long rooted and deeply felt. So important an occasion called for the services of the two leading apostles, Peter and John. These go down and pray for the new converts, that they may receive the Holy Ghost. Power and purity, the joy and freedom of the Christian life, are associated with this baptism; as repentance or a preparatory change of life was associated with that of John the Baptist. It is difficult to understand how such gifts as those we associate with spiritual religion could be conveyed by the physical act of imposition of hands. Nor are we required to believe that the imposition of hands was in any way *causally* related to the spiritual result, or even *instrumentally*. It was an external association, an *apparent* not a real connection, such as might well deceive the unspiritual observer.

II. THE SELF-DECEPTION OF THE UNSPIRITUAL MAN. Simon perceives the solemn act of laying on of hands; he perceives that something follows—a spiritual power in the converts, and he mistakenly infers that the apostles are magicians, who can bestow at their pleasure supernatural gifts. What man can bestow may be bought from man. Had the apostles been like Tetzal, the friar who went about in Luther’s time selling indulgences, it would have been natural to offer them, and for them to receive payment for the communication of the power. But spiritual things are spiritually discerned; and “the carnal mind understands not the things of the Spirit of God.” When the heart has not been awakened, when the man has not been born into the kingdom of God, there is constantly the danger of confounding things that differ. Money cannot buy thought, nor feeling, nor inward power; though it can buy action and the imitation of reality, but not reality itself. Simon confounds the outward *phenomena* of the Spirit with the essence and meaning.

III. THE UNSPIRITUAL MAN’S ERROR EXPOSED. 1. The sin of Simon is that of the money-loving man. His faith is in it; he believes that it “answers all things,” not only in reference to this world, but in reference to the kingdom of God. He is the type of a class. There are those who secretly believe they can patronize the ministers of Christ, and purchase for themselves an interest in the kingdom of God. The power of wealth so subtly mingles with all Christian work, and profusely used may so readily acquire for its possessor the reputation of sanctity. But the immortal antipathy of

the spirit of the gospel, as the free energy of the holy God in men's souls, casts off in one word of the apostle these vile counterfeits, which ever obtain currency side by side with it in the world. The apostle whose word has been in the very act of healing, "Silver and gold have I none," exclaims, "Thy money perish with thee!" 2. A bosom sin will separate a man from the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is within. It is a spiritual state and a spiritual system of motives. He has no part or lot in it who does not see that it aims at the fulfilment of our life by the subjugation of the lower motives and the instatement of the higher in the rightful empire of the soul. Simon's heart was not "straight" before God. He was trying to juggle with him who searches the heart; to keep the lower passions in full action, if possible, under the mask of piety. His is the type of perhaps the deadliest sin that Christianity has occasioned in the world. As the shadow follows the sun, so does hypocrisy follow close on the heels of genuine piety. *Insincerity* is the sin of sins. What filth is in the bodily habit, that untruth is in the soul. The man is aware of his sin. It is no blindness of passion, but the deliberate admission of an habitual lie to the feelings and the thoughts. It is a poison or gall infusing its influence into the whole life of the mind. It is a bondage, and no liberty is possible under the tyranny of inward falsehood. Thus is the character of the impostor exposed by the pure light of the truth. He is seen to pretend a faith of which his heart knows nothing; he regards the gifts of the Holy Spirit as the means of base gain; and he knows no higher motive to repentance than slavish fear of punishment. The spirit of the gospel is illustrated in St. Peter by the strong contrast. It sternly points out man's sins and tracks them to their source in the heart; chastises the sinner, but at the same time holds out the duty of repentance and the hope of forgiveness to the worst.—J.

VERS. 26—40.—*Philip and the Ethiopian.* This incident teaches us—

I. **THAT MEN IN THE WAY OF DUTY MAY RECEIVE UNUSUAL GUIDANCE.** The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, and gave him directions as to the course he should take in his missionary journey. How are we to understand the mode of this interference? We are told that rationalist expositors assume that the angel appeared to Philip in a dream; for the word "Rise!" is spoken. But then it is replied that there is no mention of the night-time nor of a couch. And in ver. 26 there is no mention of a vision. Avoid rationalism, which is the attempt to exercise clear intelligence upon things best left in a sacred obscurity, or *chiaro-oscuro*. The point is not so much to understand how the Divine intimation came, as to recognize the fact that it did come. Cases of sudden and irresistible impressions of the kind are not uncommon and are well attested. But there are a thousand coincidences in life which we do not notice, and which may nevertheless be equally real evidences of a higher intelligence directing the human will, and "a good man's steps are ordered of the Lord, and he delighteth in his way."

II. **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS CHANCE IN LIFE.** Two men meet on the road, the railway, in a foreign city, "casually," as they say; and something flows from the meeting which influences the after-life of one or both. In the present meeting, notice: 1. *The stranger's nationality.* He is from Ethiopia, from the south of Egypt. Some say of Jewish extraction; for he was reading the great Jewish prophet; but perhaps it was not so. 2. *His rank.* He was a "potentate" in his land, the grand treasurer of the queen, Candace being the official title of the queens of Ethiopia, as Pharaoh was that of the kings of Egypt. 3. *His religious belief.* Whether he was a "proselyte of the gate" or no cannot be decided. But his errand was to Jerusalem, to pray. Therefore in his African home he had learned to know and to worship the God of Israel. It looks like a case of independent conviction, and therefore the more interesting; somewhat like that of the Roman centurion in the Gospel. He was reading in all probability in a copy of the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Scriptures. This version had been diffused from Alexandria through Egypt, and was doubtless well known to all the educated class. Philip receives an intimation, not this time from "an angel," but from "the Spirit," to go and join himself to the chariot of the Ethiopian.

III. **THE WORD OF GOD A COMMON BOND OF INTEREST AND SYMPATHY.** The teacher is led by Providence to the disciple, who is found beforehand prepared to receive the teacher's instruction, and craving it. The teacher and the disciple have need of one

another. The teacher has much to impart, the disciple much to receive; and each in a way changes his part with the other, for we learn as we teach and teach in learning. The passage the Ethiopian was reading is one of the most significant of the Old Testament. It contains the picture of the Servant of Jehovah, the Representative of Israel. It is the embodiment of Israel's spiritual ideal. Meekness under injuries; lowly estate in the world and exposure to persecution; obscurity in the eyes of men; such are the traits of Israel's Hero, in the passage the Ethiopian is reading. Well may he ask, "Who is this unique figure portrayed by the prophet's pen?—the prophet himself or another?" Then Philip proceeds to unfold from this text the whole evangel, which centres in the person of Jesus. He is the Divine Figure, the living Embodiment of the prophet's meaning, the Fulfiller of Israel's long history.

IV. CONVERSION PRODUCED BY CONVICTION. We may notice: 1. *The preparation for change in personal reflection.* The serious mind, the attentive gaze fixed on the records of religion, the desire to learn, the willingness to be taught, precede conversion in this case, and are the more attractive traits in one of high rank like the Ethiopian. We can only profit by the teacher when we have first used our own spiritual energy to the utmost. "To him that hath shall be given." 2. *The prompt decision.* New thought ever impels to new action. The light comes that we may use it. "What shall I do?" is the question of the conscience so soon as it is aroused and quickened by the light. The Ethiopian at once "decides for Christ"—the Christ he has learned to know through the study of the prophet and the preaching of the evangelist. And as Philip vanishes, a blessing is left on the heart of his disciple never to be effaced. The whole yields an important lesson on the value of opportunity, and how it should be seized both by teacher and by disciple. In interviews like these, like angels' visits, God is revealed, truth is sown in the heart, and influences are set at work which never cease.—J.

Vers. 1—3.—*The enemy coming in like a flood.* I. THE FLOOD OF INIQUITY CALLED FORTH BY THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY GHOST. 1. The corruption of the Jewish state. Instances in the case of Saul of Tarsus, assenting to the death of Stephen. The organized persecution as an answer to the gospel. The insincerity of those who pretended to accept Gamaliel's wise counsel. Their real cowardice in not venturing to lay hold of the apostles. 2. The persecution had now a leader in Saul. It was a more decided arraying of the priestly power against the new sect; a house-to-house visitation with assumed legal authority. This was to push forward the conflict between the two kingdoms as nothing else could. It was to give definite aim to the persecution, and so to prepare the way for the more decided lifting up of the standard against it by the Spirit of God in the conversion of Saul.

II. THE BREAKING UP OF THE FIRST FORM OF CHURCH LIFE, PREPARATORY TO A HIGHER, WIDER, AND MORE ACTIVE. 1. Fellowship is very precious, but activity still more so. Loving one another should prepare us to love the world. The temporary expedient of Christian communism gave way before the world's violence; it was a help to the realization of Church life, but not an abiding rule of action. 2. Stephen's funeral and the Church's lamentation would deeply impress upon all dependence, not on individual instruments, but on the Spirit of God. How little it was thought that the chief persecutor would soon himself be the chief preacher! 3. Those scattered abroad carried with them a body of facts, both the Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles so far, which helped them to dispense with the immediate superintendence of the apostles. So the New Testament would begin to be formed in that first persecution. The believers all over Judæa and Samaria, speaking to one another and to their neighbours of the things that they themselves most surely believed. How little Saul's "laying waste" the Church harmed it! Learn the lesson of confidence in the overruling Saviour. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him."—R.

Ver. 2.—*The grave beside the Church.* "And devout men carried Stephen," etc.

I. Death the EXALTATION of Christian character. Devout men carried him. Their hope was the rainbow on the cloud of lamentation. The fellowship of Church life helps us to appreciate excellence. The greatest and best testimony when devout men feel the loss.

II. THE CONTRAST between the grave of the good man fallen asleep in Jesus and laid to rest by the hands of lamenting brethren, and the grave of: 1. The worldling. 2. The infidel. 3. The doubter. 4. The backslider. 5. The isolated and unbrotherly Christian, who has not lived in the hearts of devout men. Try to live so that you will be lamented when you die.

III. THE EFFECT on the world of a great Christian life. "He being dead yet speaketh." President Garfield. Great lamentation is often great proclamation of truth. The cross. The Book of Martyrs.—R.

Ver. 4.—*The first flight of the Word.* "Therefore they that were scattered abroad," etc. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save the world. Providence and grace work hand-in-hand. The Church needed to be taught by discipline. Jerusalem a natural centre of religious life. But a centre of *radiation*, not *concentration*.

I. PREACHING THE WORD the greatest function of the Christian Church. 1. The Word *preached* was the Word *given*. Apostles gave it. It was pre-eminently Christ's Word. It was given by the Holy Ghost with special gifts and wisdom—"confirmed" unto us. 2. The Word preached was the Word *tried*. Conversion proved it. Church life illustrated it. The attitude of the corrupt Jewish Church showed that it was a *new Word* that was required for the world. 3. Preaching preceded writing. Individual testimony. The baptism of persecution followed the baptism of inspiration. The world wants not speculative truth, but practical—the Word of *life*. "Taste and see," etc.

II. UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY for the spread of truth. 1. The true conception of the Church—a body of believers. They believe and therefore speak. Possession of the Word is responsibility. 2. The state of the world demands activity in every believer. 3. The pastoral office quite consistent with the fulfilment of this universal duty. The *primiti inter pares* should stimulate all to work.

III. THE LEADINGS OF PROVIDENCE are the true guidance of spiritual activity. "Scattered abroad" against their will. Doors opened. Opportunity enlarged. Trouble sanctified. 1. It is dangerous to anticipate Divine preparation. 2. Watch in the night, for the darkest hour precedes the dawn. 3. Keep a true and firm centre from which to go and to which to return. Jerusalem still remains the seat of apostolic wisdom and authority. God is not the author of confusion. The greatest activity need not break up orderly religious life. Revivals and evangelistic aggression should always maintain a rallying-point. Seek out not "quiet resting-places," but spheres of labour. Let God appoint the peace.—R.

Vers. 5—8.—*Samaria evangelized.* I. THE STEPPING-STONE to work among the *Gentiles*. Half heathen.

II. THE PREPARATION FOR CHRIST. The Pentateuch. The false teaching of Simon and others. Mental and moral degradation.

III. A SPECIMEN OF SPIRITUAL WANT AND PRIVATION. Unclean spirits. Paralysed. Lame. The multitudes under the dominion of physical and spiritual disease. Adaptation of the new message to universal humanity.

IV. THE MEANS EMPLOYED. Preaching the Christ. Signs and wonders. The two great facts—a personal Redeemer the object of faith; a Divine power at hand able to lift up the fallen, to subdue the evil, to heal the sick, to change the world.—R.

Ver. 8.—*Missions to the masses.* "And there was great joy in that city." City life, its two sides of good and evil. The victims of ignorance. Vice. False teaching. Old enmities. Sorcery. Bodily disease. "The multitudes" pressing on one another. The world's joys ruinous, deceptive, consuming, filthy, degrading, hiding the light of truth. No remedy in civilization, science, social schemes,—mere intellectual growth.

I. The gospel a proclamation of GREAT JOY to our cities. 1. To the individual heart. 2. To houses and families. 3. To communities. Religion the only safe basis of social progress. The Christ preached as Redeemer of humanity. Illustrate from the actual results, both in our own cities and in heathendom. Indirect influence of Christianity on the physical condition. Healing ministry of Christ still continued. The life of

man lengthened during the last three centuries, since the truth had fuller sway over the thoughts of men and their universal activity. Science the outgrowth of the civil and religious liberty obtained by the victories of spiritual heroes.

I. God works great results with **SMALL INSTRUMENTALITIES**. Philip was one man among multitudes. 1. An encouragement to all mission work both at home and abroad. 2. A lesson as to method. "He proclaimed the Christ unto them." The people will "give heed" when the message is adapted to their wants. 3. A manifestation of Divine energy. Philip alone was powerless. The Spirit wrought with him. Moral miracles still accompany faithful preaching. The signs may differ, but still be equally striking and convincing. Witness the work done by Wesley and Whitefield. 4. A prophecy of the future. Great joy in all cities. Samaria might recall the visit of Jesus to Sychar. Some work already done there. So in the world generally, a foundation on which Christian messengers can labour. The heathen world has its measure of light, though mingled with joyless gloom of superstition and falsehood. When the multitudes give heed to the preaching of the Christ, what may not be anticipated? "Great joy" instead of great wars and great famines and great desolation: the great joy of universal progress and a redeemed humanity acknowledging and glorifying Christ. What is our joy? What is the joy of our neighbours? Cast out the lies and let the Spirit of life come in.—R.

Vers. 9—13.—*The spirit of lies cast out.* Simon an example of the kind of deceivers under whose spell the ancient world was taken captive. Samaria half heathen. "Salvation is of the Jews" (cf. John iv.). A striking instance showing that a dim twilight of knowledge is the condition favourable to the growth of falsehood and superstition. They would not have given heed to Simon had they studied the whole Scripture. Yet the gospel found a ready soil because the true wonders could be opposed to the false.

I. **THE STATE OF THE WORLD APART FROM CHRIST.** Given up to "strong delusion to believe lies." 1. Abuse of human learning and philosophy. Simon probably versed in ancient lore. 2. The distinction between sorcery and magic and true science, and the wonders of human progress, has been the fruit of Christian teaching and the development of the kingdom of God. 3. The signs of man's birthright still traceable in his degrading bondage. Subjection to the power of God. Readiness to worship. Idea of a Divine kingdom.

II. **THE VICTORY OF THE TRUTH OVER THE FALSEHOOD.** 1. Good tidings—liberty, peace, joy—"without money and without price." 2. Power manifested. This is the true kingdom, not such as Simon pretended to show. 3. Subjugation of all—even Simon himself. As in Egypt, the miracles of God are infinitely more wonderful than the deceits of the false teachers. So let us learn confidence in the gospel message. We may yet bring the very deceivers themselves to the feet of Christ. The world will be amazed as the gospel reveals its power. "Have faith in God."—R.

Vers. 14—24.—*The spirit of mammon in the Christian Church.* Peter and John represented the apostolic authority, but not as something to be imposed on believers, but as linking them with the source of spiritual gifts. Simon represented the spirit of this world in the Church—the sins of ambition, covetousness, hypocrisy, priestcraft, intimately connected with the one fatal error of admitting the world's calculations into the Church. "He offered them money." The Church has listened to such offers far too much. The Simon-spirit, the mixture of sorcery and faith, has filled some portions of the professed Church with lies and mammon-worship. Notice—

I. **THE TRUE APOSTOLIC SPIRIT manifested.** 1. Dependence on prayer. 2. Separation of spiritual gifts from all money considerations. 3. Detection and denunciation of the false and sordid.

II. **THE CHURCH'S DANGER** from the laxness of discipline. 1. Those that have "neither part nor lot in this matter" must be kept out of the number of God's people. 2. Especially must the ministry be preserved from every form of simony. 3. The bold and fearless course on the part of those in office is much the safest. Hypocrisy is weakness. Simon will succumb to Peter, if Peter only speaks out the Word of God, and stands up for purity of faith and conscientiousness. Better a poor

Church with spiritual gifts, than a treasury full of hypocrites' offerings and no Holy Ghost descending on the world.—R.

Vers. 25—40.—*The second flight of the gospel.* Samaria evangelized both by Philip and the apostles, and both in the city and country districts—a preparation of the Church for yet greater expansion. Necessity that such a flight as from Samaria to the desert on the way to Ethiopia should be supernaturally commanded. The step-by-step process of opening the Jewish mind to the idea of a world-message. The eunuch was a proselyte of the gate, so would be regarded as holding an intermediate position. Contrast this childhood of the Church with our advanced knowledge of the Divine purposes. Moreover, at that time no New Testament. The work to be done must await the instruments. The gospel cannot be preached fully till the apostles have fulfilled their testimony.—R.

Ver. 35.—*Jesus the Hope of the world.* “Then Philip opened his mouth,” etc. The two lines meeting in the desert. The Ethiopian traveller led on by Providence; the evangelist led by the angelic message; ignorant of one another, yet both in their way following Divine guidance. The importance of that meeting-place to the world's future, both as opening the South and East to the gospel, and as helping the Church to look away to the ends of the earth. The underlying facts, the Old Testament and its work. Proselytes. Devout men. Isaiah preparing for Christ. “Of whom speaketh the prophet?” The world was ready and asking questions, and the Church was prepared to answer them. The Spirit presiding over all.

I. JESUS THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF ALL GOD'S REVELATIONS. 1. Atonement the great want of the world. 2. The gospel facts fulfilments of the Old Testament prophecies. 3. A personal Redeemer preached as an object of faith, the satisfaction of the heart.

II. THE PREACHING OF JESUS THE TRUE OPENING OF THE CHURCH'S LIPS TO THE WORLD. 1. In distinction from mere dry theology, vague sentiment, or barren speculation. 2. With no feeble or uncertain sound he opened his mouth. Boldness, directness, persuasiveness, faithfulness, he preached to *him*. 3. Scriptural preaching the great demand of the age. Beginning on a firm foundation of the written Word and the convictions of hearers.

III. DIVINELY GIVEN OPPORTUNITY HUMBLY USED PRODUCTIVE OF GREAT RESULTS. 1. Missionary work should recognize the preparation God makes in men's minds for his truth. 2. Individuals the objects of gracious communications, that messengers may be raised up who shall carry the Word into the strongholds of heathenism. We should always follow the Spirit. 3. Deserts rejoicing, prophecy of a recovered world. The nations shall be baptized. But we must see to it that we preach unto them Jesus.—R.

Ver. 39.—*The way of pleasantness.* “He went on his way rejoicing.”

I. A RETROSPECT. 1. Heathenism compared with Christianity. 2. A state of doubt and inquiry compared with knowledge, faith, decision, open dedication. 3. Loneliness changed into fellowship; some one helping and guiding; remembered instructions, and opened Scripture.

II. A PROSPECT. The way of rejoicing opened. 1. Sense of reconciliation. Inward peace. Joy “springing up as a well of water into everlasting life.” 2. Hopes for himself and for others. He was carrying the gospel to his home, to his duties, his anxieties, his sovereign, his fellow-countrymen. 3. A baptized man rejoicing in the sense of Divine approval of his conscience and a new position in life. We get rid of much difficulty both within and without by public confession of Christ. We draw round our souls the visible tokens of Divine presence and favour. We associate ourselves with God's people in every age, and feel that our way is—

“The way the holy prophets went—
God's highway from banishment.”

Recognize the turning-point. Take the straight road that leads through a joyful obedience to glory.—R.

Vers. 1—4.—*Discordant elements obedient to the accomplishing of one purpose.*

This short paragraph is not only full of incident, but of strangely contrary kind of incident. It seems at first a mere medley of facts, history's patchwork, or like some mosaic pretending to no harmony at all. This first impression, however, soon passes off, and each incident of the group assumes yet clearer outline and is seen to fit into its place. The fact still remains, however, that the materials are of very antagonistic kind, and the wonder still remains, broadening more and more clearly to view, that out of all the variety a sovereign power is working a certain unity of result. The *martyrdom* is at the centre of the subject yet. It is the key of the position. It makes a landmark conspicuous far and wide, and a date for ever memorable. And this paragraph develops to view a fivefold energy resulting from the martyrdom.

I. IT BRINGS OUT IN BROAD RELIEF OTHER THAN THE LATE HUMBLING ASPECTS OF HUMAN NATURE. (Ver. 2.) Other hearts than those that beat in the breasts of the Sanhedrim are in Jerusalem, other hands than those that stone are at this very moment outside its walls. The triumph has not been an unqualified one. The contrast is a wonderful relief to the strain put on faith, a welcome restorer of hope for human outlook. And one and the same hour shows no doubtful sign of those sternest works, those tenderest offices of which the angel of Christianity would through all the ages be witness. The storm is spent, and men seek in the morning to bury them—the dead washed ashore. The battle is over, and in the evening men gather their slaughtered to bury them. The cross has done its work, and the sacred body is “begged,” and with tenderest care and service is buried. The stoning has finished, and devout men carry mangled limbs to honoured burial. Christianity has her chivalry, and the chivalry of Christianity is that purest affection which, mingled with purest faith, before all reverences and mourns her fallen heroes and warriors, though she never excused them while they lived a duty, nor exempted them a pang while they struggled and fought. Most impressive is that which is left to our imagination to fill up. When the last stone had been thrown, and the echoes of howling murderers had died away, and the mob had swept by,—then “devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.”

II. IT FINDS OUT THE TRUE DISCIPLES, AND SCATTERS THEM EACH WITH HIS FRUITFUL INFLUENCE FAR AND WIDE. (Ver. 1.) Persecution—a thing of darkest deeds, a very word of dread—has ever had some crop of most beneficent results. Of it it may emphatically be said, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” Persecution: 1. *Tries* the sincerity of character. 2. It ascertains the *dominance* of faith or its comparative weakness. 3. It gives faith much stronger hold on its proper object or objects. 4. It chases away vast quantities of vague thought, vaguer feeling, mists that have long misled, and a habit of doubt that has gone far to undermine the nobility of Christian life. 5. It exerts a vast benefit on others. If this be not part of its intention, it is a grand overruled use of it. The happy hour often is touched with the taint of selfishness. The members of happiest family are so united to one another that they render an unfairly small contribution to the happiness that should touch their borders too on all sides. And it has in point of fact often been so with the Church, till, “when persecution arises” (which “persecution” may “arise” from very various causes, and appear in very various shapes), it is broken in upon, and those who composed it are separated and spread and many a missionary is made (ver. 1).

III. IT FINDS OUT THE “CALLED APOSTLES”—TRUE TO THEIR CALL. (Ver. 1.) The believers were scattered. Some voice, some power, or some pure impulse tied the apostles. The post of duty remains so for them, though it become the post of danger. They are to remain yet in Jerusalem, to guide, to comfort, to keep together the lessened flock, and to face fearlessly the enemy. This word, “*except the apostles*,” should be heard like a trumpet-call by the leaders of Christ's flock, at all times, in all places. And does it not indicate that leaders there ought to be, and in *this* sense, ranks of service—better so called than ranks of office and dignities—in the Church of Christ? The analogy of all nature says, “Yes,” supported not only by the “call” and the special “inspiring” of apostles, but by such a *fact* as that which underlies this *exception*, “*except the apostles*.” It is left meantime open to us to imagine only why this crisis was not used by those who persecuted to turn a fierce tide of opposition upon the

apostles themselves. They must have been easy to find, and they must have been known to be at the root of the whole matter. The most probable account of the matter seems to us to be that the Sanhedrim had already had enough of them, and in interfering with them had been so humbly worsted (see homilies on ch. iv., v.).

IV. IT FINDS OUT SAUL, TO SET AN INDELIBLE MARK, NOT ON HIM, BUT BATHED IN HIM. It will seem to the reader at first, perhaps, that it is none but the historian who sets a mark on Saul, and that the mark which he sets is none but an outward mark, though he repeats it three times (ch. vii. 58, 60; viii. 3). Second thoughts will persuade him of something very different. As sure as ever sureness was, mark surer far than even Cain's mark is being set upon Saul, set where nothing can endanger its lasting depth. Ineffaceable memories are furnishing the secret cabinet of his mind; thoughts and resolutions and strong forces of conviction are being stored there, that no future crowd of cares, or throng of occupations, or tumults of mirth should avail to drive out. In the whole scene Saul takes three parts. 1. He takes a *passive* part, or what may seem mostly so (ch. vii. 58), and then a picture was being photographed on an inner tablet in its stillness, accurate, full, safe, to be permanent also. It was destined for a while, indeed, to be overlaid by other images, fleeting and vain, but after a while to brighten out and become, perhaps, brightest of all *except* one. 2. Saul takes a *consenting* part (ch. vii. 60). He *says* nothing against the martyrdom; he looks approval of it. Do they ask whether it is all right and to his mind?—his answer is in the affirmative. 3. Saul takes an *active* part. Full of zeal, full of fury, full of impetuous, imperious, intolerant determination, he "makes havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and haling men and women, commits them to prison" (ver. 3). He is mercilessly marking *himself*, unless you say that, with triple mark, another hand, a gracious one, is marking him for mercy—Jesus Christ's own "pattern of all long-suffering" (1 Tim. i. 15). Yes; the Saul of Stephen's martyrdom; the Saul who permitted the polluted garments of those that stoned that saintliest Stephen to lie at his feet for safety's sake; who made himself a consenting accomplice of the causeless murder, and who then girded himself up to the full stretch of his mighty energy to presume to "make havoc" of the flock of Jesus, will make a good pattern indeed, a pattern hard to improve upon—"pattern of the all long-suffering" of that same "Jesus."

V. IT FINDS UTTERANCES ABUNDANT, BINGING, FAR AND WIDE, FOR "PREACHING CHRIST," A THOUSAND-FOLD FOR THE ONE LOVING VOICE THAT HAD BEEN HUSHED. (Ver. 4.) And no thought outside of the rapture of his own soul, delivered unto the glory of God, of Christ, of heaven, could have been more welcome than this to Stephen. His murderous, stoned death, he would have said, was already amply and blessedly revenged. The one thing, "preaching Christ," that caused his death, was multiplied immediately a thousand-fold by that very thing—his death. In his death Samson slew more than all he had slain while he lived in his mighty manhood. Unenviable achievement! Fame unblessed! His seed perish from the earth! But Stephen in his death becomes the means of the offer of life, and doubtless of life too to more, *innumerable* more than all whom he could reach with all his saintly force while he lived. Honoured servant! Deathless renown! His seed "the noble army of martyrs," and converts exceeding the drops of morning dew! No unworthy pendant to the thrilling sacred tale of Scripture itself is the proverb that takes date from this one: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."—B.

Ver. 8.—*New-found joy*. "And there was great joy in that city." The gospel of Jesus begins now its own aggressive but beneficent march. Twice already has it passed through the most solemn baptism of blood. Its birth, its infancy, its home, its early struggles outside its own sacred home, and its baptisms can never be forgotten. Yet it is time for the young giant to essay his powers, and, without a weapon, to try what intrinsic force may count for. Apostolic preaching and achievement are still for a short time held in abeyance by the history. It is almost as though open ground were being prepared for the entrance of Saul into the great champion's place. Stephen, stricken down, is immediately replaced, not by an apostle, but by the second of those who had been specially set apart for the care of tables. Philip, who comes to be named Philip the Evangelist, is to the front. At the message of persecution, when many, apparently with no little concert and in no little order of movement, travel

elsewhere, he goes "down to the city of Samaria." Whether it were he or they, it cannot be supposed that they imagined that they and their gospel were sure, by mere change of place, of escaping persecution. They probably saw very clearly and were very sure of the reverse of this—nor *less sure* that they carried with them what would again and again win for itself and for them the heartiest welcome, waken the truest joy, reap a harvest of unending gratitude. And such was now the earliest experience of Philip. How kindly came the brief sunshine in place of persecution's biting blast! So God often helps his faithful ones on another stage, and ordains that his own cause shall triumph through alternate storm and sunshine. The city of Samaria found great joy, after a short period of Philip's visit. Let us consider this joy, what account it can give of itself.

I. IT WAS A JOY THAT HAD FOUNDATION ON WHICH TO REST. It came of "Christ preached" and Christ *proved* among the people. Philip *preached* Christ, and this is clearly stated *first*. His preaching was attended with signs and wonders following. Notice: 1. That the exact nature of those signs and wonders—miracles of healing to the body—does not derogate from the great principle here forcibly illustrated. Some may think that because present ages are not ages of bodily miracles, neither the preaching nor the preacher of the gospel has a chance to compare with that of Philip's time. But the mistake is patent. The criterion is *not* that one bodily kind of miracle should be forthcoming, but that *some practical* fruit should certainly be found. Christ preached *must* have some result of a practical kind. Christ is not among men to be nothing among them, to be no force among them, to be an indifferent possession, or to be mere passing excitement. No time is to be wasted, with Christ as the pretence of it, as he never wasted any. 2. The practical effect of Christ preached must be, really and everything taken into account, good in itself and in its bearing. It is true that awhile much of what shall seem of an opposite character may be stirred up. It is true also that Christ preached *and refused* must be condemnation to those who refuse. And it is true that much of Christ's practical work, while it is in progress, lies in discriminating, in moral judgment of men, in separating and showing the infinite disparity there is between certain kinds "of ground" on which the seed of his Word falls. These things nothing hinder the fact that, if Christ has been at work, it may be shown and *must* be shown that good has been at work, and goodness come thereof. 3. The practical *good* effect of Christ preached is *not* disadvantaged in the present day by the absence of physical signs and wonders. *These* were the shadows, not the things that now purport to have succeeded them. They were but simple, elementary types compared with the substance of which they forewarned. It might with much more verisimilitude be said that the physical miracles of Jesus Christ and his apostles shared the class of disadvantages attendant upon his own personal presence in the flesh—when men might love the person rather than the character, the body rather than the soul, the limb restored rather than the soul saved. Where to-day, Christ being preached, sins are forsaken, hearts are changed, lives do different works and those the works of godliness, the miracle is not what makes men alone wonder and throng and be glad exceedingly, but it makes them and hosts of angels also wonder, throng, and be glad to Heaven's joyfullest music. 4. The practical good effect of Christ preached is bound to be efficacious in attracting "the people." We here read that they "with one accord gave heed" to the things that were *spoken*, because of the things that were *done*. Though many an *individual* has by one method or another shut himself, alas! too surely, too successfully, out of grace, this has never yet been found true of the mass of people (unless it be judicially the case for a while with the Jew) when the gospel has been preached amongst them. So soon as *some* real fruits have become apparent, standers-by, ay, and passers-by, not a few, look, and gaze, and ask, and move toward that truth that can *act*, and then they yield ere long in tumult of devotion and unbounded subjection to it. No work, no public movement, no sample of revolution even, ever showed more genuinely the signs of adaptation for *spreading* (ay, to the idea of "covering the earth, as the waters cover the seas") than "Christ preached" has shown. It offers us a grand idea of what the scene will be, what the rate of growth, what the grand transformation of scene, when *the set* conditions, the "set time" shall have come. 5. Christ's gospel does not only not disclaim *these conditions* of its acceptance, but proposes them and gives prominence to them and desires to be itself tested

by them. (1) Jesus Christ has been a wonderful *Teacher* in this world. The civilized world now gives him *the teacher's chair*. All other teachers pale their ineffectual light in his presence. And when they shine, shine only in proportion to the light they borrow from him. (2) Jesus Christ has been also a wonderful *Example* of character—Pattern of patterns, Model of models; how perfectly sculptured! how adorably complete! (3) But the one leading wonderful characteristic to which he lays claim, and justest claim, is that of *Saviour*: not what he teaches; not what he instances and illustrates of surprising greatness, goodness, grace; but what he does and will do. Therefore no barren word, nor word of dialectic skill, nor word of elegant culture, nor of poetic fancy, nor of profoundest theologic theme, shall dare to offer to pass current for "Christ preached." *This* means false profession, audacious blasphemy, guiltiest tampering with sacredest things, *unless* it mean *conviction* for sin, *contrition* for guilty heart, *conversion* of nature, and unmistakable *change* of life! Then first would the gospel of Christ put off its glory, and he himself descend from his undisputed place, when any diminishment were made in the slightest iota, "one jot or one tittle," of these their unique and venerable and practical proffers. Well might there be "great joy in that city," when into it there graciously entered the presence which met the deep, the groaning, sighing, almost despairing and worn demand of "the people"! It carried in its very voice its evidence; in its deeds its attraction; in its varied rich message its circle of reward. And as with bountiful hand it strewed its blessings, a willing, grateful, jubilant crowd gathered round, and one filled with new joy.

II. IT WAS A JOY THAT HAD THE ELEMENTS OF LIKELY DURATION IN IT. 1. Some joyed who received the full blessing themselves. If any were dispossessed of unclean spirits; if any palsied were thrilled with all the old energy and new added thereto; if the lame were made to walk and to leap;—these were *substantial* benefits, undoubted blessings, never "to be repented" or forgotten. 2. Some joyed whose chiefest joy, reached by the way of sympathy, was for those who were dear to them, those whom they knew though not dear to them, those whom perhaps they did not know at all nor had ever seen till they now see their joy. For in the wide circumference of a genuine human heart and in its capacious spaciousness there was room, and there is still room, for sympathy to find its sweetest, daintiest food in all these ways. And the joy of sympathy, some of the sacredest that fringes human life, dwells in a secret pavilion, which no profane fickleness shall easily molest, when Christ is the origin of it. 3. Many joyed by the stirring novelty of so new, so bright a *hope*, and that hope was neither delusive nor "for a while" only. 4. Some, perhaps many, possibly very many, genuinely knew the real dawn of celestial light, of spiritual health, of salvation for the soul. That was a joy incontestably of likely duration. It was deep and large and limitless.

III. IT WAS JOY THAT HAD IN IT THE EARNEST OF THE ETERNAL UPPER JOY. However little conscious "the people" might be of any such thought, not the less might it have strong hold on them. But it is not impossible that they were in some measure conscious of it, yet the possession of the present be so true, so welcome a good, that they do not stop to ask of the future or the upper. It matters not either way; there *was* surely such an earnest in the joy that filled them now. 1. Was it not an unparalleled scene and experience for them? Had they ever known anything on earth to surpass it or to parallel it? 2. Was it not a most genuine rehearsal of "the former things being passed away"? Were pain, and disease, and deprivation of strength, and deprivation of limb—and the tyranny of evil spirits—relaxing their various grasp, nay, resigning it; and did it not look far on to the time when God would also go so far as to wipe away every tear from every eye? Was the joy all round, every eye full of it, every tongue full of it, every ear full of it, every heart full of it; and did not this go far to make it a universal joy? 3. Was it a joy that came of any other parentage than heaven? Did science bring it, or art, or even the glowing glories of creation bathed in golden sunlight? No; God sent it, and Jesus brought it, and the Spirit made it flow full and abound. *This* answers to the heavenly joy. Though one and another individual fell short of the soul's real light and the heart's deepest joy, if the scene looked like an end "of all our woe," it must have looked something like an end of all our "sin," and justly sends on our enraptured anticipations to the time when both shall have vanished in the perfect and eternal joy.—R.

Vers. 9—24.—*The type of one stricken with religion-blindness.* It may be at once allowed that it were difficult to measure with any exactness the amount of moral guilt in Simon Magus. Happily we are not called to do this. That we cannot do it will not hinder our noticing the phenomena of what may well strike upon our own knowledge and our own light as an amazing development of the very obliquity itself of moral or spiritual vision. Confessedly with most various amount and kind of effect does the glory of the natural sun strike on the profusion of the objects of nature. What brilliant effects some of these return! what rich and mellowed effects, others! How do some seem to give out all they have in gratitude's welcome, and others rest in their joy! till, when we come to the range of human life, we can by no means count upon any correspondingly uniform or correspondingly varying responses. Now something within asserts itself greater, more sullen, more given to contraction and resenting of external force than the coldest granite, the gloomiest yew, the dreariest of scenery. Yet these things within men make no such stubborn and successful fight against a whole world's source of light and heat as they do *often* against the pure light of truth, the purer light of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the purest and most vitalizing force of light of all—God in the searching gaze of the Holy Spirit. An early type of this religion-blindness of human nature is before us. Wherever the slightest allowance may possibly be made for the individual in whom it is now illustrated so broadly and undisguisedly, there must the indictment press but the more heavily on the state of fallen nature itself. Let us notice respecting this religion-blindness—

I. IN WHAT IT STOOD SELF-CONVICTED. 1. It was in the presence of the greatest power of heaven that could be on earth, and (to begin with) did not stand in awe of it, nor recognized it as a presence to inspire awe. On occasions of far less direct manifestations of the like great power of God, it had been far otherwise with Peter, and often had it been far otherwise with the miscellaneous multitude; and in particular on occasion of a manifestation of *strong* resemblance to the present—on the day of Pentecost—it was far otherwise with such a multitude. But Simon, a picked man, a taught man, a man acquainted with “mysteries,” is not cognizant of high emotions, of deep stirrings of the moral nature, as were they; but stands there still with covered head, with thoughts that run on business, and with a hand ready outstretched to do business! 2. It was in that presence, with moreover the strongest added symptoms that an unwonted *holiness* attached to it, and yet it was eager and was *presumptuous* to challenge intrinsic responsibilities in partnership with it. Forwardness to rush into responsibilities of the most sacred kind has always meant but one thing, and rarely enough led to any but one end. And yet the forwardness with which Simon may now be charged was not that of hasty impulse, of youth and its inexperience, of inconsiderate rashness. It has to be credited with a much worse and more ingrained genius. It was a calculating eagerness, an old and far too familiar impulse to be longer justly called impulse at all, the unaffected outcome of a heart indurate with self. This sort can surely no further go than when it intrudes its callous candidature for the most sacred partnership that Heaven itself has to name, nor suspects that it is at all specially to blame in doing so. 3. It was in that presence, and dares to offer *money*, that with it may be purchased a share of its most sacred prerogative or own nature. The “corruptible things” of “silver and gold” are proposed as an exchange value for the most incorruptible, living Holy Spirit! Once Judas, for the getting of money to himself, volunteers to be the betrayer of Jesus; but in real fact, human insolence of thought dared a higher flight of incredible audacity when it purposed to part with money for the attempted purchase of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Then not the leader of the rebel angels who kept not their first estate, more really affronted the holiness and the majesty and the sovereignty of God, than did Simon in that thought of his heart and word of his lip. In which lay implicit in part, and in part explicit, (1) the treasonous thought that the sovereign gifts of God could be swayed by human inducement, and (2) the impious thought that money could avail as the inducement. If there be any eye at all which sees but yet sees not the utter disparity between the symbol that makes the exchange value of one earthly thing against another earthly thing, and Heaven's gift most orical, most mysterious, most gracious of all gifts, then that eye is colour-blind with the worst deprivation, it is emptied of its own proper nature, religious rays have vainly struck

upon it, and the light that is in it is darkness—"how great!" Confusion *worst* confounded is therefore at least one motto of the transaction proposed by Simon; for, fearful as was the degree of it, its darkest condemning lies in the *kind* of matter in which it exercised itself (Ps. cxxxii. 1). 4. It was in that presence, and did *not* humbly, earnestly pray for a *personal* experience of its mighty and gracious energy, but only to have the official dignity, the self-exalting dignity, or the literally gainful dignity of being the channel of conducting it to others. What could be more suspicious? What more unnatural? What more hollow, when the question once becomes a question of matter of the highest concernment? How can any man sincerely work for the salvation of another who has never found, never sought his own? How can any man purpose to be the servant of God and of God's Spirit in order to convey spiritual gift and spiritual grace and sanctification to others, if he is not himself in constant and living recipient of the same kind of gifts? Yet many propose this thing unconsciously which Simon proposed in so many most outspoken words. For how often are men glad to think of or even to see the devil cast out of others (Luke x. 20), who have never sought deliverance themselves, and never submitted to the humbling stroke that should break the chain of their own captivity to him! And how many with the lip speak *patronizingly* of Christianity and pray for the spread of true religion, who never illustrate the possession of it? Confessedly there are some outer things which one may be the means of conveying to others by the mere hand, and as the mere deputy of some original giver; *but* as certainly the attempt is as impious as it is impossible in *other* things. The higher you ascend in gift, the more absolute and patent is the inherent impossibility, until, after you have traversed all the ascending realms of mental bestowment and attainments, you reach that realm of pure spirit; crossing over into it, you cease for ever to assume to convey to others, except that "which you have heard . . . seen . . . looked upon, and your hand has handled" in the matter "of the Word of life." It might be that the blind man should pray if haply he might find the way to give sight to other blind—though still most strange if he pray not for himself, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." But if the case be that of a man spiritually blind, who prays and with his prayer offers money that he may be the "chosen vessel" for commanding spiritual light to others benighted as yet, yet prays not for spiritual sight himself, you say he is the most benighted of all, blind indeed, and, short of limiting God's power in the gift of repentance and the grace of his pardon thereupon, you say self-stricken, hopelessly blind! And of this there is every dread appearance in the instance of Simon.

II. IN WHAT IT FOUND ITS PREDISPOSING CAUSES. 1. In a long career of *profession*. Simon's very profession was to make profession. And it was of the very essence of dangerous profession, since it was profession about self. Self was the object as well as the subject. The ill odour in which self-assertion, as a mere individual act, is held is well admitted. But how much worse when this has become habit! worst of all when it has become the bread and livelihood of a man. "Giving out that himself was some great one" sounds the irony of biography. It was all that and more for him. 2. In a professional career that rested on the basis of deception. "Of long time he had bewitched the people with sorceries." Whatever reality there was in the sources from which he derived power to work "sorcery," there was no reality of benefit flowing to a deluded people from his works. When "they all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God," they were "all" the victims of Simon's most purposed and systematic deception. And however much they were to blame, he more by far who prostituted persuasive powers to mislead and to rob his fellow-creatures, instead of to guide and enrich them. By all this, whatever else, whatever harm he did to others, he was effectually branding his own conscience with a hot iron, and putting out his own inner light. 3. In the habitual recourse to *methods* which, so far as they were not mere deception, *were* the result of some sort of league with the powers of evil. Whether this were really so, and if so to what degree it obtained, may be held moot points still; but two things must be said on the subject. (1) That it is hard to escape the conviction that the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testaments purport to say so and to give that impression. And (2) that if it be not proved that in notable periods of mankind's history had men were permitted to be in some real league with the unseen powers of evil and darkness, it is not yet *disproved*. Now, the

tampering with the unseen is ever hazardous, the mere familiarity of that kind dangerous; but disastrous in the highest degree it is to enter into relations with such powers. Samson taken of the Philistines (Judg. xvi. 21) is a type, but a very feeble one still, of that enthralled captive. 4. Yet once more, however badly things were looking for Simon, one thing might have stayed the filling up of the full measure of his iniquities—might have stayed the utter extinction of the moral eyesight; namely, if he had kept well within the domain of his darkened self and career, and not tried that worst attempt, to ally his evil unrenounced to the good. Long had he known the pride, the flattery, the intoxicating effect of a large and enthusiastic following. The hour came when he saw all this slipping away from him, and *he follows*—follows those who once followed him. It is significantly said, that “*then*,” i.e. in the rear, not in the van, “he himself believed also.” But it was no “belief with the heart,” and none “to righteousness.” And every step that he took by the side of Philip, as he “beheld and wondered at the miracles and signs which were done” by him, was a calculating step. He beheld with envious stirrings within; he wondered, and not least, how by any means he might become a sharer of that which he eyed with envy. That moment marked his fall certain. It was the turning-point. This thought filled his sordid ambition, to keep his darkness and get some light to work it to better result. And it was the supreme insult, the last wound to his moral nature.

III. IN WHAT SORT OF CONDITION IT FOUND ITSELF IN THE END. 1. It found for the first part of its reward the most trenchant and unsparring denunciation. This denunciation was just as justice could be, but it was of the severest and most scathing that Scripture records (ver. 20). 2. It brought upon itself uncompromising *exposure*. The character is weighed and declared wanting. The heart is analyzed and is pronounced “not right.” It is brought under “the eye of God” and is ruled wrong by that unerring estimate (vers. 21, 23). 3. It courted the visitation of a humiliating exhortation (ver. 22). Simon had been “baptized,” so that, though he might write under the spiritual inquisition made of him and this spiritual monition addressed to him, he had put himself where he could not refuse to bear stripes. That his submitting to baptism and his continuing with Philip made some demand on his pride, and would bear some traces of patronizing condescension, is very possible; but none the less has he placed himself where the stripe cannot be evaded. 4. It ended the scene in an unmasked acknowledgment of miserable insincerity. Simon vanishes from our view, unregretted under any circumstances, for we cannot say that he was “not far from the kingdom of God;” but none the less so for the unwelcome echoes of his *latest* voice left on the ear. No tide of “repentance” stirs him to the depth; no movement of sweet penitence begins to sway to and fro a yielding heart; no manly attitude in him awakens within us a particle of sympathy for an humbled career; no publican’s prayer and broken-hearted petition for pity and the extended hand of mercy, “strong to save,” part asunder his bloodless lips. All the contrary—a stranger still to his own guilt without a dawning or even dreaming conception of sin’s exceeding sinfulness, he can only find it in him to beg with unreal tone and with cowardly simulation that those who have found him out will pray that *his sins* may not find *him* out. He would fain ask that they take on themselves the responsibility of praying the hypocrite’s prayer, to pray the prayer which it is “an abomination” to pray—that his sins may not be reckoned against him, though unrepented their guilt, unpardoned their aggravation, and unsought any saving shelter for his own soul. Such a prayer *never* rose accepted; it never rose at all; it never had the wing on which to rise. It must needs drop out of view, as Simon now out of *our* view, into the uncovenanted, unknown.—B.

Vers. 26—39.—*A life true to light led to the Light true to life.* From one of the most unwelcome exhibitions of human nature, we are led with grateful relief to an episode full of hope and the very suggestion of sunshine for the world. This alternate light and shade of a written record of human life, which exhibits alike the appearances of a compendious description and a crowded epitome, is so far a very faithful reflection of the tenor of human history. And the faithfulness of the reflection goes some way to tell whose hand held the pencil of such graphic effect. Incident abounds in the paragraph marked by these verses. But it is no disjointed, incoherent collection of incidents. They come together, “bone to his bone,” “sinew and flesh come up upon

them," and "skin covers them above," and they make into a most living whole. These incidents of our history group around two subjects. Let us notice—

I. WHAT IS RECORDED HERE OF A LIFE THAT WAS TRUE TO ITS LIGHT. 1. The subject of this fragment of biography is an Ethiopian. Though a fragment, it conducts to the most critical portion of life, and puts the key of it into our hand. He is a firstfruits of the fulfilment of the prophecy that was written, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God" (Ps. lxxviii. 31); and in the desolacy too rapidly drawing on of Jerusalem, Zion was still to say, "This man was born in her" (ver. 28; Ps. lxxxvii. 5). The Ethiopian cannot "change his skin," but God can change a darkened heart, and this he is doing. By what route the Divine ray of light reached the Ethiopian's mind we know not, but that in man's deepest darkness that light oftentimes loves most suddenly to spring up, we do know. He was not one who had been brought up in the light of revelation, but was now following that which was given him. 2. The subject of this fragment of biography was a man of peace, doubtless of wealth also, "of great authority," and with near relations of office to royalty. Yet he is an instance of exception to the tyrannical entanglements of the "cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things entering in to choke the Word." He is not of those rich of whom it is said by unerring lips, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" He *strives* to enter in, and strives at the right time. He is not leaving it till too late—the "too late" of those who "shall seek . . . and not be able." This, again, was obeying and being very faithfully ruled by the light that was in him. 3. The subject of this fragment of biography is come upon using the advantages of his position, state, wealth, for direct religious ends. He has been to Jerusalem to worship. He is returning. He has by his resources of money and of influence possessed himself of the Scriptures, or a portion of them, comparatively so difficult to obtain; and while yet on his journey he is reading them. He is dwelling on what he has heard read in Jerusalem, and is referring to something that had fixed his attention and wakened his wonder. Air, and light, and sun, and movement of the chariot, and presumably voices of some attendants, are playing disregarded upon his senses, while his soul is communing with itself and the things written in that scarcely understood Scripture—all interested. He is scarcely outside; he is crossing the threshold in the very porch of the living Church—of God's own glorious temple and manifestation of truth to man. He is reading in "Esaias the prophet;" and is reading in "the place" of places, where "some soft hand invisible" has guided his eye. The sacred parable of some six *centuries* old—but which, within the last some six *months*, has, unknown to him, blossomed for a mission of perpetual youth—has arrested him. He reads and wonders and inquires, "Of whom speaketh the prophet *this*—'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'?" The man who has got to that "story," sacred story, sweet story, strange story, and can't pass it, won't pass it, but lingers over it, muses it, asks in the very spirit of prayer for its interpretation, looks very like a man who is *not* putting out his light, *not* dishonouring it, but is following it and on the way to improve it and find it brighter. 4. Arrived a very little further in knowledge, the subject of this partial biography is resolved without an unnecessary moment's delay to "make profession." Let him belong to what nation he may, let him wear what livery he may, let him jeopardize what splendid place of earthly promotion he may, he will take the Name of Christ. He has found the truth, and he recognizes it, and not an hour will he lose or risk his "part and lot in the matter." His "heart is right in the sight of God," and it is because God's light has come to be in him. What light he had he followed, and it "shone upon the road that led him to the Lamb;" and he was satisfied, and "went on his way rejoicing."

II. WHAT IS RECORDED HERE OF UNSEEN AND UTTERLY UNSUSPECTED AGENCIES AT WORK BEFRIENDING THE ETHIOPIAN. There *were* such agencies, and this is first to be noticed. It is plainly written where it *can* be written, that it may be the better understood and believed in the times innumerable when it cannot be written. Life flows on often apparently by *itself*; but what unthought-of tributaries there are to its stream! Or, if they are thought of and even seen, how little is made of them, with how little faith or devoutness are they mused over! Nay, even when acknowledged as *providences*, the

utterance of that word seems to discharge all debt connected with it. It is not treated as a sacred symbol of untold depth and breadth, and a mercy of meaning only thinly veiled beneath it. 1. We may be very sure that the eunuch would have been first to desire to acknowledge the help that he had received from Philip. What he may have thought of his sudden appearance, of his placing himself so as to overhear his reading of that sacred scroll, and of his addressing to him the somewhat gratuitous question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" we know not, but evident it is that he both courteously and gladly received the proffered intrusion, nor regarded it as intrusion. He was well repaid. Philip expounds to him the Scripture, and "preaches to him Jesus;" and soon after is the minister to him of baptism, and nor asks nor takes fee or reward, but, so soon as his service is fulfilled, *he* has vanished. Was all this chance? If the Ethiopian thought it was, or did not think it *was not*, it may be in some measure forgiven alike to his education and *want* of education. But he does not strike us as the man certain to fail or likely to fail in matters of spiritual discernment. Be this as it may, we know that there was no chance about it, but distinct design and preparation. So this visible human contribution of help, gratefully received and no doubt unstintedly acknowledged in the heart of the Ethiopian, owned to an unseen friendly power. It was a notable instance of a "stranger" being "unawares an angel." And our human friends, and the visits of their sympathy, their voice to encourage, or to exhort, or to rebuke, may often be "angels' visits." Pity two things—(1) that they are not *in fact* more often so; and (2) that we do not oftener recognize them and use them as such, when they are in truth so ordained. 2. More remote still, there was friendly agency, unknown, unsuspected by the man who took all the benefit of it. Philip himself did not come; he was sent. And the Ethiopian's greater and devouter thanks belong to him who *sent*. So it was once that there was "no eye to pity, no arm to save." And the majesty and sovereignty and might of highest heaven interposed. And to these behind and above all *means* and methods and "instruments," belong the glory, gratitude, and endless praise. The "angel of the Lord" (ver. 26) appeared to Philip, and told him the way in which he should go; and Philip went, obedient, unquestioning, though there was room for two or three questions. Like Abraham, "he went," presumably (ver. 29), at present, "not knowing" *why* he went, though he did know the unpromising "desert" *where*. And this was no chance, nor was it what happened as a sign and wonder in the one solitary history of this Ethiopian. It is what often is taking place. It is *in* human life, not deserted, forsaken, "despised" of God, to be also often befriended, and most graciously befriended by him. 3. A third friendly interference is vouchsafed in the behalf of the Ethiopian. Philip has reached "the way from Jerusalem to Gaza;" and probably he knows the "desert" heat and drought, and the unrefreshing barrenness of the route. And he is going to cross the path of the traveller's chariot, or rather be left behind of it and *miss* it. We need not suppose that Philip was not wishful to be "instant in season and out of season." But for whatever reason, he needs the direction of "the Spirit" (ver. 29), and that Spirit interposes and instructs and commands. These are of the gracious Spirit's chiefest functions—to *arrest*, to *inform*, to *command*. And still it is all for the help of the unwitting Ethiopian travelling from the worship of Jerusalem, using well even travelling-time, and living true to such light as he had. The fuller day was near at hand for him. Long time, perhaps, had glimmering rays been straying in, and he had wondered what they meant, and they had made him long for more light and feel for it with many a groping. Thus "he that seeketh findeth." Full conviction, full satisfaction, full faith and peace and joy are his reward (ver. 39).—B.

Vers. 1—4.—*Providence making missionaries.* The disciples of the Lord Jesus were to be missionaries, going everywhere and preaching his gospel to every creature. But they were to begin at Jerusalem, and there wait for "the promise of the Father"—the Divine endowment of the Holy Ghost. Then they were simply to follow the openings of Divine providence and the impulses and leadings of the Divine Spirit. They evidently at first scarcely understood what their work was, or how it was to be begun. Prejudices hindered them; difficulties blocked their way; it would seem to them that their lives would be imperilled by exciting public attention to them; and on the day of Pentecost they were simply borne beyond themselves and above their fears, and

were led to speak, freely and bravely, all they knew of Christ's resurrection and power to save. At first their witness was rendered in Jerusalem, and they waited on Providence for further guidance. The way for more extended work presently opened, but it was in very strange and unexpected ways. Out of seeming disaster and discomfiture came the plain indication of what their missionary work was to be.

I. PERSONAL PERIL CAME. The Revised Version gives the better reading of ver. 1: "There arose *on that day* a great persecution." It would seem "that the crowd which stoned Stephen outside the gate rushed back with its blood up, or, as Calvin says, like a wild beast which has once tasted blood, and throw itself there and then upon the company of brethren who, perchance, had met to pray secretly in their upper room for the brother who before men was playing so well his honourable and perilous part." The wild things which an excited mob will do have received abundant illustration in all ages, and recent illustration in the partial destruction of Alexandria. But the Christian disciples had more than this to fear. Such riotings of mobs last, at the most, but a few days. The Sanhedrim had now determined to persecute, and, if possible, destroy, the Nazarene sect; and from their systematic efforts, the disciples could only gain safety by flight. "A favourable juncture had come for the bigots," but it was, in the ordering of God's providence, the favourable juncture for commencing missionary work. We must always seek to judge, not what peril, suffering, persecution, or the arresting of our work may *seem to be*, but what they *prove to be*, when they have come fully under the Divine overrulings.

II. ESCAPE FROM THE PERIL SCATTERED THEM. Broke up the daily meals and the life in common; made the apostles hide away out of reach; and drove the disciples into the country districts—into Samaria, where Jewish fanatics would hardly venture, and even away as far as Damascus, where we subsequently find Ananias. It is remarkable that at this time the persecution does not seem to have reached the apostles, and it has been suggested that it was directed against that section of the disciples which followed Stephen, and attacked, in greater or less degree, the Mossic system. Dean Plumptre says, "It was probable, in the nature of the case, that the Hellenistic disciples, who had been represented by Stephen, should suffer more than the others." Missionary records contain many illustrations of persecution making opportunity. The scattering was limited at first to the neighbouring districts, but it started the missionary idea, and then the whole world was felt to be the sphere for the missionaries of the cross. Show how travel, migration, and commerce have scattered men over the world, and made providential openings for Christian work. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth" is illustrated in these early disciples.

III. THEY TOLD OF CHRIST WHEREVER THEY WENT. The persecution opened their mouths, made them bold, filled them with fervour and zeal; the silent ones now preached the glad tidings. Persecution puts new life and energy into the persecuted. Things die out if left alone, that grow into power if we attempt to crush them. Men learn to value things which others would forcibly pluck from them. The weakness of our modern witness to Christ is mainly due to the general acceptance of our message. We should speak it nobly if we had to suffer or to die for it. Then the "lips of the dumb would speak." Trouble and calamity and difficulty made the first missionaries, and it has made the best ever since. Impress that the Christian law is this—wherever the providence of God may lead you or drive you, *be there for Christ.*—R. T.

Ver. 3.—Intense against Christ may become intense for him. The indications given in this verse of Saul's intensity should be noticed; he added personal cruelties to judicial severity, manifested almost an insane ferocity and wanton brutality, as he afterwards acknowledged (ch. xxvi. 11). The grounds of Saul's prejudice against Christ and Christianity should be carefully traced, as the nature of his mistaken sentiments helps to explain the entire change of his thoughts and conduct when Christ spoke to him from heaven. A Pharisee such as Saul would have a general offence against Christ (1) as having deluded the people, and led them away from their proper teachers; (2) as daring to claim the Messiahship, when he was known to be only a poor Nazarene carpenter. But he would have further and deeper grounds of offence in the facts (3) that Jesus had openly opposed and endeavoured to discredit the Pharisee class to which he belonged; (4) that Jesus was proved to have wrought sham

miracles by the fact that he could not deliver himself from the cross; and (5) that it was a public insult to the intelligence of the people for these disciples to go on asserting that this crucified impostor had risen from the dead, and had ascended to heaven, and was now showing signs of his Divine power. Saul thought he had a plain case and good grounds for his persecuting zeal; and so he had, assuming that his view was correct. But, suppose he was wrong, and Jesus after all was Messiah? Suppose it could be shown him in a moment that Jesus was alive and exalted? Then the very foundations of all his arguments were plucked away, and a new impulse urged him to consecrate himself, once for all, to the service of Jesus the Nazarene.

I. THE INTENSITY OF AN IMPULSIVE CHARACTER. Illustrate from the Saul who was the first king of Israel; from incidents in the life of the Apostle Peter, and from the later story of Saul, or Paul. This intensity often does good service; it overleaps difficulties which hinder the quieter and calmer class of men. It bears others along on its own tide of impetuosity. It becomes holy boldness, wise enterprise, and steadfast endurance when it is duly toned, sanctified, and guided by the indwelling Holy Ghost. There is more or less of impulsiveness in each of the apostles of whom anything is narrated. James and John followed the impulse stirred by the Master's call, and left their fisher-work and fisher-folk, to become servants of Christ and fishers of men; and an impulsive spirit is sealed in the surname which our Lord fixed upon them. Matthew seems immediately to have obeyed, and left the receipt of custom, when the Master touched his heart with the call, "Follow me;" and it was evidently in the intensity of deep feeling that he gathered his friends to a parting feast. Thomas speaks impetuously, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails . . . I will not believe;" and still more impetuously he cries, "My Lord and my God," when constrained to believe by the condescending grace of the Redeemer. Peter represents to us the exaggeration of impulsiveness; and he never reveals his character more fully than when smitten down, penitent and broken-hearted, because of the second cock-crowing and the Saviour's reproachful look.

II. THE WEAKNESS OF THE IMPULSIVE CHARACTER. This finds expression in such things as: 1. A disposition to overvalue mere religious feeling. 2. To take up new ideas or new schemes, under the urgings of sentiment rather than sound judgment. 3. A tendency to give up schemes with as little thought as they were taken up. 4. A foolish expectation that every one must be as intense as the impulsive one is. 5. And an inability fairly to estimate the reasons that make slow progress alone safe and sure. In the Christian life, as in common life, seasons of undue elevation are sure to be followed by seasons of undue depression, and such seasons are very disappointing and humiliating. St. Peter illustrates the weaknesses of the impulsive. Our Lord had even to reprove him severely.

From Saul, or Paul, may be shown the solid excellence of character which the naturally impulsive man may gain when piety, principle, and noble sentiments come to rule and guide and tone his impulses. Some of the grandest sentences of St. Paul's Epistles are the utterances possible only to a sanctified man of intensity and strong impulses; e.g. Phil. i. 21—23.—R. T.

Ver. 5.—Preaching Christ. The expression here used is a frequent one in the Acts of the Apostles; e.g. "preaching the gospel;" "preached the Word;" "preaching peace by Jesus Christ;" "ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ;" "preaching the Lord Jesus;" "Jesus whom Paul preached;" "according to the preaching of Jesus." The proper idea of preaching is "heralding," "proclaiming," declaring a message; and the old prophets of Judaism were true preachers; so were the angels at Bethlehem, and so was John the Baptist. Philip the evangelist went to Samaria, where there was quite as intense an expectation of the Messiah as could be found among the Jews, and to the Samaritans Philip proclaimed that Messiah, or Christ, had come, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and that his resurrection—which was abundantly proved—was the crowning attestation and proof that he was the Christ, the Son of the Most High God. What is involved and included in "preaching Christ" may best be found by the consideration of a few illustrative cases. 1. Christ preached himself to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus; and his points were the necessity for the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent resurrection, and the absolute truth of the

Messiahship and Lordship of Christ. 2. Christ's command, "Go into all the world," etc., sends us back to the announcement of the angels at Bethlehem; they preached a Saviour, not a salvation. 3. The apostles preached Christ at Pentecost, and at the healing of the lame man, and declared Jesus as both having died and risen again, and being exalted with present saving power. 4. Stephen preached, in his defence, the Messiahship and death of the Lord Jesus, closing with a firm declaration that he was risen. 5. Philip preached unto the eunuch, and his subject was Jesus the Key to the prophecies, suffering and triumphant. 6. St. Paul preached to the Philippian jailor, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The peculiarity of the early preaching evidently was the presentation to men of a personal, living Saviour, with whom men may have personal dealings for their full salvation. Then true preaching must present a living Christ to men as having done all *for* them, able to be all *to* them, and to do all *in* them, and so the true preaching of Christ covers his whole redemptive work. Preaching Christ sets him forth before men in his *cradle*, on his *cross*, and with his *crown*.

I. IN HIS CRADLE. Or, Christ in incarnation, the Divine Man. This is the mystery of Bethlehem. It may be shown (1) that the Man Christ Jesus reveals God to man, and man to himself; (2) gives example of the human life that can alone be acceptable to God; and (3) is the assurance of the Divine sympathy with sinning, suffering man. He "took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham," and "being found in fashion as a man" he is able to save us men.

II. ON HIS CROSS. Or, Christ in sacrifice, the Divine Sufferer. This is the mystery of Calvary. A suffering Saviour shows: 1. The intensity of sin: its utmost effort crucified him. 2. The helplessness of sin. It did its worst, and was defeated. "It was not possible that he should be holden of it," A suffering Saviour: 3. Attracts men. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." No persuasions can so urge and win men as those that come from the cross where our Sin-bearer died. 4. Removes out of the way the hindrances to our fellowship with God. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

III. WITH HIS CROWN. Or, Christ in triumph, the Divine King. This is the mystery of Olivet. The kingly Jesus is: 1. The ἀρχηγος, Leader of his people, "the Captain of their salvation," their Bringer-on. 2. The Head and Lord of the new kingdom, "exalted to give repentance and remission." "Head over all things to his Church." 3. The Bestower of the Holy Spirit, which is his present inward agency, himself abiding with us and in us.

So we preach Christ, the *Man*; the Divine Man; ours, our Brother; and with this preaching we arouse interest in him. We preach Christ, the *Sufferer*, who draws us to himself in sympathy and love. "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." We preach Christ the *King*, and bid you bow down now and submit to his gracious and holy reign.—R. T.

Vers. 9—13.—*Warnings from Simon Magus.* "His name indicates a Jewish or Samaritan origin." He appears as the type of a class but too common at the time—that of Jews trading on the mysterious prestige of their race and the credulity of the heathen, claiming supernatural power exercised through charms and incantations. For other illustrations, give account of Elymas (ch. xiii. 6); the "vagabond Jews, exorcists," at Ephesus (ch. xix. 13); the so-called Simon of Cyprus mentioned by Josephus; and Apollonius of Tyana. Explain the state of the times; men were thoroughly dissatisfied with the empty formalities of religion, and were sick of the routine demands of rabbinical traditions, and were more or less distinctly yearning and crying for the spiritual. Their thought and feeling laid them open to the influence of the sorcerer and juggler, who appeared to be possessed of mysterious and spiritual power. "All over the known world, the nations were at that critical hour in history agitated by a vague unrest and a feverish anticipation of some impending change. Everywhere men turned dissatisfied from their ancestral divinities and worn-out beliefs. Everywhere they turned in their uncertainty to foreign superstitions, and welcomed any religion which professed to reveal the unknown. Along with this came a strange longing to penetrate the secrets of the world, to communicate with the invisible. To persons in this expectant and restless condition there could be no lack of prophets. Asia bred them, Egypt ripened them, the West swarmed with them."

I. SIMON'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF A DIVINE FORCE IN CHRISTIANITY. The degree of his sincerity in professing belief and submitting to the rite of baptism needs careful consideration. He may have been carried away by feeling. He may have been guileful throughout, and only seen a higher force in the power of the apostles than he knew of, and designed to get the control of this force for his own purposes. Or the two may have blended. He may have been carried away. At first he may have sincerely taken up with Christianity, but soon yielded to a guileful spirit, which suggested that a splendid fortune could be made out of the new force. But whatever Simon's motives may have been, we have from him an important testimony to the genuine persuasion and power accompanying the early preaching, and to the truth of the miraculous powers exerted by the apostles. Simon well understood the ways of sorcerers and jugglers, and he knew and openly acknowledged that the apostles were not such. Show the importance of the testimony to Christ and Christianity rendered by those outside, and even opposed, such as Rousseau, Napoleon, J. S. Mill, etc.

II. SIMON'S MISTAKE IN PROFESSING BELIEF IN CHRISTIANITY. Because true discipleship is no mere profession, no sudden excited impulse, no vanishing sentiment, but a sober, calm judgment, a full and hearty surrender, an entire consecration of heart and life to Christ. Simon did not sit down first and count the cost. Simon had no idea of taking a lowly place in Christ's service. He wanted still to be "some great one." He was "weighed in the balances, and found wanting," when Christ's testings came. "He that would be great among you, let him be your servant." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." Show with what mistaken notions men take up the Christian profession now, and how certainly life tests and tries them, and they fail in the testing day. Simon's faith had not a moral, only an intellectual basis. He expressed no compunction for having deceived the people and blasphemed God. The whole ethical side of Christianity, its power of bringing man into peace with God, and of making man like God, was shut against him. For that he had no ear. Against that his heart was closed. He believed, therefore, *without being converted*. Impress how the money-getting spirit had so hardened Simon's mind that it was difficult to gain access for the Christian truth and claims. "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!"—R. T.

Vers. 14—17.—The gift of the Holy Ghost. There are signs of an impartation of the Spirit by the apostles which we do not appear to understand fully, because it differs from any impartation of the Spirit with which we have experience. The apostles were enabled to repeat for their disciples their own experience. They were first called to discipleship and then endowed for work. So those to whom apostles preached were first brought into the new kingdom by faith and confession, and then sealed and entrusted with particular gifts for service by the Holy Spirit of promise. The apostles were at first the only agents through whom this further gift of the Spirit came. How far they were permitted to pass this agency in the giving of the Spirit on to their successors has been a matter which the various sections of Christ's Church have regarded differently. Two things require study and consideration.

I. THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF THIS GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. It was evidently regarded as essential to the full standing of the Christian. A man must be converted and sealed. St. Paul found at Ephesus some disciples who knew only John's baptism, and he asked them this, as a searching, testing question, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" as if this alone could be accepted as the assurance of their full Christian standing. The gift or endowment may be regarded. 1. In relation to the apostles as agents. They never assumed that the gift came from them; it only came through them. God might have sent his Spirit directly and apart from any human agency. Probably he used the human means in order that the source whence the gift came should be recognized and men should not treat it as an accident, but as a trust; also that its connection with Christ should be recognized, and the use of the endowments in Christ's service should be realized. It was a bestowment entirely within the Christian limits. 2. In relation to the believers, who were the recipients of the gift. It was a sealing them as Christ's. It was a taking of them over to Christ's service. It was a solemn conviction that a new and Divine life was in them, and so a sublime urging to purity of life and an ennobling assurance of all-sufficient present grace for

whatever they had to do and whatever to bear. It was a holy rest for personal feeling; they were plainly accepted of God. It was a holy urging to Christly labours; they had the powers, they must find their spheres. 3. In relation to the Church, which was benefited by the various endowments as calculated to meet all its various needs. These points assume that the indications of the Spirit's coming on the disciples were such as we find at Pentecost. There was some gift of tongues, or preaching, or praying—some outward sign which all could realize. Show that if the Spirit now comes to the believer in quieter modes, no essential difference is made in the purpose of his coming. He is with us now to comfort us with assurance of full salvation; and to inspire and guide us in the devotion of our powers to the service of others and of the Church.

II. THE MODE AND ORDER OF THIS IMPARTATION OF THE SPIRIT. Observe that it is never regarded, any more than the early Church miracles, as an independent act of the apostles. It is only effective: 1. *After prayer*, which puts the apostle in right frame to become the agent or medium, and which directs public attention away from the apostles to the real source whence the gift comes. 2. *On the laying on of hands*. A significant act, by which the vital force filling the apostle seemed to stream forth into the disciple, and the recipient shared in the Divine Spirit-life. If some indication of a gift, talent, or endowment appeared, as a consequence, it need not be anything new; it might be the characteristic quality or faculty infused with new life and energy. But in those days no man received the Spirit apart from some sign of *force for service* in the Church. This Simon noticed, and it set him upon evil thought. And still God's Spirit comes on prayer, is recognized by the spiritually minded, and is the energy for all holy labours.—R. T.

Vers. 27—39.—The inquiring proselyte. Give some account of Ethiopia, of the queen of that day, of the office the eunuch occupied, and of the probable means by which he had been made a Jewish proselyte. He was one of those men among the heathen who had been awakened to spiritual anxiety by the ever-working Spirit of God. He may have had some Jewish connections, through whom he had come to know of Jehovah. We can recognize in him: 1. An inquirer. 2. A spiritually awakened inquirer, one who had come to see that his own personal relations with God were matters of extreme importance. 3. A wise seeker, who had found the revealed Word of God, and was searching it in full confidence that therein was the "eternal life." To such a seeker help will never be long withheld. "God waiteth to be gracious." Philip was divinely guided to meet the eunuch on his return from the holy city, and to join him in the chariot just when he was hopelessly puzzled with his reading. The passage which engaged his attention was one which opened up the applications of truth to sinful souls. The great chapter of the evangelical Isaiah deals with human sins, calling them transgressions; and it discloses that wonderful scheme of Divine wisdom and love by which those transgressions were vicariously borne, and borne away. Philip preached unto him Jesus, who "was wounded for our transgressions," on whom the "Lord laid the iniquity of us all," whose "soul was made an offering for sin;" who now saves his people from their sins; from the penalty of their sins, by the virtue of his great sacrifice, from the power of their sinfulness by the cleansing energies of his Holy Spirit. With opened soul the eunuch listened, and the truth dawned upon him; Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, was revealed to him. He believed the record, and longed at once to seal in baptism his faith and love to the crucified One. He thus simply declares his faith, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." What was this eunuch's faith? and can we learn from him what the saving faith is? Evidently it was a simple acceptance of and confidence in the testimony rendered by Philip to Christ, based as the testimony was upon the revealed Word of God. And that is faith still—receiving the record which God hath given us of his Son, and acting on the record. Faith is the great difficulty in the way of seekers, yet, when it is won, it seems strange that so simple a matter should have hindered. Some of the expressions and figures of Scripture may help us.

I. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO APPREHEND OR LAY HOLD OF HIM. As St. Peter, sinking in the waters, put out his hand and grasped the offered hand of Christ, so our souls, sinking in sin and despair, by faith *lay hold* of the strong, rescuing Saviour.

II. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO RECEIVE HIM. As the imprisoned debtor welcomes

and receives the man who brings into his cell the money of his ransom, so our souls, by faith, welcome and receive him by whose precious blood we have been bought out of our prison-house of sin.

III. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO BOLL OUR BURDEN UPON HIM. To shift the weight of all the trouble and anxiety from our own shoulders, and let Christ bear it all for us; as one might do who had an important trial coming on, but trusted the whole matter to his skilful lawyer-friend.

IV. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO APPLY TO HIM. As the hungry and the thirsty apply for food and drink, so the hungry soul applies to Christ for the bread which, if a man eats, he lives for ever.

V. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO COME TO HIM. To flee to him as the villagers flee into the strongholds before invading armies; as the doomed man fled into the sanctuary to lay hold of the horns of the altar, or as the man-layer fled before the avenger of blood to gain the shelter of the city of refuge. So the soul enters the stronghold of Christ, takes sanctuary with Christ, passes within the gates of Christ, the Refuge for the sinner.

VI. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO LEAN UPON HIM, TO STAY UPON HIM, as we lean upon a staff for support. Christ is the strong Staff, on which the soul, with all its eternal interests, may safely lean; Christ is the healthy, strong Friend, on whom the sick, fainting, weary soul may wholly rely.

VII. TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST IS TO ADHERE TO HIM, TO CLEAVE TO HIM. As the drowning man clutches so must we graap, cling to, cleave to, the Lord Jesus, binding the soul to him as with everlasting bands. With so many and so simple illustrations, how well you may be urged now—even now—to believe on the Son of God, and find the pardon he speaks, the life he gives, and the love with which he will make you his own for ever!—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*Testing the impulse to confession.* The eunuch knew how his own proselytism had been sealed. When he accepted the Jewish faith, he *made confession* of it by the rite of baptism. So now, when he had accepted a new faith, his first impulse was the desire to seal it by a renewal of the rite, and the site of the water reminded him of the possibility of making his confession of Christ there and then. Though ver. 37 is not found in the Revised Version, and may be only an editor's explanation that has crept into the text, we may be quite sure that Philip would not baptize the eunuch in response to his impulsive request without some such test as this—a test which would bring out whether his faith was whole-hearted and sincere. He must know if his belief was *belief with all the heart*. On this test, which needs to be still put to would-be confessors, we may dwell.

I. BELIEF OF THE HEART IS THE BELIEF OF SINCERE CONVICTION. A man becomes intellectually convinced that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. That conviction may come by very different agencies adapted to individuals. Mere *ideas* never urge to faith, *convictions* do.

II. BELIEF OF THE HEART IS THE BELIEF OF DEEP FEELING. The intellectual grasp of truth is not enough. The sense of sin and the gratitude for salvation urge the outgoing of trustful affections towards the Saviour.

III. BELIEF OF THE HEART FINDS EXPRESSION IN PRACTICAL RESOLVE. First an entire decision for Christ; then a full and unreserved consecration to him; then a turning round of our whole life to his obedience, and a daily devotion of our powers and talents to his service. But this belief with the heart is no mere fitting association of the first act of confession; it needs to be daily maintained, growing knowledge of Christ giving fuller apprehensions of him, and our hearts lovingly responding to all we can learn and know. *Heart-belief* alone can ensure the active, noble, and self-denying Christian life.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IX.

Ver. 1.—*But for and, A.V.; breathing for breathing out, A.V.; threatening for threatenings, A.V.* Threatening and slaughter. The phrase *ἐμπνέω ἀπειθήσ, κ.τ.λ.*, is rather a difficult one, and is variously explained. Schleusner takes the genitives in “threatening and slaughter” as genitives of the thing desired, “panting after threatening and slaughter” (comp. Amos ii. 7). Meyer explains it as “out of the threatenings and murder [in his heart] breathing hard at the disciples”—an expression indicating passion. Alford, taking nearly the sense of the A.V., makes “threatenings and slaughter” to be as it were the very material of his breath, whether breathed out or breathed in. Considering that *ἐμπνέω* means “to breathe in,” as distinguished from *ἐκπνέω*, “to breathe out,” and that these two are opposed to each other in Hippocrates (see Schleusner), the A.V. *breathing out* cannot be justified; nor is it likely that “Luke the physician” would forget the distinction. The difficulty is to explain the genitive case of “threatenings” and “slaughter.” The high priest; probably the same person who is so described in ch. vii. 1 (where see note). If the year with which we are now dealing was the year A.D. 35, Caiaphas was high priest. But Alford, Lewin, Farrar, and others place Saul’s conversion in A.D. 37, when Theophilus, son of Annas or Ananus, was high priest (Chron. Table in Alford’s ‘Proleg. to Acts’).

Ver. 2.—*Asked for desired, A.V.; unto for to, A.V.; any that were of the Way for any of this way, A.V.; whether men, etc., for whether they were men, etc., A.V.; to for unto, A.V.* To Damascus. No special reason is given why Damascus is singled out. But it is clear from vers. 10 and 13 that there was already a considerable number of Christian Jews at Damascus. And this, with the fact of there being a great multitude of Jews settled there, was a sufficient reason why Saul should ask for letters to each of the synagogues at Damascus, directing them to send any Christians who might be found amongst them hound to Jerusalem to be tried there before the Sanhedrim. There may have been thirty or forty synagogues at Damascus, and not less than forty thousand resident Jews. Of the Way; *i.e.* holding the doctrine of Christ. Thus in ch. xviii. 25, 26, the Christian faith is spoken of as “the way of the Lord” and “the way of God.” In ch. xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 14, 22, it is called, as here, simply “the Way.” Evidently, therefore, for a time “the Way”

was the term by which the faith of Christ was spoken of chiefly, perhaps, among the Jews. The term means a peculiar doctrine or sect. Its application to Christians apparently lasted only so long as Christianity was considered to be a modification or peculiar form of Judaism, and its frequent use in the Acts is therefore an evidence of the early composition of the book.

Ver. 3.—*It came to pass that he drew nigh unto for he came near, A.V.; shone for shined, A.V.; out of for from, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 4.—*Fell upon for fell to, A.V.* Some, as Lord Lyttelton and Lewin (‘Life of St. Paul,’ vol. i. p. 48), from the expressions, “fell to the ground,” “fell to the earth,” infer that Saul was “himself mounted, and his followers some mounted and some on foot.” And Farrar also, for other reasons, supposes that Saul and his companions rode horses or mules. The journey, he says, was nearly a hundred and fifty miles, and the roads rough, bad, and steep; and Saul was travelling as the *legate* of the high priest. Still it is strange that no one expression should point distinctly to the party being on horseback, which “falling to the earth,” or “ground,” certainly do not. While, on the other hand, the phrases, “Arise,” “stood speechless,” “led him by the hand,” seem rather to point to his being on foot. Lange well compares the double invocation, Saul, Saul! with those similar ones, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Samuel, Samuel!” “Jerusalem, Jerusalem!” “Simon, Simon!” (Gen. xxii. 11; 1 Sam. iii. 10; Matt. xxiii. 27; Luke xxii. 31).

Ver. 5.—*He for the Lord, A.V. and T.R.* The rest of ver. 5 in the A.V., “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks” and the first part of ver. 6, “And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him,” are omitted in the R.T. They have, in fact, no manuscript authority (Meyer; Alford); and not much patristic authority, or from versions, and are omitted by all modern editors. They seem to be taken from the parallel narratives in ch. xxii. 8—10; xxvi. 14. The proverb, “It is hard,” etc., is only found in ch. xxvi. 14 (where see note).

Ver. 6.—*Rise, and enter into the city for Arise, and go, etc., A.V.*

Ver. 7.—*That journeyed for which journeyed, A.V.; the voice for a voice, A.V.; beholding for seeing, A.V.* Speechless; *ἔνεολ* (or rather *ἐνεολ*) is found nowhere else in the New Testament, but is not uncommon in the LXX. (e.g. Isa. lvi. 10) and in classical Greek. Here it means speechless from terror, struck

dumb. The description here given by St. Luke seems to be contradictory in two particulars to St. Paul's own account in ch. xxii. 9 and xxvi. 14. For St. Paul's companions are said here to have "stood speechless;" but in ch. xxvi. 14 they were "all fallen to the earth." Here they "hear the voice," but in ch. xxii. 9 they "heard not the voice of him that spake." It is obvious, however, that in such descriptions all depends upon the particular moment of the transaction described which happens to be uppermost in the mind of the speaker or writer at the time, and the particular purpose in relation to which he is giving the description. Thus at one moment the spectators might be standing dumfounded, and at the next they might be prostrate on the ground, or *vice versa*. Either description of their attitude would be a true one, though not true with regard to the same moment. Again, if the purpose of the speaker was to affirm that the whole company were conscious of both the vision and the sound of a voice speaking, but that only Saul saw the Divine Speaker, the description "hearing the voice, but beholding no man" would be the natural one. Whereas, if the purpose was to express that Saul alone heard the words spoken to him by the Lord, the description of his companions, "They saw indeed the light . . . but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me," would be equally natural.

Ver. 8.—*Nothing for no man*, A.V. and T.R.; *and for but*, A.V. Nothing (οὐδέν for οὐδένα). So the best manuscripts and editions. The idea is, not like that in Matt. xvii. 8 that when he opened his eyes the person seen in vision had disappeared, but simply that his eyesight was gone, "for the glory of that light," and he could see nothing, but had to be led like a blind man (see ch. xxii. 11).

Ver. 9.—*Did neither for neither did*, A.V. The same reason, we may venture to think, which caused the interposition of three days' blindness between Saul's conversion and his baptism, led Saul himself to pass those days in a voluntary self-abasement. His sin in persecuting the Church of God and its Divine Head, his guilt in assisting at the death of God's saints, and in rejecting the testimony to Christ's resurrection, had been very great. These three days of blindness and of fasting were therefore a fitting preparation for the grace of forgiveness about to be so freely and fully given to him (1 Tim. i. 12—16). What thoughts must have passed through Saul's mind during those three days! Before passing on, it may be well to observe that it is to this appearance to him of Jesus Christ that St. Paul undoubtedly refers when he says (1 Cor. ix. 1), "Have not

I seen Jesus Christ?" and again (1 Cor. xv. 8), "Last of all, he was seen of me also," where he puts this appearance of Jesus to himself on a par with those to Peter and James and the other apostles, which made them competent witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. And so in ver. 17 of this chapter Ananias says, "The Lord Jesus which was seen by thee" (ὁ ὁφθεὶς σοί); and Barnabas (ver. 27), when he brought Saul to the apostles, related "how he had seen the Lord in the way." And in ch. xxii. 14 Ananias says, "God hath appointed thee to see the Righteous One." Moreover the description in ver. 7 of Saul's fellow-travellers, that they "saw no man," implies, by contrast, that Saul did. The reticence of both St. Paul and St. Luke as to what he saw, and what was the appearance of the Lord Jesus, seems to arise from profound reverence and awe, such as St. Paul speaks of in 2 Cor. xii. 4. It may be also worth remarking how this appearance of Christ was deferred till he was quite close to Damascus, according to one tradition only a quarter of a mile from the gates, but according to Porter, whom Farrar and Lewin follow, at a distance of about ten miles, at a village called Caucab. So the intervention of the angel by which Isaac's life was spared was not till Abraham had the knife in his hand to slay his son; and Peter's prison doors were opened not till the very night before he was to have been brought forth to death. Faith and patience are thus strengthened, and God's intervention is more marked. There is not the slightest trace in the narrative of what the fancy of many has suggested, that Saul's uneasy conscience was wrought up into a paroxysm as he approached Damascus, and so prepared the way for the vision of Christ. Even Canon Farrar's eloquent description of what he supposes to have been the thoughts which agitated Saul's mind on his eventful journey seems hardly to rest on any solid base (see 'Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. ch. x.).

Ver. 10.—*Now for and*, A.V.; *and the Lord said unto him for and to him said the Lord*, A.V. Behold, I am here. The regular Hebrew answer (Gen. xxii. 1; 1 Sam. iii. 4, 6, 8, etc.).

Ver. 11.—*To for into*, A.V.; *named for called*, A.V.; *a man of Tarsus for of Tarsus*, A.V. The street; *βύμη*, usually the narrower lanes in a town as distinguished from the *πλατεῖαι*, or wide streets. So Luke xiv. 21, "The streets and lanes of the city," and the LXX. in Isa. xv. 3, couple *πλατεῖαι* and *βύμαι*. Here, however, the term applies to the principal street of the city, which runs quite straight from the east to the west gate, and is a mile long. It still exists, and is called the Sultany Street; but instead of being the wide and splendid street it was

in the apostolic age, a hundred feet wide, with colonnades separating the two footways on the side from the central road, and adorned with a triumphal arch, it is contracted into a narrow mean passage (see Lewin, vol. i. p. 69).

Ver. 12.—*He hath seen for hath seen in a vision, A.V. and T.R.; laying his hands for putting his hand, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 13.—*But for then, A.V.; from many for by many, A.V.; did for hath done, A.V.* Ananias's answer shows his profound astonishment, mixed with doubt and misgiving, at the commission given to him. It shows, too, how the news of Saul's commission had preceded him, and caused terror among the disciples at Damascus. Little did Ananias suspect that this dreaded enemy would be the channel of God's richest blessings to his Church throughout all ages until the coming of Christ. How empty our fears often are! how ignorant are we where our chief good lies hid! But God knows. Let us trust him.

Ver. 14.—*Upon for on, A.V.* That call upon thy name. So also ver. 21; Rom. x. 12, 13; 1 Cor. i. 2; and above, ch. vii. 59, this same phrase describes the believer who makes his prayer to the Lord Jesus and trusts in his Name for salvation.

Ver. 15.—*A chosen vessel (comp. Gal. ii. 15, Rom. ix. 21, 22). To bear my name before the Gentiles (see ch. xxii. 21; xxvi. 17, 18; Rom. xv. 16; Gal. ii. 7—9, etc.) and kings (ch. xxv.; xxvi.; 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, with reference to Nero), and the children of Israel.* The Gentiles are named before the children of Israel, because St. Paul's special call was to be the apostle of the Gentiles. But we know that even St. Paul's practice was to preach Christ to the Jews first, in every city where there were Jews.

Ver. 16.—*Many for great, A.V.* St. Paul's whole life was the fulfilment of this word of Christ (see 2 Cor. xi. 23—27; vi. 4—10).

Ver. 17.—*Departed for went his way, A.V.; laying for putting, A.V.; who appeared for that appeared, A.V.; which thou camest for as, etc., A.V.; mayest for mightest, A.V.* The laying on of hands is the medium of conveying any special grace. Here it precedes the baptism, and was the channel of restoring sight to his eyes. Doubtless he did not receive the Holy Ghost till after his baptism (see ch. ii. 38).

Ver. 18.—*Straightway for immediately, A.V.; as it were for as it had been, A.V.; received his sight for received sight forthwith, A.V. and T.R.; he arose for arose, A.V.* As it were scales (*λεπίδες*); scales, or flakes; any thin substance which peels off; a frequent term in Greek medical writers. And was baptized. It is a curious difference between St. Paul and the other apostles

that, if they were baptized at all, which is doubtful, they must have been baptized by Christ himself; whereas St. Paul received his baptism at the hands of Ananias. This is one mark of his being "born out of due time." And yet he was not behind the very chiefest apostles.

Ver. 19.—*He took food and for when he had received meat he, A.V.; and he was for then was Saul, A.V. and T.R.* Some commentators would interpose the journey to Arabia (mentioned Gal. i. 17) between vers. 19 and 20; and this seems to be the intention of the A.V., where the clause commencing with *Then* (ver. 19) seems to wind up and close the preceding narrative. This too is the view strongly supported by Canon Farrar, vol. i. ch. xi., and by Lewin. Alford places the journey to Arabia in the time comprised in ver. 22; others before ver. 22; Neander, Meyer, and others, in the time comprised in the "many days" of ver. 23. And this last is undoubtedly the easiest, were it not for the considerations urged by Farrar with great force as to the probability of St. Paul seeking a period of retirement after his conversion before commencing any public preaching, and the further countenance given to this view by Gal. i. 17, where St. Paul certainly says of himself that *εὐθέως, immediately*, after his conversion he "went away to Arabia." Taking all things into consideration, and supposing that either Luke was not aware of the sojourn in Arabia, or that he omitted from his notes some brief notice of it immediately preceding the description of Saul's preaching in Damascus, which explained the following *εὐθέως*, it seems best to understand the latter part of ver. 19 and all that follows as subsequent to his return from Arabia; and to conclude that he only stayed at Damascus *ἡμέρας τινάς*, a few days, after his conversion, and then retired to Arabia. It may be observed, too, that this interpretation gives a significance to the mention of the "certain days" which otherwise it has not. There is a further difference of opinion as to what is meant by *Arabia*. The most common view is that *Auranitis*, bordering upon Arabia Deserta, and reckoned as part of Arabia, not above two days' journey from Damascus, is the country meant. But others understand it in its more strictly Hebrew sense of the Peninsula of Sinai (Farrar, vol. i. p. 212, and Excursus ix.; Dean Howson on Galatians in 'Speaker's Commentary'; Bishop Lightfoot on Gal. i. 17). This view is decidedly strengthened by the fact that, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul clearly means by *Arabia* the Peninsula of Arabia, where Sinai was (Gal. iv. 25). On the assumption that the Sinaitic Peninsula is meant, Bishop Light-

foot says, "He was attracted thither by a spirit akin to that which formerly had driven Elijah to the same region. Standing on the threshold of the new covenant, he was anxious to look upon the birthplace of the old; that, dwelling for a while in seclusion in the presence of the mount that burned with fire, he might ponder over the transient glories of the ministration of death, and apprehend its real purpose in relation to the more glorious covenant which was now to supplant it." His journey to Arabia need not necessarily have occupied more than two or three months. It seems certain that he did not preach there, because he says (ch. xxvi. 20), "I declared to them at Damascus first," etc. (see another coincidence between the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians in ch. xiii. 2, note).

Ver. 20.—*In the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus for he preached Christ in the synagogues, A.V. and T.B.* The preponderance of manuscript authority, and the *ὁνομα* of ver. 21, and the *ὅτι οὐτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός* of ver. 22, seem conclusive in favour of Jesus rather than Christ. As regards the expression straightway, we must understand it as descriptive of Saul's action upon his return from Arabia. Is it possible that St. Luke uses it with the same meaning as he may have heard St. Paul use it in when speaking of his Damascus preaching, in the same sense as St. Paul actually does speak in Gal. i. 17, viz. as expressing that he did not wait for authority from the apostles, but at once, fresh from the Divine call, and having a direct commission from Christ himself, entered upon his apostolic ministry? If the Epistle to the Galatians was written A.D. 58, it would be just about the time that St. Luke joined St. Paul, and might be commencing to collect materials for his history. So that the phrase in the Galatians and the phrase in this twentieth verse might really be the expression of one thought committed to paper by St. Paul on the one hand, and uttered in the ear of Luke on the other. It is a confirmation of this view that in 2 Corinthians, written about the same time, there is also an account of Saul's escape from Damascus. In the synagogues; the very synagogues (ver. 2) to which the letters of the high priest were addressed, empowering him to arrest either man or woman who called upon the Name of Jesus, and bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem to be tried before the Sanhedrim. No wonder they were amazed.

Ver. 21.—*And for but, A.V.; that in Jerusalem made havoc of for that destroyed them (which called on this Name) in Jerusalem, A.V.; and he had come hither for this intent for and came hither for that intent, A.V., differently stopped; before for unto, A.V.*

The chief priests. The plural seems to mark how the high priesthood at this period was passed from one to another. Caiaphas, Annas, Jonathan, and Theophilus would all be included under the term.

Ver. 22.—*The Christ for very Christ, A.V.* The repetition of the phrase *ὅτι οὐτός ἐστιν* (vers. 20 and 22) is remarkable. As already observed, it presupposes the mention of Jesus, of whom it is thus predicated that he is both "the Son of God" and "the Christ" (comp. ch. ii. 32, 36; iv. 11, etc.). Observe the incidental proof of the general expectation of the Jews that Christ should come in this description of the apostolic preaching as directed to the one point that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ.

Ver. 23.—*When for after that, A.V.; took counsel together for took counsel, A.V.* The phrase many days is quite elastic enough to comprehend whatever time remained to make up the three years (Gal. i. 18) which St. Paul tells us intervened between his conversion and his visit to Jerusalem (see ver. 43; ch. xviii. 18; xxxvii. 7; xiv. 3). Luke frequently uses *καιώς* for "many" (Luke vii. 11; viii. 27; xxiii. 9). So in Hebrew, *ימים רבים*, many days, is applied to considerable portions of time. In 1 Kings ii. 38, 39, it is applied to three years.

Ver. 24.—*Their plot (ἐπιβουλῆ) became known for their laying await was known, A.V.; to Saul for of Saul, A.V.; the gates also for the gates, A.V. and T.B.; that they might for to, A.V.; a colon instead of full point at end of verse.*

Ver. 25.—*But for then, A.V.; his disciples for the disciples, A.V. and T.B.; through for by, A.V.; lowering him in for in, A.V.* Lowering him, etc. The A.V. gives the sense freely; and combining the verb *καθῆκαν* with the participle *χαλάσαντες*, translates both by the one word "let him down." The *by* of the A.V. seems preferable to the *through* of the R.V., as *through* suggests the idea, which cannot be intended, of making a hole in the wall. The escape of the spies from Jericho, as described in Josh. ii. 15, was exactly in the same way, except that they had only a rope to descend by, whereas St. Paul had a rope-basket. In the description of his escape given by St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 33), he uses the same word for "let down" (*ἐχαλάσθη*), tells us he was let down "by the wall." R.V. *διὰ τοῦ τείχους*, with the additional particular that he got out through the window, *διὰ θυρίδος*, and that it was a *σπυρίνη*, a basket made of ropes (which describes the kind of basket somewhat more accurately than the *σπυρί* here used) in which he was let down (see note on ver. 20). The passage in 2 Corinthians gives us a further interesting account of how the

Jews went about to accomplish their purpose of killing Paul. It seems that at this time, either in revolt against the Romans or by permission of Caligula (it is not known certainly which), a certain Aretas, or Hareth, King of Arabia Petraea, included Damascus in his dominions for a time, *i. e.* through the reigns of Caligula and Claudius. He appointed an ethnarch, who was doubtless a Jew, to rule the large Jewish population according to their Law, and who was the ready tool of the unbelieving Jews, using his power as governor to have the gates kept day and night so as to prevent Saul's escape. But he that keepeth Israel neither slumbered nor slept, and by his watchful providence Saul escaped from their hands. As regards the R.V., his disciples for the disciples, Alford adopts the reading λαβόντες δὲ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτόν, and holds αὐτοῦ of the R.T. to be simply a mistake for αὐτόν, caused by the situation of αὐτόν after λαβόντες. The R.T. cannot be right. "The disciples" is St. Luke's regular expression for "Christians" (ch. vi. 1, 2, 7; ix. 10, 19, 26; xiv. 22; xxi. 16), and is our Lord's name for his followers, but is never used by an apostle of his own followers (see 1 Cor. i. 12, 13; iii. 4—7).

Ver. 26.—*He for Saul, A.V. and T.R.; and they were for but, etc., A.V.; not believing for and believed not, A.V.* The narrative thus far exactly agrees with Gal. i. 17, 18, which, however, supplies the motive of the journey to Jerusalem, which is not here mentioned, *viz.* to see Peter. It seems strange to some commentators that the news of Saul having become a zealous Christian should not have reached Jerusalem after an interval of three years. But first, we do not know how much of those three years was spent in Arabia, nor how much the unsettled state of Damascus may have interrupted the usual communication between Jerusalem and Damascus, nor how suspicious of evil the poor persecuted disciples at Jerusalem may have been. They knew of the fierceness of Saul's zeal as a persecutor by their own experience; they knew of him as a disciple only by report. It may have been only an instance of the truth of Horace's maxim, "Segnius irritant animos demissa per aures quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus."

Ver. 27.—*How at Damascus he had preached boldly for how he had preached boldly at Damascus, A.V.* As regards the statement that Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, which some have thought inconsistent with Gal. i. 18, 19, it is obvious to remark that St. Luke's account is fully justified by the fact that St. Paul did, on Barnabas's introduction, make the acquaintance of Peter, and, as it

seems, pass fifteen days as his guest (Gal. i. 18); and while there, did also see James the Lord's brother. The other apostles were probably absent from Jerusalem during that fortnight; but Barnabas did, it seems, at a Church assembly, in the presence of James and, no doubt, the elders of the Church, give the astonishing narrative of Saul's conversion. This removed their suspicions and their fears, and he was freely, during the rest of his brief stay, admitted as a brother to their assemblies, and took part in preaching the gospel in the synagogues.

Ver. 28.—*Going in for coming in, A.V.*

Ver. 29.—*Preaching boldly, etc., the and of the T.R. is omitted, and this clause connected with the preceding one; the Lord for the Lord Jesus, A.V. and T.R.: he spake for he spake boldly, A.V.* (The παρρησιαζόμενος (translated preaching boldly) ἐν τῷ ὄνοματι Κυρίου, is in the R.T. separated from ἐλάλει); *the Grecian Jews for the Grecians, A.V., as in ch. vi. 1; to kill for to slay, A.V.* The Grecian Jews; or, *Hellenists* (margin). St. Stephen was a Hellenist, and it was among the Hellenists that his evangelical labours chiefly lay and from whose enmity he met his death. Saul showed his dauntless spirit, and perhaps his deep compunction at the part he had taken in Stephen's death, by thus encountering their bitter and unrelenting enmity.

Ver. 30.—*And when the brethren knew it for which when the brethren knew, A.V.* St. Paul gives another reason for his hasty departure from Jerusalem in his speech from the castle stairs (ch. xxii. 17—21). *Cæsarea, when standing alone, means Cæsarea Stratonis, or Παρδάλιος, or Sebaste, the seaport and Roman garrison of that name, as distinguished from Cæsarea Philippi (see Alford's note on ch. viii. 30), and is always so used by St. Luke (viii. 40; x. 1, 24; xviii. 22; xxi. 8, 16; xxiii. 23, 33; xxv. 1, 4, 6; xxvii. 1, 2, showing it was a seaport).* There is no reasonable doubt that it means the same place here. A seaport, near to Jerusalem, and with Roman protection, affording access to Tarsus either by sea or land as should seem best, was the natural place for Paul's friends to take him to. If further proof were wanting, it could be found in the phrase, "brought him down," as compared with the converse, "gone up" (ch. xviii. 22), "ascended" (ch. xxv. 1), when the journey was from Cæsarea to Jerusalem. To Tarsus. A glance at the map will show that, starting from Cæsarea, a person might either go by land along the sea-coast of Phœnicia, through Aere, Tyre, Sidon, Beyrout, Tripolis, Antioch, Issus, to Tarsus; or by sea to any of the intermediate ports between Cæsarea and Tarsus, or rather the

artificial harbour at the mouth of the Cydnus which formed the seaport of Tarsus. It is not improbable that Paul landed at Seleucia, since he says (Gal. i. 21) that he came at this time "into the regions of Syria and Cilicia," which is exactly what he would have done if he had landed at at Seleucia, the seaport of Antioch.

Ver. 31.—*So the Church . . . had peace, being edified for then had the Churches rest, . . . and were edified, A.V. and T.R.; was multiplied for were multiplied, A.V. and T.R.* It is thought that the attention of the Jews to the progress of the faith of Jesus Christ was diverted at this time, and their active hostility stayed, by the still greater danger to the Jews' religion which arose from Caligula's intention of placing a statue to himself as a god in the holy of holies. Thus did God's gracious providence intervene to give rest to his harassed saints, and to build up his Church in numbers, in holiness, and in heavenly comfort. Especially Paul had another breathing-time, which may have been the more required if, as is thought, one at least of the five scourgings mentioned in 2 Cor. xii. 24 had been inflicted at Damascus, and one of the three shipwrecks alluded to in the same passage had been undergone in the dangerous coating voyage from Cæsarea to Seleucia.

Ver. 32.—*Went for passed, A.V.; all parts (δὴ πάντων) for all quarters, A.V.* All parts. Alford, following Meyer, understands "through all the saints," which is scarcely so well. The current of St. Luke's narrative is here temporarily diverted from St. Paul, in order to trace that portion of St. Peter's apostolic work, which led immediately to that opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles in which Peter was to have the priority in point of time (Matt. xvi. 18, 19), but Paul the chief burden of labour and danger (Gal. ii. 7—9; Rom. xi. 13), and which was also the main subject of St. Luke's history. He came down; Lydda (afterwards called Diospolis, now Ludd), being more than half-way between Jerusalem and the sea-coast at Joppa.

Ver. 33.—*For he was palsied for and was sick of the palsy, A.V.*

Ver. 34.—*Healeth thee for maketh thee whole, A.V.; straightway he arose for he arose immediately, A.V.* Jesus Christ healeth thee. The juxtaposition, *ἴσθαι σε ἴησους*, looks almost like an intentional play upon the sound. Some of the Fathers who did not know Hebrew derived the name ἴησους from *ἰδομα*, and the Anglo-Saxon name for the Saviour Hælend, the Healer, seems to have the same origin. Arise and make thy bed. Not (says Meyer), "Henceforth make thine own bed," but, as the force of the imperative aorist requires, *make thy bed*

now, both as a token of his miraculous cure, and that he might carry it away (Mark ii. 9—12). *Æneās* is a Greek name, not identical with *Æneās (Aivelas)*, but occurring in Thucydides and elsewhere. If it was a Hebrew name, it might be derived from אֵנַי, ("who is) the eye spareth." It is uncertain whether *Æneās* was a disciple or not.

Ver. 35.—*In Sharon for at Saron, A.V.; they turned for turned, A.V.* In Sharon. The Greek represents the Hebrew שָׂרֹן, *Sharon*, which is the name of the rich plain which stretches from Joppa to Cæsarea (see Isa. xxxiii. 9). The name still lingers in the village of Saron. They turned; manifestly an improvement on the A.V., as giving the sense of *ἀόρτες*, viz. that all who saw the paralytic walking, turned, as a consequence, to the Lord, in whose Name the wonderful miracle had been wrought. A very extensive conversion of the people of Lydda and of Sharon is signified.

Ver. 36.—*Joppa; now Jaffa, the ancient seaport of Jerusalem (Jonah i. 3; 2 Chron. ii. 16). It was in the tribe of Dan (Josh. xix. 46). A certain disciple; a female disciple, as the word means; μαθήτρια only occurs here in the New Testament and rarely elsewhere. Tabitha; the Aramean form of the Hebrew תָּבִי, a gazelle, or in Greek Dorcas. The beauty and grace of the gazelle made it an appropriate name for a woman. Some have thought, with probability, that she was a deaconess of the Church. The thirty-eighth verse shows that there was already a Church at Joppa. About half the population of seven thousand are said to be still Christians. Compare the qualifications of a widow as set forth by St. Paul (1 Tim. v. 10). The phrase, good works, is quite Pauline (Eph. ii. 10; Col. i. 10; Titus ii. 7; 1 Tim. ii. 10). Almsdeeds. The word *alms* (from *ἐλεημοσύνη*) is one of those Greek words which has been domiciled in the English language through the Church. So *bishop, priest, deacon, Κύριε ἐλέησον, trisagion, stole, Paschal, Litany, Liturgy*, and many others.*

Ver. 37.—*Fell sick for was sick, A.V.; and when they had washed her for whom when they had washed, A.V.* For the phrase in these days, comp. ch. vi. 1. The days here meant are those while Peter was in those parts. An upper chamber (*ὑπερόβιον*), as in ch. i. 13. The upper chamber was much more private and quiet than a room on the ground floor (see 2 Kings iv. 10, 11).

Ver. 38.—*As for forasmuch as, A.V.; unto for to, A.V.; the disciples, hearing . . . sent for and the disciples had heard . . . they sent, A.V.; two men unto him for unto him two men, A.V.; entreating for desiring, A.V.; delay not to come on unto w*

for that he would not delay to come to them, A.V. and T.R. It is impossible to say whether any vague hope that Dorcas might be restored to life by Peter's prayers animated those who sent for Peter, and who had either seen or heard of the miracles wrought by him at Jerusalem before the persecution (ch. v. 15), or whether it only was that they felt the need of comfort and support in so great a sorrow. Two men; so ch. x. 7. Cornelius sends two of his household servants (comp. ch. xiii. 2; xv. 22). In unsafe times and by dangerous roads, it was customary to send two messengers, both for mutual protection and that, if anything happened to one, the other might still deliver the message. It was also a security against fraud.

Ver. 39.—*And for them, A.V.; and when for when, A.V.* All the widows. The article may denote all the widows for whom Dorcas had made garments, which the middle voice (*ἐπιδικρύνεσαι*), found only here, indicates perhaps that they had on them at the time. But it is quite as probable that *αἱ χήραι* means the Church widows, as in ch. vi. 1 and 1 Tim. v. 9, and that we have here an indication that the model of the Jerusalem Church was followed in all the daughter Churches. Dorcas's almsdeeds would naturally have for their first object the widows of her own communion. As naturally would they all come to meet the apostle at her house.

Ver. 40.—*Turning for turning him, A.V.; he said for said, A.V.* Peter's action in putting them all forth seems to have been framed on the model of that scene at which he had been present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus (see Luke viii. 54 [T.R.]; Matt. ix. 25; Mark v. 40). Privacy for the more earnest concentrated prayer was doubtless what he sought. Kneeled down; *ὄπισθ' ἑστὰ γόνατα*. The same expression

as in ch. vii. 60; xx. 36; xxi. 5; Luke xxii. 41. It occurs also in Mark xv. 19. Tabitha, arise. Exactly the same address as our Lord's "Talitha cumi" (Mark v. 40), but, as Lange observes, with this difference, that in the case of Peter it was preceded by prayer; comp. also Luke vii. 14 (where the Aramean address was probably in the same form); John xi. 43.

Ver. 41.—*Raised for lifted, A.V.; calling for when he had called, A.V.; he presented for presented, A.V.* The saints and widows; by which we learn that others of the Christians of Joppa besides the widows had come to meet Peter, as was to be expected.

Ver. 42.—*It became known for it was known, A.V.; on for in, A.V.* As in ver. 35, the result of the healing of the palsied man at Lydda was that very many "turned to the Lord," so here the like effect was produced at Joppa by the restoration of Dorcas to life. Many believed on the Lord. And St. John tells us (xx. 31) that the very purpose of the record which he wrote of the miracles of Christ is "that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we may have life in his Name."

Ver. 43.—*Abode for tarried, A.V.* Many days (*ἡμέρας ἱκανάς*); the same phrase as ver. 23; spoken of a time of indeterminate length. Here probably it means some months, during which Peter would be evangelizing the whole neighbourhood. The Jews are said to have considered the trade of a tanner unclean; but if this were so, it would not be safe to infer that Peter was already indifferent to ceremonial uncleanness. We know he was not so (ch. x. 14), but probably in his line of life he could not act up to all the nicer distinctions of the strictest Pharisees.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1—31.—*The Ethiopian changes his skin.* Of all the remarkable events in the history of human psychology, probably the most remarkable is the conversion of St. Paul, the memory of which is continually celebrated in the Church on the 25th of January. It may be viewed—

I. AS AN EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY. St. Paul lived. He preached the gospel with astonishing vigour and success. Numerous Churches were founded by him in Asia and Europe. These are facts as certain as facts can be. He wrote Epistles also to different communities of Christians, and these writings are extant at the present day. By these writings we can form an accurate judgment of St. Paul's intellectual faculties, of the force of his character, of the extent of his knowledge. By these writings we can form an estimate of his moral qualities. We can judge for ourselves whether, on the one hand, he was a fanatic, an impostor, or a knave; and, on the other, whether he was one of the noblest, sincerest, and most high-minded men with whom we have ever come in contact. These writings, besides exhibiting an unquenchable zeal for the Christian faith, lasting through years of toil and suffering,

tell us also distinctly, though incidentally, of a time when the writer was as vehemently opposed to the Christian faith as he afterwards became attached to it. They contain, too, clear evidences of that education in the Jews' religion, and that impregnation with Jewish doctrine and tradition, which were likely to have had the same influence upon his mind which the same causes had upon the minds of so many of his ablest and most learned fellow-countrymen. They also display those qualities of disinterestedness, courage, and decision, which make it to the highest degree improbable that he should have changed his mind lightly or without conviction of due cause for doing so. But he did change from a vehement and fierce persecutor to a preacher of unrivalled zeal and power, and a daily martyr of unsurpassed patience and constancy. But these same Epistles also tell us, still incidentally but also still distinctly, the cause of this change. It was nothing less than the visible appearing and the audible voice of the Lord Jesus Christ himself, of him whom he knew to have been crucified, but whom he now saw and heard in his effulgent glory, living and potent in ineffable majesty. It was that sight, too bright for mortal eyes, and that voice of exquisite tenderness in its complaint, which had in an instant overborne his unbelief and melted his obdurate heart, even as his body was swayed in terror to the ground. Did St. Paul know, or did he not know, the cause of his conversion? Did he invent a lie, or did he speak the truth, when he wove this history, or allusions to it, into his Epistles to the Galatians, the Corinthians, the Philippians, and Timothy? But even if it were possible to doubt the man whom we know as we know St. Paul, we have his account corroborated and developed by a contemporary writer of unimpeached and unimpeachable accuracy and truth. He gives us in this chapter his own account of this wonderful conversion, and he reports to us two several accounts of it given by St. Paul himself—when on his defence before the people at Jerusalem, and again when on his trial before King Agrippa at Cæsarea. Did St. Luke write a lie when he reported these utterances of his noble and saintly friend? or did he speak the truth which he had such abundant opportunities of accurately knowing? There is no fact in history more certain than St. Paul's conversion, and there is no more unanswerable evidence of the truth of Christ's gospel than this same conversion grounded upon the revelation in the way to Damascus.

II. WE MAY SEE IN ST. PAUL'S CONVERSION VIVIDLY PORTRAYED THE LEADING DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. What was it which arrested the persecutor in his furious course, which turned back the whole current of his thoughts, which wrought in him that noble inconsistency, that holy apostasy from his previous convictions, which have placed him at the head of Christian teachers and confessors? It was the clear knowledge conveyed to him by his own senses of sight and hearing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was risen, was alive, was glorified. He knew that he had been tried at the bar of Pilate, condemned, crucified, buried. He had thought that sentence a just one. He had thought that that life, closed in ignominy and shame, was closed for ever, and that his own Jews' religion had thereby triumphed and been confirmed. Now he knew that God had reversed that sentence, and had raised Jesus from the dead, and declared him in so doing to be his own eternal Son, both Lord and Christ. His previous convictions were thus refuted by the fact of the life and glory and Godhead of the Lord Jesus. The truth of the mission of Jesus Christ was thus in an instant established by irrefragable proof. Henceforth Jesus Christ was his Lord, his Guide, his Teacher, his Master, his almighty Saviour. Henceforth his own body and soul, his life, and all his powers, his whole capacity of doing and suffering, were Christ's, wholly and only Christ's. Here then we see, as in a glass, what our own religion must be. It must consist in a full assurance of faith that Jesus Christ is risen and lives for ever in the power of his Godhead, and in the consecration of ourselves to his service in the power of a personal love, devotion, and attachment—those of a person to a Person—to last while life lasts, and to be perfected in the life beyond the grave.

III. THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL GIVES US ALSO A VIVID PICTURE OF THE MIND AND CHARACTER OF GOD, AS THEY SHINE IN THE FACE OF JESUS CHRIST. This is St. Paul's own view of it: "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1 Tim. i. 16). We have here a *pattern* of the

infinite, eternal mercy of God. The threatening and slaughter of the persecutor are met and overcome by love. The ignorance and unbelief which caused the blasphemies and injuries are taken note of, and these are weighed in the scales of mercy and are forgiven. The electing grace, the predestinating love, brushes aside these obstacles, and the blaspheming tongue is made eloquent with adoration and praise, and the breath which was once all threatening and slaughter now breathes nothing but the word of peace and salvation. Such is the mercy and wondrous grace of God our Saviour.

IV. WE HAVE HERE A STUDY IN PSYCHOLOGY. Ignorance may be real. Prejudices, blinding prejudices, may be real, and unbelief may have some excuse, or at least some palliation. It is not, indeed, blameless—it never can be, because the single eye of a pure heart ought always to discern the true light from Heaven wheresoever it shines. Still, it may be that, with real conscientiousness, and under a mistaken view of duty, and with a blinding devotion to certain tenets of philosophy or religion which have been received without due care, and concurrently with a zeal for God and for supposed truth, a man may reject and even hate the truth. He may mistake his own opinions for Divine truth, and so be bitterly opposed to whatever opposes them. And he may misconceive of the truth and ignorantly believe that it sanctions this or that error inconsistent with the fundamental principles of righteousness and godliness. Had St. Paul from the first really known Jesus Christ, and had he known the worthlessness of Levitical or Pharisaic righteousness, he would never have been found in the ranks of the enemies of Christ. But he acted in ignorance and in unbelief. When the scales fell off the eyes of his understanding, the rebound of his spirit toward his Lord was instantaneous. From this we learn a lesson of caution in judging even the unbeliever. There may be some cause of his unbelief which we know not of, but which God knows, and will perhaps some day remove. Then the sceptic will come with a bruised and humble spirit to Christ, and the Ethiopian will change his skin.

Vers. 32—43.—*The fisher of men.* “The Church had rest,” we read in ver. 31, “throughout all Judæa and Galilee.” Not so the primate of the Church. The Church’s rest from persecution was his season of work. A brief glimpse of his work may be edifying to us. We saw something of his ministry at Jerusalem in the earlier chapters of this book—preaching, praying, praising, healing, protesting, resisting, suffering, perplexing his enemies, exhorting and comforting the saints. We saw him carefully building up the Church—baptizing, breaking the bread of life, appointing fresh ministries, repairing the walls of the new Jerusalem with his weapons of war in his hand. We saw him the faithful administrator of the Church’s discipline, her courageous confessor, breasting the storm of persecution at his post, and maintaining the centre of Christian unity with his brother apostles at Jerusalem. Then we saw him preaching the gospel in the villages of Samaria, confirming the baptized, rebuking the hypocrite, and returning to the post of danger at Jerusalem. And now again we see him actively at work. We see his care for all the Churches, his tender anxiety for all the disciples who had been folded in Christ’s fold in those days of danger and alarm, lest the hour of rest and prosperity should bring greater dangers to them than the day of persecution had done. He goes forth into all quarters where any disciples were, and, not content with former conquests, he so wrought by word and deed that many more were added to the Lord. Now he speaks to Eneas the word of healing at Lydda; now he passes on to the chamber of death at Joppa. Always ready with outstretched hand, or speaking mouth, or words of prayer, to fulfil his ministry and be a fisher of men for Christ. Blessed Peter! glorious apostle! great primate of the Church! opener of the door to Jews and Gentiles! we praise God for thy mighty works wrought in the Name of Jesus Christ. We pray him to give more such pastors to his feeble flock, to bind up that which is broken, to bring again that which is driven away, to seek out that which is lost, that there may be once again “one fold under one Shepherd,” and that all they who do confess the Name of Jesus Christ may be united in one communion and fellowship to the glory of his great Name.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*Conversion.* We have here an instance and a picture of conversion—of a human soul pursuing the wrong course, being arrested by the Divine hand, and submitting itself willingly to the rule of Christ.

I. A HUMAN SOUL PURSUING ITS OWN WRONG COURSE. Paul was moving with the whole force of his strong and ardent nature in the direction of active persecution of the friends of Christ (vers. 1, 2, 5). Sin sometimes takes this special form now. More often it takes the shape of (1) guilty indulgence, or (2) utter worldliness, or (3) confirmed unbelief and rejection of the truth, or (4) indecision and procrastination. But whatever particular form it takes, its essential nature is this—that the soul which was created to love, honour, and please God is pursuing another and an opposite path; it is found in highways or byways of evil. It is not with God, with Christ, but against him (Matt. xii. 30). It itself is not in active sympathy with him, rejoicing in him, delighting in his truth and happy in his service; and all the influences, both those which (as in the case of Saul at this time) are the direct result of conscious effort, and those which flow spontaneously and unconsciously from the life, are hostile to his truth and to his kingdom.

II. THE DIVINE ARREST. (Vers. 3—5.) Paul tells us (Phil. iii. 12) that he was “apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Christ laid hold upon him as he was going on his guilty way, arrested him in his own name, and charged him to turn round and pursue another and a better course. The Saviour’s interposition in his case was unusually sudden, and it was exceedingly striking in its form (see vers. 3—5). It is seldom that the hand of the heavenly Lord is laid so manifestly, so powerfully, on the human heart. Yet it is being continually laid upon us, and we now are being arrested by him, with effectual power in redeeming love. 1. Christ’s arrest of us is sometimes sudden, but more often gradual. Sometimes a man who has been proceeding far in some way of folly and of sin is instantly convinced that he is guilty and foolish; in an hour, in a moment, the truth of God flashes into his soul and lights up the dark depths within, and it shines upon and illumines the dreary and fatal path before him, and he stops and turns. More frequently the Lord of love and power works gradually in the heart; by degrees he insinuates his heavenly truth, and gradually makes the soul to see and to feel that the way of selfishness and of sin is a path which must no longer be pursued, from which it must escape for its life. 2. The Divine arrest is sometimes by extraordinary but usually by ordinary means. Occasionally God comes in power to the human soul, by some vision of the night or of the day, or by some very remarkable ordering of his providence, by some experience which is shared by no other or by a very few; but commonly the hand of his renewing power is laid upon us by ordinary means, by the gracious influences of a Christian home, by the appeals of the Christian minister or teacher, by the sickness which brings death and judgment into full view, or by the loss which compels us to feel that we do need and must secure a Divine Friend who can succour and console in the drear and lonely hour of life.

III. THE SOUL’S SUBMISSION TO THE DIVINE WILL. The first result of feeling the pressure of the Divine hand may be, perhaps generally is, *spiritual agitation*. We may be “trembling and astonished” (ver. 6), or, if not moved so powerfully, we shall be agitated, earnestly concerned, exceedingly solicitous; we shall be as those thoroughly awakened who have been partially asleep, our spiritual faculty of inquiry will be called into fullest exercise. But the main and all-important result is *spiritual submission*—readiness and eagerness to accept the rule of Christ. The question of Saul will be the question of our heart, now reduced to loyalty and self-surrender, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Christ will tell us that he wants us to *trust* him, to *follow* him, to *work* for him. And these three things we shall gladly do. But the victory is gained, the one supreme step is taken, death is left behind, and the gates of life are before us, when, responding to his merciful and mighty touch, we submit ourselves to his sovereign will, when we turn round in spirit and say, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”—C.

Ver. 6.—*The gods of God.* There is probably some truth in the familiar saying,

"If Stephen had not prayed, Paul had not preached." The influence of the sight of that martyrdom, and especially of that magnanimous prayer, may have had much to do with converting Saul the persecuting Pharisee into Paul the faithful apostle. For what could our Lord have meant by saying, "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads," but that, as it is a vain, useless, and hurtful thing for the yoked ox to struggle against that which is inciting it to its work, so was it a useless and hurtful thing for Saul to be rebelling against those scruples, heart-searchings, convictions, which were urging him to enter a new and better path? This may seem inconsistent with the language which has just been used (ver. 1); but we must remember that vehemence is never quite so violent as when it begins to suspect itself to be in the wrong; that persecution is never so passionate, fanaticism never so fierce, as when it is most impressed with the goodness and innocence of its victim. Your Legree never strikes so murderous a blow as when he finds himself face to face with a Christian hero and feels himself to be thoroughly condemned. So Saul never breathed out such threatening and slaughter as when the sight of Stephen's blood-stained body was still before his eyes, and the sound of his generous intercession still lingered in his ear. But he was beginning to think that, after all, perhaps those Christians were in the right and that he was in the wrong, and that he must either shut his eyes hard against the light or change his course. By violent suppression of these new thoughts, by stifling all scruples with strong hand, by kicking against the goads of God, he found himself on the way to Damascus to worry and harry the servants of Christ. There the Lord whom he was to serve so faithfully met him and told him he was doing a *hard* thing in thus struggling against the Heaven-sent promptings which urged him to take the true and right path.

I. THE PREVALENCE OF INWARD STRUGGLE. Few things more pathetic have come down to us from ancient times than that lament of the Roman poet, "I see the better things and approve; I follow the worse." How many have to make the same sorrowful confession now! Around us are souls struggling (1) with passion, (2) with earthly ambition, (3) with pride, (4) with disposition to wait for some favourable future. These find themselves urged by the goads of God—conscience, the sacred Scriptures, human ministry, the Divine Spirit—to take the better course, but their lower instincts and evil habits cause them to strive against these higher impulses.

II. ITS PROFOUND MISTAKE. 1. It is a *miserable* thing in a man's own experience to be living a life of vice, or worldliness, or selfishness, or indecision, when the soul is conscious of a Divine voice calling it to higher things—to pursue a path which is known and felt to be the wrong one. This is a wretched life to live; there is no peace, no spiritual rest, no lasting joy; there is distraction, discontent, rebellion. It is hard for a human soul to kick against the goads of God. 2. It is a *regrettable* thing, judged from outside. Those who look on—"the cloud of witnesses"—see with unspeakable sorrow a human heart spending its powers and wasting its life in battling with its purer and nobler aspirations. There is no more saddening sight to a Christ-like spirit than that of a human heart thus striving with the influences which come from heaven to raise and to redeem it. 3. It is a *guilty* thing. No man can continue to do that without storing up for himself "wrath against the day of wrath."

III. THE ONE WISE COURSE TO TAKE. There is only one thing for such a man to do—he must yield himself at once to God's gracious forces. He must be the "prisoner of the Lord," that he may become "the freedman of Christ." He must go on whither his Redeemer is urging him—on to full self-surrender; on to sacred and happy service; and so on to the heavenly kingdom.—C.

Vers. 10—18.—*Christ's treatment of us and our obedience to him.* I. THAT CHRIST MAY CALL US TO WORK WHICH WILL BE AT FIRST PERPLEXING. (Vers. 10—14.) Nothing which Christ could have given Ananias to do would have surprised him more than the duty with which he was entrusted. It filled him with astonishment and perplexity. Instead of immediately acquiescing, he raised a strong objection (vers. 13, 14). It seemed impossible to him that this should be his mission; nevertheless it was so, and the obedient disciple of Damascus never did a better morning's work than when he conveyed sight to the eyes and gladness to the heart of the last and greatest of the apostles. We may be summoned by our Lord, either through the promptings of his

own Spirit or through the instrumentality of his Church, to do work which at first seems surprising, undesirable, useless. We may be invited to appeal to those we deem unlikely to welcome us, to address ourselves to apparently unremunerative toil, to cultivate ground which looks sterile to our eye; but it may be that we are really called of Christ to do a most needed and useful work.

II. THAT CHRIST ONLY KNOWS WHAT IS THE RANGE OF OUR SPIRITUAL CAPACITY. (Ver. 15.) There may be very much more of spiritual power resident in us or in our neighbours than we have any conception of. How many have lived and died with vast possibilities of good in their nature never realized! Their talent has been buried. Has not our Master some good or even some great work for us to achieve? May we not, like Ananias, be instrumental in leading forward some servant of Christ who has great capacities of usefulness in him? We must make the most and best of ourselves and of others; only our Lord and theirs knows how much it is in us and in them to accomplish.

III. THAT CHRIST MAY CALL US TO THE HIGHEST POST IT IS EVER GIVEN TO HIS SERVANTS TO FILL. (Ver. 16.) He may summon us to "suffer for his Name's sake." We never reach so lofty an altitude, never come so near to the Master himself, never so nobly serve our kind, as when we willingly and cheerfully suffer for the kingdom of heaven's sake; then we may "rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is our reward in heaven."

IV. THAT THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE IS NEVER MORE TRULY MANIFEST THAN WHEN WE DO WORK FROM WHICH WE SHRINK. (Ver. 17.) When it is in our human nature to shrink from any duty, but when, from regard to our Master's will, we address ourselves to it, then we do that which is acceptable to him. It is at variance with our material interests, against our inclinations, opposed to our tastes and views; "nevertheless at Christ's word we will" do what is desired (see Luke v. 5). Ananias shrinks from approaching the arch-persecutor; nevertheless at Christ's bidding he goes, takes a friendly tone and does a brotherly deed.

V. THAT WE SHOULD AT ONCE ACKNOWLEDGE OUR DIVINE REDEEMER. (Ver. 18.) As soon as the scales had fallen from his eyes and he received sight, as soon as he had been favoured with this further confirmation that he was under the teaching and leading of the Son of God himself, Paul "arose and was baptized." No interval elapsed between the time when he was free to act as one redeemed and healed of Christ, and his action of open acknowledgment of conversion to the faith. We do well to wait till we are thoroughly assured of our whole-hearted reception of Jesus Christ before we confess him before men; but as soon as we clearly see that he is our Lord and that we are his disciples, it is (1) our simple duty, as it is (2) our valuable privilege, to honour our Redeemer by an open declaration of attachment to him, and to join ourselves to his disciples (ver. 19).—C.

Vers. 19—30.—*The texture of human life.* Of how many threads is this human life woven! Through what changeful experiences do we pass, even in a short period of our course! In the brief period—possibly three years—covered by our text, we find Paul undergoing various fluctuations of good and evil. It is suggestive of the nature and character of our common human life. We may gather them up thus—

I. THE PLEASANT. Paul had the pleasure of: 1. Congenial fellowship. He was "with the disciples . . . at Damascus" (ver. 19); "he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem" (vers. 27, 28). Few things shed more sunshine on our earthly path than the genial society of those with whom we are one in thought and aim. 2. Conscious growth in moral and spiritual power in dealing with men. He increased in strength (ver. 22). 3. Fearless action on behalf of the true and right (ver. 29). These are joys, deep and full, to a human spirit—to be growing in influence, and to be playing a brave and noble part in the strife of life.

II. THE PAINFUL. 1. The distrust of those with whom we are in sympathy. Paul "assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were afraid," etc. (ver. 26). It is a very painful wound to the spirit to be distrusted by those to whom we really belong. To have our sincerity doubted, to have our purity questioned, to be looked at askance rather than with kindly and gracious eye,—this is one of the keen, cutting miseries of life. 2. Persecution for conscience' sake (vers. 23, 24, 29). This may go far short of

"seeking our life to take it away;" It may not pass beyond the sneering word or the curling lip, and yet it may introduce great bitterness into the cup of life. 3. Humiliation. Paul never seems to have forgotten the incident of his being let down in a basket (ver. 25). He felt the humiliation of it. Anything which wounds our self-respect makes a lasting, often a lifelong, scar on the soul.

III. THE NEEDFUL. 1. *Solitude*. It is not stated in the text, but we know from his letters that at this juncture (probably between vers. 19 and 20) Paul went into Arabia (Gal. i. 17); there he spent much time alone with God; there he communed with his own spirit, "looking before and after;" there he re-read and read anew the Scriptures which he imagined he understood before, but now found to be other and more than he had supposed. We urgently need this element of solitude. We are not enough alone; more of quiet meditation, of communion with the Father of spirits, of reverent contemplation, would calm, steady, purify, ennoble us. 2. *Social activity*. (Vers. 20, 22, 29.) Whether or not we "preach Christ," "confounding" and "disputing," we must come into contact, and sometimes into collision with men. We need to know how to do this wisely and rightly, at times showing the fearless spirit, at times the spirit of discretion, at times the spirit of conciliation, always the spirit of Christ.

IV. THE ELEVATED. (Ver. 30.) This chapter simply tells us that the brethren brought Paul to Cæsarea and sent him to Tarsus. But Paul himself elsewhere informs us (ch. xxii. 17, 18) that the Lord Jesus Christ manifested himself to him and desired him to leave Jerusalem. We do not look for such trances and visions now, but we do look, or should do so, for manifestations, indwellings, influences of the Divine Spirit of God, so that we ourselves and our whole human life may be guided and sanctified of God. Of such elements are all our lives woven. We must gratefully accept and so sanctify the pleasant, meekly and cheerfully endure the painful, wisely employ the necessary, and reverently avail ourselves of the elevated; thus will our lives be blessed of God, thus will they speak his praise and spread his truth, thus will they lead to his presence and glory.—C.

Ver. 31.—*The opportunity and obligation of the Church*. I. THAT A TIME OF TRANQUILLITY MAY BE AND SHOULD BE A PERIOD OF PROGRESS. "The Churches had rest, . . . and were edified, . . . were multiplied." The time of rest is too often one of inglorious repose, of unworthy indulgence, or even fatal luxury and corruption. But when the molesting hand of persecution is taken away, it is possible for the Church to put forth all its strength—to enter on a path of unflagging activity, of holy enterprise, and of gratifying enlargement.

II. THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD NEVER BE WITHOUT A SENTIMENT OF SACRED AWE. It should always be walking "in the fear of the Lord." Love, trust, joy in Christ, should be the element in which it lives; but it must never take leave of its deepest reverence and awe. It must walk "in fear," (1) realizing the near presence of its observant Lord, the Lord of righteousness and purity (Rev. ii. 1); (2) remembering that it is held by him responsible for the extension of his kingdom, for the conversion of the world (2 Cor. v. 19); recollecting that, if it should lose its sanctity, there is no human power by which it can hope to be restored (Matt. v. 13).

III. THAT THE CHURCH REQUIRES TO BE CONTINUALLY SUSTAINED BY INFLUENCES WHICH ARE DISTINCTIVELY DIVINE. "Multiplied by the exhortation [comfort, ministry] of the Holy Spirit." No perfectness of machinery, no eloquence of human oratory, no promptings of emulation, no pressure of authority, no earth-born influences of any kind or number, will suffice to sustain a Church in living power. It must be multiplied by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It must secure the teaching which is animated by the Spirit of God; it must be listening to the doctrine which is communicated by the Spirit; it must have the indwelling of the Spirit in the minds and hearts of its members; it must be looking to the ever-living power of the Spirit to make all its agencies and operations effectual.

IV. THAT THE CHURCH OF CHRIST SHOULD BE ADVANCING AS A DIVINELY ERECTED STRUCTURE. The Church "was edified," built up; it rose as a structure rises—gradually and in due proportions. The Church of Christ should, in the increase which it makes, possess the characteristics of the best building—it should (1) attain to a stately size,

should "multiply," grow in numbers and in the extent of ground it covers; (2) become more beautiful in aspect; (3) acquire increasing strength.—C.

Vers. 32—43.—*The miraculous and the supernatural.* In these verses we have two instances of the miraculous; and we may consider what was the worth of that element then, and why it has passed away; we may also consider the truth that the supernatural—the directly though not visibly Divine—still abides and will continually endure.

I. THE RATIONALE OF THE CHRISTIAN MIRACLE, wrought in the apostolic age. Then it was (or seems to us to have been) necessary. 1. It was regarded as of the very essence of a new Divine system. Any doctrine which was to supersede the Law, and which did not carry with it the credentials of "wonderful works," would have had no prospect or possibility of success. 2. It was a power of great potency in the age in which it was granted. Witness the text, among many others: "All that dwelt at Lydda and Saron . . . turned to the Lord" (ver. 35); "It was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord" (ver. 42). 3. The early Church had to struggle against fearful odds, and might well be strengthened with a special and exceptional force. It had to contend with inveterate and all but impregnable prejudices, with powerful material interests, with worldly wisdom, with crushing political powers arrayed against it with drawn sword; it was a handful of weak men and women, destitute of resources, "unlearned and ignorant," against a world in arms, against many millions inflamed with passionate hatred or filled with supercilious contempt. At such a stage it might well be reinforced with such help as the miraculous would yield it.

II. THE EXPLANATION OF ITS DISCONTINUANCE. It was a power, very valuable when wisely used, but liable to great abuse. The time might soon come when its presence would be harmful rather than helpful, when Christian men would be disposed to rely on the marvellous rather than the spiritual. That time did come, and it came earlier than we might have thought (see 1 Corinthians). Therefore it was mercifully withdrawn. Its continuance would only have been to leave in the Church's hand a weapon by which it would have wounded itself.

III. ITS NEEDLESSNESS NOW. Now we should be able to dispense with such adventitious aid. 1. The wealth, the culture, the political power, the resources which give strength to human societies, are now on the side of Christian truth. 2. We are equipped with one weapon in particular which serves us instead of the miraculous—scientific knowledge and skill. The principal wonders which the apostles wrought were works of healing or restoring, like that of healing Æneas (ver. 34) and that of restoring Dorcas (vers. 40, 41). Now we are able to go to the heathen, with the Bible in one hand and the pharmacopœia in the other, and thus we can impress, heal, and win them. The medical missionary of the nineteenth century is as well furnished for his beneficent work as the Corinthian Christian of the first.

IV. THE ABIDING PRESENCE OF THE DIVINE. 1. A power, distinctively Divine, still brings the dead to life. A more wonderful and far more blessed work is wrought when, to a soul "dead in trespasses and sins," Christ now says, "Arise," and it "opens its eyes" (ver. 40) to see light in God's light, to behold the truth in its excellency and power. *More wonderful*, because it is a greater work to revive a dead spirit than to resuscitate a dead body—the one act is in the kingdom of the moral, the other of the mechanical; *more blessed*, for eternal life is an inestimably greater boon to impart than the prolongation for a few years of earthly existence. Dorcas had to die again and be again bewailed. 2. A power, directly and positively Divine, still confers spiritual health on those who have been spiritually paralyzed. By his renewing power, by the touch of his own reviving hand, "Jesus Christ makes whols" (ver. 34) those who have been lethargic, indifferent, worldly, idle; and they arise.—C.

Vers. 1—8.—*Saul on his way to Damascus.* I. THE PICTURE OF THE PERSECUTOR. It is almost the picture of a monster. It resembles the idea of the fearful dragon-monster, which breathes forth smoke and flame, and threatens to devour the sun and moon and stars. Saul is inspired by a murderous feeling against the disciples of Christ. He himself afterwards recognized that to persecute them was to persecute him (1 Tim. i. 13). Zeal

for God without knowledge is another of his own descriptions of his state of mind (Rom. x. 2). It leads directly to the devilish love of destruction (John viii. 44). We can distinguish pure from carnal zeal only by the effects: the one impels us to build up, the other to destroy; the one to save men's lives, the other to slay, and making a solitude to call it peace. But there are deep problems in the life of mind. Never is a man madly irritated against an opinion, violent against a cause or a person, but it is a symptom of a struggle within. The man is really at war with himself. A conviction is reluctantly forcing its way upon him; he feels the goads of conscience, and vents his resentment upon objects outside of himself.

II. THE PERSECUTOR CHECKED IN HIS CAREER. Notice the accompaniments of the revelation. They are: 1. *Outward*. A light out of heaven like lightning plays around the persecutor. He falls to the earth like a thunder-struck man. In this position the impressions of the ear come in to enhance those of the eye. A voice is heard calling him by name: "Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?" 2. *Inward*. Saul has no difficulty in putting these things together and drawing the true inference from them. "Who art thou, Lord?" betrays his suspicion, perhaps his certainty, that the voice is that of the crucified One, against whose might he has been striving. And the voice returns, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Then follows the direction to go into Damascus and to await further orders. When the outward phenomena and the inward revelation are so closely interwoven, it is difficult to separate the one from the other, and unnecessary to do so. But the point to fix attention upon is this—that revelation is always in the soul. *How* the new truth comes to us is not of so much importance as what permanent deposit it leaves behind it. "It pleased God to reveal his Son *in me*," said the *quondam* persecutor. The true mystery and wonder lie in the soul; all else is superficial and subsidiary compared with that. By what passes within we may interpret what passes without, but not *vice versa*. This scene is far more impressive and sheds a clear light on the conflicts of our own being, if we see in it a man cast down by the sudden splendour and terror of a conviction against which he had long been struggling. It is said that we never understand a truth until we have striven against it. He whom we have battled against as a deadly foe becomes our lifelong master when we are once fairly defeated at his hands.

III. OTHER MEANINGS IN THE EVENT. 1. *Here was a personal appearance of Jesus*. Jesus lives! This is the thought which comforts his friends, and strikes terror into his foes. "I am he that is, and was, and is to come." "I am the living one!" (Rev. i. 4, 18). Never was this revelation of the living Christ forgotten by Saul. It afterwards became a main subject of his preaching, as it was the core of his creed. The living Christ is, indeed, the expression to us of the living and loving personality of God, of the will to save and to redeem evermore. 2. *It was an appearance of Jesus in glory*. The splendour and terror which surround him bespeak his sovereign might. "Why dost thou persecute me?" It is vain as well as wrong to contend against One to whose holiness and majesty the conscience bears its unerring witness. Saul seemed to think that he was wrestling against flesh and blood when he harried those defenceless Christians; and that by weapons of flesh and blood Christianity might be overcome. But behold the majestic figure of One who comes with clouds. To offer him the show of violence is the extreme of irreverence and of folly. Never was this lesson forgotten. Our sins against our fellow-Christians are sins against Christ. We insult the love that suffered for us, and the majesty that rules and judges us. 3. *Yet it was a revelation of the glorified humanity of Jesus*. Saul saw him and heard him speak (ver. 17; xxvii. 15). The Redeemer glorifies the human form and nature which he wore on earth. Here lay a seed of St. Paul's teaching on the spiritual body which glorified saints are to wear. Earth and heaven, the seen and the unseen world, are for ever joined and reconciled in the body in which he lived, suffered, rose, and reigns. 4. *It was a revelation of exquisite Divine love and grace*. (1) Towards the persecuted. Their sorrows are the sorrows of Jesus. He makes their sufferings his own (Matt. xxv. 45). His exaltation and glory do not lift him out of their reach. He reigns to throw the eagle of his providence and protection over the defenceless flock of his little ones. He is the Head, and all the members are in vital union with him, and receive from the fulness of his life. (2) Towards the persecutor. Sin in its extreme of violence and rebellion is
and the weapons struck from the hands of the rebel—not

by the tyrant's force, but by the gentleness of Divine love. "Where sin had abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. v. 20). 'Tis hard to kick against such goads. Condemnation hardens the rebel in his opposition; gentleness melts his heart and converts him into an ally and a friend. "O Galilean, thou hast conquered!" The conversion of Saul is a type of the whole spirit and method of the gospel. Unlike the kingdoms of this world, which rest on force and must repel violence by violence, it rests on the negation of force, the eternal affirmation of love. It is strong in its weakness, and converts foes into friends by gaining the victory over the intelligence and the conscience.—J.

Vers. 10—19.—Saul and Ananias. I. THE MINISTRY OF MAN TO MAN. After the direct revelation through the terror of the lightning and the thunderbolt, comes the mediate revelation through the familiar voice and manner of one's fellow-man. Ananias is not an apostle; he is a disciple, a member of the Church simply, entrusted with no particular office or position. Possibly the reason for this was that Paul might not be dependent on any of the other apostles. He was, he said, "an apostle, not from men nor by men, but by Jesus Christ." But the general lesson is on the *unofficial* service of Christians to others. Officialism often brings Christianity into suspicion. The genuine service of private Christians is always of value and always an evidence of the Spirit of Christ.

II. THE HOPEFULNESS OF THE ACT OF PRAYER. The good disciple is directed to go to Saul, "for behold, he prayeth!" A pregnant word by which to describe the condition of a converted sinner. He prays; therefore he is no longer a persecutor of Jesus, but a captive of his grace, subject of his love. He prays; therefore his heart is emptied of its former hate towards the brethren, and is filled with meekness and charity. The expression also betokens the gracious mind of the speaker. The Lord looks down with pity on the broken heart prostrate before him in prayer. And the Church are in like manner to turn to him, as one though lost yet found, no longer a foe but a friend. "Behold, he prays!"

III. THE IMPRESSIONS ATTENDING CONVERSION. Saul has seen the messenger of Christ coming in and laying his hands on him that he may receive his sight. It is by its associations that any great event in the outward world or in the mind fixes itself on the memory. Paul was to look back upon those days as an inexhaustible fund of deepest spiritual impressions. He shall be able to say, "I received my office as apostle not from man but from Jesus Christ." He shall be for ever cured of his Pharisaic wisdom and pride of the flesh. He was not reasoned into Christianity, but the living Christ was revealed in him, in ways too manifold and various to be mistaken.

IV. THE STARTLING CHANGE OFTEN INVOLVED IN CONVERSION. Ananias hesitates. The acts of men are standing evidence of their disposition. What safer guide can we have? Yet the Divine voice quells the hesitation of Ananias. Saul is a chosen vessel, instrument, or tool, fashioned by the Divine hand and for the Divine purposes. In the mysterious world of the human heart all things are possible to God—even as elsewhere. The volcanic fire which is working beneath the convulsions of the earthquake is a formative as well as a destructive agent. The passionate outbreaks of a man against a principle or a party are often a sign of internal change going on. Saul was to be fashioned as an instrument for the greatest work, perhaps, ever committed to man—the bearing of the Name, *i.e.* the message and doctrine of Christ to the Gentiles, to confront and shake the powers of the world with the power of the crucified One. Such a missionary must need no common training. He must have known the depths of the evil of his own heart, the heights of redeeming grace. That Christ could conquer the proud and stubborn Pharisee, and turn Saul into Paul, was a prophecy of the nature of his progressive conquests over mankind.

V. CHRIST'S CHOSEN ONE CHOSEN FOR SUFFERING. (Ver. 16.) Christ will show the newly called, not what things he is to enjoy, what honours he is to reap, but what things he must suffer. Never was prophet called of God without some adumbration of future suffering, of struggle painful to flesh and blood. With us all there is something awful and repellent in the forms of duty. It is the "stern daughter of the voice of God." Yet in obedience alone can we enjoy true freedom and the presence of God in the soul. And the greater the strength given, the greater will be the struggles

imposed, the pain to be endured, the inner sense of joy and triumph to be experienced. To follow Christ truly is no soft and sentimental thing—it is an enterprise which taxes manhood to its utmost. To him may be applied the words of the poet—

“Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead’s most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.”

VI. DELIVERANCE AND STRENGTH IMPARTED BY CHRIST. Ananias comes with his cheering message and his inspired acts to emancipate the body and soul of Saul. 1. *He is to see again.* The first view of new truth “blinds with excess of light.” Presently the scales fall, and the eyes are found to have new powers of perception. We may find a parable here. The exchange of fleshly wisdom and narrow views for spiritual insight and wide command of the field of vision seems at first a loss. We can see nothing for a time; the old horizon has vanished. Presently the darkness lifts, the dawn appears; we are in a new scene, and “behold, all things are become new.” 2. *He is to be filled with the Holy Ghost.* The moment of the break-down of all our old system of thought and life is that of extreme weakness. It is that self-emptiness which is utterly painful, but prepares for the incoming and indwelling of Divine power—the Holy Spirit. 3. *Baptism as an epoch of life.* It closes one era, it opens another. The putting on of Christ—the essential thing in baptism—involves renunciation on the one hand, fresh choice on the other. God sets us free that we may serve him.

“I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!”

To live out in our own experience the call, and conversion, and initiation of Saul is to get to the heart of human nature and of the relation of Christ to that nature.—J.

Vers. 19—25.—*Saul at Damascus.* I. HIS PREACHING. In those very synagogues where he had determined to make victims of the followers of Jesus, he was found owning and proclaiming his Name. And his proclamation was that Jesus was the *Son of God*. This was, perhaps, a *new truth* to the Christian Church—or at least in the clear recognition and definite expression it has now—and must have come with extraordinary power from lips that were learned and eloquent and charged with the profound conviction of one whose thoughts had undergone an entire revulsion. “I believe, therefore have I spoken.” The Divine Son; his life and love, his work for mankind;—this is the heart of all Christian preaching.

II. THE EFFECTS OF HIS PREACHING. Astonishment at the change of feeling and of conduct in Saul. Astonishment breeds curiosity and gives rise to inquiry and information. Wonder at the extraordinary phenomena of nature is the parent of science. Wonder at the extraordinary phenomena in the kingdom of God gives birth to conviction and to reverence and piety. A change of heart and life is the standing moral miracle. When he whom we have known as passionate, proud, and fierce is seen to be meekly giving up all worldly advantages for the sake of a despised cause, counting things that had been good loss for the excellency of a new knowledge, it is an evidence not to be resisted. “Fool!” must have been the verdict of his friends of the Sanhedrim on his conduct. “For Christ’s sake” was the secret in the breast of Saul.

III. THE GROWTH OF SAUL IN POWER. Mighty is the energy of truth newly found and grasped, with power to nerve the will and impart influence over others. The man of convictions, and with the courage of them, is the true conqueror. Second-hand opinions and inherited prejudices cannot stand against original force in the moral sphere. *This is the Christ*: one man believed it with all his soul, and triumphed over the world in its hatred and ignorance. But the growth of moral power in an individual calls up the dark shapes of envy and jealousy. Secret and cowardly opposition is the compliment which passion offers, the testimony it bears to the forms of clear, calm truth. Malice lurks and lies in wait to destroy what it fears to encounter in the open field. Energy in diffusing light and truth will be certain to evoke a corresponding energy out of the kingdom of darkness to obscure and to destroy. So did the storm

gather about Saul's devoted head. But the servants of God bear a charmed life until their work is done. Already the promise of the Saviour, that Saul must suffer many things, is being fulfilled. In trouble and the deliverance out of it God is made known to our spirits as *our* God and *our* Saviour.—J.

Vers. 26—30.—*Saul's visit to Jerusalem.* I. SUSPICION AND COLDNESS ENCOUNTERED. Saul finds no welcome at Jerusalem, no confidence, but distrust. It is hard to live down the records of past life. And never was the proud *quondam* Pharisee permitted to forget his lesson of humility. Well might this be the meaning of the "thorn in the flesh." Our impression of the man is that of a fierce and impetuous temper, the force of which, having been used for the devil, was now to be used in the service of Christ. The genuineness of his conversion, Calvin remarks, is shown by the fact that, having been himself a persecutor, he can now endure persecution with calmness.

II. COMFORT IN A FRIEND. Yet Saul had a most sensitive and loving heart, yearning for sympathy, grateful for kindness and love. How full of meaning on another occasion his words, "God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus"! Then the affectionate Barnabas takes him by the hand, and performs the offices of friendship on his behalf. The scene carries its teaching on the nature and offices of friendship. 1. *The friend takes us by the hand* in the hour of need. His loyalty and courage compensate us for the coldness of the world. Who so self-reliant as not to need a sponsor on occasions? One draught of true human love will refresh us in the desert of others' coldness. And doubtless, if we have been true to love, love will be found for us at the hour of need. 2. *He will say for us what we cannot say for ourselves.* Barnabas tells Saul's story when Saul himself is not believed. The ideas of the Paraclete, or Advocate, of the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, of the Witness on our behalf, are found again in the highest Christian relations. Christ fulfils to the soul the highest ideal of friendship. Let the recollection of our dependence on ministry ever incline the heart to humility and correct the excess of self-reliance. Through Barnabas, Saul is received as a brother, and the old enmity and distrust is forgotten. To be obstinately set against old sinners, to refuse a kindly oblivion to the past, is to ignore the grace which delights to heal and to forgive.

III. FRESH DANGERS. Following in the steps of Stephen, Saul disputed with the Hellenists. There was a resurrection of the martyr's spirit in the martyr's murderer. Enmity is again aroused; again Saul's life is in danger; and again, through friendly providence, the way of escape is opened. Thus through early combats, the Christian soldier's courage is tried and experience is gained for future struggles.—J.

Vers. 31—43.—*Works of peace.* It is a bright picture of happy and prosperous Church life that here opens. Peace "lay like a shaft of light athwart the land" of Judæa, Galilee, and Samaria. The work of edification, ever silent and sure like the growth of the tall palm, went on. There was the spirit of reverence and the sense of comfort and of joy in the presence of the Holy Spirit. That nation is happy whose life contributes few incidents that startle, changes that dismay, revolutions and wars that attract attention. Who can calculate the value of a day's sunshine to the earth? Who can tabulate the results of a year's peaceful intercourse? Quiet Church life is not resultless; and to obtain it demands and implies more of prayer and effort than that which is spasmodic and sensational.

I THE VISIT OF PETER TO LYDDA. He finds there the paralytic Æneas. The bedridden sufferer may be viewed as a type of all prostration, physical and moral, which Christ comes to heal. "Jesus Christ is healing thee!" such is the abiding word of the Christian apostle and minister, further reaching in its application to the inward than to the outward life. And if it be a fact that healing energy is ever flowing from Christ, a moral hope and a moral energy is derivable from the fact. "Rise and act for thyself" is the command which the Christian minister may give, founded on the fact that the energy is imparted to the will in trust on Divine power. "And straightway he arose." The rise of any soul out of weakness into strength, out of self-despair into confidence and freedom, implies two things—(1) the Divine agency to heal; (2) the human will co-operating with the Divine. In the absence of either of these factors there is no transition from one state to another. ~~Whenever such a con-~~

version takes place and is observed, the minds of the spectators are turned towards that higher source of power. They "turn to the Lord" in reverent recognition, in devout thankfulness, in earnest expectation.

II. THE RAISING OF DORCAS. 1. *The sketch of a useful life.* Dorcas is full of good works and alms. The "eye for pity, and the hand open as day for melting charity," was hers. Pity, compassion, the feeling for those who are less happy than ourselves, is the habit which above all the gospel teaches and cultivates in the soul. The loving simple heart has a place not less important to fill in ministry to others than the clear intellect and the powerful will. The tears and gratitude of the widows were a noble testimony to Dorcas and her character. She was a centre of the true "sweetness and light" in the community, a fountain of pure Christian love. "In the possession of one such example a Church has a great spiritual capital. When such a one dies, God will raise up followers, for love never dies." 2. *The office of raising from the dead.* Was not this entrusted to Peter, that it might be a parable to all times of this truth—that God gives to chosen men in the Church the power to raise others out of death into life, that is, instrumentally? The Resurrection is spiritually repeated whenever the word of power reaches the conscience. Peter puts all the mourners out of the room, kneels down and prays. This was after the example of the Master. Solitude, silence, and prayer prepare for all exertion of spiritual activity. However great the power entrusted to the minister of God, he must still use it in dependence upon him. However urgent the call from men, the Divine will must first be consulted before it is obeyed. From dependence on God comes all independence of other conditions. To use the imperative mood with others, we must have learned the submissive mood before him. The word, "Tabitha, arise!" and the stretching out of the hand to the prostrate one,—these acts had their antecedents in the spiritual sphere. We cannot comprehend a miracle; but we may be well assured that it follows a Divine though hidden law. God has reason in all his acts. In the giving of the lost but restored one again to her friends we have a prophecy of future restoration of those whom we have loved and lost. There are moments when the power of God is put forth to realize our most loving wishes and to satisfy the unquenchable aspirations of the heart. Our friends "live in God" as Dorcas and Lazarus lived in him, and death is but a semblance for pious souls. Would that we had that profound knowledge of the power and love of God which should enable us to see the wondrous in the common! Faith will be produced and will be increased wherever our passage through the world, our visits and our words, are followed by a joy like that reflected on the Church at Joppa by the visit and ministry of Peter.—J.

Vers. 1—9.—*The sign from heaven.* The state of the Church and the world calling for such a sign. The want of a greater spirit among the apostles, to undertake the new leadership as the gospel went forth to challenge the whole world. The awakening mind of the disciples—Samaria, Philip and the eunuch, Casarea (ch. viii. 40), all pointed to a new epoch. The *hour* was there; but where was the *man*? Peculiar qualifications necessary—intellect; culture; burning zeal; personal experience of the power of Christ. Notice—

I. THE CHALLENGE MET. 1. Saul represented persecution. A successful raid at Damascus would be a decisive blow at the new sect. Preparation made. If prisoners could be brought bound to Jerusalem, an appeal could be made to crush the heresy. 2. The challenge was made to the utmost. He was suffered to draw nigh to Damascus, and was surrounded by his fellow-persecutors. 3. The blow which struck him down was distinctly supernatural, a sign from heaven. Jesus did not fight with carnal weapons. He smote with "light out of heaven," and a voice addressing the heart and conscience.

II. THE MAN CHOSEN AND CALLED. 1. His previous history showed the work of God's Spirit. His question, "Who art thou, Lord?" His remembrance of Stephen and his words. His immediate submission. 2. The manner of Saul's conversion a preparation of his soul for the part he was to take in the Church's work. It was greatly independent of human agency (cf. Augustine; Luther). It was a miracle which to him became the moral basis of all other miracles. It enabled him to say, "I have seen the Lord Christ;" and gave him at once an apostolic position. 3. The overwhelming

nature of the evidence and the deep spiritual work of those few days prepared such a mind as Paul's for grappling with the mysteries of faith. The eyes were shut that they might be opened the more clearly to spiritual realities. It was especially necessary that Saul should begin his new life feeling that Jesus was able to do all things, that he was revealing his Divine kingdom in the earth.

III. THE GRACE MANIFESTED. 1. The gentleness and compassion. The same stroke might have slain. The enemy was loved, not hated; the shame of his defeat partly hidden from onlookers. 2. The wonderful change wrought by the Spirit: the persecutor turned into the foremost apostle. 3. The gift of such a man to the Church and to the world. Think of what Paul has been to those who came after him. The treasures of knowledge, the marvels of personal history. Especially the fact of his conversion itself as an evidence of the truth of Christianity. Lord Lyttelton and many others convinced by it. Standing miracle which no one can resist except by subterfuge. The effect on the Church at the time and on the Jewish world. A great conversion is always a great converting power.

APPLICATION. 1. There is a gate of grace close by the gate of sin. Paul was going to Damascus to do evil. Jesus met him to turn him on the path of life. 2. The new world may be entered blindfold, yet if we do what the Lord tells us to do our eyes will be opened at last.—R.

Vers. 10—19.—*Baptism of St. Paul.* While the conversion was independently of human agency, the new life awakened was immediately called up by Divine appointment into fellowship with the life of the Church. The baptism is here plainly a Divine seal upon the individual, an invitation to the privileges of the Church, a consecration to higher life and service.

I. THE CHOSEN VESSEL MARKED OUT BY THE LORD. 1. By the supernatural signs—the vision; the communication of Ananias and its results; the opened eyes of the new convert. 2. The introduction of Saul among the circle of believers at Damascus. They would receive him as not only a converted man, but one of whom the Lord predicted such things.

II. THE TWO BROTHERN UNITED IN PRAISE. 1. The joy of Ananias over Saul; the joy of Saul in the salutation of *brotherly love*. 2. An answer to *prayer*. Darkness turned to light. 3. A release from the captivity of an anxious *solitude*. Such a mind needed quickly to be delivered from the danger of too great a reaction. The sympathy of an experienced Christian with a young convert is unspeakably precious. The introduction to Ananias was an introduction to the Church at Damascus, which, while no doubt wholly Jewish, was yet prepared by its training in that city for the reception of such a man. They would be less startled then at the announcement that he would go to the Gentiles. Thus God works all things according to the good pleasure of his will. The converted Saul opens his eyes in *Damascus*.

III. SPECIAL CONSECRATION of the newly won soul to higher service by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. 1. The baptism was an acceptance on Saul's part of the Lord's commission. He knew that he would have much to do for Christ. He remembered the past and desired to make up for it by entire devotedness to him whom he had persecuted. 2. Extraordinary conversion is a preparation for extraordinary service. The days of darkness are days of wrestling prayer. The foundations of the new life were laid deep. Augustine; Luther; Bunyan; Chalmers. Grace abounding to one who has felt himself the chief of sinners becomes an abounding strength to do the Lord's work. Preachers who have no deep experience to fall back upon cannot speak to the hearts of others. 3. The special gifts of the Holy Ghost bestowed through the ministration of Ananias. A miraculous power at once descended on Saul, and he felt himself lifted out of the ordinary current of his life and set in a higher level of experience and faculty.—R.

Ver. 12.—*A spiritual wonder.* "Behold, he prayeth!" "Behold!" The Church, the world, invited to look on the sight. The enemy, the Pharisee, the warrior, behold his *hands* clasped in prayer, *countenance* bathed in tears, *voice* uttering petitions. Look into that house of Judas; it might have been filled with mourning; it is the scene of a spiritual victory. We can look back and look forward; what he was, what

he will be. Great mercy in the blinding stroke, shutting him up in his own thoughts. His cry was, "What wilt thou have me to do?" Gracious answer to the prayer. Contrast between the prayers which Saul of Tarsus had previously offered, and that worthy prayer of penitence and faith. Every event the summing up of the past and prophecy of the future, like a seed which represents former and following harvests. Epochs in spiritual history which face both ways. A representative fact; "Behold it!" "he prayeth."

I. A GREAT SPIRITUAL CHANGE. 1. *In the mind.* Thoughts of Jesus. Acceptance of Messiahship. Overthrow of legalism. Satisfaction of understanding in the Divine authority manifested. Exaltation of Israel. We must be changed in our thoughts. "What think ye of Christ?" 2. *In the heart.* The persecutor penetrated with the feeling of Divine love. The perverse will, kicking against conscience, against the reproach which like a goad was left by the remembrance of Stephen's death. Personal sense of sin the root of a true conversion. "I am the man." 3. *In the conduct.* Obedience to the heavenly vision. Tractable as a child; led by the Spirit. The prayer recounts that his face was turned towards the new way. Christianity not a mere change of views or sentiments, but a proclaimed rule of life. Walk in the way. Obedience.

II. AN EPOCH IN SPIRITUAL HISTORY. Little could Saul foresee his own future, yet that Peniel was the introduction of a prince of God to his kingdom. What a step from the chamber in Judas's house at Damascus to Rome's imperial palace! 1. *Prayer the preparation for activity.* Jesus in the mountain solitude. All great spiritual heroes before they have gone down into the battle-field. 2. *Prayer the lifting up of the fallen.* Peace with God. Reopened eyes. A blotted-out past. The goads of conscience exchanged for the light of a new life, the message of a reconciled Father, the commission of the heavenly King to his chosen ambassadors. 3. *Prayer the pledge of fellowship.* He prayeth; go and pray with him. Private prayer and public prayer closely connected together. Religion is not a secret thing. "Behold!" We should take knowledge of the state of souls around us. These that feel prompted to secret prayer should welcome the visit of the Christian brother, and the appeal to take the Name of Christ upon them, and the place which is appointed us both in the fellowship and work of the Church.—R.

Vers. 19—22.—*The new convert proving his sincerity.* I. THE GRACE OF GOD ELEVATING THE NATURAL MAN. Characteristics of Saul appearing in the new phase of his life. 1. *Intelligence.* He is ready to grapple with subtle antagonists. He seizes the great central truth of the gospel—the Messiahship of Jesus. He employs his vast knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. 2. *Boldness and energy.* Not even waiting for opportunity, but making it; entering the synagogues, producing amazement by his vehemence. 3. *Self-surrender to Christ,* as before consuming zeal for the Law. Where he was expected as the persecutor, there he appears as the convert. All sense of shame swallowed up in devotion to Christ.

II. THE TRUE METHOD OF SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT. He "increased the more in strength." 1. Conviction deepens by *speaking.* Many lose strength by remaining silent. Work for Christ lifts up the heart. The idle ones doubt; the active ones are cheerful. 2. The sense of *victory* a great help, both to individuals and the Church. A bold aggressive policy specially demanded. In *proving* the doctrine, we must advance into the midst of the opponents. Especially should those that can speak of great grace not be ashamed of Jesus. Personal testimonies have remarkable power. Let the world be amazed. 3. The gifts of the Spirit should not be restrained. Something for each one to do. If we cannot speak, we can proclaim Christ by the active life of benevolence. The disciples at Damascus gained great strength from the example of Saul. An earnest Church creates an earnest minister, and an earnest minister an earnest Church.—R.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The new faith exposed to trial.* All manifestations of God's Spirit stir up the opposition of the evil one. The bold faith drives back the enemy into ambush. Conspiracy against truth always means confession of weakness. The false Church takes counsel to kill. But God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations,

I. CONSIDER THE EFFECT UPON SAUL HIMSELF—on his faith, on his future, on his spirit, as preparing him for suffering and humiliation for Christ. We never know what our religion is to us till we suffer for it and feel what it is in suffering.

II. CONSIDER THE EFFECT ON THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD. The persecutor persecuted. The faith of the new convert shown to be strong enough to stand such a trial. The seal of the Lord put upon his servant. He was dealt with as many of the prophets. We must remember that we “fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for his Body’s sake, which is the Church.” Be patient.—R.

Vers. 26—30.—*The Church’s seal upon the new acquisition.* Jerusalem. Its influence on all the Church. Natural doubt of the change. Difference between the character of Saul and that of the leading apostles. Barnabas fitted to be a mediator, both by his loving disposition and large-mindedness as a Cypriot.

I. A simple, candid DECLARATION OF FACTS the true foundation of confidence. Spiritual men cannot resist the evidence of the Spirit.

II. BROTHERLY SYMPATHY may accomplish much in times of perplexity, both in helping us to overcome natural feeling and in facilitating personal intercourse.

III. THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LABOURER will prove his own work. Let the facts speak for themselves. Preach boldly, and all must acknowledge the Lord’s presence.

IV. AFFLICTIONS HELP FELLOWSHIP AND MUTUAL CONFIDENCE.—R.

Ver. 31.—*Edification.* “Then had the Churches rest,” etc. (cf. Revised Version). The events of the past had been exciting, stimulating activity, spreading the Word. But excitement checks growth in character. Wonderful appointment of Providence—the leader of the persecution becoming the chief example of Christian activity.

I. THE RIGHT USE OF A TIME OF PEACE AND REST. 1. The cultivation of *brotherly intercourse.* The Churches (or the Church) throughout Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee, in a time of peace, could communicate with the apostles and with each other. 2. The exercise of spiritual gifts, knowledge, prophecy, tongues, etc., the study of Scriptures, especially with a view to future claims on the Church’s activity. 3. The manifestation of steadfast Christian character: “Walking in the fear of the Lord.” The times of external danger less suited for the observation of individual graces.

II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A SPIRITUAL EDIFICE. The foundation is Christ. The superstructure is: 1. *Eminently simple*; not a hierarchy, not a complicated system of ecclesiastical offices, not an imitation of civil society, but the amplification of the germ seen in the upper room at Jerusalem. 2. *Spiritual.* Full of the Holy Ghost; not built up with worldly materials; maintaining discipline, purity, fellowship. 3. Multiplied from within, not from without; by its own graces coming forth on the world; not by mere accession of material resources or combination with worldly elements. Take care that our multiplication is genuine.—R.

Vers. 32—35.—*Wonderful ministry of the Apostle Peter.* Introduction to what is about to be described—the extension of the apostolic ministry to the Gentiles. “Peter went through all quarters,” *i.e.* where there were already Churches of believers. The general superintendence of the apostles was not in the way of despotic rule, but brotherly guidance. Situation of Lydda on the way to Joppa and so to Cæsarea. But Peter’s intention went no further than Joppa, *i.e.* not beyond the limits of present fellowship. The Holy Ghost leads him further. The healing of the palsied Æneas a sign to the neighbourhood.

I. JESUS CHRIST THE SUBSTANCE OF THE APOSTLE’S MINISTRY. The servant behind the Master.

II. THE TESTIMONY OF MAN ACCOMPANIED BY THE POWER OF GOD. Miracles were necessary as proclaiming the *kingdom* of Christ in distinction from a mere message of preachers. Æneas the healed man would preach the Word with power.

III. THE RAPID SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD A WITNESS TO THE APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY OF PETER. They “turned to the Lord,” but were doubtless introduced to the Church through the apostle. The record is preserved that Peter’s position may be understood. There is no necessity to accept the Roman Catholic view

of Peter's supremacy; but it is necessary to maintain the apostolic guidance and leadership of the early Church, otherwise the New Testament itself loses its authority.—R.

Vers. 36—43.—*The raising of Dorcas.* The contrast between the ancient and modern world, changing somewhat the relation of almsdeeds to the rest of Christian life; but the poor always with us. The special providence of woman in the Church. The individuality of the charity, not a *society*, but Dorcas the woman.

I. FAITH WORKING BY LOVE. 1. Show that *Dorcas* was not a mere philanthropic worker, but a true believer. 2. The *disciples* at once sent for Peter, believing that he represented a Divine power at work, hoping that something might be accomplished, at all events believing that the Spirit of the Lord would cast out the gloom of their sorrow. 3. It was an atmosphere of true faith in which such a miracle could be wrought. 4. The character and work of Dorcas typical of the influence of Christianity in the world; distinguishing it from all other religions; caring for the weak, lifting up women, sanctifying sorrow.

II. THE THRESHOLD OF THE GENTILE WORLD. Peter many days at Joppa. A place where a vast and mingled population. The raising of the dead a great sign both to the world and to Peter himself. The loving character of the new doctrine set forth; a special appeal to the heathen. The rapid spread of the gospel an immense encouragement and elevation of the apostle's mind. All preparing him for the revelation about to be made. Peter and Dorcas hand-in-hand at the gate of the Gentiles, full of significance. We shall lay hold of the outlying masses of the population by Dorcas-like activity. Women will wonderfully help in the spread of Christianity. The true power of Christ is that which ministers.—R.

Vers. 1—5.—*The one question of conversion.* With this paragraph the landmark of the history changes. The conspicuous figure of Paul is seen, and is not again lost to sight till a certain Lord's day morning dawns on the Isle Patmos. The differences that exist in the life and lot of various men often awaken thought in those who think enough, oftener envy or murmur in those who *fail* to think enough. It is a notable token of the character of such envy that, when excited, it is almost invariably in those instances which show differences of worldly lot or providential circumstance. But amid all the differences that might *legitimately* surprise, none can for a moment compare in intrinsic significance with that which gave, still gives, ever will give, undying renown to Saul—that he *is*, and is set forth as the type of conversion. He stands before us as remarkable in many ways—as an apostle; as a writer of many Epistles, ever studied, never wearied of; as a first missionary to the Gentiles, and most bold preacher of the gospel; as the planter and settler of so many primitive Churches far and wide; and as a man of such endurance and of so many hairbreadth escapes, that men would say for the one he had an iron constitution, for the other he wore a charmed life. But he is most known, he is apparently most intended to be known, by just what belongs to his conversion. The tale of Saul without his conversion (which he repeats within our knowledge twice for himself, how many times more we cannot say) would be an instance, and in the intensest form too, of the play of 'Hamlet' without Hamlet. Would that there were those, and many of them, who, coveting "the best gifts," coveted *this* unworldly distinction—the thoroughness, the conspicuousness, the ever-enduring practical results of such a conversion! But how unusual is *this* ambition! The prominence given to the conversion of Saul cannot mean less than this, that it is a sample. Yet is it *not* put where it is to stand there in solitary unique grandeur, inapproachable, but that it may be approached, studied, reproduced. Let us look into it at the moment of its crisis, the moment when such unwonted words started to the lips of Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

I. IN THIS QUESTION IS FOUND THE OUTSPOKEN CONFESSIO OF PAST DARKNESS, IGNORANCE, MISTAKE. Conversion reveals to a man, not only many other very important things, as time goes on, of which he had never dreamt, but it surprisingly persuades him of this to begin with—that he does not know something which he thought he did know, perhaps thought he knew particularly well. What an astonishing thing to hear Saul asking, of all other questions, such a one as this, "Who art thou, Lord?" This is a great point to gain. Saul had thought he did know *this*, and knew that Jesus was

not one to be called his "Lord" or "Lord" at all. 1. He had put his own idea and his own impression on Christ; but not *the right* one, and of the right he was ignorant and destitute. How many do this! No name, perhaps, better known to them than the Name of Jesus, no nature less known or more mistaken. It is the darkness which belongs (1) to nature; (2) to wilful neglect and habit. 2. The very wrongness of those ideas and impressions were the measure of the persistency with which they were held and the intemperateness with which they were expressed. Paul afterwards tells us this "I verily *thought* with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth," and he developed his "thought" into the acts of violent persecution. But when Saul utters the cry of the text it is because he is just beginning the escape—the *escape* of his life, the *escape* for his life—from that long dark mistake, that native delusion and ignorance. And afterwards he does not excuse his wrong "thought," but condemns himself with deepest contrition as "the chief of sinners." Saul was *utterly in the wrong* before his conversion; and is not every one else *utterly in the wrong* until his conversion? What a solemn responsibility this one thing is in life, to make up the mind how to think, to speak, to act towards Christ!

II. IN THIS QUESTION IS FOUND THE EVIDENCE OF THE AWAKENING OF A NEW AND KEEN DESIRE. 1. Past darkness and mistake (specially in proportion to its moral blamableness), not only may incur the deep-settled habit, but they generally do so. They strangle, till they kill, anything like a natural healthy desire for real light, real knowledge. They seem to be able to go to the length of *destroying* the power for all further use on earth. Then *what* a power it must be that is needed to speak life, strength, use again into that palsy! 2. The one unvarying testimony of Scripture witnesses to one great silent Power, alone able "to create a clean heart, and to *renew* a right spirit" within man. It is that great Power which awakens again in the deep disused of human nature the keen desire to know, the relish of true knowledge, the thirst for light and love and the liberty of Christ. As on that day so eventful Saul journeyed in hot haste over the hot sands to Damascus, but with raging heart hottest of all, a new future is opening for him, for a new future is opening *in* him, ere yet the echoes of his brief question die on the air. When in the intolerable blaze of that bright light that passed the brilliance of the noonday sun he fell to the earth, and when the heavenly voice of the risen One twice summoned him, "calling him by his name," it may well be that, if there were anything to waken after too long sleep confessed, it now should "hear and live." And it was so. Some power has reached and touched the vital germ within, yet unextinct, and it owns to the sudden impulse. There is no more genuine evidence of God's mighty Spirit: being sparingly at work than when *every* hindrance, *every* excuse, *every* delay, falls back, and you press on simply to ask for Christ. Then human nature's want, sin, misery, are arrived at the door of Heaven's infinite wealth, happiness, willingness. Keen is the force of human appetite and keener the edge of passion; keen are our worldly desires and keener our mad wrath; but keenest of all and ever conquering is the force of the desire to know Christ, when it is the Spirit of God who puts it into the heart and kindles its flame. And does not this sample-conversion history guide us most closely to see what are the Spirit's real ways with our natures, which need *first* obstructions removed, and *thereupon* force and life restored? The treatment shall be such as reveals to him who experiences it at *one* glance the world of darkness and error and sin that has been so long within, but close upon that tells him of new, strange, and blessed life astir within also.

III. IN THIS QUESTION IS DISCERNIBLE THE HUMBLED AND ALARMED SELF TURNING ROUND AND BECOMING REALLY READY TO EXERCISE A SIMPLE, DEEP TRUST. How many "hope" they are ready, "think" they are ready, have some sort and some amount of "wish" to be ready, but of whom all the truth is, they are not *really* ready to trust Christ! They are not really ready to cast themselves on mercy, nor to acknowledge that "this is the work they have to do," namely, "to *believe* on him whom God hath sent." They are not yet really ready to believe that salvation is to be had by *trust* and not by any other way; by *trust* in Christ, and trust illimitable. Yet is there no surer, no safer article of all our faith. And healthy life and fruit are only where faith is rooted in Christ, and root to finest tendril and branch to finest twig do all derive their nourishment and their sap from him. So Saul's question and the sharp, direct method of it signify then, evidently enough, both the hopeful and the trustful state into

which he had come, or was ready immediately "by the grace of God" to come. Men sometimes ask a question indifferent to its answer; they sometimes ask a question for the sake of the merest information; they sometimes ask a question for some critical purpose or to block a question waiting on themselves; but *this* question was none of these. This is like a question indeed. Angels listen to it, and listen to its answer too, to ring out Heaven's wild "Amen." Jesus listened, and a soul was saved. Travel, then, the circle of "the earth and the world" and "the heavens," and there is not a question we could address to any or all of them which could equal the momentousness of this, when, at last turning to Christ, a man asks, "Who art thou, Lord?" To Jesus Saul had borne himself ever so proudly, as many, many do now—their will ungiven to him, their trust fitting everywhere else but not settled on him, their love and allegiance unyielded to him; and when *he*, even he, asked, "Who art thou, Lord?" it meant the coming down for ever of pride. So the confession which we have seen to hide here, and the keen desire we have seen to bud forth here, led to the utter renunciation of self-trust, and to the simplest and most entire trust in Christ. None can ask this question for you; you must ask it yourself. None can answer it but Jesus, and he will answer it.—B.

Ver. 5.—The considerateness of a love already infinite. "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." [Note.—There is ample evidence that Paul himself narrates these details of his conversion (ch. xxvi. 14), and that their proper place is not here. They will, however, be considered here, and reference made to this place from ch. xxii. 10; xxvi. 14.] Saul, when now he was called Paul, and after he had been some while in the service of Christ, himself tells us what passed in those wonderful moments when Christ and the Spirit wrestled with him thrown prostrate to the earth. They are never forgotten by him, nor will he for a moment try to hide those details describing Heaven's remonstrances with him where they might most infer humiliation to himself. The humiliation of Saul at this time has its counterpart in some sort in the condescendingness of Christ. The risen Lord will still use human language and human figure, even to employing a proverb. The proverb needs no explanation, and the interpretation of it needs only illustration and enforcement. And it may be led up to profitably by inferior applications of it which none will gainsay. How, then, will they be able to gainsay that illustration of it and that application of it which Jesus himself thinks it worth while to utter from an open window of heaven?

I. IT IS HARD TO KICK AGAINST THE EARTHLY LOT ASSIGNED TO US. That lot is a very complex thing, but it is made up of some very manifest elements. It is a combination of the date in time's long calendar at which our life is placed, of the bodily and the mental endowments which we own, of the circumstances and surroundings which we inherit, and of the very dispositions which belonged to those who went before us—our parents' and *theirs*. None can give any account of these elements, but every man has to use them and to seek to use them to the best advantage. Some of them no man ever finds fault with or murmurs because of them, or most rarely. Very, very few ever complain that they live *now*, for instance, and did not live long ago—that they live *now* and not rather a century or two hence. They see, they feel that to do this were insanity itself: and they do *not* kick against their lot in this respect. Yet they often do in other respects. Well, *this* is hard—hard as for the bird of plumage to beat against the wires of its cage; may, harder far than that. It is hard for loss of time, for loss of temper, for loss of strength, for loss of trusting loving obedience, and because *no* good can come of it, *no* success can be gained in the vain, Utopian, and worse than foolish struggle. Let every man struggle in his lot to improve *himself*, and he will not fail to improve it also. But let him never "kick" against it; for so, if hurt at all, he hurts himself the more. He "kicks against the pricks."

II. IT IS HARD TO KICK AGAINST DUTY. The discipline of duty may often be painful at present. There is none, however, more strengthening and health-giving. Many a heavy burden becomes lighter if borne manfully. It always becomes more irritating in proportion as it is not willingly taken up and borne. And duty knows how to take keen revenge. When its obligations are only partially and grudgingly discharged, the penalty it assigns is the misery of utter dissatisfaction; and when they are altogether neglected, the penalty is a forfeiture of unknown amount and kind.

III. IT IS HARD TO KICK AGAINST CONSCIENCE. If the conscience is alive and in full life, to sin against it in both disobeying it and also taking the offensive, makes its reproach tenfold. If it be already half dead, it hastens its destruction for the present life; and if it be "on the point of death," the death-stroke now falls.

IV. IT IS HARD TO KICK AGAINST ANY FORCE THAT IS PLAINLY GREATER IN DEGREE OR THAT IS SUPERIOR IN KIND. If it be only greater in *degree*, the peril lies in the inevitable mercilessness of the opponent. He holds the vain struggler in his grip. And if it be a greater force because it is superior in *kind*, then he who struggles struggles "against his own soul," and drives the deadly disease within.

V. But all these are faint warnings of what hardness may mean, WHEN A MAN'S SOUL AND ETERNAL LIFE, CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT, are on the one side; and the man himself, driven in darkness, error, and recklessness, is on the other. 1. It is hard, intrinsically so, hard on *every* account and in *every* bearing of it, to go against the interest of your own soul. The soul is so inestimably valuable, the injury so inestimably cruel. Eternal life is so unboundedly to be desired, the loss of it so unboundedly to be dreaded and wailed over. Saul was doing this very thing, beneath all other guise and disguise, when his career was stopped. If he could have had his way, his way shut him right out from "life, life eternal," and led him straightest path to death. And all the while he had been resisting light and evidence, miracles and signs and mighty wonders of apostles and of Stephen, which had availed with others; he was kicking against the highest welfare and interests of himself. *Convictions* are some of our strongest friends, and to kick against them is to inflict some of the keenest of pain and most cruel of injury upon self. 2. It is hard, essentially so, to resist the hard as kind as it is strong, as strong as it is kind, of Jesus. "Strong to save" is, indeed, his truest name and his best-loved name. But if he is to the last refused in this force, it must be, alas! he is swift to destroy. It is especially hard to resist Jesus: (1) Because he means *nothing* but kindness. (2) Because his *meaning* makes no mistake, incurs no slip nor charge of good intention only, and he *does* nothing but kindness. (3) Because he first did so much and suffered so much for one only purpose—that he might be *qualified* to show that kindness to the full. (4) Because his is the initiative always, in proffering that kindness to those whose initiative always is the front of hostility to himself. (5) Because all his kind meaning and his kind doing are in the train of perfect knowledge. He knows all that we shall want to bear us through and to bear us up on high, all that we shall want to save us from *falling* through and falling into "the lowest hell." What folly we often observe it to be to stand up against or to neglect knowledge superior to our own! But oh! but what extent and what kind of superior knowledge is *this*!

* No eye but his might ever bear
To gaze all down that drear abyss,
Because none e'er saw so clear
The shore beyond of ondless bliss!

* The giddy waves so restless hurled,
The vexed pulse of this feverish world,
He views and counts with steady sight,
Used to behold the Infinite!"

(6) Because him refused, him lost, there is no other can plead our cause in our last extremity, there is no other Saviour! When such a one speaks, touches, urges, then the sinner who resists him is one who has no mercy, no mercy at all on himself, "body or soul." 3. It is hard, most ruinously so, to resent the persuading address of the Spirit. Hardening as it is to neglect the lessons of reason, the persuasions of the affection of others, the call of duty, the dictates of conscience, and the Word and work and impassioned invitation of Jesus, this is the worst of all—to resist and reject the Spirit. For he is the life itself. Light and Life are his twofold name. All round creation light will be attended ere long with symptoms of life; and nowhere round the whole sweep of creation does consent to dwell with perfect darkness. They seem almost synonymous, perhaps, *but* as they are *not* the same in nature, so neither can they be counted the same in grace. And still, therefore, this twofold name speaks something of the quality and prerogative of the Spirit. He brings Christ himself and his true and

his cross to the sinner's heart, and if he is refused, then finally *all* is refused. Hence the awful trembling emphasis which Scripture lays on the pleading exhortation that we slight not, grieve not, quench not, the Spirit. And hard indeed it must be counted to "kick against him." (1) He is so silent a Friend. (2) He is so gentle a Friend. (3) He is so close a Friend. (4) He is so sensitive a Friend. (5) He is so condescending a Friend—in *him* it is that God dwells in the humble and contrite sinner's heart. (6) He is so cheerful and gladdening and sanctifying a Friend. (7) He more than halves our griefs—he dries them up. He more than doubles our joy—he multiplies it a millionfold, till it is already "full of glory." His sympathy is perfect. (8) He is our indispensable Friend, if we are to be loosed from sin, to be created anew, to take hold of Jesus, and to find salvation. Against the united, loving, determined, and predetermined force of Jesus and the Spirit, 'twas hard indeed for Saul to strive. Love and power—amazing grace!—have hold upon him, nor mean to relax their gracious grasp. If he struggles, he but prolongs his own fierce inner conflict, multiplies his own subsequent pangs of memory and conscience. So Saul and every converted man are in a hand from which no power shall ever pluck them.—B.

Ver. 6.—The act of capitulation. The moment had come for Saul. His conversion is a fact accomplished. He speaks to it by speaking its reliable evidences. Short, undoubtedly sharp, and as it now appears decisive, had the conflict within been, but it is now over. And the fight over finds out the two results—the soldier unwounded and the victory won. The moment had come also for Jesus. What preparations his had been! What work he had accomplished! What "sufferings" he had endured! What shame he had borne! And his mighty power and mightier love have now triumphed. He too has his victory, has taken, and without blood, his captive, and has bound that captive to him, a willing captive for ever and ever. That moment of double victory—of Jesus over the human heart, and of a man's better over his worse self by the grace of the Spirit—two victories, yet but one, is described by one of the best of our sacred hymn-writers, and could scarcely be better set forth—

" 'Tis done! the great transaction's done!
I am my Lord's and he is mine!
He called me and I followed on,
Glad to confess the voice Divine."

The question on Saul's lip (in the text) speaks, we say, the sure moment of his conversion. Much may prepare the way for that moment—thought and feeling, honest doubt and dishonest, fear and shame and strife, convictions stifled, purposes dishonoured, resolutions broken, and perversest kicking against the pricks. But these are but the always mournful, often shameful, last show of sword-play of the wicked one, who knows no pity for the subject he is so soon to lose, and when he must leave his old abode would then most discredit it. And therefore in this question, may we not find in simplest, clearest outline, the suggestions of what are the real facts involved in conversion? They are—

I. THE DISTINCT RESIGNING OF TRUST IN SELF. That surrender will mean the surrender of: 1. Self-guidance. 2. Much more of self-will, the determination that self shall rule and shape all. 3. The *works* of self. 4. The loved ends that have *only* self or self supremely in view. 5. Most of all, the last remnant of an idea that self can procure its own salvation. For here is a man who possibly less leaned on fellow-creature than any other man who ever lived. But let him come to know Jesus, and his first question thereupon is the childlike, leaning, humble question, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

II. THE TAKING UP AND PLAIN PROFESSION OF UNDIVIDED ALLEGIANCE TO THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. The converted is not all at sea. That is what he once was, but *not* what he is now. He has not to seek and calculate between different and competing matters. That was once large part of his deep-seated unease and dissatisfaction, when "other lords many had dominion over him." But now he knows to whom his undivided allegiance belongs. That undivided allegiance takes him to Jesus Christ as: 1. *Unrivaled and undisputed Teacher*. He sees, knows, feels, that Jesus has won this place all his own—the one grand Revealer of the deepest things of the Spirit in

man and of the state of man and of the future for man. And all other knowledge he feels to be necessarily subordinate to this. 2. *Perfect Example*. No sculptured model so perfect for example as the delineated character, the written life of Jesus, the impress that is made on the attentive observer of his work and word and *manner*. Here is the sculptor seen, indeed, and his sculpture worth the studying. And Christ's true convert will be *this* kind of true student of him also. He will well know the place at his feet, and his own right attitude as he sits there *watching*. 3. *Master and Lord*. He will feel that his strength and devotion belong to him. "*What has he done for me? and what for him shall I not do?*" 4. *One alone Saviour*. Whatever his trust or hope for his own future life and for his soul may once have been, he finds all now in "Jesus only." And if he were conscious of, careful for none at all before, now how earnestly he clings to Jesus, because of this—"Saviour" his dearest name, "mighty to save" his dearest attraction! Oh, with what passionate adoration of gratitude and of love did Paul sing, and since him unnumbered millions of others have sung it, "My dear Redeemer and my Lord!" Thus Saul, in his first allegiance to Jesus, calls him "Lord," and asks him nothing else but as to what are his instructions: "What wilt thou have me to do?"

III. THE ALTERED PRACTICAL LIFE. Conversion means a changed heart, changed thoughts, changed feeling, a changed air and light. But it means *nothing* if it do not mean also a genuinely, practically changed career. No sublime enjoyment, no rich experience, no flight of sanctified imagination, no foretaste in saintly, heavenly communings with unseen realities, of "the joys" that are to come, shall satisfy Jesus, nor can satisfy Scripture's conception and representation of the convert of Christ. His life must be "Christ;" and he must await death to know his full "gain." His life must be a witness to Christ, albeit it be first strong witness against his old past self, and ever a quiet rebuke of those who live not after the same rule. The amazement and the solemn dread of those minutes of blindness and strongest excitement, when Saul lay on the earth, and was already summoned as it were to the bar of his Maker, did not prevent him, as a true convert and as type of a true convert, asking for his *practical work*. "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In our ignorance, perhaps we should, *à priori*, have thought a more reasonable question, a more modest question, a more reverent question, might have been, "Lord, where wilt thou have me to go"—go *hide* myself? "Where wilt thou have me go," that I may shed bitter tears and do penance for the past. "Where wilt thou have me go," that I may pass through the fires of some purgatory, and be proved by some solemn ordeal? But no, the question cannot be mistaken, misreported, or altered. It is, "What wilt thou have me to do?" And Jesus tells him, and does *not* say now, "This is the work of God, that you *believe* on me." He tells him, and it proves very shortly, how really he had "to do," "to spend and be spent," "to labour more abundantly than they all," and to *prove* his conversion by his changed life and its fruits. For vain, unspeakably vain, the profession of a changed heart and the hopes of Christ and of heaven, without the proof that lies in the changed life.—B.

Ver. 9.—*The sequestered soul*. In the wonders of the conversion of Saul we are greatly impressed with the close regard paid to the needs of human nature. It is not all miracle, nor must it be so viewed. Amazing is the grace of what cannot be construed as anything less than superhuman intervention. An adoring surprise is certainly not diminished when we notice how that intervention condescends so soon, so readily, to make itself at home with the harmonies of human nature. It does not affect to disdain them, nor does it dispense with them, because of the majesty of its own omnipotence, but rather emphatically "*condescends* to the low estate of men." For the experience of intense excitement through which Saul had just passed is sure, upon the reckonings of human nature by itself, to be decisive of his future. If it do not make him, it will most surely undo him for ever. He may "be exalted above measure" or he may be depressed "above measure." Either of these two extremes is a constant result in human life of whatever might come nearest to such excitement and impression as those here described. In the presence of a position so critical, it does not follow that nature is entirely helpless nor that miracles must be implored. In succeeding degrees repose, silence, even darkness will be prescribed, and we shall be told unerringly

that life or death is the alternative issue of attending upon such prescription or neglecting it. And this is a principle observed in the marvels of the conversion of Saul. That which may be viewed as proof of intervention upon human does its short, sharp work, to be followed by the immediate resumption of methods which human wisdom and human experience would dictate. The experience of Saul here narrated may be regarded as it was—

I. THE CONSEQUENCE OF DEEP MENTAL, SPIRITUAL IMPRESSION. No doubt the exceeding brightness of the "light that shined about him from heaven" may be credited with a natural power to infer the blinding of his eyes. But the same light "fell round about them that journeyed with" Saul, and they saw that light (see the accounts in ch. xxii., xxvi.), and yet it had no blinding effect upon them—at all events no effect of the kind lasting three days. In fact, for Saul it was but the signal of the light that flashed upon the *inner* eye that belonged to him. But it is of God, and it is not below the Spirit of God to assert and to prove the completest mastery over man—body, soul, and spirit. And the continued loss of sight and the continuous fast are justly regarded as the result of the deep mental, spiritual impression now made on Saul. That impression was of the nature of: 1. The shock of inordinate surprise. Not an idea, not a fear, not the vaguest surmise had come near the strong horseman of such an arresting check. 2. The shock of overmatched force. The weak and tender and gentle will yield and bend. It is a matter of breaking to others, and if the heart break *not*, who can imagine the strain? *That* heart will be rocked to its foundation. 3. The shock of a flood of mental conviction, and so far forth illumination, breaking in upon an estranged nature and terrifying by the dark shadows it casts proportioned to its own lustre. 4. The shock of the rapid rising of the tides of penitential grief, and grief that energetically stirs up repentance. 5. The shock of compunction for ingratitude and all the past hostility of a hating heart when mercy began to dawn and love began to be born. 6. The shock of *one* mere *glimpse* through the merest chink of the sepulchral soul into the outer and upper and most inspiring light. 7. The shock of a *real change*. What busy but amazed, aching, anguished tumult within that soul! And who shall stay bodily sense and bodily appetite from resigning and retreating from that scene and confessing themselves merely the subordinate and temporary?

II. THE GRACIOUS PROVISION OF DIVINE THOUGHT FOR YET DEEPER IMPRESSION AND FOR LASTING RESULT. Very strong impressions, if made very rapidly, may very rapidly pass away. Explain it as we may or leave it unexplained, the *fact* is too well ascertained. How very vivid sometimes the dream that visits us! how exceedingly difficult to throw it off for the first minutes of waking! but after those few first minutes are past, no mist climbed the mountain-side, nor morning cloud the heaven, quicker to vanish than that dream and its impression vanish. And so it is evident that everything is not necessarily gained or surely gained when vivid effects, ay, effects howsoever vivid, are gained. 1. Vivid impression needs the staying effect of reflection. 2. Vivid impressions which are also of the most startling personal character need the conciliating influences of some calm familiarity with them. They must be faced, must be looked at so that they may be recognized again, must be granted the opportunity of revealing their *lovely* aspects as well as their bright or powerful aspects. 3. The vivid impressions that belong to a heart touched by the Spirit of God particularly demand to *dwell* a while with that Spirit, and dwell as though quite *alone* with him, (1) that he may be *honoured*; (2) that he may work his work amid the absorbed and the undivided, undistracted attention of that human heart. In what ineffable communion with the Father supreme, with the Saviour and Mediator Jesus, and with eternal realities, will the Spirit then engage the yielding heart! It is not that the Spirit cannot work apace, but, as in everything else, it is that man cannot—he is slow, slow indeed, as compared with that Spirit's swift power. 4. Strong convictions do none the less need the confirming effect of deliberate resolution, of some contributing and very conscious effort on our own side. 5. The most right resolutions need that we summon our whole self, after carefully "counting the cost," to *prove* moral courage and spiritual vigour by taking some practical step. It is Jesus himself who lays the stress on "counting the cost," for those who would be his followers, do his work, "enter the kingdom of God." And to changed objects of life, methods of life, and society in life, such as those to which Saul—ay, to which any true convert—is called, needs it not the entrance by unmistakable, confessed

self-renunciation? Of the honesty and thoroughness of such self-renunciation it is at all events no feeble symbol when sense and appetite resign their grip, generally so tyrannical. And now in no parable, but in most literal truth, Saul is befriended by Divine forethought and care. The strong man is taken out of his own keeping. When he was his old self, he had indeed "girded himself and walked whither he would;" but now he is too glad to "stretch forth his hand, and that another should gird him" and lead him whither he had never, never thought of going. It was the completing so far of God's great love to him, and Jesus' great compassion toward him. He is delivered, fairly delivered from himself for three days. He sees not, eats not, drinks not. Neither does he go out to this present world by the beautiful gate of the eye, nor does the support of the outer world come so much as to his body. He is sequestered with the Spirit, who reveals to him the errors of the past and something of the destiny of the future; who makes him to know Jesus and himself—the fullness and grace of the one, the poverty and insufficiency of the other. The plain facts for Saul again and again speak with lessons most needed for us and for all time. They suggest to us what meditation we need, what devotion, what divorce from sight and from appetite which may so seduce the soul, what grateful and close communion with God, obedience to the Spirit, and trust in the Saviour, and how the safest augury for the future is that we do break with the past. Wonderful and fascinating to imagination Saul's "retreat" of three days. To the things that then transpired, however, we need not be and ought not to be entire strangers. We may learn what Saul learned if we will go where he learned them, and may ere long say for ourselves—

"There if thy Spirit touch the soul
And grace her mean abode,
Oh, with what peace and joy and love
She communes with her God!"

B.

Ver. 11.—*The sight that Jesus notes.* These words, spoken by Jesus himself from heaven to one disciple of his and about another, the very youngest of all, single out a fact, and point to it as a sight worthy to be observed. The fact is in itself a very simple one, in the judgment of many a very ordinary one, in the unheeding judgment of most men an exceedingly uninteresting and unimportant one. Nor would it be easy to find a more clearly outlined illustration of the different estimate of earth and heaven, of Jesus and of erring man, than that found here. Jesus points to the sight of a man on his knees as one worthy to be beheld—to the fact of a man praying as one to engage attention, deep regard, and practically altered conduct on the part of his fellow-men. This is the simplest statement of the history that is before us. And it may be objected that, though it be a true statement so far, it is true only in this instance, or, if not only, yet that it is to such a degree exceptionally true here, that it may not be drawn into a precedent. But the burden of proof of such a position will fall upon those who shall hesitate to admit that one and the same essential element of noteworthiness attaches to the same situation, the same spectacle, wherever it presents itself. This, then, which was a spectacle to the Lord Jesus, and of which he speaks to his disciples in that very light, may well interest the gaze and devout thought of all generations—"Behold, he prayeth!"

I. Let us consider, first, what different descriptions may be given in answer to the question, "WHAT IS IT TO PRAY?" since Jesus gives such prominence to the act. 1. It is the first sign of some great change. It betrays something novel that has been at work, unseen but not unfelt. It portends much to come. 2. It is itself the first movement of spiritual life, the new-born infant's trial of the spiritual lungs, and first lifting of them up and first breathing of spiritual air, the first voice of the "babe in Christ." 3. Its form may be a single word, a simplest sentence; one gentlest sigh may bear it up all the way to heaven, one passionate cry may speed it up; one upward glance of the eye may reveal it to that benignant eye which is ever bended down in compassion on us; one big solitary tear, that drops into the earth and can no more be gathered up, will be "counted" for it by him who doth "count all our tears." 4. The time it takes may be a moment, the twinkling of an eye, or it may be the exercise of agonized hours.

II. We may ask, "WHO IS THE PRAYING MAN? AND WHAT HIS STATE?" The man who prays is the man who has come into a certain new state towards God—a state that makes him desire also to come in a very new attitude into his presence. 1. It is the state of one who has discovered a *need* of a kind, a depth, an amount, and an urgency he had never dreamt of before. 2. It is the state of one who has become ready and anxious to make a thorough confession. Pride has gone. Self-satisfaction has gone. Trust in the world's short resources has gone. Blindedness and delusion are dissipated. 3. It is the state of one who has been shaken by conviction of sin. The first prayer is not for mercies temporal, but for *mercy*—the mercy that a creature wants who has been growing up a long time, but *not* growing up in either perfect or even conscious relations with his Creator-Father. Conviction is the grandest interpreting exposition of the prophet's *dictum*, "Be sure your sin will find you out" (Numb. xxxii. 23). 4. It is the state of one who, let him be what he may, let him have been, have done, what he may, toward God, or toward man, or toward his own heart and conscience, has been visited by some glimmering ray of light, and has felt the warmth of some feeble flame of hope. Real prayer and absolute despair, real prayer and utter darkness, never go together. So prayer is the *pulse* of vitality. Its feeblest expression is the radiation of the spark of God's light, life, love, *not extinct*. 5. It is the case of one long sore sick, for whom the crisis of fatal danger is past, the disease stayed, and on whom, with more than the fondest solicitude of the tenderest parent, the Lord Jesus looks down and vouchsafes to point out the blessed symptoms, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!"

III. Let us consider WHO IT IS THAT IS HERE SPOKEN OF AS PRAYING. He is a Jew, well taught, of pious forefathers, of strict Pharisee school, full of earnestness, free from immorality, given to striving for superiority and profiting above his equals, and given to saying prayers. So that, whatever a certain kind of light and moral character and virtue might avail, he had the benefit of them. On the other hand, "the light that was in him was darkness;" his zeal was bigotry; his high character was to the scale of human measurement only; he had never touched deep ground; he was a sinner and didn't know it; he persecuted "saints" and didn't know it; he kept the raiment, and consented to the stoning, of them that stoned Stephen, and didn't know what he was doing or what they were doing,—till now, in the full career of a very successful "breathing out of threatenings and slaughters," he is flung to the ground, and becomes as one stunned. Yet spoken to, he knows the Lord, and in a moment owns his rightful Master by word. The prayers of the crucified Jesus, and of the first martyr Stephen—"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do"—are answered; and he who was just now breathing out those threatenings and slaughters, now breathes the deep, earnest, pleading accents of prayer. And there is no mistake, deception, nor unconscious delusion; for he who knew all says, and hushes every doubt and objection while he says it, "Behold, he prayeth!"

IV. Let us notice, lastly, WHY JESUS SAYS, "BEHOLD!" 1. To the risen Jesus, at all events, no real surprise could be possible. Only a God's wonder—whatever that may be—might be understood here, if the charmed words had been words of soliloquy. But they are not words of soliloquy. They are condescendingly spoken in order to *disarm* the very faithlessness of human distrust, which, nevertheless, insisted on expressing itself. Jesus calls attention to what may teach us a large lesson of liberality, of charity, but above all of trust in the force victorious and "more than conquering" of his gospel and his Name. 2. Jesus calls attention to what we may think little of, and think *amiss* therein. Many are the things we think little of—little sins, to wit—of which he thinks much, to hate them. Many are the things we think little of—little kindnesses, little cups of cold water, to wit—of which he thinks much, to love them. And much—oh, how much!—will waken our astonished attention one day, soon to come, that moves us with not a ripple of either surprise or interest now. Still, he that hath ears to hear may hear now that heavenly "Behold!" It speaks in most striking contrast to the "Lo! here," and "Lo there," of earth and men. 3. Jesus says, "Behold!" because he would call attention to a change that was a pattern miracle of his power and grace. He calls attention to it, not as *unique*, but as a model instance. Such a character revolutionized. Such a life and force of life, and combined elements of life, and character

istics not all unmingled bad, changed! What, then, shall not Christ and the Spirit be able to do? Eighteen centuries have justified that "Behold!" in both these aspects—as pointing out a model conversion in Saul's conversion, and as vindicating it as but the first of an amazing and glorious series. 4. Jesus, in saying "Behold!" teaches us where to look, and so also where not to look, in ourselves for evidence of real change. All objection, all inquisition, all human dogma, all ecclesiastical domination and forging of creed and formula and fetters,—perish they all before the decisive "Behold!" of Jesus—"Behold, he prayeth!" Before this sight human presumption may well be silenced, as before it "Satan trembles." In conclusion, still, alas! for once that the gracious finger points while the gracious lip says, "Behold, he prayeth!" how often must it be said, "Behold, he prayeth not"! Though there be every reason to pray, every encouragement to pray, how many pray not! Yet no monarch on the most powerful and majestic throne, and wielding the mightiest sway, is in very deed to compare for one moment with the man whose attitude is on his knees before God. Who can describe the new alacrity with which in due time that man regains his feet? Though Saul had laboured abundantly under the wrong master, after that praying he "laboured more abundantly, yet not he, but—the grace of God that was in him," and in him through that praying.—B.

Ver. 15.—*The choice of perfect forgivingness.* Ananias demurs to the errand assigned. It was not altogether unnatural that he should do so. His hesitation, however, does not resemble that of Moses. And, in expressing the grounds of it, he was only occupying by anticipation the position which it would become necessary to occupy when any and all actual interposition of the great Head of the Church should be withdrawn. Then, as it is to this day, it became among the most critical cares and the most solemn responsibilities of the Church and of its leaders, its "pastors and elders," to consider what prudence may permit, and act as much with the wisdom of the serpent as with the innocuousness of the dove. The hesitation of Ananias does not appear to be reproved, but is plainly overruled; and we are therein reminded still how—

I. AN ILL REPUTATION AMONG MEN WILL NOT DETER THE CHOICE OF JESUS. The "things that are highly esteemed among men" are not only sometimes "held in abomination in the sight of God," but the things that are with justice *lightly* "esteemed among men" are taken up sometimes by God, that he may in them magnify his transforming power. 1. *Reputation* is an uncertain guide. It is even particularly so, perhaps it may be said, when it is a good reputation; for how "many that are first shall be last"! 2. The tyranny of *reputation* is not for a moment recognized by Jesus. As peremptorily as he would bid the worst sinner depart from the error of his way, as lovingly as he would persuade the most *disreputable* to "sin no more," so graciously does he *receive* such also; and let the censorious world say what it will, he discountenances the censoriousness by word, and here emphatically discountenances by *deed*, what *might* contain the germ of the principle. It is a thing to be much thought upon by the true disciples of Christ. The world and a *worldly Church* aggravate the difficulty of the returning sinner. This is the opposite of the way of Jesus. Jesus helps a man to *recover* his character; he helps his struggles while he does so; he shows him sympathy, and, "though he fall" many a time in the struggle, graciously watches him and upholds him again and again that he be *not* "utterly cast down." It is a proverb that the world keeps the man down who is down. And when the Church approaches anything of the like kind, it means to say that it is only in name the Church, and is drained miserably dry of the Spirit.

II. THE UNLIKELIEST ANTECEDENTS DO NOT FRIGHTEN JESUS FROM HIS CHOICE. Ananias did not misstate anything, did not exaggerate the case against Saul, was not overrudden by strange tales untrue. But he did fear; he had a nervous apprehension; he had not up to that moment learned, what probably he did at that moment learn, and from that moment never forgot, the proud reach of the power of Christ. How long it is before any of us attain to the right conception of Jesus and his heart and his hand! We still think him such as ourself, only something *greater*, greatly greater; something *better*, and very much better. We need to see that he is *divinely* greater, *divinely* better, and all that *divine* means. 1. The antecedents of a man's life may largely betoken its real bent. 2. They will largely have made his *habits*. 3. They

will almost inevitably colour all his future way of viewing things. But to these three things the answer for Jesus is that he, ay, he alone, can *reverse* bent, can *undo* habit, and can give to see light in God's light (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

III. NONE OF THAT RESENTMENT THAT BORROWS SO MUCH VITALITY FROM LIVELY MEMORY OF PAST INJURY BELONGS TO JESUS. Genuinely to forgive is acknowledged to be one of the highest moral achievements of human nature. Nevertheless, there are ascending degrees even to this virtue; and when some men are satisfied that they have done their most and their best, all that nature admits of or that God demands, it must be allowed that these men are but beginning their higher flight. To forgive the bitterest opponent in these senses—that you love him again or for the first time, as the case may be; that you sympathize with him and accept his sympathy; work with him and accept his work and devotion—nay, *select* him as your chief man, and set him forth and forward as your champion;—is a type of forgiveness rarely reproduced. With sublimity of ease Jesus does all this now. Not Peter, not John, not James, but this wild enemy, Saul, is the man he called and honoured “to bear his Name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.” His sins shall not be remembered against him for ever. They are, then, really *blotted out*. He is not forgiven, but put rather low down; forgiven, but kept rather down, lest he should not be fit to be *quite* trusted; forgiven, but in deepest truth left still a marked man. No; if he is marked it is for honour, for renown, for grace, and for the unfading crown of glory. In sight of this proof of the perfection of forgiveness that is with Jesus, we may well sing—

“Mighty Lord, so high above us,
Loving Brother, all our own,
Who will help us, who will love us,
Like to thee, who all hast known?
Who so gentle to the sinners
As the soul that never fell?
Who so strong to make us winners
Of the height he won so well?”

IV. IN THE CHOICE OF JESUS WE STAND IN THE PRESENCE OF ONE OF THE ULTIMATE MYSTERIES OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AND HUMAN RELATION TO GOD. When we ponder this subject, if we side with the infidel, we ridicule and at the same time we are putting ourselves nowhere. If we side with the reverent, we are in the depths too deep for us. The choosing of Jesus *is* mystery, unfathomable mystery for us. 1. It is mystery because he gives no account of it nor will be arraigned nor questioned concerning it. 2. It is mystery, because not all our reason, nor all our reverent study of the oracles, nor all our diligent search of history, nor all our scrutiny of human will and character, can trace the *law* of that choosing. It baffles us in reason and in fact. Its startling anomalies presented to our view in closest juxtaposition, its sudden appearance in the most unexpected place, and its equally conspicuous and impressive absence, speak the mystery of sovereignty. 3. It is mystery in the wonders which it reveals of surpassing condescension, grace, and clinging love. While reason still stands afar off in cold repulsion and haughty distance, hearts draw near. And for its last achievement it works out this harmony for all those, without one exception, who have become the objects of it; they adore the free grace that has drawn and brought them; they condemn in the same breath the perverseness and folly and guilt in themselves, which left them so long outside.—B.

Ver. 16.—*Jesus' far-seeing compassion appearing in an unexpected way.* That Saul, when now called Paul, did indeed suffer many and great things for Jesus' “Name's sake,” is most true. He knew it *when* he suffered them; he knew it also by anticipation (Ch. xx. 23; xi. 11)—a kind of knowledge that to many would be of the most harassing and distressing consequence; and he knew it as he looked back (2 Cor. xi. 23—31; xii. 10), not indeed to murmur, nor to repent of having exposed himself to it, but, while glorying in the suffering, to testify how real it was. That, therefore, of which Jesus tells Ananias that he will forewarn Saul, did by all the witness of history come to pass. But it is another question why he is forewarned of it, and why Jesus assures Ananias that he shall be so forewarned. Nor can it escape our notice that

much significance is intended to lie in the statement as here introduced. Let us consider this announcement of Jesus—

I. IN ITS APPLICATION TO ANANIAS. It is intended to remove the objection of Ananias, by suggesting to him: 1. That Christ did not overlook, had not overlooked, the speciality of the case. 2. That Christ would be himself answerable for the education of Saul for his work, failing the antecedents that Ananias supposed would have been of more auspicious promise. 3. That that education would not fail to be what, in its character and the severity of its discipline, would both (1) attest the reality of the change passed upon Saul and (2) confirm and deepen that change. 4. Possibly Christ may, in the mode of his reply, desire also very condescendingly to still any smallest germ of (1) personal envy or (2) *forwardness* to suspicion lurking in the character of Ananias. It is very certain that the mischief of these two very things, unacknowledged and covered over with finer words, has amounted to a total result of very great disaster during the career of the Church, ever since the personal intervention of Jesus has been absent. How often did Jesus in the days of his flesh stand by the sorry sinner round whom surged the murmur of the envious multitude! But the half-stifled and cautious envy and suspicion of the wary *individual* has often proved itself a more cruel enemy to souls, and must be a more offensive obstacle, in the eyes of Jesus, to his work making way in some poor guilty but struggling soul. Certain it is that—

“Since our dear Lord in bliss reposed,
High above mortal ken,”

his Church has, times without number, made to pass through severest quarantine heart-broken volunteers for his service. The effects have been all deteriorating and disastrous. They would have been ruinous save for the still steady, if invisible, rule and headship of Jesus Christ. The Church (whether only so named or so in deed and in truth), mistaking duty and right, has failed in such cases to note sufficiently the *Divine* treatment as here illustrated in the three days' blindness and fasting of Saul, succeeded by the confidence and trust of the great Master, given immediately in the kindest and most unreserved manner.

II. IN ITS APPLICATION TO SAUL HIMSELF. Jesus bids Ananias lose no time, but “go” at once to bear to Saul the message, so far as the way could be prepared for it by human lips; and herein suggests to us to notice certain relations of this language to Saul. 1. Christ, having chosen his servant, apprises him both faithfully and early of what awaits him. No false, nor tempting, nor too favourable gloss is put by him on his own “most worthy” service. 2. He apprises him also of what is expected of him. If Jesus show to any one, whether in the ways of apostolic time or in the ways of time present, “how great things he shall suffer for his Name's sake,” “how great things” life and circumstance and earthly lot are likely to make him “suffer,” “how great things” his divinest directest call shall impose upon him to “suffer,”—it must be that he is addressing a call to him that shall invoke all his *heroism*. It is very much as though the condescending Jesus did here introduce the Christian hero into the possible ranks of his own blessed Church. All must come of him, all *does* surely come of him; but if it be possible, something shall be credited to the range of human virtue. Manifestly Saul was a good instance by which to set forth this. He *had* been conspicuous; he *had* been a hero of *some sort*; he *had* shown lavish energy, which shall no longer be sacrificed to lavish waste. Thus from the first Jesus gives a *tone* to certain of his servants—those, to wit, who are of the sort to answer to it readily and really. Life and labour and the success of real usefulness do often largely own to original impulse and early impression. The high-pitched thought and purpose and feeling of youth and of first effort are rarely lost, when they are genuine to begin with. They tell and count and swell to the echo as year and period pass by. Nor can it be denied that many a true Christian life falls under the condemnation of being a feeble and an unfruitful life, because it was not *at the first* appealed to with *power*. It never got the idea of trenchancy. And indecision—its watchword—was snare and delusion to it. 3. He apprises him of what may be calculated upon, as acting like a certain and safe check to both pride or vanity and self-confidence. How many have fallen upon the very threshold of what would have been a great spiritual career through one or both of these things! And the pride ecclesiastical

and the self-confidence that "lords it over the faith" of others are just two of the most pronounced pestilences of human nature. From the fright and the fire and the faintness of the "three days" which Saul had now known, it were *well* that he should not be brought out at once to the light and "the cheerful sun" and the splendid hopes and prospects of a great career. It is better that an *annealing* interval find place. It is safer that his thought and heart find tonic in a Saviour's call and in a Master's demand—that he familiarize himself with the outlook of suffering, and great suffering. 4. Though lastly, yet most of all, Jesus will connect everything in Saul's thought now with *himself*. How great, how true, how kind was this *philosophy*! Saul has sinned no end against Christ, and he shall suffer no end for "his Name's sake." What healing for Saul's soul that foretelling announcement! Saul has persecuted fiercely those who were dear to Christ unspeakably, and he shall bear the brunt of fiercest persecution for the sake of Christ and in the service of his loved ones. It is the only compensation for his self-respect, it is some anodyne for his inward smart, and, though an undiscerning world would never have thought it, it is the supreme mark of Christ's sweet forgivingness, of his delicate considerateness, of his tenderest sympathy. "I will show him how great things he must," etc.—B.

Vers. 17—19.—A parable in things spiritual. We entertain no doubt that we have here a simplest history of what actually occurred. We doubt no less that the chiefest interest and significance of the record lie in the spiritual history that underlies it. Nay, more, though we read facts of outer life, they do nothing more than *outline* those of an inner life, which Jesus notices, loves, helps, and even *makes*. Notice—

I. **THE CHANGE THAT PASSES ON SAUL.** He receives his *sight*. For three days he had been blind in a bodily sense, but for probably three and thirty years he had been blind in the *other* sense. And this *is* just what he had been. He had not been vicious, immoral, sottish, nor an infidel, nor irreverent toward all religious truth and feeling. But he had been blind—blind to the very type of human nature. And his blindness is but the type of that of every one of us, till he "receives his *sight* from the Lord Jesus."

II. **THE HUMAN HAND AND VOICE BY AID OF WHICH THE BLESSING IS CONVEYED.** If Jesus had been in a literal sense upon the earth, *he* would have spoken to Saul, *he* would have laid his own hands upon him. The actual ministry, the visible ministry, is passed, however, now into human agency. This was a plain-spoken statement of it. How great the honour laid on men! and how great their responsibility by this devolution of the highest and holiest functions! How full of solemn and inspiring suggestion, too little traced out in devout thought by us—that the actual work which for a space of time Jesus' own voice and hand had attended to, are now to be attended to by man, fellow-man. 1. That work, that ministry of service to the soul of a fellow-creature, finds out very soon and very surely all that is of the nature of sympathy. It tries sympathy, it wakes it, it increases it. The fearful Ananias and distrustful of one hour ago finds, and no doubt *honestly*, the word "brother" now on his lip—"Brother Saul." 2. Jesus himself became genuinely a Brother to those he came to save, *not* by virtue of his Divine power and practical pity only. That his might be the very type of brotherliness, he took our nature on him, and made himself Brother (Heb. ii. 11, 17). And when he ascended, his representatives are to be found in those who were men alone. That what might seem the *unnecessary* thing is here done, in a man being sent with the mere message of regiven sight, and the mere formality of "laying on hands" where no *virtue* could pass, must mean all the more to set honour on the spiritual work which one man should do for others.

III. **THE ONE DIVINE SOURCE FROM WHICH, NEVERTHELESS, ALL SAVING HELP CAME.** 1. Jesus sends Ananias. He has directed him, and where necessary corrected him also. He has fixed the time, and hastens the lingering step of Ananias. 2. Jesus, who "began the good work," perfects it. The Jesus who met Saul in the way and peremptorily reined up his career is the Jesus who gives him now light and liberty and his commission. The miracle is the miracle of Jesus; his the power, the will, the love, the sovereign grace. Nor can this be too well remembered by the servants of Christ, in all they do now toward the salvation of a fellow-man. Those who will most readily admit that the touch of their hand *can* do nothing to work sight for the blind, are

not always quite so clear that their voice, their wisdom, their persuasion, their *mental* influence on a fellow-being's mental state, are correspondingly *impotent in and of themselves*. Yet it is so. The love of Jesus and the command of the Spirit, and *these alone*, "make dead sinners live." Of one thing we may be convinced, that, had Ananias only spoken a hollow word of respect to Jesus, and flattered himself that the healing and sight-giving were going to be his own, the miracle would have broken down in the middle, if it had got so far, as Peter sank in the middle of his walking upon the sea. Does the preacher, does the teacher, does the pastor, remember this principle constantly enough? Do they possess an unfeigned humility of faith in it?

IV. THE ASSERTION OF THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY GHOST. 1. The work of the Holy Ghost is announced. 2. The presence of the Holy Ghost is announced as the result of the sending of Jesus Christ (John xvi. 7). 3. The commanding need of the Holy Ghost for a renewed man and an enlightened man, that he may remain surely so, is strongly enough implied: "That thou mightest be filled with the Holy Ghost." Nothing so hinders the spread of Christianity, the force of Christian life, the conversion of souls, as the neglect or the indifference shown to the work of the Holy Spirit. Christianity is in the fullest sense "the dispensation of the Spirit," and yet prayer for that Spirit, dependence upon him, understanding of him, are often all of the vaguest. The power and persuasion and grandeur of Christ and the cross of Christ only move into vitality as the Spirit takes of them and brings them to men's hearts. We do all and always need the Holy Spirit for both conversion and for sanctification, and for knowing and doing acceptably any service for God, for Christ, in man's heart and life.

V. THE SIGNS FOLLOWING THE WORD AND THE LAYING ON OF THE HANDS OF ANANIAS. They followed just as *though* it were by his own "power and holiness" that this miracle was wrought. So in our spiritual work, we should look for results. We should feel their cheering effect. We should delight in them. We should be grateful and honoured exceedingly that we are permitted to be instruments in the "mighty hand" for doing them. But, meantime, we are bound never to forget how fearful the robbery and the guilt if we give not all the glory to God, to Jesus, to the Spirit.—B.

Ver. 21.—*Amazement's opportunity.* The amazement of the disciples of Jesus, and of others also who heard Saul preaching at Damascus, may be pronounced natural enough under any circumstances and in any view of it. Yet distinct and emphatic mention of it asks for a somewhat more careful observation and scrutiny of its nature and peculiar features. Notice—

I. THE CAUSE OF THIS AMAZEMENT. 1. That Saul, a bitter opponent heretofore of Christ and his truth, now preaches Christ, the whole Christ, and nothing but Christ. He preaches "the whole Christ" in this sense, that, as we are told, he uplifts the central and so to speak crucial fact about Christ, "that he is the Son of God." This once granted "with the heart," all else follows. He has not yielded upon some side aspects of the matter, and for some politic reasons joined a remarkable movement. But he has yielded the stronghold of his own unbelief, and has acknowledged the impregnable character of the stronghold that he had been striving to batter down, to undermine, to "utterly" destroy. 2. That Saul, a notorious opponent of Christ, comes now to preach in the places where his change of front would also become most notoriously confessed, and where it in turn would be the mark and butt of keen opposition. He preached Christ "in the synagogues." 3. That, with the most unreserved and apparently even unconscious self-forgetfulness, Saul mingles in this work side by side with men, for the apprehension of whom, and for the conveying of whom "bound to Jerusalem," he had in his pocket official authorizations. 4. That Saul does this "straightway," without finding delay a possible thing, without waiting for anything of the nature of diplomatic introduction. There is something or other fresh in his heart, and it comes with all promptness and naturalness and force, full of its freshness, into his life.

II. THE SUBJECTS OF THIS AMAZEMENT. 1. They were in part disciples. It is impossible to say that all those who were amazed were of the number of either disciples or non-disciples. It is said "all" that "heard him" were amazed. These must have consisted of both disciples and non-disciples. The one had not left off entirely to frequent the synagogue, and the others would, as a matter of course, be found in some

sort of number there. So far as they were strictly disciples, their amazement marks no doubt, on the one hand, grateful and adoring impression; but, on the other, it is not altogether free from the imputation of betraying that the glories of the Spirit's power in conversion, and the force of the truth and call of Jesus, were at present only dawning upon their minds. We still speak of *remarkable* conversions, chiefly because they are so rare. We have had enough instances of them to satisfy us as to what the force of conversion is on every kind of sinner, in every kind of nature, and in every "nation." We are ever to magnify Christ and the Spirit, and gratefully to acknowledge their triumphs in conversion, but the expression of *amazement* may sometimes derogate from their honour. Perhaps the conversion of Saul was not only the most remarkable conversion that had yet taken place, but was the *only* one that, all things together, had stood out *uniquely* enough to compel attention individually. 2. They were in part unconvinced Jews, who, dead in formality, still frequented the synagogues in Damascus. The *lingering* and somewhat *feeble faith* and knowledge of the disciples finds something to counterbalance it, perhaps to some little degree, in the quickly aroused criticism and spirit of observation on the part of others less enlightened than they. The indirect influences of Christ and of his truth are many and effective. His enemies, and the force and the violence and the cruelty of their opposition, he often makes tributary to the advancement of his cause. Many who had hitherto willingly spread opposition, and opposition only, now become the means of spreading tidings of how the chief of the opposition had thrown up the contest and joined heart and hand to help. And they spread this ominous fact in the most contagious manner. It is by the manner of wondering, excited question, and question that wraps up in a sentence or two the salient and really telling aspects of the whole matter. The astonishment of the godly is often deep down in their own souls or sacred in the converse of one another; the astonishment of the ungodly is sure to be loud on their lip. But when this latter largely reinforces the former, both advantages are secured, and the march of victory advances to the step of both friends and foes. It was so now, and throughout the whole people far and wide notoriety was as the consequence given to the conversion of Saul—a notoriety which had its share in bringing on the "Churches' rest" spoken of in ver. 31.

III. THE RESULTS OF THE AMAZEMENT. 1. A very wide hearing was gained *irresistibly*, not for the truths of Christianity alone, but for its triumphs as well. One triumph is itself a sermon better than a thousand merely spoken sermons. And now this triumph-sermon, this sermon of sermons, is proclaimed and repeated by thousands of lips. 2. Even when first impressions had died away, substantial increase of faith and hope was left in the character of all "disciples." They had without doubt known already striking instances of changed opinion and feeling and life among those to whom Christ had been preached, and for whom his mighty works had been done. But *this* was not what is generally meant by a remarkable conversion. *The* grand feature here was not the reform from an unholy life, but the reform from an uncompromising antagonist into a devoted and very powerful champion. This would be a comparatively new and a most refreshing testimony to disciples of the nature and the force of the new treasure they had in the gospel of Jesus Christ. 3. Slumbering enmity and indifference to Christ in those who were *not* disciples were brought into the shape in which they would be best dealt with—*malignant* enmity and active resistance. Now "the sinners" and "those who were at ease" wake themselves. Here is found a foeman worthy indeed of their "steel," if they had weapon of the make. But they had not. They, therefore, conspire and "watch day and night," to learn how vain the attempt to take those whom Christ holds so safe in his hand and love. The fruit of confessed amazement and undoubted amazement at the mighty deeds of Christ must ever be either hearty obedience to him, or an understanding more blinded and life aggravated to perverseness itself.—B.

Ver. 25.—*The beginning of perils for Paul.* To this beginning of "perils" Paul will often in later days of life have looked back. He did not live to any prolonged period, but if he had, there is not a length of life so long nor charged with changes so violent as to be able to cut off from us the effects of the touching comparisons and the telling contrasts of beginning and ending. Many a broken portion of life offers us such effects; but how much more moving those of life itself! Long was the list of perils

and sufferings, varied and sharp the discipline of them; but when the rehearsal of them comes (2 Cor. xi. 16—33), it speaks a perseverance unbroken, a courage unquenched, a heart, fidelity, love, stronger and more determined than ever. That rehearsal somewhat remarkably closes with the mention of the *first* peril of Paul, as here given us, as though his memory, deliberately travelling backward, reached last that which life brought to him first. The opportunity may be seized for considering at least one side of the great *service of suffering*. It must be a ministry full of *expression*, full of meaning, full of deep feeling, and, if not made full of use also, it must be of all loss "most miserable." In the present connection let us observe that—

I. IT TESTS A CAUSE, OF WHAT SORT IT IS. With rare exceptions, it may be said that the cause which bears the test of suffering, and of much suffering, will be a cause alike great and good. Human hearts, strong though they be, are *not* strong enough to bear gratuitously a vast amount of suffering. The vast amount of the worst sort of suffering that sin entails, that comes inevitably in its *wake*, is of course not in the place for a test, and cannot operate as such. The abundant presence of it, therefore, where it is, does not invalidate the position. The cause that asks suffering to espouse it, to sustain it, to carry it to completion, is self-hedged around as with some sovereign safeguard. The frivolous will not come near it, and the great multitude will pay no court to it. But: 1. If it arrest the attention, kindle the enthusiasm, win the practical confidence of a few, and those, perhaps, the thoughtful, the useful, the unselfish, it is a considerable surgery of something substantial and substantial good in it. 2. Enthusiasm can do very great things for an hour. It will encounter and even court any amount of suffering. We cannot, therefore, consider *taking* service in a cause that imposes suffering any decisive test. The test, however, becomes much more decisive when that service is *persevered* in, still entailing suffering, year after year, and on to the maturity of life. 3. The highest kind of human test is reached when the cause is one persevered in to the very end of life, through suffering all the way and almost every step. The enterprise that can secure *this* allegiance says as much for itself as any enterprise on earth can, and the best. And this is abundantly the case with Christianity. When Saul embraced it it meant peril, and labour, and privation, and much direct suffering. But, "being persuaded of it, he embraced it," and was faithful to it through the succeeding periods and phases of his own earthly career, and up to the very last. Then in old age, beaten and weather-beaten, in prison and in chains and bonds, he does not dream of repenting or of recanting, but says, "I am not ashamed," and bids others follow in his steps (2 Tim. i. 12). If it had been a flowery path and an easy career, Paul's perseverance would have been no argument for it. But because it was a suffering career, his perseverance spoke, not his praise alone, but that of his Master's cause yet more. How many a cause will waken enthusiasm! how few will sustain it! How many will beg it! how few reward it! There is the difference of a world, ay, of two worlds, between the two.

II. SUFFERING TESTS A MAN, OF WHAT SORT HE IS. If any one persevere in fighting a suffering battle, it is certainly so far forth an argument for the object of the battle. But if he do not fight the battle, or beginning do not carry out to the end the struggle, it by no means condemns the cause. The question will have to be settled whether blame lie with the cause or whether it do not rather lie with the person. 1. Suffering for the individual tries high moral quality and improves it. 2. Suffering tries many individual virtues and graces—those of faith, of hope, of perseverance, of love that fires cannot burn away nor death destroy. And it unfailingly improves them. 3. Suffering certainly tends to fix and give clear "*evidence*" to an unearthly type of character. 4. Suffering lends distinctness to conviction, to purpose, to achievement. It is a disinfectant, an alterative, and a tonic all in one. Pleasure and indulgence enfeeble, that is, they *tend* to enfeeble and to enervate, once past a very moderate amount. Suffering, short of an excessive amount of it, makes keen the faculty, the sight, the soul itself! Wonderful is its bracing effect on body and mind, on heart and life.

III. SUFFERING BECOMES SOMETIMES THE OCCASION OF A GREAT MORAL DISPLAY IN THE WORLD. Beside the uses of suffering in the good fruits it produces on individual character; and beside its use as a test, whether of worth in an enterprise or of strength in a person, it cannot be denied that it lends itself to special moral service, often on a large scale and in a wide theatre. Against it all nature rebels. For that very reason,

when it is voluntarily encountered, patiently borne, and embraced even to the cross, to stoning, to torture, and the stake, the world has no help for it but to notice what is transpiring. An unwilling world is put into the dilemma that it is either convinced or convicted. The confession is wrested from all beholders that there is something present which begs and deserves close scrutiny and respectful attention, or that they are in any given instance deserting precedents that in all others they have observed. When the testimony of suffering is shown forth in one, the force of it will partly depend on the notoriety that his conduct may win, and it may undoubtedly be weakened by the suspicion of individual eccentricity until this again be rebutted. But when the testimony is borne by many and for a length of time, it is equivalent to the presence of a new and very real moral force among mankind. Many of the grandest and most impressive triumphs of Christianity have been owing to this, and many of its most significant impulses have been due to it. Men and suffering have calmly faced one another, have measured the force of one another; neither have shrunk from the wager—men have not fled and suffering has not yielded up its sting. And yet they have made common cause, and have made also most wonderfully effective fight. Something *in* man, given him from without and from above, has made him fearless of what all nature made him to fear. It is an exhibition in the arena of the world; it never fails of having witnesses; it always leaves its traces. And the Paul of perils and sufferings ever stands one of the clearest and noblest illustrations of a great and effectual moral display.—B.

Vers. 26—30.—*An ill odour and its remedy.* The odour of character and “ill report” are two very different things. The character of most fragrance may be in worst “report.” Was it not true of Jesus? The noblest personages that have graced the world have often been temporarily of ill report, but not, correctly speaking, of ill odour. Of all ill odour none is a hundredth part so bad as the ill odour of character. Notice—

I. ITS CHIEF POINTS OF STRONG CONDEMNATION. 1. It is an intrinsic shame to the person of whom it is true. It is the result of what he is and what he says and what he does, and not of the mistakes others may possibly make respecting him in any of these particulars. 2. It is a virulent *disintegrant* of human society and love. It turns the place and opportunity of attraction into those of repulsion, and substitutes for the union of trust the disunion of suspicion. 3. It is cruelty to all those who are of the same kind by nature. Some kind of sin, beside all the black front it shows as such to God, adds the aggravation of widespread and keenly felt domestic misery. 4. It is a very fountain of *fear* to an indefinite number of others. The character that is correctly answerable to the description of one of ill odour is an offence to those who *have* to come in contact with it, and to those who *fear lest* they should come in contact with it. 5. It is constantly diffusing its noxious and malarious influences, and not least when perhaps for a brief while least observed.

II. THE REMEDY. There is one remedy, and only, that goes to the root of the matter. That character must be *changed*. Come what may, let what may seem risked, through whatsoever experience of suffering and anguish of a new birth, nothing short of a real and penetrating change will avail. Nothing partial, no outside improvement, no mere mitigation of his style of word or deed, could have reconciled “disciples at Jerusalem” or anywhere else to Saul, had there not been proof patent of radical change. The source of the old ill must be cut off, and in such wise that it comes to be the natural thing to men to feel convinced that it is really and undoubtedly out off.

III. THE ROOM THAT THERE IS FOR THE EXERCISE OF BROTHERLY CHARITY WITHAL. Men who go by the name of Christian do often suspect when they should not, and distrust too long. The example of Jesus is clear against such conduct and such a disposition. To the worst sinner he was prompt to give the hand of hope and the hand of help, and to shield them from the glance and the pointed finger of tauntings drawn from the past. We may admit that the eye of Jesus recognized genuineness, and his lip could pronounce upon it with a certainty shut out from ourselves. None the less must we recognize his principle, and honour it by using it. Barnabas now took Saul by the hand, and showed him the brotherly kindness the spirit of which the great Master first gave to the Church. And it is agreeable to observe how “apostles” and “brethren” thereupon believed in Saul, and acted as though they believed in

him. Grateful is it at one and the same time to see how the trust reposed in Barnabas quite sufficed to counteract the distrust that had been so naturally felt towards Saul. Broad as is the line, therefore, that separates the repentant man from the sinner; uncompromising as our conduct must be in having no fellowship with darkness; and trenchant as our fidelity to *doctrine* as it were;—yet for all this amount of reason, the more promptly, gladly, and trustfully must we give heart and hand to the repentant, whatsoever they have been heretofore. From the moment Jesus pardons, receives, and sets to work one who has long and deeply insulted him, we must pardon, “receive as a brother beloved,” and welcome as a fellow-labourer that man. Nor ever forget that to suspect and distrust a moment too long, or to wonder past believing, is to put ourselves into the last position that we would wish or mean to occupy. For our immovable and gladdest creed is that Christ *can* do all things in human heart and human life.—B.

Ver. 31.—History a sermon. The simplest matters of fact are sometimes weighted with impression and charged with instruction. And in like manner, the simplest-told history sometimes preaches the most suggestive of sermons. Notice three things in this briefly described episode of history.

I. THE REST WHICH THE CHURCH HAD. 1. It was a rest from the actual *sufferings* of persecution. 2. It was a rest from the constant and tearing anxieties involved in the fear of persecution. Foreboding kills many whom no actual suffering would kill. 3. It was a rest from the literal moving about from place to place, either with the chance of eluding persecution or as the consequence of it. In all of these respects the mercy of Christ is not forgetful of the need of the Church: (1) As repose is one of the first necessities of each individual that composes it. Storm, trouble, conflict, operate as useful tests of character and fidelity, and they may be said to add some sort of *strength*. But for growth and nourishment and sound health rest is one of the first conditions. (2) As repose is one of the first necessities for giving scope to the character and action of the Church as a whole. One of the divinest tests of the Church is its spontaneous love and its spirit of co-operation. Those who are in similar want, similar sorrow, similar danger, similar fear, do not find any difficulty in harmonizing, drawing near together, co-operating. But the scene is often changed when it is all fair weather. Therefore fair weather itself is necessary (a) for trying character and hardening character, and (b) for giving the time and the opportunity for combining in works of holy activity. Note well what a various thing Christian character and life make. They are of many elements; they need not a hard, stiff, monotonous, unbending treatment. But they need the revolution of the seasons, and can bear it too. They need blast and tempest, and are responsive to summer evening’s softest sigh also. They need many a caution, many an anxious watching, many an anguished heart-searching, but also they need to luxuriate awhile in the rest of calm, of happiness, of love.

II. THE PEACE WHICH PREVAILED DURING REST. The enemy which might have taken opportunity to enter, one whom the most experienced would have feared the most, did *not* enter. The true motto, “Peace, as in all Churches of the saints” (1 Cor. xiv. 33), was their welcome watchword now. Rest from without is often the very signal for confusion and discord within. The concord that comes of a common enemy known to be no distance off is something far inferior to the concord that comes from real intrinsic causes. This only can give us any slightest foretaste of the deep calm of heaven. 1. How pleasant this calm peace within must have been, as a mere contrast to what had been! 2. How welcome it must have been, as introducing the followers and disciples of Jesus to their first acquaintance with a thoroughly new set of ideas, new range of affections, new work of this life, and new scope of life itself! 3. How delightful this peace, for the sake of the actual converse of disciples with disciples, and of Church with Church! They had met, perhaps, in the relations of business, and of pleasure, and of a dead formalism of religion, and in the discussion of the humiliation of the political bondage under which they were now living; but what unwonted peace this was to have “their conversation in heaven,” to find it “building”-time in the best sense, to “walk in the fear of the Lord,” and to know the “comfort of the Holy Ghost.”! The “fellowship of kindred minds” is indeed not necessarily “like to that above;” but the fellowship of such kindred minds is undoubtedly and blessedly “like to that above.”

III. THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH. Intervals of rest give the opportunity of growth, and intervals of peace within are deep, solid, firm, growing itself. But neither the Church nor the individual Christian can be right in considering exclusively, or enjoying exclusively without consideration, its own possibilities of inward growth. The Church was now not only "edified" in itself, and "settled," "established," "strengthened," but "it was multiplied." No doubt, even in times of severest tribulation, it was added to, and persecution by no means closed its roll and cut off its recruits. But now the Church—the destined depository of Divine power in part, and the honoured fellow-labourer with Divine unseen actors—was beginning to know its work and to feel its high force and to be conscious of its most responsible privileges. The very simple and beautiful description before us warrants us to say that the consistent "walk" of the Church, and the deep heart-felt experience on the part of the Church of what is most characteristic above all things else whatsoever of her existence and nature, namely, "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," are *the best* adapted human means for the increase of the Church, for the impression of the world, for the conversion of the sinners. "The power is of God" under any and all circumstances. The "foolishness of preaching" is the positive and declared method of making known what the gospel of Christ is and what it proffers. But for impression on others, so far as human action goes, the Christian man who "walks in the fear of the Lord" availeth much. And for pressure upon the unbelieving world, pressure upon its eye, ear, judgment, and conscience, pressure constant, close, and unevadable, there is nothing like the advance of a host that "walks in the fear of the Lord," and that enjoys "the comfort of the Holy Ghost." 1. Consistent Christian life speaks itself. This has always been a potent presence and an irresistible argument. The absence of it is *damnatory*, on all sides and in all senses—to the person who makes hollow profession, damnatory of that hollowness; to the world damnatory of any inclination to be found in the camp of *such* hollowness. For, wonderful though it be that the world will condone and will have fellowship with other hollowness, most blessed and advantageous it is that it kicks at, scorns, and exposes the hollowness of *mere* profession of Christ. 2. "The comfort of the Holy Ghost" is an *experience*, and it is of what is deepest down in human hearts. Yet is it *not* for that reason invisible. It betrays itself in the eye; it betokens itself in the language and the very tone of that language; it beams forth in all the deed of the man whom the Spirit who gives it vouchsafes to inhabit. When the Holy Ghost becomes the Master, the gracious, condescending, comforting Master of any man, or of the Church, or any part of the Church, then these become the persuasive masters of others, and the choicest, chiefest attraction of the world. The "Church is multiplied" then, and the "excellency of the power is of God" still. This little episode of history, then, is a sermon, and teaches us what a practical sermon the life of every Church and every Christian may preach.—B.

Vers. 32—35.—*One specimen of Christian activity.* The history has for some little while veiled the Apostle Peter from view. He now appears again in an episode that catches our attention the more because of the things it leaves unsaid. Let us notice—

I. THE MORE REMARKABLE FEATURES OF THE BRIEF NARRATIVE. 1. The picture is put before our eye, by the mere touch of the sacred pen, of the full measure of activity that characterizes Peter. He is not at home. He is "not slothful" and self-indulgent. He is at work, and for work's sake travelling "through all parts." 2. The fond inclining of Peter's heart is seen. He "comes down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda." He comes down to refresh brethren and to be refreshed by them. He comes to see the little nucleus of believers, to give them "some token for good," to give them another hostage of their work, to give them an example, and to take from them that which they had to give and yet be no losers—Christian sympathy and joy. 3. The silence observed respecting Æneas, who he was. Is there not justification for supposing that he was already one of "the saints"? For: (1) Peter seems to have found him *among* such. (2) Peter asks him no question to elicit knowledge or faith, hope or love; nor does he seem to ask anything of Peter either for body or mind. (3) Peter appears to use the Name of Jesus Christ as a name known already to Æneas, and addresses him apparently with the ease of brotherly familiarity and of Christian homeliness. 4. The immediate blessing "given" though *unmasked, unsought yet*

"found" (Luke xl. 9, 10). Much as Jesus loves and teaches that we should ask, seek, and knock for his blessings, it must be a sight acceptable to him to see the patience of bodily suffering that asks nothing. 5. The great attention called hereby to the Lord. The little villages were "born" again in a day (Isa. lxvi. 8). Lydda and Saron "saw the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God," and they "blossomed as the rose" (Isa. xxxv. 1, 2).

II. THE MORE REMARKABLE LESSONS OF THIS BRIEF NARRATIVE. 1. The refreshing suggestion given to us of the force that lies in the genuine activity of *one* Christian. 2. The wisdom, amid all our visitings, of visiting Christians and little communities of Christians, who may dwell apart, in the village and the hamlet, afar from the stir of the large masses of the people. When with such, there will be sure to be much to be given and much to be gotten by the genuine. 3. The grand opportunities that seem to *come*, where our faithlessness least anticipates it, when only we are very simply walking in duty's path. Those are really the opportunities *Heaven sent*, and the likeliest of all to be fruitful of immortal good. *Our* grander preparations do not at all infallibly correspond with Heaven's grander opportunities. Explain it as we may, though the explanation is in no sense far to seek, the laboured preparations of even Christian men ill harmonize with the sublime ease of the Spirit's achievements. But to humble prayer, humble work, untiring activity, opportunities seem to *come* which are really Heaven's earliest, freshest sending. 4. The pity that sees and forgets not, sees and visits, and visits that it *may* see, the patient sufferer. One type of this we know, one only we adore. But how it ought to rivet our gaze and our admiration, and constrain our reverent, loving imitation! The impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, who had "had his infirmity thirty and eight years," gains the notice of Jesus' eye above all the rest. The Æneas who "for eight years had kept his bed because he was palsied," has the eye of the risen Jesus and Lord upon him, and Peter is sent to him. At one and the same time it is true that Jesus does all and that Peter is learning in his work to be like Jesus. 5. The widespread advantages of one real stroke of work done in the Name of "Jesus Christ." There is no doubt a *self-spreading* force in Christian truth and in Christian good. For they are both what are *wanted* by men. And nothing so much wanted, so deeply wanted. Let men unsophisticated, let men whose real nature has *not* yet been utterly lost to the devil, only get a "taste" of the good that Christ has to give, that Christ *is*, and that Christ can work in mind and heart, and they will "hunger and thirst" for him. But we have to remember that, in order to this, we must take care that it is the Name of Jesus we preach, the pure truth of Jesus we teach, the life of Jesus we exhibit, and the deep, unquenchable love of Jesus that is in our own heart.—B.

Vers. 36—43.—*The emphatic mark of Divine approbation which Christianity puts upon womanly kindness, in what may seem an humble sphere, and upon genuinely felt gratitude for it.* The narrative is the more interesting as being the first subsequent to the Ascension, and among the Acts of the Apostles, which brings the deeds, the character, and the fame of a Christian woman into prominence. The share that Christianity has contributed in honouring women, and in raising them to occupy their own proper place, has been often acknowledged. Omitting what Christ's own word and deed helped to this end, the narrative now before us may be said to be the beginning of a long stream of illustration of it. Let us notice—

I. THE DECISIVE MARK OF RESPECT HERE PUT ON HUMBLE BUT PRACTICAL FEMININE GOODNESS. The mark, in few words, consisted in a miracle wrought to restore to life a woman "full of good works and almsdeeds," who was cut off in the midst of her usefulness. But what are the things that may be remarked in more detail of this miracle? 1. It was wrought, not for a case of long suffering, or for some agouized form of suffering that might necessarily touch any heart with a deep compassion. 2. It was not wrought to restore to the service of this world one who had already largely figured in its high places. It is not position, wealth, great natural power and endowment, distinguished character, philanthropy of renown, nor even great learning, that is the object of honour. We do not at all take the idea that the heaven will fall if this gap which death has made be not somehow or other rapidly filled up. 3. It was *not* touching youth, fashion, beauty, accomplishment, nor even the mourned

mother of a family—that dethroned queen of the domestic heaven, whose vacant throne dashes dismay into so many true hearts, and fills all the house with darkness and a sense of desertion. It was no such pensive, pathetic, unfortunate, natural sadness that begged the mercy of miracle. 4. The object of the miracle was a woman, “full of good works and almsdeeds.” We are kept a brief while in suspense as to the nature of her “good works,” but are at once apprised that her “alms” are not *almsgivings*, but “almsdeeds.” So it is not an instance of a wealthy woman lamented from a very superficial sorrow of survivors. And then it proves that her “good works” (though we are not by any means constrained to suppose that they were literally all comprehended under this description) were such as to be sufficiently typified by the humble handiwork of scissors and needle and thimble, “coats and garments,” and *these*, not for the “rising generation” and “the hope of the nation,” but forsooth for “widows.” Yet it is such a person and such a woman who is restored to life, and no doubt to the humble but beneficent round of *such* a life again. And to *this* woman alone of women is given the space in all Scripture to tell the record in full of miraculous restoring of life. These are some of her ever-memorable characteristics. (1) She worked, and was known for working, rather than for anything else. (2) She worked “abundantly,” perhaps “more than they all.” She worked so abundantly that she is described as “full of good works.” (3) Her works aimed at one thing—being useful works, and they succeeded in attaining that at which they aimed. They succeeded because they were practical and not merely theoretical, practicable and not Utopian. (4) She worked humbly and for the humble, and remembered the spirit of the proverb that bids not be so wasteful of what we have or what we are as to “cast our pearls before swine.” What waste there is in a world already poor, because that with labour and with material the *right* thing is not wrought nor offered to the right person! Yet Jesus taught his disciples against even this sort of error, when he told them to go and preach in *other* places when the people would not hear them where they were. He would not have any of us waste our time and his precious Word-seed, nor eat our heart in one place, when we might be enlarging it in another. (5) She did what came first to do—first to her own ability, first to her own means, first to the want that was nearest to her in place and nearest to her in feminine alliance, first to the suggestion of Providence, instead of first to the idle swellings of an ambitious heart within. And how often did God smile on that woman’s work, and Jesus own it, whose Spirit had first quickened the heart from which all came! But *now*, even *now* already, had come a day ripe for manifestation. There is to be a glorious “demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” She who had loved so well and been beloved so well, snatched a day from sight and life, is restored to sight and life, still awhile longer to bless and be “blessed.”

II. THE DECISIVE MARKS OF RESPECT HERE PUT ON SIMPLE GRATITUDE, THOUGH IT WERE BUT GRATITUDE TO A FELLOW-BEING. The miracle, humanly speaking, owed its working to the deep feeling, so genuine and so earnest, which pervaded all who had known Dorcas. The feeling was the right kind of feeling, not wastefully overwhelming, but quickening to thought and action. Perhaps the illness was sharp and short. She is dead before they know how dangerously ill she is. But “the disciples” have their memory about them. They remember that they have heard of Peter at Lydda and of what he has been doing there for Æneas. It is eight miles off, but some of them soon clear the ground. And Peter does not feel affronted at being begged “*not to delay*.” And he comes and sees how grieved all were. Evidently it little entered into the mind of the many that it was a case for a miracle of restoring to life. But love and gratitude and grief, *without* “anticipation of favours to come,” made the widows come with their impromptu exhibition of garments, and with their grateful reminiscences uttered forth. Well, that Peter was on the spot was the result of a real feeling and gratitude; and come, he does *not* find himself come to a dead or a dead-alive Church and congregation. Far otherwise; and it was the very crisis and point of the occasion. Peter couldn’t help but recall the dear Master’s words and action, *so far as* they were *apropos* to the occasion—and it was only in a degree that they were *apropos* to *this* occasion—“Why make ye this ado and weep? the woman——” (Mark v. 39). But no, he says no more at present, but he does just the same thing as Jesus did; he puts them all out, and goes and prays, and pleads and wins his

instructions and his force alone. If dying should be a quiet scene, nor harsh sound of earthly life disturb its solemn experiences, who knows what the coming to life may be, and what it may require, and what may best suit it? Ah! perhaps in reality, not in merely the recovered life of this present, but in *the real*, perhaps there the waking life may open its eye to see "Jesus only" (as it was once on the Transfiguration Mount), and its ear to hear in new-born exquisite sense the whispering of Jesus. And that will ask peace and silence and the banishment of earthly life, its crowd of sight and of sound. But as the Lord appeared to Zacharias in the holy place, while the expectant people were shut without, so did the mighty Lord appear to Peter in that holy chamber, and from the upper chamber of death didn't it become the antechamber of heavenly life indeed? And all this was condescending honour put upon human gratitude. It entered into "the ears of the Lord God of sabaoth," and he descended with power to reward it.

III. THE DECISIVE MARKS OF HEAVEN'S MOST KINDLY SYMPATHY WITH HUMAN LIFE-WANTS. The scene would seem almost unmatched in Scripture, in just this *one* respect. Here is no question of love direct to God, to Christ, to their work on earth as such. But it is an occasion of innocent feeling, yet earth's sort of feellug; innocent excitement, yet caused, not by the loss of a great spiritual benefactor like the Master or like Stephen, but by the loss of a kindly, good-hearted, and most homely and neighbourly benefactor. Yet the power of the Divine Spirit owns it. And as Jesus in the days of his flesh condescended to the genial atmosphere of the marriage feast, and made them yet more wine there, so does he in his perhaps yet mightier power, but certainly mightier majesty and glory, condescend to the sympathies and regrets of this widow group and disciples' gathering. He reminds us surely of his constant, gentle, faithful care for us. "What we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed,"—he shows us that he has not forgotten his early words hereupon, nor those other words, in which he has taught us that he will accept our works for his "little ones," and for his poor and needy ones, as works done personally to himself.—B.

Ver. 2.—"The Way." This seems to have been the earliest name for what we now call Christianity. That it was used as a distinctive appellation of the Christian religion may be seen by comparing ch. xix. 9, 23; xxii. 4; xxiv. 14, 22. A fuller expression is employed in 2 Pet. ii. 2, "By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." Our Lord had used the term in a very significant manner, saying, "I am the Way" (John xiv. 6); and the previous prophetic figure of the Messianic times—"An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness"—would be in the memory of the disciples, and therefore they would be likely to accept the term if it was first started by their persecutors. Compare the name "Christian," which began as a taunt, and became accepted as an honourable title. In introducing this subject, reference may be made to the interesting fact that, from this point, Luke's record becomes almost entirely an account of St. Paul's labours, probably because round *him* centred the missionary work of the early Church, and he was its greatest representative. The kind of religious authority over all Jews exercised by the Sanhedrim, and the limitations of its power to imprisonment and beating and excommunication, require consideration. Saul probably went to Damascus for two reasons—(1) because in the scattering the disciples were likely to have found shelter there; and (2) because many Jews dwelt there, and especially those Greek Jews, who were most likely to become converts to the broad principles as taught by Stephen's party. It was against *this particular party* that Saul was so greatly incensed. Their teaching most effectually plucked the ground from beneath mere formal Judaism. Reverting to the term, "the Way," as descriptive of the Christian religion, and filling it with the larger meaning of our later knowledge, we may notice that it is—

I. A WAY OF THINKING. It is characteristic of Christianity that it has its own peculiar way of thinking about (1) God, (2) man, (3) sin, (4) redemption. Its "way of thinking" is placed under the guidance of special Divine revelation. And the starting-point of its thinking is that God has, "in these last days, spoken unto us by his Son." Probably the exact reference in this verse is to that "way of thinking" which Stephen introduced and taught, because that appeared to present special points of antagonism to the doctrine and authority of the Sanhedrim. There is still a "way

of thinking" characteristic of Christ's disciples. With a large liberty there are well-defined lines beyond which the thinking, being unloyal to Christ, is unworthy of the Christian name.

II. A WAY OF FEELING. Every true disciple is distinguished by his admiration for, his trust in, and his love to, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the early Church the loyalty and the love were so strong that the disciples could endure shame and death for his sake. And still our "way of feeling" about Christ should mark us off from all the world; men should "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus," that he has won our very hearts, and that to us henceforth "to live is Christ." Impress the important bearing of sustained high feeling on the power and joy of the Christian life.

III. A WAY OF WORKING. Besides the general modes of working characteristic of Christians, for the glory of God and the good of men, attention should be given to Stephen's way of working against mere formalism and ritualism, and in favour of spiritual religion; and the need for similar "ways of working" in each recurring over-civilized period should be impressed.

IV. A WAY OF LIVING. By their fruits of godliness and charity the early Christians were known. The Christian "way" is a "way of holiness," not of mere separateness, but of consecration; a way of laying all possessions or attainments on God's altar, and a way of using all powers and opportunities for God's service.—R. T.

Ver. 6.—*The power of a revelation.* There are solemn seasons in the life of every man, e.g. birthdays, times of sickness, first leaving home. Of all such days, perhaps the most solemn, the one with the wider consequences, is the time of our conversion. It is not usual for the Scriptures to give us—what we find in modern biographies—detailed accounts of the precise experiences of such times; e.g. of Lydia we only know that "the Lord opened her heart," and of the jailor at Philippi that, in sudden alarm, he cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" We may, therefore, ask why so full an account is given us of the experience of Saul of Tarsus? The answer is found in his subsequent prominence as a Christian missionary, and in the necessity for assuring the fact that so bitter a persecutor and so zealous a Pharisee was *really* changed into a disciple. Some have further suggested that he was intended, in the Divine providence, to take the place from which Judas by transgression fell, and that it must be publicly known how he had received his direct commission from the risen Lord, if he was to be recognized as one of the apostolic band. The conversion of men is, in mode, as varied as are their minds, characters, and circumstances. Yet there are some *essential* things which may be well studied in connection with this narrative of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus.

I. SAUL'S PREPARATION FOR RECEIVING A DIVINE REVELATION. Every true conversion is effected by a revelation of God to the soul. It need not be a visible revelation, such as was suitable to other times. It must be an awakening of the soul to the apprehension of Divine things, and a direct dealing of God with the awakened soul. This cardinal truth must never be lost sight of in our active use of Christian means and agencies. The unregenerate man does not *know* God; he cannot apprehend the *holiness*, the *claim*, or the *love* of God. These must be unfolded to him by revelation. As illustrations of what is meant by "conversion by revelation," see the vision of God to Jacob at Bethel, and the voice of God to Samuel in the night hours, when he was but a youth. But the capacity to receive a Divine revelation depends on previous preparations, and we have to inquire—How was Saul of Tarsus prepared? In answer the following things must be carefully treated:—1. His education and early associations as a Jew and as a Pharisee. This involved considerable knowledge of Scripture, and a theory of the possibility of Divine communications with the individual. 2. His naturally impulsive and impetuous disposition, which led him to undertake things in an intense way, but left him exposed to the peril of sudden change of opinion and conduct, and to the danger of giving up an enterprise as suddenly as he had begun it. This disposition prepared him to be influenced by the sudden surprise on the Damascus road. 3. The ideas about Jesus Christ which he gained from the party at Jerusalem to which he belonged. Those ideas rested altogether on this proposition: "The impostor Jesus is *not* risen from the dead." If it could be proved or shown that he *was*, then the whole

doctrine concerning him held by Pharisee and Sadducee fell down about them, as a house built on the sand in a day of storms. And so God overrules men's lives now to prepare them for his revelations. Illustrate by the ways in which (1) the satiety of pleasure, (2) the pollutions of vice, (3) prolonged scepticism, (4) failure of efforts, (5) serious illness, (6) the naturally inquiring mind, or (7) sudden bereavements, are overruled to become Divine preparations for our "days of grace."

II. THE EFFECT OF THE REVELATION ON THE MIND OF SAUL. To his Jewish notions the light from heaven would seem to be manifestly Divine, and his first thought would be that God was honouring him with a commission to exterminate the Nazarenes. It must have come to him with startling and painful surprise that the voice speaking from heaven to him should be the voice of Jesus of Nazareth. His prejudices were crushed down in a moment. Jesus was not an impostor; he was accepted of God. Jesus was not dead; he spoke out of heaven. In Saul's response there is: 1. *Conviction*. If Jesus is after all the Messiah, then what have I been doing? Nothing less than fighting against the God I thought I was serving. There was no need for him to search his life and try to find every particular sin; for he felt the sin of *unbelief*. And unbelief is sin against every attribute of God, against his (1) justice, (2) holiness, (3) wisdom, (4) love. Observe that this conviction of sin was felt by one who was outwardly moral. And the true conviction is not the finding of some dark, polluting deeds in our life; it is the feeling of the pollution, the godlessness, the self-seeking of our evil hearts. In his response is: 2. *Penitence*. Men may be convicted, and go no further. Penitence involves (1) the sense of sin as committed against God,—illustrate by sentences of David, Peter to Ananias, and Prodigal Son; (2) sorrow for sin and earnest purpose to forsake it; (3) submission, as in this incident the proud Pharisee becomes as simple as a child; (4) surrender, a special act of yielding *will and heart and life* to Christ. What, then, is essential to a true conversion to God? (1) Not any particular form of experience, (2) not any precise time, but (3) the sense of sin and (4) a full surrender to Christ. The difference between common faith and saving faith is mainly this—saving faith is faith with a sense of need and personal application.

III. THE EVIDENCES THAT SAUL HAD RECEIVED A DIVINE REVELATION. 1. Changed inward life: "Behold, he prayeth!" 2. Changed outward conduct. Contrast him keeping the clothes of them that slew Stephen, and preaching at Damascus the very faith he had sought to destroy.

Appeal to those whom God has been preparing by his providential orderings to receive his revelation. Maybe that revelation comes through this message. If so, what will your response to it be?—R. T.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Blind eyes, but open soul*. Attention is invited to what is suggested by the interesting fact that, after seeing the vision, Saul remained blind, and so absorbed in thought as to be wholly indifferent to food, for three days. That there are miraculous features in the circumstances attending Saul's conversion can hardly be denied, but some incline to exaggerate the miraculous features, while others put them under too severe limitations. We need not assume a miraculous blindness, or so serious a matter as a lightning stroke. The phenomena rather suggest a sunstroke of a severe but temporary character. In the Divine order this was arranged to give the surprised and humbled man an opportunity for quietness and loneliness, that he might carry on, and carry out to a conclusion, the conflict which had been begun by hearing the voice of him whom he had called the Nazarene impostor speaking from heaven, and speaking words of power and command to him. And it was also designed as a continuing physical effect which would assure Saul of the reality of his heavenly vision. In endeavouring to estimate the thoughts of Saul's time of blindness, consider that—

I. SAUL HAD KNOWLEDGE. General knowledge, as an educated man, belonging to the well-to-do classes. Special knowledge, as trained in the best Jewish schools; especially as having a kind of collegiate culture, as a Pharisee, in the highly esteemed school of Gamaliel. And a precise and wide knowledge of both Holy Scripture and rabbinical tradition, which must have included the grounds for expecting the coming Messiah the Prince. Saul would not need even his Bible in those lonely hours, for memory brought abundant subjects of thought. Illustrate the advantage of early

teaching of God's Word. Thus we become prepared to make the best of the sudden occasions of life.

II. SAUL HAD NOW GAINED THE KEY TO HIS KNOWLEDGE. The key was this—the Messiah has come. He was Jesus of Nazareth. He is risen, living, exalted. Show how this cleared the mystery from the fact that Jesus had been a sufferer, and brought light on the *spiritual* character of the Messiahship. Illustrate by the preaching of Philip to the eunuch. But—

III. SAUL NEEDED A TIME OF QUIETNESS FOR THE DUE APPLICATION OF THIS KEY. It had to explain the prophecy that Messiah should be born at Bethlehem, and be of the lineage of David. It must explain the figures of the King and Conqueror under which Messiah had been presented. Saul must think over the grounds on which his prejudiced opposition had rested, and over all that was involved in the proved fact that Jesus was risen from the dead and had won God's acceptance. For with his eyes blinded, and the ordinary cravings of his body dead, Saul saw with his soul—spiritual things were gaining clearness. Set out what Saul began to see *with his soul*, concerning Jesus, concerning his own past and future, and show what revulsions of feeling in such an impulsive man the new soul-visions occasioned.

In practical application, dwell on the desire for loneliness and quietness; and for meditation, which those feel who are, by any gracious agency, smitten with conviction; and the relations of such quiet times to full decision and consecration. So much good work begun in souls is lost, proving but as "morning cloud and early dew," for want of quiet meditative times following upon convictions and impressions. Seasons of loneliness, meditation, and prayer are as truly needed for newly awakened souls, as shady, covered times for slips, or plants, newly potted, in order that they may get safe-rooted. Those who are wise to win souls will learn of God's providing this blind season for the awakened and humbled Saul.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—God's chosen vessels. Take the single sentence, "He is a chosen vessel unto me;" literally, "a vessel of election." Illustrate by the apostle's own figure of the "potter having power over the clay," and refer to prophetic illustrations taken from the potter's wheel and art. Here, however, the meaning of "vessel" may rather be "instrument," or "tool." In every age God has called forth special workers, fitted for the occasions; "with the hour always comes the man." In the ordering of God's providence, the time had come for the extension of Christianity to the Gentiles, and now we are directed to Saul as God's chosen vessel, or instrument, for this work. From his case may be illustrated the following points concerning "God's chosen vessels:"—

I. THEY ARE PREPARED FOR THEIR WORK BY HIS PROVIDENCE. After showing how Saul was being fitted by his earlier experiences, find further illustration in the earlier careers of Joseph, Moses, David, etc. And show how our Lord's secluded life at Nazareth may be regarded as his preparation-time. Careful observance of men and life and work *now* brings again and again to view the wonderful ways in which they have been prepared for the stern work of their full manhood. The fact is so fully recognized as to have passed into a proverb, and we say, "The child is father to the man." Then it follows that the wise training of our children should include the careful culture of any special gift or endowment of which we may see indications.

II. THEY ARE FOUND IN GOD'S OWN TIME. It is not enough that a man should find out *what* he can do; he must wait on God to teach him the time for the doing, and the sphere in which his work is to be done. Saul had yet to wait some time before his life-sphere was pointed out to him. But we need have no fear. Willing servants are never left idle, and when God's work is ready he will call to it the workmen he has prepared. A North-country proverb is, "The tools come to the hands of him who can use them;" and God's people can tell strange stories of the gracious orderings of providence that brought their great life-work to their hands.

III. MIGHTY TO DO THE LORD'S WORK. Because the appointment to a particular service carries with it the assurance that sufficient grace for the work will be given. Fitness is not enough, if it stand alone; it must be followed up by daily grace for efficient working. Compare Moses willing to go on to further journeyings only if the Lord would go with him; and the Apostle Paul "able to do all things through him who strengthened him." We can always do what God calls us to do. We are wrong,

as Moses, Jeremiah, and Jonah were wrong, if we shrink back or flee from the Lord's work.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGED BY GOD'S OWN PEOPLE. Sooner or later, God's chosen vessels are found out by the Divine signs which accompany their labour. There may be temporary prejudice on account of their former life, as in the case of Saul, or on account of the particular form and feature of their work; but if God acknowledges a man's service with his benediction, God's people are usually ready to acknowledge it too. If in a very strict sense some only can be called "God's chosen vessels," in a large and comforting sense the term may be applied to *all* God's people, for each of whom he surely finds work and the grace needed for doing it well.—R. T.

Ver. 20.—Saul's first sermons. Revised Version, "And straightway in the synagogues he proclaimed Jesus, that he is the Son of God." "The point to which all the effort of the apostle was first directed was naturally the Messiahship of Jesus, and that in the higher view in which Christianity exhibits the Messiah, namely, as the Son of God" (Olshausen). Very different ideas are entertained as to the advisability of encouraging young converts to begin preaching at once. The difficulty arose in the China mission field, and the new convert earnestly pleaded to be allowed to tell the little he did know, and so grow to know more. This principle Saul followed, beginning *at once* to "preach the faith which once he destroyed," and he made the opportunities just where he was, going into the synagogues, and using his privilege as a rabbi to read and expound the Scriptures. The text briefly indicates what truth Saul had gripped, and, taken with ver. 22, it shows how large his grip was, and that it concerned the very basis-truth of Christianity. He saw that—

I. THE CHRIST HAD COME. Explain that "Christ" is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah," and would often be wisely changed for the Hebrew term. Deal with (1) the foregoing prophecies of Messiah, showing how they had given tone to the national and religious sentiment; (2) the actual expectation of the coming of Messiah about that time, which seems to have possessed both the Jews and the Gentiles. The practical question dividing public opinion at the time was the question which divides the Jew and the Gentile up to this present hour; it was this—Had Messiah come, or had he not come? Saul was now able to deal with this question, and he proclaimed openly that Messiah *had come*. Show the importance of this step, and how it narrowed the field of inquiry for all those pious souls who "looked for redemption in Israel."

II. THE CHRIST CAME IN THE PERSON OF JESUS OF NAZARETH. The better manuscripts give the reading, "preached Jesus." If Messiah had come, had he been recognized, and acknowledged? Saul firmly answered, "Yes; Messiah was Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet, Teacher, Healer, holy Man, who was crucified, had risen from the dead, and was exalted to heaven." Surely this was a great theme for his preaching, one demanding explanation, argument, evidence, and the "accent of his own conviction." But Saul had seen more than even this, and so further proclaimed that—

III. JESUS THE CHRIST WAS THE SON OF GOD. Explain that term as (1) compared with "Son of man," and (2) as gaining to the apostles its deeper and fuller meaning. To Saul had evidently come an insight into the glorious mystery of the Incarnation. He realized (1) that Jesus was the Christ in a high spiritual sense; (2) that Jesus was entrusted with a present power to save and to sanctify; (3) that Jesus had Divine rights, and made Divine claims to the immediate surrender to him of the heart and will and lives of men. So it is evident that Saul grasped at once the very essence of the gospel, and the very centre of that doctrinal system which, urged by the necessities of the Churches, his genius developed. There is still no more searching test of our religious condition than can be found in the question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" If we feel that we must say, "He is the Son of God," then we are bound to bow our souls before him, seek his grace, accept his salvation, acknowledge his authority, and bind on our whole lives the livery of his service.—R. T.

Ver. 31.—The relation between edifying and multiplying. For the precise meaning and the New Testament use of the term "edified," consult the Exposition. The "rest" secured for the Church at this time followed partly on the removal of Saul from

the party of the persecutors, in which he had been the most active member; none seemed ready to take up the work which had so completely dropped from his hands, and by his secession the whole party was depressed and disorganized. But it followed chiefly on the fact that the attention of the Jewish rulers was turned away from the disciples to resist an attempt made by Caligula to have his statue erected in the temple at Jerusalem. The importance of resting-times for nations, Churches, and individuals should be shown, and the ways in which they usually come may be pointed out. Their value is illustrated in connection with our text, from which it appears that when, in a resting-time, the Church was *edified*, it was found to be also *multiplied*; or, to express it in other forms, *internal culture is the best guarantee of external success*. We dwell on two things.

I. SOUL-CULTURE AND ITS INTERNAL SIGNS. Piety, from the Christian point of view, is a new and spiritual life, with which our souls are quickened by the Holy Ghost. But in its beginnings it is young, feeble, untested life, like that of the young seedling or plant. Culture is demanded. The young life must be nourished into strength; and while the expressions of the life, in leaf and branch and flower, need to be watched and guided aright, the gardener's supreme anxiety is to maintain and to increase the vitality. And so, while apostles give good counsel for the ordering of Christian *conduct*, their supreme anxiety concerns the culture of the soul's life. They would have their disciples "grow in grace and in the knowledge [experimental] of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is to such forms of "edification" that Churches are directed in their quiet resting-times. Two signs were given as indicating that this "edifying" work was healthily progressing. 1. There was holy walking. "Walking in the fear of the Lord." Christian conduct and conversation was "as becometh the gospel of Christ." The relations of the members to each other were kindly and brotherly, and the character of the disciples was increasingly satisfactory. 2. There were signs of heart-joy. The disciples were evidently enjoying the "comfort of the Holy Ghost"—the inward sealing of the Spirit, the power of his impulses to righteousness, and that happy sense of adoption which he gives. When the soul is efficiently cultured, its signs are apparent in these two things—joy in God, and holy living. Joy in God includes joy in his worship and his work. Holy living includes the nourishing of all graces and virtues into fulness and beauty and power. Illustrate by the commendations of the living Christ to such Churches as Ephesus, Smyrna, and Philadelphia.

II. SOUL-CULTURE AND ITS EXTERNAL POWER. For evidently the two things, edification and multiplication, are intentionally connected, and the one is, in some important respects, the *cause* of the other. We may say that multiplying a Church is one of the certain consequences of its edifying, for the well-nourished and truly spiritual Church has power: 1. By its *witness*. Such life must find expression. (1) There is the silent yet mighty force of its *unconscious* influence. (2) There are the active labours to which it is inspired. 2. By its *attraction*. For wherever there is holy walking and evident heart-joy in God men are inclined to join the company. Such heart-joy all would find. Such holy walking seems to say, "Come with us, and we will do you good; for verily the Lord is with us." Distinguish carefully between the spasmodic and impulsive successes of revival times, and the steady witness and work of *edified* Churches and *edified* Christians in all ages. And conclude by impressing the moral value of the forces that strictly tend to edification, such as the example and character of our saintly ones, and the labours of those who instruct in Christian truth and duty. Such forces are sometimes most imperfectly estimated and are even undervalued, because their results are not easily counted; yet God's Word teaches us that in the way of edifying comes the truest power for multiplying.—R. T.

Ver. 34.—*A bodily absent Christ may be a spiritually present power*. Attention is directed to the remarkable fact that St. Peter spoke to Æneas as if the Lord Jesus were actually present in the room; and that he was present is proved by the healing which followed upon the invoking of his power: "Jesus Christ maketh thee whole!" The words must have sounded very strangely to those who first heard them. They sound strangely to us. Jesus Christ was not there. No one saw him. No calming look from Jesus quieted the sufferer. No hand of Jesus touched and quickened into life the sickly man. No voice of Jesus spoke the words of healing power. The Jesus of Bethesda,

and Nain, and Capernaum, and Bethany was not there. Some might have said, "Jesus is dead," and might tell how they saw him die. And if others urged that nevertheless he lived, they might say, "Ah! yes; lives far away in heaven, among the angels." They had seen him go up, and a white cloud sailed across and hid him from view; and since that day no human eye had looked into his face or seen the print of his feet. To many of us one of the gravest difficulties is to reconcile the apparent contradiction—Jesus is in the glory; Jesus is here. Jesus sits on the throne; Jesus dwells in the open, trusting heart. And our difficulty is not met by urging that Jesus himself is in the glory, but his influence is here, his power is here, his Spirit is here; for we do not want to know about his influence, but about his personal presence, which carries and assures his influence. What we find it so hard to realize is that the only true being is *spiritual being*. Christ is a spiritual being; we are spiritual beings; so we can be really together, though the material thing *space* may seem to be a woeful divider. Two spirits can come together; and if one spirit be weak, dependent, suffering, and the other strong, loving, and glorious, there may be wondrous and gracious intercommunications, and Jesus may make palsied Æneas whole. The striking thing in our text is the declaration that Jesus was actually there, and there to heal. Then we inquire—

I. WHAT ARE THE EYES THAT CAN SEE SUCH A PRESENT CHRIST? For it is quite proper to say that both St. Peter and Æneas *saw* Jesus there. We so highly value the use of our *bodily* eyes that we fail to realize our *soul-eyes*. There are some striking instances in Scripture of the weakness of our bodily vision, and of our power to see what the eye never looks on; e.g. Sodomites wearying themselves to find the door; the prophet's servant seeing the guardian angels all round the mountains; so Saul saw nothing, and yet everything, when smitten down at Damascus. See also the hidden eyes of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. This eye of the spirit, that brings Jesus near, we call *faith*. It is to the soul what the eye is to the body. It strains through the spiritual atmosphere, and makes real and clear spiritual objects. And the present Christ, so beheld, becomes to us a comfort and a joy unspeakable; telling as a gracious elevator on our whole daily life, sanctifying everything with the conviction, Christ is with me here.

II. WHAT IS THE CONDITION WHICH CAN FEEL CHRIST'S PRESENCE? Need and suffering, especially spiritual need and spiritual suffering, are the great quickeners of sensibility. The soul that needeth Christ soon makes the joyous discovery that Christ needeth the soul, and has already come seeking it. Sin-sick souls want the Physician nigh, and it is still the great gospel to men that we may stand before them and open and quicken their spiritual vision as we say, "Look! Jesus Christ maketh thee whole!"—R. T.

Ver. 40.—*Apostolic and other resurrections*. There are only eight cases of resurrection from the dead recorded in the Bible. Elijah raised the widow's son at Zarephath. Elisha raised the Shunammite's son. By contact with Elisha's body in his grave, a dead man was quickened. Our Lord raised the daughter of Jairus; the son of the widow of Nain; and Lazarus of Bethany. St. Peter raised the charitable Dorcas. St. Paul restored the fallen Eutyclus. Keeping these cases in mind, we may compare them with the resurrection of our Lord, and learn much from the distinct peculiarities of his resurrection.

I. IN ALL OTHER CASES DEATH TOOK PLACE UNDER THE QUIET CONDITIONS OF ORDINARY DISEASE, BUT OUR LORD DIED BY A DEATH OF VIOLENCE. The little lad at Shunem was smitten by a sunstroke. The maiden at Jairus's house was struck down by fever. Over the fading hours of Lazarus's sickness loving sisters watched. Dorcas was for some days at least ill. Eutyclus alone seems to have died by sudden accident. But our Lord's was death in the prime of life, in the fulness of health and strength; death borne when all the human faculties were in full vigour and exercise; death by the hand of violence; death judicially arranged; death voluntarily submitted to. Show that the difference is explained by our Lord's relation to human *sin*.

II. OTHER RESURRECTIONS WERE EFFECTED THROUGH SOME HUMAN AGENCY, THE DIVINE POWER WORKED BY SOME HUMAN MEDIUM; IN THE CASE OF OUR LORD THERE WAS NO HUMAN AGENCY WHATSOEVER. At Zarephath and at Shunem there were prophets, prayers, and painful efforts, to which alone returning life responded. St. Peter went into

the death-chamber of Dorcas, prayed, and spoke words of faith and power. Paul fell on and embraced the dead Eutyclus. But our Lord "had life in himself," and so he rose. In the grey of the dawning of that glorious Easter morn, he rose. No hand of power, no wizard's wand, no prophet's outstretched body, touched the sleeping King. He rose; that is all. Show what of his *Divine nature* is declared to us in this unique and sublime fact. He was "God manifest in the flesh."

III. ALL OTHER RESURRECTIONS WERE MERELY TEMPORARY RENEWALS OF EARTHLY LIFE UNDER THE SAME OLD EARTHLY CONDITIONS. Lazarus was restored for just a few more years to his home and brotherhood, by-and-by to die again even as he died at first. Dorcas came back but to make a few more garments for the widows and the poor, and then to die again, and be hopelessly laid out for burial a second time in that upper chamber. Nobody was ever raised from the dead to live a *fresh* sort of life under new conditions. They simply took up the thread of their old lives, as if there had been no strange break in them. The little lad ran out to his father among the reapers, just as he had done before that sad sunstroke. The maiden grew on into her womanhood as if she had never closed her eyes to the light in that time of burning fever. And the lad went to work again at Nain, to keep a home for his poor widowed mother. But in the case of our Lord there was no mere continuation of the old earthly life. The Resurrection links on to the Ascension, and Jesus risen is Jesus glorified.

IV. ALL OTHER PERSONS WERE BROUGHT BACK FROM THE GRAVE ONLY TO FALL INTO ITS POWER AGAIN. We think of them with feelings in which much sadness mingles; for they were *twice* dead. But "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; and hath no more dominion over him." He liveth again; and now he liveth for ever. Man's power to bless his fellow-man is sorely limited; for he must die. Christ's power to bless is unlimited; for he will *never die*. His resurrection was to a deathless and eternal life; there are no limitations that can ever check, on Christ's side, the beneficent operations of his grace. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER X.

Ver. 1.—*Now there was* (two last words in italics) *for there was* (in roman), A.V. and T.R.; *Cornelius by name for called Cornelius*, A.V. A glance at the map will show that *Cæsarea* (see note to ch. ix. 30) was but a short distance, some thirty miles, from Joppa. It was doubtless with a view to Peter's momentous errand to *Cæsarea* that Luke recorded his previous visit to Lydda and his residence at Joppa, consequent upon the restoring of Dorcas to life: the *origines* of Gentile Christianity being the prime object of the Acts (see Introduction to the Acts). The Italian band; or, *cohort* (*συνετα*). The *συνετα*, or cohort, was used in two senses. When spoken of strictly Roman troops, it meant the tenth part of a legion, and consisted of from four hundred and twenty-five to five hundred or six hundred men, according to the strength of the legion. Its commander was called a chiliarch, and it was divided into centuries, each commanded by a centurion. But when spoken of auxiliary provincial troops, it meant a regiment of about a thousand men (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' iii. 42). It is in this last sense probably that it is used here. Josephus, in the

passage above quoted, speaks of five such auxiliary cohorts coming from *Cæsarea* to join Vespasian's army, and he tells us in another place ('Bell. Jud.,' ii. 13, 7) that the principal portion of the Roman army at *Cæsarea* were Syrians. It is pretty certain, therefore, that the Italian cohort here spoken of were auxiliaries, so called as being made up in whole or in part of Italians, probably volunteers or *velones* (Farrar, vol. i. 278, note). Another reason for this conclusion is that it does not seem likely that one of the *divisions* of a legion should have a name (though it was very common for the legions themselves to be distinguished, in addition to their number, *prima*, *secunda*, *decima*, etc., by such names as *Italica*, *Parthica*, *Augusta*, etc.), but that separate regiments would naturally have appropriate names for the same reason that the legions had. Thus, besides the Italian cohort here named, we have the *Augustan* cohort in ch. xvii. 1. It might be important for the security of the procurator, in so turbulent a province as *Judæa*, to have at least one cohort of Italian soldiers at the seat of government. Renan ('Apôtres,' p. 202) thinks the full name of the cohort may have been "Cohors prima Augusta Italica civium Romanorum;" and

adds that there were in the whole empire not fewer than thirty-two cohorts bearing the name of *Italian*.

Ver. 2.—*Who for which*, A.V. A devout man (*εὐσεβής*); and in ver. 7. It is an interesting question as to what was the precise religious status of Cornelius, whether he was a proselyte in any technical sense. But the whole narrative, in which he is spoken of simply as a Gentile and uncircumcised, seems to indicate that, though he had learnt from the Jews to worship the true God, and from the Jewish Scriptures read or heard in the synagogue to practise those virtues which went up for a memorial before God, yet he was in no sense a proselyte. It is pleasant to think that there may have been many such in the different countries where the Jews were dispersed (comp. ch. xiii. 16, and probably ch. xi. 20).

Ver. 3.—*Openly for evidently*, A.V.; *as it were about for about*, A.V. and T.R.; *unto for to*, and *to for unto*, A.V. Openly; or, *evidently* (*φανερῶς*), indicates the distinctness and certainty of the vision. It was, as Meyer says, a clear angelic appearance; there was no indistinctness or confusion about it, and consequently it left no kind of doubt in the mind of Cornelius. An angel; or rather, *the angel*; the addition of God defines it (see ch. v. 19, note).

Ver. 4.—*He, fastening his eyes upon for when he looked on*, A.V. (*ἀρραβίας*, as ch. iii. 4, etc.); and *being affrighted for he was afraid and*, A.V.; *gone for come*, A.V. For a memorial; i. e. thy prayers and thine alms are set in the sight of God, and are the cause of his now remembering thee and sending this message to thee. Cornelius's good works were the fruit of his faith in God as revealed in the Old Testament.

Ver. 5.—*Fetch for call for*, A.V.; *one* (in italics) *for one* (in roman), A.V. and T.R.; *who is surnamed for whose surname is*, A.V. Peter is always used by St. Luke, rather than *Cephas*.

Ver. 6.—The last clause in the A.V. and T.R., “he shall tell thee,” etc., is omitted in the R.V.

Ver. 7.—*That for which*, A.V.; *him for Cornelius*, A.V. and T.R. Two of his household servants (see ch. ix. 38, note). Cornelius's faith and piety were like Abraham's—he taught his household to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment (Gen. xviii. 19).

Ver. 8.—*Having rehearsed for when he had declared*, A.V.; *all things for all these things*, A.V.

Ver. 9.—*Now on for on*, A.V.; *were for went*, A.V. The house-top; the quietest and most retired place in an Eastern house (comp. 1 Sam. ix. 25, 26). It is not inconsistent with this that the house-top could

also be made a place of special publicity, from its height and open space (see Luke xii. 3). About the sixth hour. Noon, the second of the three hours of prayer among the Jews, called “the midday prayer.” The last was the ninth hour (ch. iii. 1) and the first the third hour, nine in the morning (ch. ii. 15). See Ps. lv. 17.

Ver. 10.—*Hungry for very hungry*, A.V.; *desired to eat for would have eaten*, A.V. Hungry. The word so rendered (*πρόσκεινος*) occurs nowhere else either in the New Testament or in any other writer. Possibly he, like Cornelius (ver. 30), had been fasting till the time of prayer. A trance (*έκστασις*) expresses a state of transition from the ordinary state into a new or different state. Applied to a man, it denotes that state in which the external senses and the volition are suspended, and all his impressions are derived from within (see ch. xi. 5; xxii. 17). It is also used to express great astonishment (Luke v. 26; ch. iii. 10; Mark v. 42). In the LXX. of Gen. ii. 21 it is spoken of Adam's *deep sleep*, and in Gen. xxvii. 33 of Isaac's *exceeding trembling*, and elsewhere of strong emotions.

Ver. 11.—*He beholdeth the for saw*, A.V.; *descending for descending unto him*, A.V. and T.R.; *were for had been*, A.V.; *let down by four corners upon the earth for knit at the four corners and let down to the earth*, A.V. and T.R. The vessel coming down from the open heavens implied that the command to eat what was contained in it was given by revelation. The things sent were from God, and the command to eat was from God. Peter's hunger had prepared the way for the particular form of the vision.

Ver. 12.—*Beasts and creeping things of the earth for beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things*, A.V. and T.R.; *heaven for air*, A.V. The distinction between clean and unclean was very sharply drawn in the Levitical Law (Lev. xi.; see especially vers. 41—44 and xx. 25; Deut. xiv. 3—20). Peter's astonishment must, therefore, have been exceeding great at the command to slay and eat. And so his answer in ver. 14 shows. And yet our Lord had taught him the same truth (Matt. xv. 10—20, or still more distinctly Mark viii. 14—23).

Ver. 14.—*And unclean for or unclean*, A.V. and T.R. It is rather a striking testimony to Peter's religious character as a Jew before his call to the apostolate, that poor Galilean fisherman as he was, unlearned and ignorant, he had yet always conscientiously obeyed the Law of Moses in regard to things clean and unclean (comp. Dan. i. 8—15). The address, Lord (*Κύριε*), seems certainly to recognize the voice as that of

Christ, which also agrees with the descent of the vessel from heaven. The answer is very similar to the refusals in Matt. xvi. 22; John xiii. 8.

Ver. 15.—*A voice for the voice, A.V.; came for spake, A.V.; make not for that call not, A.V.* What God hath cleansed, etc. "The Law was our schoolmaster ['tutor,' R.V.] to bring us to Christ." But now, under the gospel of faith, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. There is neither Jew nor Greek. "Old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

Ver. 16.—*And this for this, A.V.; straight-way the vessel for the vessel . . . again, A.V. and T.R.* This was done thrice; i.e. as is clear from the previous "the second time;" the same voice addressed to him the third time a direction to eat. The repetition three times of the same injunction was to give certainty (comp. Gen. xli. 32). For the repetition of the same words, comp. Matt. xxvi. 44. The receiving of the vessel again into heaven merely indicated the termination of the vision. The interpretation of it was to follow ver. 19 and following verses (see especially ver. 28), and was further emphasized by what is related in vers. 44—46 and ch. xi. 15—17.

Ver. 17.—*Was much perplexed for doubted, A.V.; the for this, A.V.; might for should, A.V.; that for which, A.V.; by for from, A.V.; having made inquiry . . . stood for had made enquiry . . . and stood, A.V.* The gate (πύλη) the porch or gate into the court of an Eastern house. In ch. xii. 13 we have "the door of the gate" (see Matt. xxvi. 71; Luke xvi. 20, etc.).

Ver. 18.—*Lodging for lodged, A.V.*

Ver. 19.—*And while for while, A.V.* Though (διεθρομυμένον, R.T.), stronger than the ἐθρομυμένου of the T.R.; *thought over through and through; considered in all its bearings.* It only occurs here and two or three times in Cyril and other Church writers. The Spirit (so ch. xi. 12). In ch. xiii. 2 it is τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον.

Ver. 20.—*But arise for arise therefore, A.V.; nothing doubting for doubting nothing, A.V.* But arise. The but answers the unexpressed idea—Do not hesitate, do not delay, but go at once. For I have sent them. This is one of the many passages which distinctly mark the personality of the Holy Spirit (comp. ch. viii. 29; xiii. 2; xx. 28, etc.). Here, too, we may notice the working of God's providence, under whose direction Peter's thoughts and Cornelius's message meet at the same point, like men working from opposite ends of a tunnel and meeting at the same spot.

Ver. 21.—*And for then, A.V.; the men for the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 22.—*A centurion for the centurion, A.V.; righteous for just, A.V.; well reported of for of good report among, A.V.; of God (in italics) for from God (in roman), A.V.; a holy for an holy, A.V.; from thee for of thee, A.V.* Righteous; as Matt. i. 19 (comp. the description of Cornelius in ver. 10). The mention here of his being well reported of by all the nation of the Jews is an additional trait (comp. Luke vii. 2—5). For the expression, "of good report" (μαρτυρούμενος), see ch. vi. 3, note. Of God. The rendering, "warned from God," however, fairly represents ἐχρηματίσθη, because χρηματίζομαι does not mean "to be warned," but "to be divinely warned." Χρηματίζεσθαι παρά Θεοῦ ἀποκάλυψιν δέχεσθαι (Theophylact). See the frequent use of the word in the New Testament (Matt. ii. 12; Luke ii. 26; Heb. viii. 5; xi. 7, etc.). Josephus frequently uses the verb in the active voice in the same sense. To hear words from thee. A Hebrew turn of expression.

Ver. 23.—*So he called for then called he, A.V.; he arose and went forth for Peter went away, A.V. and T.R.; certain of the brethren for certain brethren, A.V.* And lodged them is rather a feeble rendering of ἐξέμισεν. The same word is rendered *entertained* in Heb. xiii. 2, which is nearer the sense; "to entertain as a guest." The word carries with it that he showed them hospitality, and thus broke down the wall of partition between him and them. "He gave them friendly treatment, and made them at home with him" (Chrysostom). (For ξενίζομαι, see ver. 32.) He arose and went forth. This was on the morrow of their arrival. It was two days' journey from Cæsarea to Joppa, and two days' journey back again, the distance being thirty miles. They would probably stop the night at Apollonia, which was half-way, on the coast road. Certain of the brethren. The ready missionary spirit of the first disciples is here apparent (comp. ch. xx. 4).

Ver. 24.—*On the morrow for the morrow after, A.V.; was waiting for waited, A.V.; having called for and had called, A.V.; and his near for and near, A.V.* On the morrow. The addition of *after* in A.V. makes the sense clearer. They entered into Cæsarea. A memorable event, being the first invasion of the Roman empire by the soldiers of the cross. His near friends. We have here a proof of the strong faith of Cornelius. He did not doubt the angel's promise (vers. 5 and 6). We see his brotherly love. He invited his friends to come and hear the message of salvation; those whom, as Chrysostom suggests, he had himself brought to a better mind.

Ver. 25.—*When it came to pass that Peter entered for as Peter was coming in, A.V.*

The commentators all notice the ungrammatical phrase, ἐγένετο τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν, of the R.T. It seems to be a mixture of two constructions—ἐγένετο τοῦ εἰσελθεῖν τὸν Πέτρον and ὡς δὲ εἰσῆλθεν ὁ Πέτρος. But probably the T.R. is right. Worshipped him; not necessarily as a god, because προσκυνεῖν (with a dative or an accusative, or, as here, without any case, Hebrew קָנַע) is constantly used to express that prostration which Orientals practised before those whom they wished to honour; e.g. Gen. xxiii. 7, 12; xxxiii. 3, 6, 7, etc. But Peter's answer shows that he saw in it greater honour than ought to be paid by one man to another (see ch. xiv. 15).

Ver. 26.—*Raised for took, A.V.*

Ver. 27.—*Findeh for found, A.V.; many come for many that were come, A.V.*

Ver. 28.—*Ye yourselves for ye, A.V.; to join himself for to keep company, A.V.; and yet unto me hath God showed for but God hath showed me, A.V. Ye yourselves know. It was notorious among the Romans that the Jews kept themselves aloof from other people. Hence the accusation against them, in common with Christians, of being haters of the human race. Tacitus says of them that they hated all people, except their own countrymen, as their enemies, and refused to eat or intermarry with them ("Separati epulis discreti cubilibus;" 'Hist.,' v. 5). The word ἀλλόφυλος, one of another nation, occurs only here in the New Testament, but is common in the LXX. often as a synonym for "Philistines" (see Judg. iii. 3, etc.). This rather refutes Meyer's remark that "the designation (of Gentiles) here is tenderly forbearing."*

Ver. 29.—*Wherefore also I came for therefore came I unto you, A.V.; when for as soon as, A.V.; with what for for what, A.V.; ye sent for ye have sent, A.V.*

Ver. 30.—*Until this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer for I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed, A.V. and T.R.; apparel for clothing, A.V. Four days ago. This was the fourth day (see ver. 23, note). Until this hour, etc. The reading of the R.T. is not adopted by Meyer or Alford, and the R.V. is unintelligible. The A.V. seems to give the meaning clearly and accurately. Until this hour probably denotes the sixth hour, midday, as in ver. 9. Peter's journey would naturally have been taken in the cool of the early morning. Starting at 5 or 6 a.m., five hours, with perhaps an hour's halt, would bring him to the end of his fifteen miles' journey by 11 or 12 a.m. Apparel. The same phrase, ἐσθῆς λαμπρά, is used by St. Luke (xxiii. 11). In the description of the transfiguration a stronger expression is used, ἐξασπράττων, dazzling.*

Ver. 31.—*Saith for said, A.V.*

Ver. 32.—*Unto thee for hither, A.V.; who is surnamed for whose surname is, A.V.; lodgeth for is lodged, A.V. (ζειρίζεται in the middle voice; for the active, see above, ver. 23); Simon for one Simon, A.V. The clause which follows in the A.V., "who when he cometh shall speak unto thee," is omitted in the R.T. and R.V.*

Ver. 33.—*Forthwith for immediately, A.V., we are for are we, A.V.; in the sight of for before, A.V.; have been for are, A.V.; the Lord for God, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 34.—*And for then, A.V.*

Ver. 35.—*Acceptable to for accepted with, A.V. As regards the truth that God is no respecter of persons, which the present incident had brought home so vividly to Peter's apprehension, there can be no difficulty in understanding it. Cornelius was devout, he feared God, he was fruitful in prayer and almsgiving. God did not say to him, "All this would have been accepted in a Jew, but cannot be noticed in a Gentile." But, Gentile as he was, his prayers and alms went up for a memorial before God. If the things done were good in themselves, they were equally good whoever did them. God is no respecter of persons to accept or reject one or another, because of who he is, and not because of what he does (Eph. vi. 8). The rule is glory, honour, and peace to every one that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. ii. 10, 11). The word προσωπολήπτης (respecter of persons) occurs only here at all; προσωπολήπτῳ (to accept or respect persons), once only, in Jas. ii. 9; προσωπολήψια (respect of persons), Rom. ii. 11; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iii. 25; Jas. ii. 1. The same idea is expressed by πρόσωπον λαμβάνειν, by which the LXX. render the Hebrew קָנַע נִשְׂבָּ, and by πρόσωπον θαυμάζειν, by which they also render it and the kindred phrase, קָנַע יָרַח (see Lev. xix. 15; Deut. x. 17, etc.). The first phrase occurs in Luke xx. 21 and Gal. ii. 6; the latter only in Jude 16, where it is rightly rendered in the E.V., "showing respect of persons." Another phrase is ἀπροσωπολήπτης (without respect of persons), 1 Pet. i. 17, and βλέπειν εἰς πρόσωπον (to regard the person), Matt. xxiii. 16; Mark xii. 14.*

Ver. 36.—*He for God, A.V.; preaching good tidings of peace for preaching peace, A.V.*

Ver. 37.—*That saying ye yourselves know for that word, I say, ye know, A.V.; beginning for and began, A.V. The construction of vers. 36, 37, and 38, is somewhat difficult, but by far the easiest and most natural way, both as regards grammar and*

sense, is to make *ὁμοίς οἰδατε* govern *τὸν λόγον* directly: "You, Gentiles, well know the word which God sent to the Israelites, when he caused the gospel of peace to be preached to them, the word, namely, which came [*τὸ γενόμενον ῥῆμα*—comp. especially Luke iii. 2] throughout all Judæa," etc. (ver. 38), "about Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him," etc. In the above sentence, *τὸ γενόμενον ῥῆμα* is in apposition with *τὸν λόγον*, but amplifies and explains it; and again *Ἰησοῦν τὸν ἐκ Ναζαρέτ*, with all that follows down to the end of ver. 39, is a still further explanation of the *ῥῆμα*, and a summary of that gospel which, as Cornelius already knew, had been preached to the Jews by Jesus himself. The parenthesis, "He is Lord of all," is most opportunely inserted, that his hearers might know that Jesus of Nazareth was Lord of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. The words *λόγος* and *ῥῆμα* are synonymous, as in ver. 44 and in 1 Pet. i. 23, 25 (see Luke iii. 2; Eph. vi. 17), and are better both expressed by the English word, as in the A.V., than by *word* and *saying*, as in the R.V.

Ver. 38.—*Even Jesus of Nazareth, how that God anointed him for how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth.* The reference to the anointing (Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18, 21; Matt. i. 16, 17; ch. iv. 27) was necessary to represent him as God's Christ (see ch. ix. 22). For the designation, of Nazareth, comp. ch. ii. 22; iii. 26; iv. 10; vi. 14; Luke xxiv. 20. Oppressed of the devil. This ascription of disease to Satan agrees with Job ii. 7 and Luke xiii. 16. The word rendered "oppressed" (*καταδυναστευόμενος*) occurs in the New Testament only here and Jas. ii. 6, but, with its substantive *καταδυναστεία*, is found repeatedly in the LXX, and the Apocrypha, and in classical Greek, though rarely. A good example of its force is Exod. i. 13, and of the substantive Exod. vi. 7. It means "to rule over oppressively, and by force." In the explanatory addition, For God was with him, Peter teaches what our Lord himself and St. John in his Gospel so constantly do, that our Lord's miracles were wrought by the power of God (see e.g. John v. 17, 19, 30; vii. 28; viii. 28; ix. 3, 4; Luke xi. 20, etc.). The unity of the Son with the Father would be taught later.

Ver. 39.—*Country for land, A.V.; whom also for whom, A.V. and T.R.; hanging him for and hanged, A.V.*

Ver. 40.—*Gave him to be made manifest for showed him openly, A.V.*

Ver. 41.—*That were chosen for chosen, A.V.* Peter here again brings forward the

special apostolic office of being witnesses of Christ's resurrection (see ch. i. 8, 21, 22; ii. 32; iii. 15; iv. 33; v. 32; xiii. 31; xxvi. 16, as well as vers. 39 and 42 of this chapter). This constant reference to the testimony of eye-witnesses is an indication of the thoroughly historical character of Christianity, and of the importance of Christian evidences. The new matter which Peter was to bring before Cornelius and his company begins at ver. 40, but with the prefatory remarks in ver. 39, which both attest the truth of what Cornelius already knew and prepare for the following revelation. Who did eat and drink (see Luke xxiv. 30, 41—43; John xxi. 12, etc.).

Ver. 42.—*Charged for commanded, A.V.; this is he which is for it is he which was, A.V.* To be the Judge, etc. This statement involves the resurrection of the dead (comp. John v. 21—29; Rev. xx. 11, 12). It is easy to see how the creeds would be formed from the repetition of short doctrinal statements like this (see 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4).

Ver. 43.—*Bear for give, A.V.; every one that for whosoever, A.V.; on him for in him, A.V.* Here we have another article of the Creed, the forgiveness of sins, preached too in immediate anticipation of baptism, on the profession of faith in Jesus Christ (ver. 48). Comp. ch. viii. 37 (T.R.) and 38.

Ver. 45.—*Amazed for astonished, A.V.* They of the circumcision would doubtless be the brethren from Joppa who accompanied Peter (ver. 23). A more striking confirmation of Peter's vision cannot be conceived than this descent of the Holy Ghost upon the uncircumcised. How could they any longer be reckoned common or unclean whom God thus cleansed with his Holy Spirit?

Ver. 46.—*For they heard them, etc.* This was the incontrovertible evidence of their reception of the Holy Ghost (see ch. xi. 15—18, and ii. 4 and 11, and note on ver. 4).

Ver. 47.—*The water for water, A.V.* They actually had the Spirit, which God himself supplied; could any one object to their having the water also, which was the part of the sacrament which it rested with man to supply, in order to complete the new birth (John iii. 5)?

Ver. 48.—*Jesus Christ for the Lord, A.V. and T.R.* No one forbidding or objecting, Peter immediately ordered that they should be baptized. He does not appear to have baptized them himself, any more than St. Paul did his converts (1 Cor. i. 13—17). They prayed him to tarry with them, no doubt that they might receive fuller instruction in the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, into which they had been baptized.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—33.—*The indenture.* The meeting of Peter and Cornelius is one of those hinges upon which, small as they seem at the moment, vast interests turn. It was one of those moments when revolutions in the whole state of human society are at the birth; when that is being unconsciously enacted by the doers which will powerfully affect mankind to the end of time and beyond it. From the call of Abraham to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the covenanted mercies of God had been restricted within the narrow bounds of the Hebrew race. The very ordinances which were necessary to preserve them as a separate people, able to have the custody of the great truth of the unity of God, and of the great promise of a Messiah which should come, erected an impassable barrier between them and the rest of mankind. But this state of things was designed to be only temporary, and to pass away when it had accomplished the purpose for which it was set up. The time was to come when that knowledge of God which had been confined in the narrow reservoir of the Jewish people was to burst its embankment and flood the whole world with truth. But the embankments were very strong. The institutions which were intended to isolate the seed of Abraham had done their work well. The mind of the Jew was built in by a wall of prejudice, which it might have seemed impossible to break down. But it was to be broken down, and that by the hand of God. The manner of doing it was remarkable. Among the things which powerfully persuade the human mind *coincidences* occupy a foremost place. An event which, happening alone, might not have any very commanding power, happening concurrently with another event which has distinct marks of special relation to it, acquires enormous influence. And when all possibility of human agency in producing the coincidence is removed, the sense of a Divine purpose falls irresistibly upon the mind, and with a peculiar energy of conviction. The edges of two events, wholly independent as far as the will of man goes, fitting into one another with the precision of the two edges of an indenture, produce the absolute certainty that the two events were foreordained of God, and have their unity in his eternal purpose. Such a coincidence broke down the barrier in Peter's mind between Jew and Gentile, and was the first beginning of that wonderful movement which transferred the religion of the Jews, purified and spiritualized, to the possession of the Gentile, and brought Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem. Little did the good men whom Cornelius sent to Joppa think what would be the results of their embassy to Simon; and even Simon Peter, when he went with them to Casarea, probably scarcely understood the magnitude of his errand. He opened the gates with the keys of his apostolic office, but scarcely realized the multitudes who would enter through them to the kingdom of heaven. To us there is something wonderfully instructive in standing where we can see the simultaneous events on both sides of the wall. The messengers of Cornelius wending their way to Joppa, to find the unknown teacher. Peter praying and seeing his vision, and perplexed about its meaning, in utter ignorance that the Italians were approaching his door and bringing its interpretation with them. Their arrival makes the vision plain, and the voice of the Spirit within him concurs with the voice of the men without. One sees at once the irresistible effect of such a coincidence in overcoming the strongest prejudices, and forcing upon a reluctant mind the conviction that duty lay in a hitherto untrodden path. "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" was the just conclusion to which all who heard it were brought. And even so in our own lives, if we watch with a careful eye, shall we see many coincidences of a like nature giving us the clearest evidence of God's watchful care for us, revealing distinctly his hand and his purpose, and making our own path of duty clear in the light of his providential ordering. Sometimes it will be a coincidence between our thoughts and feelings and the events which come unexpectedly upon us; sometimes a coincidence between our own thoughts and the thoughts of others previously unknown to us. It may be some word of wisdom coming home to us at some crisis in our life; some guide sent to us at the very moment when we were in danger of losing our way; or some comfort poured into our heart by a stranger "in his simplicity;" but anyhow a coincidence in which the two edges of the indenture so

manifestly fit into one another that we are constrained to hold our peace and to glorify God, and say, "This is God's work."

Vers. 34—48.—*The great surprise.* How seldom do things turn out as we expect! What frequent proofs we have that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor his ways as our ways! And yet we are always making iron cages in which we think to confine the operations of God's Spirit, as well as the thoughts of men, and are surprised when either God or men refused to be confined within their bars. The pride of caste is perhaps that which, more than any other one cause, tends to mislead our judgment and to narrow our conceptions. The Jews thought that all God's grace and favour was reserved for themselves alone. The Pharisees thought that true holiness was confined within the still narrower circle of their own sect. The Romanist conceives of salvation as tied within the four corners of the Church of Rome. Each narrow sect thinks of itself as being exclusively the people of God. Even various parties in the Church can hardly think of grace being found in any party not their own. The great truth that burst upon Peter's mind, that God is no respecter of persons, is one which we are all very slow to admit. Peter and his companions learnt it with astonishment when the Holy Ghost fell upon the mixed multitude in the house of Cornelius. They were, perhaps, half surprised at their own liberality in sitting in the same room with the uncircumcised soldiers of the Italian cohort, when lo! all difference between them was swept away in an instant, and, to the utter amazement of the condescending Jews, those Gentiles spake with tongues and magnified God. They had received the very same gift of the Holy Ghost which the Jewish disciples had received on the day of Pentecost. They were on an equal footing with them. The middle wall of partition was fallen to the ground. There was not any longer Jew and Gentile, bond and free—they were all one in Christ. "One body, and one Spirit, even as they were called in one hope of their calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who was over all, and through all, and in all." It was a great surprise, but it was a great and new discovery of the hidden mind of God, a blessed manifestation of the width of that saving grace which embraces all who believe those glorious truths which Peter opened his mouth to declare to the assembled company.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—8.—*Piety, its place, its associations, and its reward.* We gather—

I. THAT GOD HAS HIS SERVANTS IN UNEXPECTED PLACES. We look for piety in certain quarters where it may be supposed to flourish; in others we do not look to see it; yet in these latter it may be found. Who would have expected that a centurion in a Roman regiment would prove to be a worshipper of God—one that "feared God with all his house"? He and his family must have been living in a way that contrasted strangely with the great majority of those in a similar position. We must never conclude that men are irreligious because of the class to which they belong or of the occupation in which they are engaged. Sometimes, in spite of the most uncongenial surroundings, and sometimes taking part in avocations which few godly men could possibly embrace, there are found simple-hearted and sincere Christian men. Christ has his servants, not only on the exposed hillside and the open plain, but in the most secluded glen, hidden where no eye can see them, living in the very last place where we should go to find them.

II. THAT PIETY SHOULD BE INSEPARABLY ASSOCIATED WITH CHARITY. Cornelius was "a devout man, . . . who gave much alms to the people" (ver. 2). In certain lands and at certain times, as in the country and at the period to which our text belongs, devotion and almsgiving were very closely conjoined in the public mind. It is quite possible, as was then too painfully evident, that these may be found existing together in outward form, with no acceptableness to God. But it is not the less true that God demands of us that reverent thought directed toward him should be found in close connection with generous thought directed toward our brother (see 1 John iv. 20). Christian charity should be both deep and broad. 1. It should spring from a deep sense of the worth

of human souls whom Christ pities and seeks to save. 2. It should extend beyond occasional gifts to those who are in extremity of want. It should include an intelligent endeavour to do that which is really best for the lasting well-being of the people.

III. THAT A SPIRIT OF DEVOUT INQUIRY IS ONE SURE SIGN OF GENUINENESS IN RELIGION. Taking the expression, "Thy prayers . . . are come up for a memorial" (ver. 4) with "he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (ver. 6), we conclude that Cornelius was deeply conscious that he needed to know more of God than he knew, and that he was prayerfully endeavouring to find his way into the path of truth and heavenly wisdom. This is a mark of reality. Those who complacently conclude that they know all that is to be known, that wisdom dwells with them as in its chief home, that they have no need for spiritual solicitude as to themselves,—these are they whose piety we may distrust. But the humble and earnest seeker after more light and truth is the man about whose moral integrity there cannot be two opinions. He bears the stamp of sincerity on his brow.

IV. THAT GOD WILL FULFIL THE DESIRE OF HIM WHO IS THUS SEEKING AND STRIVING. God gave to this devout inquirer that which he sought. He granted him a vision, and instructed him how to obtain the further truth he needed that he might find rest unto his soul (vers. 3—6). Thus he will treat us also. Only we must fulfil his Divine and constant conditions, viz.: 1. Earnest, repeated, patient inquiry (Matt. vii. 7, 8). 2. Living up to the light we have (John vii. 17). Half-hearted or impatient prayer will wait in vain for the door to be opened into the kingdom. Inconsistent piety will never know the doctrine which is of God. But let a man seek with his whole soul and let him live according to the known will of God, and then let him "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him," and God will give him his heart's desires (Ps. xxxvii. 4, 7).—C.

Vers. 9—48.—*Man in God's sight; or, Divine impartiality.* The incident of the conversion of Cornelius is suggestive of some important truths, but of one in particular, viz. the perfectness of the Divine impartiality. We look first, however, at—

I. THE PART OF THE PHYSICAL IN THE APPREHENSION OF THE SPIRITUAL. Peter went up to pray (ver. 9); but he was very hungry and desired bodily refreshment (ver. 10). This state of body was probably favourable to his "falling into a trance" (ver. 11); however that may be, it evidently *had something to do* with the character of the vision which he beheld. The contents of the great sheet, the invitation to "kill and eat," answered very closely to his physical cravings. In truth, our spiritual apprehensions depend in no small degree on our bodily condition. We may safely conclude that: 1. Fasting, as such, has a very small place, if it have any at all, in the Christian dispensation. (It had only the very smallest in the Law, though Pharisaic accretions had made it a prominent feature of Jewish piety in our Lord's time.) 2. Abstinence rather than indulgence is favourable to spiritual apprehension. 3. Bodily health is the best condition for religious service.

II. THE ABSOLUTE NOTHINGNESS OF OUR PHYSICAL DISTINCTIONS IN THE SIGHT OF THE SUPREME. Peter did not at first perceive the full significance of the vision, in which he was bidden to partake of anything before him: he "doubted what this vision should mean" (ver. 17). But the coincidence of the vision with the coming of the messengers of Cornelius, and the statement of the centurion himself, removed all difficulty and doubt, and he used the noble words recorded (vers. 34, 35). Not that he meant to say that God was indifferent to the consideration whether men believed what was true or what was false; that is a gross perversion of his language, which the apostle would have resented with the greatest indignation. He meant that God regarded with equal acceptance *all who held and loved the truth*, whether they were sons of Abraham or whether they stood quite outside the sacred circle. The lesson for us is that most valuable one, viz. that no physical distinctions of any kind affect our position in the sight of God. "The accident of birth" has no bearing on our place in his kingdom. Neither age, nor sex, nor class, nor race has anything whatever to do with the estimate he forms of us or with the sphere he will assign us. This absolute indifference on God's part to distinctions of which we make so much, applies: 1. To the remission of sins now; that depends wholly on our spiritual relation to Jesus Christ (ver. 43). 2. To his judgment of us after death; that also will be decided by our attitude towards him (ver. 42). 3. To his communication of special gifts (vers. 44, 45). This impartiality

should be copied by us and, particularly, made applicable to the standing we give to men in the visible Church (vers. 47, 48).

III. OUR COMMON RELATION TO GOD THE SOURCE OF HUMAN SACREDNESS. "What God hath cleansed, call not thou common" (ver. 15). Probably or possibly it may have been intended by this vision to confirm and illustrate the words of our Lord when he "made all things pure" (new rendering). But, however this may be, the words certainly denote that we are not to consider common or profane those whom God has redeemed from profanity. And who are these? Not only (1) those of our race who have been actually redeemed and renewed—those who are "washed and cleansed and sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" but also—and this is the main thought—(2) all the children of men in virtue of their common relation to the Divine Father and Saviour. As those who are "all his offspring," and who are all free to become his sons and daughters by spiritual resemblance; as those for whom the Son of God shed his blood and to whom he sends his message of love and life,—all are worthy of our "honour" (1 Pet. ii. 17); none are to be "lightly esteemed."—C.

Ver. 38.—*The imitable and inimitable in Jesus Christ.* I. THAT IN CHRIST WHICH IS INIMITABLE BY US. 1. God sent him on a mission altogether higher than our own. He "anointed him" to be the Redeemer of a world, to be its Saviour by suffering and dying in its stead, by revealing truth which it could not possibly have discovered. 2. God dwelt in him as he does not and could not do in us. He was anointed "with the Holy Ghost," and God "gave not the Spirit by measure unto him." 3. He was armed with a power which was irresistible: the "winds and the waves obeyed" him; sickness fled at his touch; death itself was obedient to his voice; the spirit-world owned his presence and yielded to his authority; he "healed all that were possessed of the devil." Our function in the world, our possession by God, our power over the forces around us,—this is in striking contrast with the work and present power of Jesus Christ.

II. THAT IN CHRIST WHICH IS IMITABLE BY US. 1. We are charged with a holy and benign mission; we are "anointed" to do a good if not a great work in the world (see John xx. 21). We are "sent" by our Lord to "bear witness unto the truth," both in word and deed; "to work and speak and think for him;" to "serve our generation by the will of God." 2. We are to be those in whom God dwells by his Spirit (see 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16; Eph. ii. 22). 3. We are to be possessed of spiritual power (Eph. iii. 16, 19; vi. 10; Col. i. 11). 4. We are to be the sources and channels of blessing; we are to "go about doing good" (Heb. xiii. 16). We may "do good" everywhere and always—the smile of encouragement, the look of love, the sigh of sympathy, the touch of kindness, the word of truth, the act of integrity, every manifestation of the Spirit of Christ is "doing good." And all is to be done under the same condition. For: 5. We are to have the continual presence and sanction of our heavenly Father: "God was with him."—C.

Vers. 1—8.—*The pious centurion.* I. THE SCENE OF THE STORY. It was at Cæsarea. Hitherto we have heard of Judæa, Samaria, and Galilee. Here the fiery baptism had descended, and here the martyrs had sealed their testimony in blood. Now the second part of the early Church history begins, and the great thought of the gospel, the conversion of the Gentiles to Christ, begins to be an accomplished fact.

II. THE GENTILE SUBJECT OF CONVERSION. 1. *A centurion; a captain; a soldier.* An old proverb says that "There is no faith and piety with men who follow the camp." Not always so, and Cornelius is an early type of those who have united the calling of the soldier with simple faith and loyalty to a Divine Master. Whatever view be taken of the military profession, such an example makes it clear that God has his chosen in places, as it may seem to us, the most unlikely, in callings the most unfavourable, as we may think, to the growth of piety. But in reality, religion shows its power in transmuting the raw material of external circumstance. Were piety dependent on happy external circumstances, it would be merely a matter of grace of manners. We cannot expect elegance of the boor, refinement of savages and roughs, but the sparks of Divine love may be struck from the roughest flint of human nature. Those characters which present naturally the greatest resistance to the gospel become often its brightest

Illustrations when subdued by the power of the truth. 2. *Moral preparation for the gospel.* He was pious, recognizing the reality of religion, reverencing God in the life of the household, and practising known duties with diligence and zeal. Almsgiving, it is well known, was commended and enjoined by the rabbis as the chief duty in religion. And this was connected with the habit of constant devotion. Not to self-neglected hearts does God come; not on eyes unused to watch does the vision of heavenly forms beam. The oratory is the reception-room for God, and the heart is the true oratory. 3. *Fulfilment of secret yearnings.* He sees and hears that which satisfies deep desires of his heart. He beholds an angel of the Lord coming in to him, and hears his name pronounced, "Cornelius!" Let us not distract ourselves by considering whether this was a dream. The point is not *how* the centurion saw and heard, but *what* he saw and heard; not the mode but the matter of the revelation. Evidently here was a Divine visit—a personal and particular visit—a visit of Divine recognition, sympathy, and blessing. We may notice: (1) The invariable fear excited in the soul by Divine revelations. The brave soldier feels it, no less than Moses the stern leader of men, or Isaiah the leal-hearted prophet, or Peter the rock-like and bold. "Woe is me; for I am a man of unclean lips;" "Hide thy face, or I die;"—such is the language of those to whom God appears and speaks. (2) This is followed by inquiry, "What may God's will with one so selected and singled out be? What is it, Lord?" So Isaiah, after the vision in the temple, expresses his readiness for service, "Here am I; send me." 4. *Clear directions of providences.* "Send men to Joppa, and cause Simon Peter to be fetched." Here, again, is the ministry of man to man. That Cornelius is bidden to send for Peter, and that Peter is bound to follow him, shows, not that Cornelius is turning to Judaism, but that the kingdom of God is turning to the Gentiles. Cornelius, with prompt and soldier-like despatch, sends two servants under the escort of a soldier to Joppa. We should be ready to meet our mercies half-way, as unhappily we are too ready to meet our troubles.—J.

Vers. 9—17.—*The ecstasy and vision of Peter.* I. THE ATTITUDE OF PRAYER. How constantly is the act and the habit of prayer mentioned in the course of this history—on the part of the community and on the part of individuals! Peter and Cornelius, the Jew and the Gentile, are in communion with God at the same moment; and it is thus shown that true fellowship between man and man on earth is conditioned by fellowship with God. Souls far apart in space are near and at one by means of this mystic tie. It was the calm noonday hour, when, as the ancients were wont to say, "Pan sleeps." All the mighty heart of nature is at rest, and the very houses of Joppa at his feet might seem to be asleep. But the living God slumbers not; watching over his faithful ones and listening to their prayers. Fixed hours of prayer may be useful and blessed. The thought of uniting with others at the same hour may strengthen devotion. But it is an abuse if the fixed hour only is employed in prayer, so as to make devotion outside it superfluous.

II. THE VISION. 1. *Its character* is determined both by the physical and the natural state of the apostle. The rapture of his spirit in devotion causes a drain on the forces of the body, and, like the Lord in the desert, he is hungry. The noonday meal is preparing. At this moment the ecstasy comes upon him, and the earthly need is stilled by the heavenly revelation. The food of the spiritual man is to know and do God's will, and he can learn, with St. Paul, how to be full and to be hungry, how to abound and to suffer need. 2. *Its particular features.* The vast vessel, like a sheet let down by its four corners from heaven, contains a miscellaneous collection of quadrupeds, reptiles, and birds. Thus the first impression is shocking to a strict believer in and observer of the Mosaic ritual. The confusion of the clean with the unclean, the profane with the holy, is that which he abhors with all his soul. It is, in fact, the visible presentment of the feelings of repugnance with which Peter must secretly have viewed the drawing of the Gentiles with the Jews into the kingdom of God. 3. *The Divine voice.* "Slay and eat." Here the Divine resistance to natural and acquired prejudice reaches its height. If we would be followers of the Truth, and make progress in the knowledge of God, we must be prepared to meet with such rebuffs. Prejudices we have thought to be a clear and integral part of our faith must be overcome when the call comes to us to emerge into larger views and clearer light. The most

mysterious elements in such struggles is that we seem to be placed in strife with the holiest traditions and best associations of our earlier life. But it is when the fight begins within the man that he becomes worth nothing. And never do ideas become clear, never is the higher generalization grasped, except as the result of such struggles. As Saul, in the zeal of the old faith, kicked against the goads of his new convictions, so was Peter now repugnant to that new truth which was breaking in with so much power upon his mind. In both cases it was a wider view of the kingdom of God, a more loving interpretation of his purposes to mankind, which was struggling for admission to the intellect and heart. Never let us fear the generalization of our ideas and feelings of the truth. The change, in uprooting the old, gives us something far better to put in its place. The resistance of Peter on this occasion is so like him—sharp, stubborn, peremptory. “Never, Lord!” When Peter spoke thus it was a sign that he was about to give way, either on the side of good or evil. So had he said on former occasions: “I will *never* forsake thee.” “Thou shalt *never* wash my feet!” And we know what followed. So in this instance. In each case there was a right feeling combined with a wrong or ignorant thought. Ignorance of self precipitates into rash resolves; ignorance of the grace of Christ and of the power of truth leads to mistaken obstinacy and resistance. 4. *The repeated voice.* This time in explanation of the command. What God has cleansed, men are not to deem common. This is a deep and pregnant word. The distinction of clean and unclean animals was (1) a sanitary distinction; (2) a ceremonial distinction founded upon that; (3) therefore a relative and temporary distinction. Apart from the special purposes for which the distinction holds good, the general truth of universal and eternal application obtains—that all creatures of God are good and to be received with thanksgiving. So deeply important is this truth, it is repeated over and over again, that it may not possibly be forgotten, that it cannot henceforth be ignored. (1) Ceremonial, local, national distinctions are for a time; truth and love are universal. (2) The local must give way gradually before the universal; the truth which reveals differences before the truth which reconciles. (3) The truth for which a sect contends, once clearly established, cannot be lost. But the universal truth of the gospel absorbs both it and all partial definitions of truth with itself.—J.

Vers. 17—23.—*Peter's visit to Casarea.* I. **THE CALL TO ACTION FOLLOWING THE REVELATION OF FAITH.** Peter was in perplexity at this astounding vision of the sheet let down from heaven. Every Jewish prejudice was confuted by it, and a new view of the purpose of God in the gospel, quite dazzling to his unaccustomed sight, was opened. Well might he hesitate. But when God gives us a new view of truth and duty, it is not long before he calls us to act upon it. So in this case. Often do feelings in the mind thus coincide with outward occurrences. They join hands and irresistibly indicate the will of God. While Peter is inquiring the meaning of what he had seen, he is being inquired for by the strangers at the door. Then comes the inward intimation of the Spirit: “Lo, three men are seeking for thee.”

II. **THE CLEARNESS AND EXPLICITNESS OF THE DIVINE CALL.** “Arise, go down, go with them, doubt nothing; I have sent them.” Happy for us when the path of duty is made equally clear. Let us remember that the light is given to those who are sincere, and serve God in simplicity of heart. And when the clear call is heard, unhesitatingly must be the obedience. “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” The habit of conferring with flesh and blood, *i.e.* with inclination and disinclination, obscures the conscience, and, perhaps, destroys our hope of future inspirations. “I never rise so high,” said Cromwell, “as when I know not whither I am going,” that is, in obedience to the Divine call. So Peter went forth to meet the men.

III. **THE MEANING OF THE CALL EXPLAINED.** Cornelius, a Roman centurion, has sent for him. A just and pious man is he, the servant says. Here, then, the vision begins to explain itself. What has the Roman to do with the Jew? Everything, if God brings them together. And that this was here the case was too evident to be ignored. For while God was revealing his will in one way to Peter in a vision, drawing the thought of the apostle toward the Gentile, in another way he was speaking to the Roman, impelling him to send to the apostle, that he might listen to his teaching. What secret attractions of Providence bring lives together! Do we sufficiently consider

this? The great lesson reflected both from the conduct of Peter and that of Cornelius is that we should be prompt to obey Divine calls, whether to do good or to seek good. Willingness to receive and to give is the great condition of being rightly led. To speak good words to others may be, for some, the noblest function; to listen to them, for others, the greatest means of blessing. It is the Divine will to bring the speaker and the hearer together, the teacher and the disciple. Let each, then, be true to the voice within.—J.

Vers. 23—34.—Peter and Cornelius. I. THE RECEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN APOSTLE BY THE GENTILE CONVERT. Here were Jew, Gentile, and Christian visibly brought into juncture and unity in the persons of these two men. 1. The Roman officer gives a noble reception to Peter, at once a true Jew and a true Christian, by calling together his kindred and friends. He desires that others may partake of spiritual gifts and blessings—a true mark of love. We become poor by giving earthly goods away; rich by imparting of those that are spiritual. Perhaps there is commonly too much reserve in such relations. We assume reluctance where we might meet with a ready response on the part of friends to such invitations. 2. Cornelius feels deep reverence for the person of the apostle; fell at his feet on his entrance, to do him homage. The Romans were an intensely religious people in their way. They recognized the *numen*, or Divine power, in all the great objects of the creation. It was a profound mystical instinct, needing only proper direction.

II. THE CHRISTIAN APOSTLE'S DEMEANOUR TOWARDS THE GENTILE CONVERT. "Rise! I also am a man." "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" had been his confession to Jesus; and on this he had been appointed fisher of men. Perhaps he remembers that incident now, and, in view of the respect and preparations of Cornelius, repeats, "I am also a man." "Cornelius does too much in his reverence towards a living and genuine saint; then how can prayer to the images of saints be justified?" No true successor of Peter is he, nor has he Peter's humble mind, who suffers his feet to be kissed. The worship of the instrument obscures the honour of the Divine Agent. The word of Peter rebukes, not only the worship of saints, but all excessive hero-reverence and worship paid to great men in the Church.

III. THE CONNECTION OF EVENTS EXPLAINED. 1. *There was a great prejudice to be overcome.* (Ver. 28.) The prejudice of the Jew against intercourse with the stranger. No barrier in nature, no mountain to be crossed or travelled, river to be forded, waste to be reclaimed, is comparable to the obstinacy and difficulty of prejudice, most of all of religious prejudice. And where in all the pages of history do we find a prejudice equal in strength to that of the Jew against the Gentile? 2. *The Divine victory over prejudice.* God had shown that "*no man is to be called common or unclean.*" Immense word! Not yet has its meaning been exhausted; not yet, perhaps, begun to be truly unfolded. How profound the strength and the comfort which flows from such a clear word of God! For the preacher, teacher, missionary, every kind of worker for anthropic good, it is a clear light, a clue to hand and heart alike. The ideal human nature is pure and beautiful, for God made it—whatever actual human nature in the individual may be. 'Tis this thought gives inspiration. Peter will not hesitate to come to the Gentile's house when he is filled with it; and we may face the facts of the life of the nations, as they are now being so abundantly unfolded to us by scientific inquiry, with intelligent interest and cheerful hope, with the light of the gospel resting broadly over the whole field of inquiry. Such is the impulse which has brought Peter hither. But why have they sent for him? The answer will disclose: 3. *Further coincidences.* Cornelius now relates his vision. He, too, had been praying and seeking. To him, too, an apocalypse had been given; and the Divine finger had pointed Jew-wards, as to Peter it had pointed Gentile-wards. Equally Divine is the call; with equal promptness obeyed. Cornelius has sent, Peter has done well to come. Happy meeting, divinely brought about, and pregnant with Divine consequences! Such a series of events indicates God's hand, prepares the mind to listen to God's voice. The inarticulate voice of events is his voice, and it prepares us to listen to that which is clear and definite.—J.

Vers. 34—43.—Discourse of Peter at Caesarea. I. THE EQUAL JUSTICE AND LOVE OF

God. He is no respecter of persons. The conditions of acceptance in his sight are everywhere and for all men the same, viz. reverence and rightness of moral conduct. Does this imply, it matters not what a man believes, so long as he fears God and does what is right? Certainly, belief is not immediately under the control of the will. But indirectly it so far is that we are bound to keep our minds open to the light, and to seek some belief that may guide conduct. The truth is that the reverence and the moral rectitude spoken of cannot exist apart from the root of faith in a supersensual order and Divine Law. Indifferentism is not recommended nor excused. But the truth that it is only the genuine qualities of the heart, the real disposition of the will, not external associations nor advantages of birth, which constitute true worth in God's sight. And any other principle of Divine dealing than this would shock the conscience as unjust.

II. **RECAPITULATION OF THE GOSPEL.** 1. It was a good message of peace sent to the sons of Israel. He says nothing about natural religion and the universal conscience, on which St. Paul dwells in the Romans. The gospel is pre-eminently a message by man to man; by a selected people as ministered to the race. It was diffused through the Holy Land, and its substance was well known. 2. Its substance—Jesus: his person, his sanctified character, and his mighty deeds. His life of perpetual beneficence, his healing of those under the bondage of disease and of ignorance. It was manifest to men that God was with him, setting the seal of power upon his character and deeds. 3. The existence of living witnesses to those truths. The apostles were witnesses of the facts in the physical world on which Christianity was founded. Christian teachers and Christian men now are witnesses of the facts in the moral world which are eternal, and which interpret the physical facts. 4. The death and resurrection of Jesus. The suffering and the triumph of love; here lies the very kernel of the gospel. This triumphant Christ has been made manifest to chosen witnesses—to his close companions and intimate associates during his earthly life. And they have a commission to make proclamation of these truths to the people, and to testify that he is appointed Judge of the living and the dead. Finally, the gospel has the confirmation of prophecy; and all who believe on him may receive the remission of their sins. Here, then, is a useful summary of the gospel. (1) Peace through Jesus Christ, who has lived, suffered, and risen for men. (2) This is a message to all men, and a call to salvation. (3) Its aim is universal human blessedness.—J.

Vers. 44—48.—*Descent of the Spirit at Caesarea.* Let us notice the following particulars in connection with this visitation:—

I. **EVER THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON MEN IN CONNECTION WITH THE RECEPTION OF THE TRUTH.** So at Pentecost; so here. The falling of the rain from heaven is concurrent with the germination of the seed. It can hardly be said that either is first or second. Each is the necessary condition of the other. If we desire to secure the heavenly words, we must preach the Word—"be instant in season and out of season."

II. **EVER A NEW REVELATION BRINGS WITH IT ASTONISHMENT AND PERPLEXITY.** The believing Jew could not understand this outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the heathen; nor how *they* could be found speaking with tongues and glorifying God. To us it seems natural enough that the great purpose of God, the generous germs-thoughts of eternal truth and love, should break forth into larger meaning and wider development. But there is a lesson for us here. We are all slow to see the large consequences of the truth we hold and teach. It surprises us, and alas! not always with a joyous surprise, when we find people accepting the consequences of our own doctrines, and proving that they have taken seriously what perhaps we preached with only half a heart.

III. **LOVE AND TRUTH PREVAIL ALONG WITH EVERY MANIFESTATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** It is *Peter*, the very personification of the Jewish and exclusive spirit, who now pleads for the reception of the new converts. We never understand a truth till we have striven against it. Then we become enthusiasts for it when it has conquered our own heart and intelligence. The representative of the "circumcision," that is, of the exclusive or Jewish view of the gospel, is now the very champion, not merely of toleration, but of a free and loving reception of the heathen converts to the fellowship of Christ. The case of Peter, like that of Paul, shows how the best advocates

of a holy cause are often, it may be always, to be found amongst those who have been its sincere opponents. Thus do extremes meet; thus out of weakness comes strength, from bitterness sweetness; thus does the gracious and gentle will of God select foes to turn them into friends. But we shall see in the next section the further victory of Divine love over the narrowness and hate of the human heart.—J.

Vers. 1—8.—*The Spirit of God in the Gentile world. Cæsarea.* Roman spirit there. Philip's visit (see ch. viii. 40). Herod's influence. Possible contact of Cornelius with gospel truth. Necessity that the entrance of the Church on its new territory should be solemn, authorized, undoubtedly firm, because of the subsequent controversies which would be largely settled by reverting to the facts.

I. CORNELIUS A TYPE of the religious heathen under the influence of the Spirit. 1. Devotion may be sincere, while unenlightened; yet needing the higher teaching. 2. Almsgiving, when accompanied by prayer, a sign of real religion. 3. Household piety. The true man lives his faith, however imperfect. As best he could he feared God in the regulation of his life.

II. SUPERNATURAL HELP leads on the seeking minds. The resources which were open to the heathen world insufficient. Philosophy dumb on the greatest questions. Heathen priests mostly deceivers. Cornelius was *not* satisfied. Sense of sin awakened. The heathen must be evangelized, even though we admit that their religious position is not absolutely hopeless. The gospel is not a mere individual message; it proclaims a remedy for universal ills. The centurion was a man of great influence. His conversion would open the way of the truth to many others.

III. LESSONS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE to be learnt from those without. 1. Responsibility for light. 2. Position to be faithfully employed for God. 3. Family religion—even soldiers in the house had learnt devoutness from their master. 4. Follow the leadings of God's voice.—R.

Vers. 9—16 (or ver. 15).—*The light of heaven on the open gate of a new world.* Review the preparations made for the revelation to be now vouchsafed. The teaching of Christ. His commission to his apostles. Stephen; Paul; Samaria. Peter's charge of the key. His visit to Joppa. His mind probably already at work on the problem.

I. THE TWO WORLDS FACE TO FACE—the heathen and the Jewish, both the scene of spiritual manifestations. The two streams of grace flowing, ready to commingle in one broad river of new life. 1. Take the two men as types of the two different forms of thought and faith—Peter and Cornelius. 2. Both worlds need supernatural communications. Jews had abused privilege. Gentiles had trampled underfoot the remnants of Divine tradition. 3. The new world, that is, the new humanity to be called forth, a union of the Jewish and the Gentile. Christ making peace (Eph. ii. 11—22).

II. THE LIGHT DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN at the open gate. 1. Such a vision requisite to dispel the *darkness of Peter's mind* and to assure his faith. He was practically weak (see his controversy with Paul, Gal. ii.). 2. A reversion to the original position of *man in creation*. All distinctions of clean and unclean subsequent to creation (see Gen. i.). 3. *Authority* removes what authority had prescribed. "God hath cleansed." 4. While the *vision* must have loosened prejudice, it was not itself commandment. It prepares the way, shows the open door, but is not itself a substitute for God's Spirit. Learn from this that all such help should be used in dependence on the still higher help, the direct teaching of God's Spirit, both by facts and words.—R.

Vers. 17—23.—*The finger-post of Providence.* It is well when we can look away from visions to facts, and deal with living men. Opportunity for action often disperses the cloud of perplexity. The vision in the memory, the men at the gate, the Spirit presiding over all.

I. GOD'S METHOD ILLUSTRATED. 1. The subjective and the objective united. The spirit within is experience. The work of grace in the outward world. 2. Providential guidance is vouchsafed. The facts that will help us are at the gate. 3. There is

a background of the supernatural to which we are able to refer for authority—the Spirit in the Word, in the living Churches, in the world.

II. BELIEVING OBEDIENCE EXEMPLIFIED. 1. Natural feeling overcome in the presence of undoubted Divine commandment. 2. A new enterprise faced, in dependence on Divine support. 3. Wisdom humbly seeking light that it may be followed. 4. The Spirit's seal recognized by the spiritual man. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine," etc. Doubt too often a moral defect.—R.

Vers. 23—43.—*The first trumpet-sound of the gospel in the heathen world.* I. A REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY. 1. Cornelius, his kinsmen, his near friends, probably some of them devout soldiers. 2. Peter, his brethren from Joppa. The different states of mind. Inquiry after truth, perplexity as to duty. The helplessness of the heathen world well set forth in Cornelius's salutation. The sense of darkness and spiritual want a temptation to worship men instead of God. The false Church accepts such worship. The true says, "Stand up! I myself also am a man."

II. THE LIGHT OF GOD the only true light in which differences are removed and blessings are recognized. Peter brings into that light his Jewish prejudice, and it vanishes. Cornelius brings into it his desire for knowledge and equality with all God's children, and it is abundantly satisfied. So in the controversies of men, let them meet together "in the sight of God," and to hear his voice, and all will be well.

III. THE TRUMPET-SOUNDS awaking the Gentile world. 1. The personal Redeemer. 2. The witnessing Church. 3. The universal invitation. *The true evangel—the true liberty, equality, and fraternity. The Holy Spirit spake by Peter's mouth.—R.

Ver. 34.—*"God is no respecter of persons."* A great truth exemplified in fact becomes like a new revelation. What Simon Peter perceived in the setting of real life he had often acknowledged before. It was the application that was requisite. Difference between holding a truth and being held by it.

I. A CONDEMNATION OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. Not person, but his own Divine righteousness does he respect. The acceptance of the sinner is not a personal favour, but a manifestation of that which is perfect—the righteousness of Christ. Ritualism supposes God capable of being turned aside from his perfect justice. The intolerance of bigotry. Class distinctions in the Church. Priestcraft.

II. A CONDEMNATION OF UNBELIEF, in the form of distrust and despondency. Nothing acceptable in self-reproaches except as they are sincere and accompanied with active efforts to do his will.

III. THE MOTTO OF THE CHRISTIAN AMBASSADOR, whether in carrying the message to the degraded classes of our own population or to the heathen. One gospel for rich and poor, cultivated and uncultivated.

IV. THE NOTE OF THE TRUE CHURCH. That which will not recognize the universal brotherhood of men will not be the Church of the future. Coincidence of providential teaching with the teaching of the Bible. The world will acknowledge no form of Christianity which respects persons. The history of the last century showed that a false Christianity produces atheism.—R.

Ver. 36.—*The universal proclamation.* "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Taking Cornelius as an example of a devout heathen, show that the world needed a new proclamation of peace, both to individuals and to nations. A personal name must be announced; for it must be preached, not by wars and worldly power, but by persuasion and appeal to the heart.

I. THE MESSAGE—PEACE. 1. Peace between man and God in atonement. 2. Peace rising up as a well-spring of new life in the heart. 3. Peace ordering the life.

II. THE PREACHER—JESUS CHRIST. 1. Not destroying the Law, but fulfilling it. The gospel preached from the first. 2. The power of the message is in the messenger. Personal power. Power of love. Power of Divine supremacy inviting confidence. 3. Jesus Christ preached in his people, by his Church, in the embodiment of the Word. Test of all doctrines claiming to uplift humanity—Will they bear to be made the basis of fellowship? Rationalism has never been able to form a Church. Jesus preached and preaches still a peaceful revolution which shall totally change the world.

III. THE AUDIENCE. 1. None excluded. No other condition would harmonize with ooth the message and the preacher. 2. Christianity preaches peace in states and among the contending nations, not by substituting spiritual principles for laws, because it is not the preacher's province to legislate, but by proclaiming the Word of Jesus Christ. 3. The mission of the Church to the homes of men, not the peace of blind submission, intellectual and moral death, but the peace of Jesus Christ, the life of God in the soul of man, flowing out into the surrounding world. Is it peace—within, without?—R.

Ver. 38.—*The great Philanthropist.* "Who went about doing good." The true criterion by which Christianity must be tried is its' adaptation to the world's necessities. The text of Peter's sermon was Jesus Christ. "We are witnesses" of what he was, what he did, how God testified his authority.

I. THE WORLD'S GREAT WANT. 1. Deeds, not words. Failure of all mere human schemes of philanthropy. 2. A benevolence working from a spiritual basis. External reform insufficient. 3. Universality. "All the ends of the earth shall see this salvation." 4. A permanent motive to philanthropy. National, legislative, personal efforts apt to die out.

II. THE WORLD'S GREAT RESOURCE. 1. Philanthropy springing out of religion. The deepest springs of humanity touched. The lowest and highest united together. Reverence for the weak a truly Christian sentiment; absent from all heathenism. Destroyed by science unless guarded by higher motive. 2. A *Divine hope* at the root of all effort. The kingdom of heaven was what Jesus proclaimed. Not relief merely, but restoration. 3. A *perfect Example*. The character of Christ acknowledged even by opponents to be unique. Its influence on his disciples inexhaustible. The method of Jesus a great guiding fact—"he went about doing good," not waiting for organization, or merely presiding over others, or sitting on an inaccessible throne of dignity, but doing the work by personal, individual ministrations.

III. THE TOUCHSTONE OF TRUTH. 1. Apply it to the claims of rival religions. "Doing good." 2. Apply it to the prevalent tendencies of modern society. Philosophical scepticism. Socialistic experiments. Rationalistic criticism. Lowering Christianity to a mere republication of morality. 3. Apply it to individuals. Are we treading in the footsteps of Jesus as he went about doing good? Is there an impelling motive, a generous self-sacrifice, a single-minded simplicity in us, like his?—R.

Ver. 42.—*The Saviour's charge to his ministers.* "He commanded us to preach unto the people." No secrets in the Christian religion. Apostles witnesses for the sake of others. The key opened the door, and then was flung away. Baptism of the Holy Ghost preceded the universal message.

I. THE DIVINEST WORK OF GOD'S PEOPLE—TO PREACH. 1. The greatness of the work rests upon the greatness of the necessity. Teaching can never be dispensed with. The root of a true faith is knowledge. Popular ignorance immeasurable. 2. No ritualistic display can supersede preaching. Nor is devotion the whole of worship. As a moral force, Christianity must be preached to men, both conscience and heart. 3. Preaching is the most simple and pure channel of connection from soul to soul. The Spirit flows through the Word.

II. THE CHIEF AIM OF GOD'S MINISTERS MUST BE TO REACH THE PEOPLE. 1. No sophistry should blind us to the fact that the proclamation of gospel truth is the first duty of Christians. 2. The Word preached must be the Word which is adapted to the people. No power like that of evangelical truth. 3. Churches must guard against being "at ease in Zion." Edification is best aimed at through aggressive efforts on the surrounding population. Intellectual preaching must be subordinated to popular wants. An educated ministry is the want of the times, but the education, like all other means employed, must be full of the Holy Ghost.

III. THE MASTER'S COMMISSION THE SUPPORT OF THE CHURCH'S HOPES. 1. Direct charge must silence all questioning and all speculation. 2. Jesus Christ reads the future. Let the commander give the orders. Then his predications of victory will be fulfilled. 3. The reflex action of zealous fulfilment of the charge on the Church's own faith and experience. Those who do much for the people the happiest Christians, the

most assured believers. The triumphs of practical Christianity will be its best evidence. What are we doing, both as individuals and as Churches, to preach to the people?—R.

Ver. 43.—Faith directed to its highest object. “To him give all the prophets witness,” etc. Peter’s climax. He led his hearers up the ascent of faith, and bid them see Jesus on the height, above all, summing up all in himself, before all eyes, testified to by all witnesses from the beginning.

I. THE TWO TESTIMONIES here set forth—the witness of the written Word, the witness of the unwritten work of the Spirit in the heart. 1. The union of these the ground of a sinner’s confidence. Faith lays hold of the object. 2. The world is invited to examine these two witnesses for Christ. The Bible, as the Book of the prophets, stands not alone. God writes a Bible in his Church, in great examples of his Spirit’s work; in the consciences of men. We must appeal to both. Review the course of revelation side by side with the facts of spiritual history. Great revivals accompanied by great openings of the Word.

II. THE WORLD-WIDE BLESSEDNESS. 1. *Remission of sins* the foundation on which all spiritual, moral, and physical change must be built up. No compromise with a lower doctrine. The promise of the Spirit is to faith. The kingdom proclaimed is not man’s kingdom, but God’s. 2. The Name of Jesus is the centre of all religious reformation. Apostolic successes were due to the unflinching steadfastness of the ambassadors. 3. Connect the conclusion of Peter’s sermon with the preceding testimony. Faith is acceptance, not of any Christ, but of the Christ to whom all the prophets witnessed. Practical religion is based upon intelligent understanding of the object of faith. It is obedience to the truth.—R.

Vers. 44—48.—The first Gentile Church. 1. Importance of the event as removing all doubt and opening the new future. The Holy Ghost his own witness. To resist such evidence would be blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. 2. The immediate consecration and public sealing of the work by baptism a striking example of obedience to the Spirit, and shows us that we should bear in mind always how much profession and consecration bear on the interests of Christ’s kingdom. 3. Apostolic authority is great, but is itself subject to the Spirit. Inspiration in the people of God blends with inspiration in his specially anointed messengers. Wherever he shows us that his Spirit has already been poured out, let us hasten to bear witness to it. So shall we strengthen our own faith and enlarge the Church. The whole history, thus concluded, a lesson on the blessing attending a simple following the guidance of the Spirit. Peter an example of a heart enlarged by simplicity.—R.

Vers. 1—46.—Broadening foundations. The promises of God to “Abraham and his seed for ever” are not going to be diminished now, but something of the extent of them is to be made more plain. Nothing shall be taken from the Jew which he is willing to have and to keep; but much is going to be given, with a manifestation unknown before, to the Gentile. With some form of vision, of dream, of angel-appearance, the covenant of long ages ago was made with the patriarch, and it seems that now, some nineteen centuries later, similar august realities shall be graciously put into movement, to inaugurate the abundant entrance of the whole Gentile world to the blessings of revealed religion. Multifarious as the detail of this chapter is, it is knit together by strongest bonds. It is one in spirit and in subject, and its impression is one. It is the moving drama-like representation of a very real and very significant transition in universal history. We are in the presence of a landmark that shall be seen far and wide and to the end of time. And we may observe—

I. IN WHOM THIS GREAT TRANSITION IS ILLUSTRATED. Confessedly indications of it had not been wanting, while Jesus lived on earth, in the eulogy he pronounced upon the faith of such as the centurion whose servant was ill, and the Syro-phenician woman. And within the actual ministry of Peter as an apostle, the Ethiopian eunuch, his conversion and baptism, had given similar indications. But more than indications are now arrived. The time is ripe for manifestation. And the illustration, nay, the full and distinct announcing, of the universal privileges and universal blessings of the

gospel of Christ are made in the personal history of Cornelius. 1. He is a Roman. No larger, better type of the world could be chosen. 2. He is a Roman of the profession of arms. No profession could be chosen fitter to yield in fullest surrender to the message of the Prince of peace. 3. He is a man of large and liberal heart, of large and open eye. One detail after another of this history betrays it. 4. He is already of a religious and devout disposition. He is held in honour for his practical goodness among the people. His character as a religious man is regarded by them as a consistent character. But past these, he has been a genuine seeker after God in prayer. Though a Gentile, he had a soul like that of the true Israelite. His gaze was to the East; he would not bow down to the West. Some of the gospel's grandest triumphs are, and are set forth in Scripture as, over the worst lives. But signally the grandest revelations of truth and of things to come have been vouchsafed to the pure and the watchful, those devout in heart and devoted in life—ay, from Enoch to the shepherds of Bethlehem, and on by the Ethiopian and Cornelius to John of Patmos.

II. IN WHAT MANNER THIS GREAT TRANSITION IS FORMULATED. The one great effect is that we are impressed with the Divine initiative and the Divine conduct in even the details of what took place. The Divine purpose shall be carried out with Divine attention. 1. A vision, and an angel in the vision, appear to Cornelius. Instruction lies, no doubt, both in what is said to Cornelius in this vision, and what is left even to him to fill up. (1) He is graciously and approvingly advised that his "prayers," though he was not of the favoured nation, and his "alms" have been noticed of Heaven, and have been accepted. They have *availed*—even as though they had been "incense" and the "evening sacrifice." (2) He is told to send to a certain place for "Peter," whose name, possibly enough, he had heard by this time; whom, however, it is evident he did not personally know, both from the mode in which the angel described him, and from what we read of the way in which Cornelius received him (vers. 5, 6, 25). (3) He is left to gather that Heaven's own clock has signified that the time is ripe for some event on earth worthy of its marking, and, with exemplary promptitude, he does the latter what he is commanded—and waits the issue. Let alone what was left to Cornelius to surmise, it is left to us also to imagine how this interval was passed by him—how devoutly he mused, how surely he expected what was divinely worth the having from the manner in which communication had been made to him, how he talked about it with any like-minded, and invited such together, that with himself they might share the privilege and responsibility of receiving the illustrious visitor, and hearing his mission. 2. A trance, and a vision in the trance, a voice distinctly repeated, and the direction of the Spirit (ver. 19), are given to Peter. These were to act as (1) strong impulse to him; (2) deeper instruction in the understanding of the one universal God and Saviour, and one large family of mankind "of one blood," though spread among many a nation of the earth; (3) literal guidance in the path of duty, and especially when the close of the trance and vision was timed to the hour of the arrival of the embassy from Cornelius. A wondering and awed and *asking* mind in Peter is in some measure *satisfied* as well as relieved by the errand and practical work to which he is immediately challenged by the three messengers. We may note that all this is mere myth and idle tale on the page of Scripture, or that it strongly begs our study of providence and a very grateful faith in such providence. Though the age of vision and trance be passed, the age of providence and of the Spirit has not passed and never will pass. 3. A designed and manifestly adapted meeting of instructor and instructed carries on what may be designated without irreverence the divinely planned programme of the occasion. Companions and witnesses go with Peter, who has already entertained for one night in the same "lodging" with himself the strange messengers of Cornelius, and arrived at the abode of Cornelius the next day but one after the "trance." Peter finds a little congregation of Gentiles to see him and receive, not so much him, as God's Word by him. All these things must be viewed as the arrangements and preparation for that which was to follow, and to prove itself the great object in the Divine purpose. Forces long estranged are led toward one another in happiest and most impressive omens, and very soon they find themselves one in one "Lord of all." Often have there been larger congregations to hear Peter and brother apostles and the true successors of these to the present; rarely have there been more expectant or more rightly and devoutly prepared. 4. God's own great sermon to the world is now spoken by lips

prepared to speak to hearts prepared to receive. The text is that God accepts every man who is ready "to walk humbly with him, to do justice and to love mercy" (Micah vi. 8). And the real sermon consists of this, that Jesus Christ is the only way hereto. His Name, his anointing, his unwearied goodness, his oneness with God, his crucifying, his rising from the grave, his charge to the apostles in that mystic forty days that they now should preach him "to all the world," as, in fine, *Judge of living and dead*,—these are the touching, thrilling, inspiring heads of Peter's discourse, a summary of the way of life. And the practical exhortation in the conclusion amounts to this, that to Jesus *all* men are to have recourse—*he*, the one object of faith for the forgiveness of sins: "Every one that believeth on him shall, through his Name receive remission of sins." With these words the errand of Peter was very nearly finished. The visions and the trance, the intimations of the Spirit, and the journeyings to and fro of messengers, the expectant Cornelius and friends, have all found their meaning face to face with one another. Men might little think to-day what lay in that brief address of Peter, or that matter of such precious import could lie in so simple a rehearsal. Yet it was so. Those few words of Peter were even *burdened* with the material of hope, comfort, joy. They were like the charter of liberty, of right, of wealth, to a household and a nation. They were really such a charter to the world.

III. THE SANCTION BY WHICH THIS GREAT TRANSITION IS CONFIRMED AND CROWNED. This consisted in the descent of the Holy Ghost, with his wondrous powers. It was another scene of Pentecost; nay, it was *the* other scene of Pentecost, its counterpart. Pentecost in its divinest significance, let us say, in the Divine eye itself, awaited this perfecting. The world, it is true, does not yet lie at the feet of Jesus, but "this day is salvation" proclaimed to the world, and "the Son of man" is announced as "come to seek and to save that which was lost," of whatsoever nation, tribe, tongue. Again, "there was great joy in that city" and in that house. Notice: 1. The stress that is laid on "those of the circumcision" being witnesses of the effects of the descent of the Holy Spirit "upon the Gentiles." 2. The respect shown to the administration of the initiatory rite of baptism. 3. The little stress that is laid upon the matter *who* should be the administrators of that rite. It is only said that Peter uttered forth the deciding word that this congregation of Gentiles, upon whom the gift of the Holy Ghost had fallen, and who were showing manifestly forth his "gifts," "should be baptized in the Name of the Lord." We are reminded of the words of Paul, "I thank God I baptized none of you, save," etc. (1 Cor. i. 14). The apparent abstinence on the part of Peter now, and the language of Paul subsequently, whatever else may possibly underlie them both, may certainly be justly understood to "magnify the office" and the work of preaching. In how little honour do we sometimes hold that which was now honoured so highly alike by the anxious longing and attention of Cornelius and his friends; by the conduct of Peter; and by the Divine preparation of vision, trance, the Spirit, and some coincident providences! The "words" of Jesus are "spirit and are life." Near the fount itself they were sometimes honoured as such. They spread light and life. They have lost nothing of their own force as time has gone on, nor ever will to time's end, though men may neglect or reject.—B.

Vers. 2, 22.—Devout heathen. To correct the tendency to limit the operations of Divine grace to particular sections, classes, or nations, the Scriptures record instances of true devoutness and sincere piety both before and outside the Abrahamic covenant. The comforting and inspiring truth of the Divine call and election man has too often changed into a doctrine of Divine favouritism, involving the sovereign and groundless choice of some, and the consequent repudiation and hopeless condition of many. We should ever seek to hold the truth which God is pleased to reveal with a jealousy of ourselves, lest we should unduly apply it to the disadvantage of others. Our God has said, "All souls are mine;" he maketh "his sun to rise upon the evil and upon the good." And if he claims the right to judge all mankind, he must have given them all knowledge, opportunities, and measures of grace. While fully realizing that the only book revelation has been made to the Jew and the Christian, and that the great revelation of God to man has been made in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that this revelation is the key to, and the completion of, all others, we need not refuse to admit that God has had gracious access to the minds and hearts of heathen peoples,

and has guided, in measures that seemed wise, their gropings and seekings after him. One of the remarkable cases is that of Cornelius the Roman centurion, a man declared to be of pious character, and to have won the Divine acceptance. As illustrating the above statements, mention may be made of Melchizedek, Balaam, Araunah, etc. Accepting the fact that there may be genuine religion among the heathen, we may ask by what signs may we hopefully recognize it, and then turn to the story of Cornelius for aid in making anewer.

I. The first sign is BELIEF IN GOD, as distinguished from *the gods*. The conception of one supreme Being is more common among the heathen than we are wont to admit. It is often lost sight of by the prominence that is given to subordinate divinities, and the elaborate worship rendered to them. It is often sadly limited and deteriorated by the notion of a second being, who is regarded as a rival of the supreme Being, and energetically destroying his work. Polytheism and dualism represent the two evil tendencies of man's religious nature; but we may reasonably hope that not a few of the heathen have, like Cornelius, risen above the prevailing sentiments, and held firmly their faith in one supreme God. And we must, in all charity, assume that there may be a personal trust of heart on the living God, when the intellectual conceptions of him, and of his relations with men, are very imperfect and unworthy. To be acceptable, a man's religion must include faith in one God; and we must remember that this was the first great fact and truth revealed to men, and, however men may have blotted it *over* in their souls, they have not blotted it *out*.

II. The second sign is SUCH APPREHENSION OF GOD AS BRINGS FEAR. The Bible use of the word "fear" should be carefully explained. It is the word which most suitably expresses the proper attitude of men towards God. It includes *awe, reverence, worship, and obedience*, and may be best illustrated by the feelings entertained by a good child towards a good and noble parent. The sense of Divine authority should make us *fear* to do wrong, and the sense of Divine holiness should make us *fear* to approach unpreparedly his presence or to take his Name in vain. "Fear," as an equivalent for "worship," needs explanation, and, rightly explained, it will be seen that it is the very essence of religion, so far as religion affects man's *feeling*. Wrong senses of the term *fear* may be considered. Fear which crushes hope and keeps us from God must be wrong; as is also fear that makes us unwilling to accept the grace he offers.

III. The third sign is SUCH APPREHENSION OF GOD AS LEADS TO PRAYER. Not merely to prayer as a sudden act, forced on by calamity or distress, but to prayer as the daily expression of the cherished spirit of dependence on God—a daily leaning on God and waiting for him, which is indicated by the description of Cornelius as a "devout man." Miss Cobbe strikingly says, "Our belief in the *personality* of God is in a peculiar manner allied to the *moral* side of religion. In proportion as that moral side is developed in us, so, we may almost say, is the clearness of our conviction that it is indeed a living God who rules the world, and no mere creative intelligence. Now, this moral side comes out only in its full luminousness in prayer. Prayer is in its essence the approach of the finite and fallible moral agent to its infinite moral Lord, to whom it is conscious of erring allegiance, and to whom it comes for forgiveness and strength. In such prayer all the moral life bursts into vivid consciousness. In prayer there comes to us the true revelation of the personality of God." Illustrate by the characteristic feature of the converted Saul of Tarsus, "Behold, he prayeth!"

IV. The fourth sign we may speak of as the RESULTS OF TRUE RELIGION IN PRACTICAL CHARITIES. These are *signs*, because they are the natural and necessary fruitage and expression of true piety. Right ideas of God tone our relations with our fellow-men, so that we can be "kind even to the unthankful and the unholy." Cornelius is marked as one who "gave much alms to the people." The more internal features of true piety are, of necessity, beyond our reading; but our Lord taught us that by men's fruits in conduct we might know them, and that, if there is ever the Divine life in souls, it will force its way out into practical charities and goodness of conduct. When, therefore, we find those we call "heathen" exhibiting Christian virtues, we may reasonably hope that there is a right-heartedness towards God of which these are the expressions. By the story of Cornelius we are taught that God may make more or less open responses to such devout and prayerful souls by visions, revelations, or inward communications, witnessing thus their acceptance, and guiding the open soul to righteousness and truth.

It is true for all the world that "if any man will *do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine." While this subject needs to be treated with great prudence, and strongly dogmatic statements should be avoided, we may gain from it some relief from the pressure of our questioning as to the salvability of the heathen, and we may conceive how the heathen state may become a moral preparation for Christianity. It is an important feature of modern missionary enterprise that those who preach Christ's gospel seek to find points of contact in the heathen mind and religious sentiments, and expect to discover that God has been beforehand with them, preparing men's hearts to receive the wonderful message of Divine salvation by a Divine sacrifice.—R. T.

Vers. 5, 6.—The intimacy of Divine knowledge. This is a striking passage when thoughtfully considered. The doctrine of Divine omniscience we may accept without having any adequate conception of it, or feeling any practical impression attending on our faith. The ease with which a general truth or principle may be held, while it yet remains ineffective on the life, has often been urged on us. The skilful teacher seeks to set forth the general truth in some particular instance, and expects that the truth will thus be seen clearly and grasped firmly. We have an instance in the passage before us. Cornelius had some appropriate ideas concerning God's omniscience and omnipresence, yet we may be sure that they had never been practical, real, and searching thoughts to him, until the angel showed that God knew all about him and all about Peter, his name, lodging, host, etc. In our childish days we were often frightened by being reminded of the words, "Thou God seest me." It is well if in our manhood we can have such a revelation of the marvellous minuteness, yet more marvellous tenderness and graciousness, of the Divine inspection. David's joy in the omniscience and omnipresence of God, as indicated in such psalms as the hundred and forty-ninth, may be referred to. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." We may notice the points in the passage which suggest the intimacy and exactness of God's daily knowledge of us.

I. GOD KNOWS OUR NAMES. Our *surname*, by which we are commonly known to the world, and even our *Christian name*, by which we are known to our intimate friends. He knew Peter the fisherman, but he knew him as Simon. This includes God's knowledge of all that our fellow-men, with whom we have to do in daily business, know of us; and his further knowledge of all that our most intimate relatives could tell of our character and disposition. There may be some things of private thought or conduct which we would gladly keep from God; even these are "naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

II. OUR EMPLOYMENT. God knew that this other Simon was a tanner by trade. We somehow dissociate the common occupations of life from the thought of God, but he watches us in daily work. And we may surely feel that he judges day by day the spirit in which our daily work is done. "Whereunto a man is called, therein let him abide with God."

III. THE SITUATION OF OUR HOUSE. God knew that this tanner's house was "by the seaside," placed there, probably, for the conveniences of his trade. So God knows our precise circumstances and surroundings, and the exact influence which these things bear upon us. And if he knows all this, we may confidently rest assured that he is ready and willing to be the power that helps us to overcome our disabilities, and master our difficulties, and live for him "even where Satan's seat is," if our lot should be cast in such scenes.

IV. OUR RELATION TO THE FAMILY. Bringing his inspections to bear on the family circle, he knows the place of each one. He knew that Peter was only a *lodger*. Then he can give each one the needed grace for worthily occupying his place, and faithfully maintaining his relations and doing the consequent duties. Apart from the revelation of the humanity and sympathetic brotherhood of Christ, as "God manifest in the flesh," so minute a Divine knowledge would only appal us, crushing down energy, effort, and hope. Now we glory in the thought of the perfect knowledge, for he who besets us behind and before is our Father, whom we know well through his Son and our Brother, the "Man Christ Jesus."—R. T.

Vers. 14, 15.—Nothing common in God's sight. Introduce by an account of St.

Peter's vision, observing how it affected the mind of one who was so thoroughly imbued with Jewish notions. In our Lord's time the laws of the clean and unclean were scrupulously observed, and the apostles had not yet realized how the new spirit of Christ's kingdom was to set them free from the bondage and the limitations of the Jewish ceremonial. God would, by this vision, correct two of the prevailing mistakes.

1. That his favour was granted only to certain defined classes and individuals of mankind. He "so loved the world." 2. That his service was found in the obedience of merely external regulations, that once had their usefulness and their meaning, but were not necessarily expressions of heart-love and devotion. The first mistake was corrected, in the vision, by the outstretched sheet, which was a figure of the wide world, and the four corners as the directions into which the gospel was now to be borne forth into all the world. The second mistake was corrected by the obliteration of all formal distinctions in the announcement that what God has cleansed man may not call common, for God will receive the love and trust and worship of "whosoever will." Deau Plumptre says, "In the interpretation of the vision, all that belongs to humanity had been taken up into heaven, (1) when man's nature was assumed by the eternal Word in the Incarnation (John i. 14), and (2) when that nature had been raised in the Ascension to the heaven of heavens." We may consider—

I. THE UNIVERSAL TRUTH AS HERE STATED AND ILLUSTRATED. "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." God affirms that the whole earth is free to receive the message of the gospel, all disabilities and barriers are for ever removed, and he recognizes no longer the distinctions of elect and non-elect; "To the Gentiles also is granted repentance unto life." It may be shown (1) that God, as Creator and Preserver, cares for his whole world; (2) that, as the fatherly Ruler, he is concerned for the moral well-being of the whole world; (3) that, as dealing with wilful and rebellious children, we must conceive that he seeks to accomplish the salvation of all. This truth is the very life of our missionary labour. We are bidden to preach the gospel "to every creature," with a perfect assurance that God would have "all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This truth is often embraced with difficulty, after strong conflict with limiting prejudices; it is often held as mere sentiment; and perhaps on few men is it the inspiration to noble labours and sacrifices that it was designed to be. How it would urge us to missionary work, if we really believed that Christ wants every man to come to him, and would have us bring them!

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF THIS TRUTH FOUND IN JUDAISM. Special favour to one particular race—or, as we may better express it, the special call of one race to a particular work or witness—does not assume or involve the Divine indifference to the rest; we might more wisely say that all special calls of the few were made for the sake of the whole, and God's love to the world made him commit a special revelation to the trust of the Jew. The distinction between "clean and unclean" in the food represented a distinction of clean and unclean between Jew and Gentile. But "unclean" things were still God's, and used by him for other purposes, though not just for food. They were not despised or rejected things, but each had its mission. And so Gentiles were not *out* of God's care and favour because Jews were in. They too occupied the places he assigned and did the work he willed. It may further be shown that the Jewish limitations were designedly (1) *temporary*, (2) *educational*—preparatory to the advent of Christ, in whom and by whom the Divine thought for the whole race could be fully revealed.

III. THE REMOVAL OF THE LIMITATIONS UNDER THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM. Which deals with man *as man*, apart from any local and temporary distinctions of (1) nationality, (2) class, (3) genius, (4) location, or (5) ceremonial cleanness. The gospel is for the "sons of men." Jew and Gentile, Greek and Roman, bond and free, meet as sinners at the feet of Christ, to receive the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting. Now there is nothing common in God's sight. Every soul is a priceless soul, for it has been bought with precious blood, the infinite sacrifice of the Son of God.—R. T.

Vers. 17, 18.—*Providences may translate revelations.* The effect of the vision on the mind of St. Peter is indicated in the simple expression, "doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean." He was puzzled and set anxiously

thinking by it. He realized Divine teaching in it, but was not sure about the *scope* of it. He saw clearly enough that it obliterated, for him at least, the old distinction of meats; but he was set questioning whether there was not some deeper, some underlying meaning, for the sake of which it had been granted. Was it not like a parable, simple enough, at first sight, for a child to understand, but so rich in meaning and suggestion that a man might meditate therein day and night, and find rich reward? St. Peter might well be puzzled, for there seemed to be nothing that could give him the key to the further and more spiritual meanings. That key came in the events of the day—came by the orderings of Divine providence. Following along the line God marked out for him, St. Peter came naturally upon the unfolding of the mystery, and understood the vision and revelation. This we may show more fully.

I. ST. PETER IMPRESSED WITH A DIVINE REVELATION. To a Jew, familiar with the varied visions and direct communications of God granted to his fathers, this vision of the descending sheet would suggest no such doubts as would trouble our minds. He would not be likely to wonder over whether it was a delusion, or the dream of a disordered frame. St. Peter would accept it at once as a gracious revelation of the Divine will to him. His only anxiety concerned its true and proper interpretation. Two things need careful illustration. 1. The various modes of Divine revelation to individuals, for the general good, in all ages. It should be pointed out that (1) the mode adopted, whether voice, personal appearance, angelic ministry, dream, or vision, was exactly suited to the individual communicated with, and the time and circumstances of the communication; (2) that the message, though sent to individuals, was never sent for the sake of the individual alone; it was always designed for others, to whom he must become the minister. Just as (it has often been pointed out) our Lord never wrought his miracles for himself, only for the immediate physical, or ultimate moral and spiritual good, of others. 2. The receptivity of St. Peter, who, by a season of loneliness, meditation, and prayerful communion with God, was in a state of mind and feeling that fitted him to receive such a vision. Still it is true that the inward communications of God's love and truth demand an openness of soul such as St. Peter cherished. If we do not know them, in forms and ways suited to our thoughts and our times, it must be because in us there are no fitnesses and preparations.

II. ST. PETER DOUBTING THE MEANING OF THE REVELATION. This may not have been a prolonged state of mind, nor was it a distressing state. Explain how many moods of mind are expressed by the single term *doubting*. There is the doubting: 1. *Of simple uncertainty*; the proofs are not reasonably sufficient to lead us to a conclusion, and the matter must be held in suspense. 2. *Of criticism*, which must get to the root of a matter, and test and try the reasoning by which any fact or truth is declared. 3. *Of scepticism*, which has a bias or prejudice, and by it is led to require unreasonable tests and proofs; such a spirit persists in doubting when a matter is fairly and adequately explained. 4. *Of infidelity*, which makes a foregone conclusion a basis for doubt and denial. This spirit is usually most credulous in some matters, and stubbornly unwilling to believe in other matters. St. Peter's was the simple but earnest questioning of a man who really wanted to get at the truth and the meaning of his surprising vision.

III. ST. PETER CALLED TO ACT, AND SO PUT ASIDE HIS DOUBTINGS. Often the best cure for doubting is a call to present action. It is good advice that bids troubled souls do Christian work. Light on the most puzzling questions often comes to us when engaged in works of love; and, if the light does not come, the burden of the questions ceases to press heavily on us. St. Peter, in his doubtings, was called to meet the messengers from Cornelius, and to arrange as soon as possible to return with them on their journey. Activity stopped the brooding and doubting, and God made it the very way to the mastery of the doubts.

IV. ST. PETER FINDING THAT IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE COMES LIGHT. He followed God's providential leadings, responded to the inward voice, obeyed in all simplicity, went, not knowing quite for what purpose, and, in the line of God's providence, found the unfolding of his vision, and learned the deep truth about which he had been so anxiously questioning. Led to the house of the devout heathen, who was a man accepted of God, he was delivered from the Jewish bondage of the "clean and the unclean;" he saw that the gospel of life in Christ Jesus was for Gentile

well as Jew; and he delivered this testimony: "Now I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In ways quite as clear, in fact, though it may be not so sensibly plain to us, God's providences still unfold God's Word and will; and he who will obediently follow as God leads shall surely find the heart-rest of spiritual apprehensions of the Divine truth.—R. T.

Ver. 33.—*Good hearers.* Picture the company assembled in Cornelius's house. It was composed of the God-fearing, devout people in the neighbourhood; and, in their attitude, interest, and openness of heart, we may find the example of the "good hearer," to whom God's Word may come with power, and in whom it may be made fruitful. The following are the marks of the "good hearer," of which we may be reminded by the text:—There will be—

I. **THE DUE SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.** "We are all here present before God." Though that presence now finds no outward or symbolic expression in cloud or flame, it is inwardly realized, and has now on men's hearts its due solemnizing effect. The true worshipper can say, "Surely God is in this place."

II. **FULL RESOLVE AND INTENT.** The company had not gathered according to custom or merely to please each other; all were purposed to come, and had set their minds upon hearing what St. Peter might have to say. Cornelius had awakened this earnestness by telling of his vision.

III. **DUE OPENNESS OF HEART.** They were prepared to put all prejudice aside, "and hear all things commanded of God." The open-hearted listen to all, receiving what God sends, not merely what may please them or accord with their doctrinal views or prejudices.

IV. **CONSCIOUSNESS THAT WHAT GOD COMMANDS WILL HAVE TO BE DONE.** The only good listener is the obedient listener, who goes forth to life prepared to carry out God's will as it may be revealed to him, and determined to tone all life by the principles which God may announce. Illustrate by the parable of the Sower and the seed.—R. T.

Vers. 34, 35.—*Believers outside Judaism.* Several important and interesting cases, taken from the old Scripture histories, may serve to illustrate this conviction which now came to St. Peter, and found suggestive expression in our text. The point of his testimony is that the one living and true God of the whole earth has been and is graciously concerned in the religious life of the human race as a whole, apart from any special revelations which he may be pleased to make to any portions of the race. From the religious point of view, the "God of the whole earth must he be called."

I. **MELCHIZEDEK IN THE PATRIARCHAL PERIOD.** We know very little about the religious condition of Palestine in the days of Abraham. Hastily we say that doubtless the Canaanite idolatries absolutely prevailed, for "the Canaanite was then in the land." But the figure of Melchizedek is, as it were, thrust into the Scripture narrative as if on purpose to correct such hastily formed notions. Abraham is clearly the elect of God, separated from his Chaldean surroundings in order to witness to the great truths of the Divine unity and spirituality. And yet, coming into the land that was promised to his descendants, he finds believers in the Most High God, presided over by a king-priest, to whom Abraham feels that he must pay homage and give tithes. It has been well said that "when Abraham received the blessing of Melchizedek, and tendered to him his reverent homage, it is a likeness of the recognition which true historical faith will always humbly receive and gratefully render when it comes in contact with the older and everlasting instincts of that religion which the 'Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth,' has implanted in nature and in the heart of man, in 'the power of an endless life.'" So, in the very starting of Judaism, in the very lifetime of its founder and father, we find God directing our attention to real and acceptable religious life outside the Abrahamic election.

II. **BALAAK IN THE PERIOD OF THE JEWISH WANDERINGS.** Without attempting to form a full judgment of Balaak's religious standing, we must admit that he was a prophet of God, to whom God made communications; and whatever may have been his religion, it was certainly distinct from Judaism. "In his career is seen that recognition of Divine inspiration outside the Jewish people, which the narrowness of

modern times has been so eager to deny, but which the Scriptures are always ready to acknowledge, and, by acknowledging, admit within the pale of the universal Church the higher spirits of every age and of every nation."

III. **JOB AT THE TIME OF THE NATIONAL CLIMAX.** There is little room for doubting that, whenever Job himself may have lived, the book bearing his name was written in the Solomonic age, and represents the religious sentiments of that time. And the book represents the man Job as good, perfect, upright, fearing God, and eschewing evil; but he is not a Jew, he is an Arab chief or the wealthy prince of some city in distant Uz; the very selection of such a hero for the story plainly showing belief in vital godliness outside the Jewish limits. Not a trace of Mosaic religion has been found in the book, and therefore it is evident that the writer accepts the fact that true and acceptable piety may exist apart from the Mosaic covenant.

IV. **NAAMAN AND NINEVEH IN THE TIME OF THE NATIONAL DECLINE.** We place these two together, but they may be treated separately. Naaman is a Syrian, but God's prophet makes no difficulty about recognizing the sincerity of his religion, and he requires of him no conformity to Jewish regulations. The Ninevites are penitent before the one living God, and their repentance is even set on record as an example to the wilful Jews. So again and again did God, in the olden times, correct the exclusiveness of his people's feeling, and force them to think of him as the God of the whole earth. And when our Lord Jesus came among men as the Divine Teacher, we find him also correcting the same exclusive spirit by blessing Roman centurions, Samaritan villagers, and Syro-phenician women; commanding that his gospel should be preached to the whole world; sending Paul "far hence unto the Gentiles;" calling Cornelius into the fellowship of the redeemed; saving the eunuch of an African queen; and moving Paul to witness for the universal redeeming love of God, in Athenian agora and before Roman tribunals. That the heathen had some religion God did not make a reason for withholding from them his fuller revelation; neither should we so argue. Our very sympathy with heathen souls groping for the light should increase our longing to give them what we have in our trust, the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."—R. T.

Vers. 37—43.—The gospel for the heathen. Under the Divine inspiration, St. Peter preached the gospel to this company of devout Gentiles; and we can find both (1) what is the essence of the gospel message, and (2) what are the points of it specially suitable for presentation to the heathen mind, by a careful study of St. Peter's speech on this occasion. As the points are very simple, and the illustration of them very abundant and familiar, we need only briefly state the several headings. The gospel is the declaration to men of the personal Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the demand of instant acceptance of him and yielding the will and heart and life to him. It must deal fully and efficiently with—

I. **THE CHRIST WHO LIVED.** "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good."

II. **THE CHRIST WHO DIED.** "Whom they slew and hanged on a tree."

III. **THE CHRIST WHO LIVES.** "Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly."

IV. **THE CHRIST WHO CAN SAVE FROM SIN NOW.** "Whoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Upon this gospel, believingly declared to men, even to the heathen, we may still be assured that the power of the Holy Ghost shall rest, and it shall prove, as to the company in the house of Cornelius, a word of "eternal life."—R. T.

EXPOSITION

CHAPTER XI.

Ver. 1.—*Note for and, A.V.; the brethren for brethren, A.V.; also had for had also, A.V.* We can imagine how rapidly the news of the great revolution would travel to

the metropolis of Jewish Christianity, and what a stir it would make in that community. It does not appear what view James and the other apostles took.

Ver. 2.—They that were of the circumcision. At first sight this phrase, which was natural

enough in ch. x. 45, seems an unnatural one in the then condition of the Church, when all the members of it were "of the circumcision," and there were no Gentile converts at all. But the explanation of it is to be found in the circumstance of St. Luke himself being a Gentile; perhaps also, as Alford suggests, in his use of language suited to the time when he wrote. It is an indication, too, of the purpose of St. Luke in writing his history, viz. to chronicle the progress of Gentile Christianity. Peter, having completed his rounds (ch. ix. 32), returned to Jerusalem, which was still the abode of the apostles. He was, no doubt, anxious to commune with his brother apostles upon the momentous matter of the Gentile converts; but he was at once attacked by the bigotry of the zealous Jews.

Ver. 3.—*Thou wastest in, etc.* The circumstance of his eating with Cornelius and his friends is not expressly recorded in ch. x., but almost necessarily follows from what is there stated. It had been seized upon as the chief sting in their report by those who brought the news to Jerusalem. Observe the total absence of anything like papal domination on the part of Peter.

Ver. 4.—*Began and expounded the matter unto them in order for rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order unto them, A.V.*

Ver. 5.—*Descending for descend, A.V.; were for had been, A.V.; unto for to, A.V.*

Ver. 6.—*The four-footed for four-footed, A.V.; heaven for air, A.V.*

Ver. 7.—*Also a voice for a voice, A.V. and T.R.; rise for arise, A.V.; kill for slay, A.V.*

Ver. 8.—*Ever for at any time, A.V.*

Ver. 9.—*A voice answered the second time out for the voice answered me again from, A.V. and T.R.; make for call, A.V.*

Ver. 10.—*Thrice for three times, A.V.*

Ver. 11.—*Forthwith for immediately, A.V.; three men stood before the house in which we were for there were three men already come unto the house where I was, A.V. and T.R.; having been sent for sent, A.V.*

Ver. 12.—*Making no distinction for nothing doubting, A.V. and T.R.; and . . . also for moreover, A.V. Making no distinction.* The reading adopted here in the R.T. is διακρίματα instead of διακρινόμενοι in the T.R. The verb διακρίνειν in the active voice means to "make a distinction" or "differuce" between one and another, as in ch. xv. 9. But in the middle voice διακρινέσθαι means "to doubt" or "hesitate," as in ch. x. 20. It seems highly improbable that the two passages, which ought to be identical, should thus differ, while employing the very same verb. Some manuscripts, which Alford follows, omit the clause μηδὲν διακρινόμενον altogether. These six brethren; showing that

Peter had brought the brethren from Joppa (now specified as six) with him to Jerusalem to substantiate his account; a plain indication that he anticipated some opposition.

Ver. 13.—*Told for showed, A.V.; the angel for an angel, A.V.; standing in his house and saying for in his house which stood and said unto him, A.V.; send for send men, A.V. and T.R.; fetch for call for, A.V.*

Ver. 14.—*Speak unto for tell, A.V.; thou shalt be saved, thou, etc., for thou and all thy house shall be saved, A.V.*

Ver. 15.—*Even as for as, A.V.*

Ver. 16.—*And I remembered for then remembered I, A.V.* This is a new incident not mentioned in ch. x. The reference is to ch. i. 5. This saying of the Lord being thus referred to by Peter looks as if Peter might have furnished many of the particulars in the first twelve chapters to Luke.

Ver. 17.—*If for forasmuch . . . as, A.V.; unto them for them, A.V.; did also for did, A.V.; when us for who, A.V.; who for what, A.V.* The saying, Who was I, that I could withstand (κωλύσαι)? corresponds to ch. x. 47, "Can any man forbid (κωλύσαι) water?"

Ver. 18.—*And when for when, A.V.; then to the Gentiles also hath God granted for then hath God also to the Gentiles granted, A.V.* The fitness of the method adopted by the Divine wisdom for effecting this first reception of Gentiles into the Church upon an equal footing with the Jews is apparent from its success in quieting the jealous prejudices of the Jews, and preserving the peace of the Church. It was still, however, long before the exclusive spirit of Judaism was quenched (see ch. xv. and Gal. i. 6, 7; ii. 4, 11, 12, 13; v. 2-12; Phil. iii. 2, etc.).

Ver. 19.—*They therefore that for now they which, A.V.; tribulation for persecution, A.V.; Phœnicia for Phenice, A.V.; speaking for preaching, A.V.; save only to Jews for but unto the Jews only, A.V.* Scattered abroad; as in ch. viii. 1, to which point of time the narrative now reverts. Tribulation (θλίψις). The word in ch. viii. 1 for "persecution" is διωγμός, Phœnicia. "The strip of coast, one hundred and twenty miles long, and about twelve broad, from the river Eleutherus" to a little south of Carmel, as far as Dora, including, therefore, Sidon and Tyre, but excluding Cæsarea. The name was preserved in the great Tyrian colony of Carthage, as appears in the ethnical forms, Pænus, Punicus, and Pœnicus, applied to the Carthaginians. We are all familiar with the "Punic Wars," *Punica fides*, the 'Pænulus' of Plautus, etc. Cyprus lies off the coast of Phœnicia, in sight of it, and was very early colonized by the Phœnicians. Philo and Josephus both speak of the Jewish

population in Cyprus. Antioch,¹ the capital of the Greek kingdom of Syria, on the river Orontes, built by the first king, Seleucus Nicator, in honour of his father Antiochus, who was one of Alexander the Great's generals. It lay about one hundred and eighty miles north of the northern frontier of Phœnicia. There was a large population of Jews, whom Seleucus attracted to his new city by giving them equal political privileges with the Greeks. It was reckoned by Josephus to be the third city in importance of the whole Roman empire, Rome and Alexandria being the two first.

Ver. 20.—*But there were some of them . . . who for and some of them were . . . which, A.V.; the Greeks also for the Grecians, A.V. and T.R.* This last is a most important variation of reading—'Ἑλλῆνας, Greeks, for Ἑλληνιστάς, Grecians, i.e. Grecian Jews, or Hellenists. It is supported, however, by strong authority of manuscripts, versions, and Fathers, and is accepted by Grotius, Witsius, Griesbach, Lachman, Tischendorf, Meyer, Conybeare and Howson, Alford, Westcott, Bishop Lightfoot, and the 'Speaker's Commentary' (apparently) and most modern critics. It is also strongly argued that the internal evidence proves Ἑλλῆνας to be the right reading, because the statement that the men of Cyprus and Cyrene preached the gospel to them is contrasted with the action of the others, who preached to the Jews only. Obviously, therefore, these Hellenes were not Jews. Moreover, there was nothing novel in the conversion and admission into the Church of Hellenistic Jews (see ch. ii. 5, etc.; ix. 22, 29). And these very preachers were in all probability Hellenists themselves. Bishop Wordsworth, however, on the contrary, defends, though with doubt, the reading Ἑλληνιστάς; and argues that even if Ἑλλῆνας is the right reading, it must mean the same as Ἑλληνιστάς. He also hints that it might mean "proselytes" (see ch. xiv. 1, where the Hellenes attend the synagogue, and ch. xvii. 4). But there is no evidence that these were proselytes any more than Cornelius was. The Hellenes, or Greeks, here were probably naturalised Greeks who feared God, like Cornelius, and attended the synagogue worship (see Meyer on ch. xiv. 1). It is very likely that in Antioch, where the Jews occupied such a prominent position, some of the Greek inhabitants should be attracted by their doctrines and worship, repelled, perhaps, by the prevalent superstitions and profligate levity of the great city.

¹ Renan reckons the population at above 500,000 souls. (For a glowing description of its splendour, see 'Les Apôtres,' ch. xii.; also Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. ch. iv.; Lewin, vol. i. ch. vi.)

Ver. 21.—*That believed turned for believed and turned, A.V. and T.R.* The hand of the Lord; i.e. his power working with them and through them. Compare the frequent phrase in the Old Testament, "with a mighty hand and a stretched out arm" (see too ch. iv. 30; Luke i. 66).

Ver. 22.—*And the report concerning them for then tidings of these things, A.V.; to for unto, A.V.; as far as for that he should go as far as, A.V. and T.R.* The news of this accession of Gentiles to the Church was quickly carried to Jerusalem, with the same motive, probably, that brought thither the account of the baptism of Cornelius and his household, as we read in vers. 1-3 of this chapter. The conduct of the Church in sending so excellent and temperate a person as Barnabas (as we read in the next verse), the friend of Saul (ch. ix. 27) and a favourer of preaching the gospel to Gentiles (ch. xiii. 1, 2) to inspect the work at Antioch, is an indication that they had already heard the account of the conversion of Cornelius from the mouth of Peter, and were already led to the conclusion, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life!" There is no clue whatever to the length of time that elapsed between the flight from persecution and the arrival at Antioch, except that Saul had had time to sojourn three years in Arabia, to come to Jerusalem, and from thence to go and settle at Tarsus, where Barnabas found him; thus leaving abundant time for Peter's operations in Judæa and Cæsarea.

Ver. 23.—*Was come for came, A.V.; he exhorted for exhorted, A.V.* Had seen the grace of God; i.e. had seen the number and the truth of the conversions of Gentiles effected by God's grace. He exhorted them all (παρεκάλει πάντας); thus showing himself a true υἱὸς παρακλήσεως, son of exhortation (see ch. iv. 36, note). Cleave unto the Lord; προσμένειν, to abide, continue, persevere in (comp. ch. xiii. 43; 1 Tim. v. 5). In 2 Tim. iii. 14 it is simply μένει. The frequent exhortations to perseverance and steadfastness should warn us of the great danger of falling away from the faith, under the pressure of temptation.

Ver. 24.—*A good man.* The predominant idea in ἀγαθός is simply "goodness," moral excellence. So in Matt. xix. 16, "Good Master." To which our Lord answers "There is none good but One." In Luke xxiii. 50 Joseph of Arimathea is ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος, "a good man and a righteous." In Matt. v. 45 πονηροὶ καὶ ἀγαθοί, "the evil and the good," are contrasted. In classical Greek the common phrase, καλὸς κ' ἀγαθός, describes an honourable and good man. It is pleasing to read this testimony from Luke, Paul's companion and friend. Full

of the Holy Ghost and of faith. So Stephen is described (ch. vi. 5) as "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit is spoken of in both places as a Spirit of power and demonstration in preaching the Word. No reason is apparent why the R.T., having altered *Ghost* to *Spirit* in ch. vi. 5, retains *Ghost* here. Much people, etc.; the direct consequence of the energy of the Holy Ghost in Barnabas's ministry.

Ver. 25.—*And he went forth for them departed Barnabas, A.V. and T.R.; to seek for for to seek, A.V.* Observe the remarkable providence which had made use of the violence of the Hellonist Jews at Jerusalem to drive Saul to Tarsus, where he would be close at hand to take up the work so unexpectedly prepared for him at Antioch. "It was in the spring of the year A.D. 43, or just ten years after the Crucifixion, that Barnabas proceeded to Tarsus, found Saul, and brought him to Antioch" (Lewin, i. 96). From Seleucia to the port of Tarsus would be about a twelve hours' sail; or, by land, a journey of about eighty miles would bring him to Tarsus from Antioch.

Ver. 26.—*Even for a whole year for a whole year, A.V. and T.R.; they were gathered together for they assembled themselves, A.V.; and that the disciples for and the disciples, A.V.* The phrase ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ occurs again in 1 Cor. xi. 18 (T.R.), where it has, as here, very nearly the sense of "in the church," as a place of meeting. It should be "in," not "with." The "Church" is the assembly of disciples gathered together in their house of meeting. Were called; *χρηματίσαι*, bore the name of. It is a peculiar use of the word occurring in the New Testament only in Rom. vii. 3 besides, but found also in Polybius, Strabo, Josephus, and some other writers. Its common meaning is, in the passive voice, "to be warned of God," as in ch. x. 22, where see note. Christians. It was a memorable event in the history of the Church when the name of *Christians*, which has distinguished them for nearly eighteen centuries and a half, was given to the disciples of Christ. Hitherto they had been called among themselves disciples, and brethren, and saints, and, by the Jews, men "of the Way" (ch. ix. 2), or "Nazarenes" (ch. xxiv. 5), but now they received the name of *Christians*, as followers of Christ, from the outside world, and accepted it themselves (ch. xxvi. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 16). From the Latin form of the word *Christians*, i.e. followers of Christ (like Herodians, followers of Herod; Marians, Pompeians, partisans of Marius and Pompey; Cæsariani, Ciceroniani, Vitelliani, Flaviani, etc.; Conybeare and Howson, vol. i. 130; Lewin, vol. i. 97), the designation **must** have been invented by the Gentiles,

either by the Roman court or camp at Antioch, or by the Greek population, influenced as they were by Roman forms of speech current amongst them (compare the Græco-Oriental Nestorians, Arians, etc.). We may be sure that *Christians*, i.e. followers of Messiah, is not a name likely to have been given by Jews. There is no evidence either of its having been given in derision. The well-known account of Tacitus is "Vulgus Christianos appellabat. Auctor nominis ejus Christus, Tiberio imperitante, per Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat" ('Annal.,' xv. 44). Suidas says that those who had been previously called *Nazarenes* and *Galileans*, in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, when Euodius had been made Bishop of Antioch by Peter, had their name changed into that of *Christians*. He seems to refer to the statement of Malalas (quoted by Conybeare and Howson, i. 131), "that they who had been before called Nazarenes and Galileans received the name of *Christians* in the time of Euodius, who succeeded St. Peter as Bishop of Antioch, and who himself gave them this name." Malalas is thought to have lived somewhere between the sixth and ninth centuries, at Byzantium. A beautiful passage in the Clementine Liturgy is also quoted at p. 130: "We give thee thanks that we are called by the Name of thy Christ, and are thus reckoned as thine own," where the allusion is to Jas. ii. 7. The name *Christian* is frequent in the epistles of Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch; Polycarp's dying words were, "I am a Christian" (Bishop Wordsworth).

Ver. 27.—*Now for and, A.V.; there came down for came, A.V. (see ch. xvii. 22).* Prophets; a recognized order in the Church at that time (ch. ii. 17, 18; xiii. 1; xx. 23; xxi. 9, 10; 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29; Eph. iv. 11). The news of the accession of the Gentiles to the Church of Antioch would naturally lead to such prophets being either sent by the Church of Jerusalem or coming of their own accord.

Ver. 28.—*A great famine for great dearth, A.V.; over for throughout, A.V.; Claudius for Claudius Cæsar, A.V. and T.R.* The world; ἡ οἰκουμένη, the inhabited earth, the common expression for the whole Roman empire. But the expression must be taken here as hyperbolic, just as Josephus says that Ahab sent messengers to search for Elijah, *κατὰ πάντας τὴν οἰκουμένην*, where, of course, only the neighbouring countries to Judæa can be meant, strictly speaking ('Ant. Jud.,' viii. xiii. 4). But there is no evidence to show that ἡ οἰκουμένη is ever a technical term for Judæa. See the use of the word by Luke (Luke ii. 1; iv. 5; xxi. 26; ch. xvii. 6, 31; xix. 27; xxiv. 5). In

point of fact, the predicted famine, which began in the fourth year of Claudius Cæsar (A.D. 44) and lasted till A.D. 48, fell upon Judæa exclusively, as far as appears from Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' iii. xv. 3; xx. ii. 5, v. 2), and was very severe there. Ishmael was high priest at the time; and Helena, Queen of Adiabena, fetched large supplies of corn from Egypt and of figs from Cyprus to Jerusalem, to supply the wants of the people. Eusebius ('Ecl. Hist.,' ii. 8) speaks of this famine as having prevailed "over the world," and as being recorded by authors hostile to Christianity, but mentions no names and gives no particulars ('Ecl. Hist.,' ii. 8), but in the twelfth chapter of the same book he limits it to τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, Judæa. There were several other historical famines in the reign of Claudius, but they can hardly be included in the prophecy of Agabus. The prophet Agabus is mentioned again in ch. xxi. 10, and again as coming from Judæa. Renan ascribes the poverty-stricken condition of the Jerusalem Christians to their communistic institutions.

Ver. 29.—*And for them, A.V.; that for which, A.V.* This is the first example of the practice, so much encouraged by St. Paul, of the Gentile Churches contributing to the wants of the poor Christians of the mother Church of Jerusalem (Rom. xv. 25—27; 1 Cor. xvi. 1; 2 Cor. ix.; Gal. ii. 10, etc.).

Ver. 30.—*Sending for and sent, A.V.; hand for hands, A.V.* Sending (ἀποστείλας). Those by whom they sent were ἀπόστολοι (2 Cor. viii. 23), messengers, or apostles. To the elders. This is the first mention of presbyters, or elders, in the Church at Jerusalem, which was now fully organized. James the Less was the resident apostle (?) and bishop; with him were the presbyters (ch. xxi. 18); and under them again the seven deacons (ch. vi. 5, 6). The presbyters of the Church of Jerusalem are mentioned again in ch. xv. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; xvi. 4; xxi. 18; Jas. v. 13, where, however, the elders of other Churches in Judæa may possibly be included. A difficulty arises with regard to Saul's mission to Jerusalem with Barnabas, as to how to reconcile it with Gal. ii. 1, which speaks of St. Paul's second visit to Jerusalem as taking place *fourteen* years after his first, whereas this visit could not be above *four* or *five* years after. But there are three hypotheses about the visit to Jerusalem referred to in Gal. ii. 1. The first identifies

it with the visit here recorded. 2. The second identifies it with that related in ch. xv. 2, etc., which is supported by most of the best authorities ancient and modern (see note on ch. xv.). 3. The third, which is advocated by Lewin ('Life of St. Paul,' vol. i. 302, etc.), identifies it with the visit recorded in ch. xviii. 22. As regards the first, with which we are now concerned, though at first sight you would have expected St. Paul's next visit to Jerusalem after his conversion to be the one alluded to in Gal. ii., yet the following circumstances make this impossible. (1) The date of the visit named in Gal. ii., which is distinctly stated to be *fourteen* years after that recorded in ch. ix. 26 (ἔπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν πάλιν ἀνέβην, κ.τ.λ.). (2) When St. Paul went to Jerusalem on the occasion adverted to in Gal. ii., "he laid before them the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles." But at the time of this visit he had not yet begun his labours among the Gentiles (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν), to which he was only called after his return (ch. xiii. 2). (3) On the occasion spoken of in Gal. ii., Paul and Barnabas were received by the chief apostles, and must have passed a considerable time at Jerusalem, with many consultations and meetings, public and private. But on this occasion, as far as appears, their visit was a very hasty one, and they saw no one but the presbyters, and returned as soon as they had handed over the collection to them (ch. xii. 25). The conclusion, therefore, seems quite certain that this is not the visit referred to in Gal. ii. And the hasty nature of this visit explains at once why St. Paul made no count of it in his statement to the Galatians. It had no bearing upon the course of his argument. It was not a visit to Jerusalem in the sense in which he was speaking, and he saw none of the apostles. The state of the Church at the time, James the son of Zebedee killed, Peter in prison or lately escaped "to another place" (ch. xii. 17), the other apostles very likely dispersed, made it impossible. He therefore took no count of it in his statement to the Galatians. This seems quite a sufficient explanation (see the note of Bishop Ellicott on Gal. ii. 1, and Bishop Lightfoot's convincing remarks at p. 113 of his 'Epistle to the Galatians'). There is no occasion to resort to the violent expedient of Renan, and say that Saul did not go with Barnabas at this time.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—28.—*The mystery.* The beginning and the close of this chapter refer to events of precisely similar character, which took place almost simultaneously, at all events without any concert or communication, in Palestine and in Syria; the recep-

tion of the Word of God by Gentiles, and their admission into the Church of God. It is difficult for us, after the lapse of eighteen centuries and a half, during which this has been the rule of the kingdom of heaven, to realize the startling strangeness of such an event when first brought to the knowledge of the then Church of Christ. That a wall of partition, which seemed to be built upon immovable foundations, and which had defied every effort to break it down through a period of between one and two thousand years, should suddenly fall flat down at the blast of the gospel trumpet, like the walls of Jericho of old; that a hidden purpose of God, which had been veiled and concealed for so many ages, should suddenly flash out and stand clearly revealed to the eyes of mankind at two remote spots of the earth; must have struck with astonishment the minds of the Jews of that age. St. Paul himself, after many years of successful work as the Apostle of the Gentiles, cannot speak without emotion and wonder of the great revolution in the religion of mankind. The admission of the Gentiles to be partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel, and to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, was the *great mystery* which in other ages had not been made known to the sons of men, but was at length revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit. His heart swelled, and his utterance rose as he recited that "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. iii. 1—11). And certainly we ought not to allow familiarity with this dispensation of the Divine wisdom to breed in us any contempt or overlooking of its infinite importance. The destinies of the human race, in its varieties of intellect, and civilization, and creed, and morals, and social and political institutions, ought ever to be a matter of the deepest concern to us. We have the certain knowledge that the door of repentance and faith is thrown open to all mankind. We know that God is no respecter of persons, and we know that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world. If the Word of God could win its way in a cohort of Italian soldiers quartered in an Oriental city; if much people, in the dissolute city of Antioch, overruled as it was with every kind of superstition and extravagance of vice and luxury and pleasure, listened to the teaching of Barnabas and Saul, and were added to the Lord; surely we ought not to be faint-hearted in communicating to the whole world, whether heathen, or Mohammedan, or Buddhist, the Word of truth which we have received of God. Oh for a simultaneous breathing of the Divine Spirit, which may quicken dead souls in every nation under heaven, and make Churches of Christ to spring up in vigour and beauty in all the dark ~~places~~ ^{corners} of the earth, to the praise of the glory of God's grace in Jesus Christ!

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—18.—Rectification and enlargement. It was not to be expected that so great an innovation as that of free communion with a Gentile would pass unchallenged in Jerusalem. Nor did it escape the criticism and condemnation of the "apostles and brethren" there (vers. 1, 2). From the interesting and animated scene described in the text, we conclude—

I. THAT GOOD MEN ARE OCCASIONALLY FOUND DOING THAT WHICH SEEMS HIGHLY OFFENSIVE TO THE GODLY. We can hardly realize the intensity of the indignation which breathed and glowed in the accusing words, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them" (ver. 3). Peter had done an act which was wholly irregular and positively unlawful. What did he mean by it? We know that he had simply followed the instructions which he had received from Christ, and that he could not possibly have acted otherwise without downright disobedience. How many times, in what various spheres, under what different conditions, have good men found themselves placed by their very faithfulness in a position of "contention" (ver. 2) with their brethren, either respecting (1) a point of doctrine (e.g. "the Reformation"), or (2) a matter of Church government (e.g. the way in which the Church should be officered or

the relation in which it should stand to the civil power), or (3) a method of evangelization, or (4) the position which should be taken toward other Christian communities! In these and similar matters the best and wisest of men have occasionally found themselves compelled to confront the strong censures of those with whom they were in communion. It is a most painful position to have to excite the indignation of good men, but it may be our plain and bounden duty so to do.

II. THAT OFTEN A SIMPLE NARRATION OF THE FACTS IS THE BEST POSSIBLE DEFENCE. "Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it by order" (ver. 4). He told the whole story in its simplicity (vers. 5—16). That was enough: it disarmed his accusers; they had nothing to reply; they accepted his defence; "They held their peace" (ver. 18). If some of them went no further than ceasing to complain, others acknowledged that a new step was taken, and that the Church was warranted in "going forward." It is often, if not always, the wisest of all plans to let the simple facts speak for us. If our complaining brethren knew as much as we know, they would not condemn. We have but to let in the light, and we shall be acquitted and perhaps commended.

III. THAT GOD WILL VINDICATE HIS OWN. Peter's one great argument was that he had done everything under Divine direction (see vers. 5, 9, 12, 15, 16). He summed it all up in the strong, overwhelming consideration, "What was I that I could withstand God?" (ver. 17). By his marked and manifest interposition, God had sustained his servant, and had given him the means of justifying his conduct when it came before the tribunal of his fellows. If wisdom is not always justified of her children *at once*, it will be in time. Unto the upright there *will* arise light in the darkness (Ps. cxii. 4). God may desire his servant to place himself in an attitude of opposition to his friends, and to bear the pain of their blows; but he will at length—later, if not sooner—vindicate that servant, and give him the greater honour for the shame he bore at his bidding.

IV. THAT WE SHOULD KEEP OURSELVES FREE FOR THE EXCULPATION OF MEN AND FOR OUR OWN SPIRITUAL ENLARGEMENT. The apostles and brethren had to own that Peter was right, and, at the same time, to receive into their mind a larger and nobler view of Christian truth. Happily they were free to do so; otherwise there would have been a bitter separation and an injurious rupture. 1. However wrong good men may seem to us to be, let us remember that it is possible that it is *we* and *not they* who are mistaken. We may be very confident we are right, but it is the most positive who are the most fallible of men. 2. Let us be ready to enlarge our view as God gives us light. "He has yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word." Wisdom does not dwell with us. Out of the heavenly treasury there are riches of truth still to be dispensed. A docile Church will ever be learning and acquiring. There are some men who, by their guilty stubbornness, will block the way of the chariot of God; there are others who will take up the stones and prepare the path that it may go swiftly on its benignant course. Let ours be the spirit of the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, who, when they had listened and learned, said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."—C.

Vers. 19—26.—*The many ways and the one work of God.* It is interesting to see how God works in many ways toward one end, and how, from the first day of the Christian era, he has been acting on the world and on the Church, making all things to move toward one glorious issue.

I. THE MANY WAYS OF GOD'S WORKING. We may be reminded: 1. How he defeats his enemies. "They which were scattered abroad upon the persecution . . . travelled . . . *preaching the Word,*" etc. (ver. 19). If the enemies of the truth had been its best friends, they could not possibly have taken a course more favourable to its circulation and establishment than the one they took. God overrules the designs of his foes, and turns their attacks upon his kingdom into actual support. Again and again has the enmity, the cruelty, the violence, the cunning of sin been compelled to subserve the interests of righteousness. Mischief smites down the standing corn of truth, but, so doing, it sows living seed from which a large harvest will rise. 2. How he teaches his friends. Those who were scattered abroad went "preaching the Word to none but unto the Jews only" (ver. 19). They did not understand that the gospel was intended for mankind: this was an enlargement of view which the Christian Church had then to gain. Its Divine Master had to teach it this most necessary lesson. How should he do

this? He might have done so (1) by the direct inspiration of his Holy Spirit; or (2) by manifesting himself to some one of the apostles and conveying through him his mind on the matter. But he chose to do this (3) by the teaching of his providence. "Some of them"—we do not know who, some whose names are lost and will never be discovered—some men from Cyprus and Cyrene, "when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks [not 'Grecians'], preaching the Lord Jesus." And this unpremeditated, irregular work proved to be marvellously successful (see ver. 21). When the Church at Jerusalem heard of these unauthorized proceedings, they despatched Barnabas to inquire into the matter (see ver. 22). The nobility of his character and excellency of his spirit triumphed over the narrowness of his views, and, instead of disowning and discouraging the work, he acknowledged its Divine origin and furthered it to the height of his power. And *thus* the seal of apostolic sanction was set to the broader aim and the larger hope. Thus God leads us into his kingdom of truth. He places us in such circumstances that we take right steps without realizing all the consequences therein involved, and then our convictions rise to the height of our actions. 3. How God uses his servants. "Then departed Barnabas . . . to seek Saul" (ver. 25). Barnabas served God and his race in one way, Saul in another. Barnabas was not the man to do what Paul afterwards did. He had not the evangelizing, organizing, literary faculty in anything like the same degree in which his illustrious colleague possessed it. But he served the Church and the world in his own way. It was a valuable contribution to the cause of Christ and of the kingdom of God to introduce the distrusted convert to the confidence of the Church (ch. ix. 27), and to give him such an opening for the exercise and training of his varied powers as that he now enjoyed at Antioch; it was an eminent and precious service thus to place on a firm footing and to bring into the foreground the man who was to be the means of doing such work as Paul accomplished for mankind. What immeasurable service have the fathers and mothers and teachers of our great reformers, evangelists, preachers, etc., rendered their race! Other men have other spheres to fill; that of Paul was the sphere of abounding activity. We may be sure that he had a great deal to do during those twelve months at Antioch, in "teaching many people" (ver. 26). Some in quieter, others in more active scenes; some in virtue of intellectual, others by means of moral and spiritual gifts; some by their influence on a few influential men, others by their action on the multitude; some by impressing their convictions on men by direct personal appeal, others by organizing and arranging; all in the way chosen of God and pleasing to him, play their part and do their work in their hour of opportunity.

II. THE ONE WORK OF GOD. At Antioch it became convenient to distinguish the converts to the new faith by some name which marked them off from the Jews; they were called "Christians." It is a mark which speaks of the rising tide of truth. It reminds us that God was working out a grand design, far, far beyond the elevation of a favoured nation, viz. the redemption of the whole race of man by faith in Jesus Christ; he was and is engaged in "reconciling the world unto himself in Christ."—C.

Vers. 27—30.—*God's bounty and our well-being* The reference, in these verses, to "a great dearth throughout all the world" (ver. 28), and to the sending of relief by the disciples, according to their several ability, to the brethren in Judaea (ver. 29), may suggest to us thoughts concerning the provision which God has made for us in his Divine goodness and also in his Divine wisdom. We look at—

I. HIS PROVISION FOR OUR TEMPORAL WELL-BEING. The great multitudes of mankind, the hundreds of thousands of millions are fed, year after year, age after age; and many hundreds of millions more might be sustained if all the use were made that might be of the opportunities open to us. God, in his bounty, provides what we want in (1) fruitful and extensive soil, (2) multiplying seed, (3) agricultural knowledge (Isa. xxviii. 26), (4) materials for implements of husbandry, (5) all nourishing and ripening agencies.

II. HIS CONSIDERATION OF OUR PIETY. God gives us our bread, our maintenance, in such a way that we are almost compelled to acknowledge his hand in the harvest. Evidently we did not produce the soil nor make the seed; evidently we cannot cause it to fertilize and grow; evidently it is his sun that shines and his rain that falls on our fields. The ordinary processes as by which the seed is multiplied are such as direct our eyes to heaven. And often, in his wisdom, he holds his hand, he withdraws the sunshine

or keeps back his clouds, he sends dearth as "in the days of Claudius Cæsar" (ver. 28), and then men are constrained to remember that there is work being done in the soil and in the sky which they cannot control, and in regard to which they must look up to God the Giver of all, whose is the earth with its fulness, and ask of *him*, and plead *with him*, and, it may be, humble themselves before him.

III. HIS REGARD FOR OUR INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL WELL-BEING. 1. *Intellectual*. God teaches us (Isa. xxviii.), but he leaves much to be discovered by our own mental labour. Agriculture provides a very wide and a very noble field for observation, experiment, contrivance; it tasks and trains the mind. 2. *Moral*. We cannot secure our harvests without (1) industry, (2) combination, (3) patience (Jas. v. 7). The abundance, and indeed superabundance, of the earth's yield is such that (4) there is enough for the supply of those engaged in other pursuits; hence there is room for all kinds of labour beside that of agriculture—for the pursuit of art, and for the teaching of religious truth and training in the religious life. Those who have received the bread of eternal life from the lips of others can furnish, as Antioch now supplanted Jerusalem, the bread of this temporal life to those to whom they are under spiritual obligation. The abundance which prevails in some districts—and famine is *never* universal—gives the opportunity of (5) showing practical kindness. On this occasion there was sufficient in Syria for its own need and for the distress in Judæa, and the Christians of Antioch contributed to supply the wants of those at Jerusalem.

We should (1) *receive* God's temporal mercies with the gratitude which belongs to piety; (2) *distribute* of our abundance to those who have a claim on us, either on account of the spiritual favours they have conferred or in virtue of their special necessity.—O.

Vers. 1—18.—*The spirit of sect and the spirit of the gospel*. I. SECTARIAN SUSPICIONS. In Judæa are the head-quarters of this sectarian spirit. There it centres and rankles. The very tidings which fill the generous spirit with joy fill the sectarian with jealousy. They hear that the Gentiles have received the Word of God. Happy news! Alas that any should regard them otherwise! But to the ideas of the sectarian any change is appalling which threatens to break down the fence and wall of the sect, and compel him to widen the extent of his fellowship. So the sectarians quarrel with Peter. Their charge is that he has visited the uncircumcised heathen and eaten with them.

II. THE TRUTH ELICITED BY OPPOSITION. God overrules all things for good, makes the wrath of man to praise him, brings the truth into clearer manifestation by the very means of resistance to it. Let us not be too severe on the sectarian, if he be honest in his opposition. Far more pernicious the hypocritical friend than the sincere and downright foe. Were every innovation tamely submitted to without inquiry, progress would not be so sound. It is by overcoming objectors that truth triumphs, not by silencing them. And again, facts are the best arguments. Once more Peter relates the vision at Joppa. To overcome others' objections, the best way is to show how our own objections have been overcome. The great point of opposition is the repugnance, inborn and strengthened by education, of the Jew to certain objects viewed by him as common or unclean. The great difficulty of overcoming the feeling lies in the fact that it is interwoven with all the best associations of the mind. The man, having learned the idea of holiness by means of a sharp physical distinction, fears that he shall lose the idea itself if that distinction be obliterated. No mere arguments in words will avail. But Peter can exhibit the argument of facts. Their fitting into one another with an invincible Divine logic can neither be denied nor refuted. The coincidence of the revelation to the centurion and to Peter has been already dwelt upon in previous sections. The end is the falling of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at the very moment when the Jew and the Gentiles are brought together and Peter opens his mouth to speak.

III. THE TRUTH OF THE PRESENT LIGHTS UP THE PROPHETIC DECLARATIONS OF THE PAST. Words deep in meaning slumber in the mind until the revealing event takes place. Then they are suddenly quickened into life and start up in all their power. Peter remembers the word of the Lord on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. It is in *contrast* to that of John at the opening of the evangelical era. It *surpasses* that of

John as the positive surpasses the negative; the entrance into blessing, the denial of and departure from evil. The conclusion, then, of the whole is that the facts are irresistible. In these lie the clear intimations of providential will. Neither apostle nor angel can contend against *facts*, whether they refer to the outer world and are construed by scientific law, or to the inner world and are known by the devout soul as revelations and inspirations. The Gentile is placed on an equality with the Jew in reference to the blessings of the gospel; one does not stand in the vestibule, the other in the interior of the new temple, but both are gathered to the heart of God, who reconciles us to himself by Jesus Christ. A common faith in him entitles us all to the appellation "sons of God," and therefore brethren amongst one another: "Ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Thus, when the hour strikes, does God silence controversy, causes his voice alone to be heard, and presently draws forth a burst of praise from human hearts. Yes; at bottom the heart loves truth, and craves the revelation of love. "God then hath given the nations repentance unto life!" The signs of the times point to a similar revolution of the large and generous spirit of the gospel. May we be ready to meet it, and not be found amongst those who contend against the light and fight against God, but amongst those who herald with joy and thankfulness the approach of the new dawn; for the Sun of Righteousness shall arise to those that fear his Name with healing in his wings.—J.

Ver. 19—26.—Founding of the Church at Antioch. I. THE SECONDARY CAUSES OF THE FOUNDATION. Christians had been dispersed by the persecution. And thus there went a stream of believers through Phœnicia, Cyprus, and the district of Antioch, charged with the Divine message, living seminaries of the word of love. Persecution, in breaking up communities, diffuses their spiritual contents, as when the box of precious unguent is broken a sweet perfume is diffused abroad. As a rule, these emissaries addressed themselves only to the Jews. But some there were who had seized the larger truth of the gospel and the time, and proclaimed the gospel to the Greeks also. On the day of Pentecost men from Cyrene are named as present, witnesses of the power of the Holy Spirit. Better fitted are they to carry back the gospel to their countrymen than those born Jews. God knows where to find the proper labourers for any harvest which he has ripening.

II. THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION. The hand of the Lord, the Divine power, was with them, and in large numbers converts and believers were forthcoming. Is not the hand of the Lord ever stretched forth when his blessing is sought, his commands obeyed? All through these profoundly interesting details, do we not clearly see that God requires human co-operation? We bind the hands of God—to use a bold figure—when we do not faithfully deliver his truth, the truth which the time is bidding us to utter. It was the generous and world-wide application of the gospel which was followed by the Divine sanction and blessing. As it was then, so may we expect it to be now and ever.

III. THE VISIT OF BARNABAS. 1. The Church at Jerusalem, hearing of the progress of the truth at Antioch, despatch Barnabas thither. They are quite otherwise disposed than upon a former occasion (ver. 1, *seq.*). Peter had then to meet a storm of objections to his holding intercourse with the heathen. But now the same Church sends without hesitation Barnabas to further the good work. Thus gradually does God unfold his ways, and opposition gives way before his manifested counsels, as the frost-bound snows before the sun of the spring-time. 2. And when Barnabas saw the grace of God, he was glad. The spiritual eye discerns spiritual things. As God is no respecter of persons, neither is he who lives in the fellowship of God's mind. It is no question of the human instrument, but of the Divine results; not of the channels of the grace, but of that pure grace itself. 3. Barnabas proves himself true to his name and character, and proves his fitness for the mission. Good and holy himself, his exhortations tend to goodness and holiness. Let them cleave to God with the full purpose of the heart. Ever a salutary counsel—to walk by the same rule, to mind the same thing, to stand in the old ways and inquire for the well-trodden paths. Religion is an attitude of the soul, a habit of the will. The constant Divine Object requires constancy in us; let us be true to him as the magnet to the pole. It is good to *become* a Christian, better to *be* a Christian, best of all to *endure* as a Christian and

inherit the promise of the crown of life. Here, too, we see the qualities of the true teacher—to be good and upright in life-conversation, to be full of the holy confidence which faith inspires, and of that contagious inspiration which God's indwelling imparts.

IV. THE RESULT OF BLESSING. A "considerable multitude added to the Lord." And this, it seems, in consequence of the visit of Barnabas. How mighty the power of one energetic will, one faithful heart, of a man who can say with all his heart, "I believe," and whose life backs up his word! So successful is the work, so full the net of the gospel fisher, that Barnabas has to seek the aid of Saul. Another proof of the pure and humble temper of Barnabas. Evidently he did not desire to make himself the great man at Antioch. The greatness of the work and of his Master engrossed his thoughts. Nor does Saul thrust himself forward, but comes when sought. It is a picture of friendship and comradeship in the service of Christ. Plato rhapsodized of the joint striving of two souls after knowledge and truth; but nobler and sweeter is the joint striving of two souls to serve the Saviour of men and promote his kingdom of peace and love in souls. Memorable year in the annals of Christianity! Here were the disciples first called Christians—followers of the Christ, of the Anointed One; themselves anointed by the same Spirit and to the same life-work. Let us go back to the origin of our name, that we may understand its meaning. The notes of the true Christian are and ever were, the anointing of the Holy Ghost and with power, and the life seen to be busy, like that of the Master, in "doing good."—J.

Vers. 1—18.—*The Church of God set on the new foundation of liberty.* I. The only stable foundation of SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP. Mutual confidence. Common dependence on the Spirit of God. Free speech. Entire understanding of the rule of life. Peter himself cannot be allowed to violate accepted principles without being called to account. He frankly explains and justifies his conduct. The old leaven of Judaism was at work; but the antidote was there—obedience to the Spirit.

II. The true conditions of SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT. The individual not despotically silenced, but called to his true place as one of the community, a member of the body, supplying his portion of new light. The standard of reference, not Peter's private opinion, or the Church's decision after discussion, but the manifestation of the Spirit in facts and undoubted testimony. There were seven trustworthy witnesses. "*Who was I, that I could withstand God?*" Difference between such a revelation and those private, isolated assertions of inspiration such as Swedenborg's and others.

III. THE BREAKING DOWN OF THE "MIDDLE WALL OF PARTITION" between Jew and Gentile; glory to God. The old circumcision superseded by the new baptism. Repentance granted to all. The free gift of the Spirit.—R.

Vers. 19—26.—*A new centre of evangelistic work. Antioch.* Another hold upon the Gentile world. More important than Cæsarea. Next to Alexandria. Intellectual culture; commercial. A sphere prepared for Saul.

I. THE MINISTRY EMPLOYED. Lay agency. Persecution compelling the Church to enlarge its borders. The circumstances opening the door to the Gentiles. Probably little success among Jews. The multitudes of Greeks at Antioch. The Greek mind prepared for inquiry. The state of the heathen world well represented there.

II. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY GIVEN. The hand of the Lord with them. The Spirit outpoured. Possibly not so much in miraculous signs, but in conversions.

III. THE MESSAGE PREACHED. "*The Lord Jesus.*" Not speculations to catch philosophers, but facts to lay hold of hearts. Not preached in a tone of ecclesiastical authority, but by laymen full of the Holy Ghost.

IV. THE TWO CENTRES UNITED—JERUSALEM AND ANTIOCH. Apostolic ministry and lay agency. Barnabas, an intermediate representative man. The kind of man required; not lax in his views of truth, but "a good man," full of kindly spirit, an inspired man, a firm believer. Thus the expansion of the Church was no rending of the body of Christ, but simple growth, spiritual life seeking its development.

V. THE SCHOOL OF THE CHURCH OPENED. Antioch a great catechetical centre. Barnabas aimed at instruction and edification, that they should cleave unto the Lord. He called in Saul, as more eminently adapted than himself for work in such a sphere.

The humility of both men exemplified. Both fitted to be masters, because both simple-minded. *Teaching* must accompany evangelization, or the work will fall to pieces. A whole year they taught much people; hence their steadfastness at Antioch.

VI. THE WORLD'S TESTIMONY TO THE NEW LIFE. "Called *Christians*." Antioch saw a distinct society arising; gave it a name, separated it in thought both from Judaism and heathenism. Recognized that the substance of it was *Christ*; that the members of it were like Christ and lived for Christ. The providential appointment of the name signalized the new start of the Church on its mission, with Saul at the head of it, to evangelize the world. An interesting line of progress from Jerusalem to Antioch. Divine guidance.—R.

Ver. 26.—*The Christian name*. "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Three great cities identified with Christian history in a special manner—*Jerusalem, Antioch, and Rome*. The birth of the religion; its triumph in full manhood over the world; and between these two points its baptism as the religion of the East and West alike. Describe position and influence of the city. The name not given by Jews, as recognizing that Jesus was Messiah. Not by disciples, as other names in use—"believers," "brethren," "saints," "friends." Nor by Divine direction. It was either a name of reproach or a convenient designation of a rapidly enlarging society. Consider—

I. THE NAME GIVEN. 1. *Personal*, testifying to the pre-eminence of Christ in the first preaching. The facts came before the doctrines, as they always should. 2. A name of *distinction*. Separation from the world. Baptism in his Name. Worship of Christ. Spirit of Christ. "See how these Christians love one another." Contrast with heathen world. 3. *Prophetic*. Christ expected to return. Judge of all the earth. Despondency the main feature of heathenism. Christians preached hope. The Resurrection and Ascension. Not as others, children of the night, but children of the light.

II. THE NAME HONOURED. "*Called Christians*." 1. The life should be evident before it is named. Baptismal regeneration is condemned by such a fact. 2. If the world looks upon the life, it will name it; let us see to it that it names it after Christ. It should be the sign of conversation, and the testimony to a spiritual work. 3. The privilege is to wear the name. Are we ashamed of it? Secret disciples an anomaly. Connect the profession with teaching at Antioch, and the name will be itself a publication of the truth. 4. It is not what we are *called* that will decide our final state, but what we *are*. Let all who name his Name depart from iniquity. "*Christendom*" is an empty mockery. Seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost.—R.

Vers. 27—30.—*Practical sympathy between Jew and Gentile*. I. The test of REAL UNION must be an appeal to self-sacrifice. Antioch was wealthy; Judæa was poor. The prophets came from Jerusalem; the return was relief sent to poor brethren, both as a sign of obedience to the Spirit and as a pledge of future oneness. There could be no more decided evidence that the Gentile converts were really incorporated into the apostolic Church.

II. The prophetic element quite consistent with the maintenance of A SETTLED ORDER in the spiritual life. The extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit must be distinguished from the ordinary work of the Church. The collected relief was sent to "the elders." The hands of Barnabas and Saul carried it. Thus the new Gentile community at Antioch did not break away from the original centre at Jerusalem. It was not Saul's aim to disacknowledge those who had preceded him; but, while carefully maintaining the connection, preserving independence.

III. WILLINGHOOD the principle of the Church's charity. "Every man according to his ability." "God loveth a cheerful giver." No sign of ecclesiastical rate-laying. Until the Church became corrupt, it had no need of any other law than spiritual law.—R.

Ver. 18.—*A model Church meeting*. The worst hindrances to the spread of Christianity and to its hold upon the world have always been found to be, not so much the native opposition of the human heart, nor the direct conflict with Satan and with sin,

but those indirect conflicts which are entailed by: 1. The inconsistencies of Christians in their individual life. 2. The "contentions" of Christians in their mutual or collective life. We have before us a threatening instance of this latter kind, and an agreeable example of the way in which it was averted. Notice—

I. A THREATENING INSTANCE OF CONTENTION AMONG A BODY OF CHRISTIANS. We read that "when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him." Though the more unfavourable turn of the word as now used by us need not be pressed, yet it certainly implies, as it stands, dissatisfaction with what he had done, and not the gentlest or suavest manner exhibited in calling him to account for it. 1. Contentions within Christian communities are in their simplest principle and beginning justifiable. It need *not* be said of them, as of offences, "Woe to him by whom they come!" though it may, nay, almost *must*, be said of them, that they "will come." It is for this reason, because the Church on earth is, as amongst its own members, its own guardian. It acknowledges the headship of Christ. It acknowledges the rule of the Spirit. It does *not* acknowledge any earthly lord, any vicar of Christ, any earthly *sovereign* authority. Hence it is answerable for its *own* doctrine and for its own discipline within its own pale. And investigation, debate, yea, all the formality of judicial trial (so that neither motives, methods, nor weapons are carnal), are within its province. 2. Contentions within Christian communities very generally arise on some *plausible* ground, to say the least. It was certainly so now. It is highly important to discriminate as far as possible between what is really legitimate and what is merely plausible. Of the first are—(1) zeal of scriptural doctrine and revealed fact; (2) zeal of a holy and consistent life. But of the second are—(1) mere love of precedent; (2) ascription of motives; (3) generally scant charity. 3. Contentions within Christian communities fix stern responsibility on those who stir them, only second to that of those who *cause* them, when this is really done. 4. Contentions within Christian communities demand as much, as solemnly as any position whatsoever in life, singleness of eye and a pure conscience. Feeling, personal feeling, party feeling, priestly feeling, and even the perfection of ignorant prejudice, have, in probably the saddest preponderance of history, profanely trampled on the ground and made it mournfully all their own. Nor is there any more hollow hypocrisy, more miserable meekery, more insulting blasphemy, than when these counterfeit zeal for the Lord of hosts and a pure and sensitive conscience.

II. A GRATEFUL EXAMPLE OF THE METHOD BY WHICH IT WAS AVERTED. It takes two persons to make a bargain, and two to make a quarrel; and, if a reconciliation is to be genuine and have in it the elements of lasting, both parties must do their share. It was so now. 1. Peter did what lay in him to remove cause of offence and to explain difficulty. (1) He seems to have been taxed in a somewhat point-blank style. Yet he does not rein himself up, though he does rein temper in. He does not stand on his dignity, and refuse any account of himself and doings till he is addressed in a somewhat milder and more deferential style. (2) He does not assert simply that what he had done he had done under an overpowering conviction "of duty"—a phrase among the worst abused of moral phrases. (3) He does not assert positively, even though he had good right to know it, that what he had done was right and all right, and no two opinions about it with any man of understanding and principle. (4) Discarding all irritating and aggravating beginnings, he even waives any expression of claim to the confidence of "the brethren," and instead, at once conciliatingly tells his tale. He tells it all from the beginning to the end succinctly. He narrates the revelations made to him (vers. 5—10). He states the facts, which could be easily disproved if incorrect (ver. 11). He instances his "six brethren" companions, who were witnesses of all he had done, and were now in the position of witnesses for him (ver. 12). He tempts out their memory by just quoting his own (ver. 16). And in closing even he does not pronounce a dogmatic verdict for self, but rather asks a verdict, and whether his hearers think the case admits of any verdict different from what he had in his conduct practically given. It is well worthy of notice how different the result might have been if Peter had at all, in a hectoring tone, begun with this question. But he did *not* begin with it; and when, with Christian gentleness, he now closes with it, all are ready in their answer to acquit him of blame. They see with his eye and are one with him. 2. On the other hand, those who had it first possibly

rather peremptorily challenged Peter's conduct may be observed with some commendation now. Presumably these were some of his fellow "apostles and brethren" (vers. 1, 2). And of their disposition it is to be noted favourably that: (1) If they had begun by putting themselves a little in the wrong so far as their tone was concerned, they do not therefore persist in it. The injurer is often the last to give in and forgive. So frequent is the occurrence and so fraught with mischief, that this may be called one of the "devices of Satan," that even Christian men will cleave to the thing they have said, let alone quite the subject of it, *because* they have once said it *in a wrong* manner. Eye and mind and heart get sealed up in deference to *one* humiliating fact, that they have uttered so much sound in wrong tone. Well, this was *not* the case now with those who called Peter to account. (2) They give Peter a patient, and no doubt what soon became a riveted, hearing. (3) They accept unquestioningly every statement that he makes, so far as it purported to be a statement of *fact*. There is no quibbling nor attempt at cross-questioning. This was Peter's due under any circumstances. But even fellow-Christians are chary sometimes in the matter of justice to one another. (4) At the right yielding-point they do yield heartily. To "hold their peace" was a very victory of goodness. Better than this, while they "hold their peace" from blaming Peter, they open their mouth to "glorify God." Their mode of yielding bespeaks truth and honesty in them at the first, if even these manifested themselves forth in a manner a trifle unceremonious. Doubt, perplexity, a little vexation, clouded brow, all went in a moment. Pent-up anxiety and distrust are relieved. They are glad to hear and be persuaded by the things now "rehearsed to them" of Peter. They are *not* envious and still exclusive, but welcome the admission of the large Gentile brotherhood to the family of God and to "repentance unto life." And the end of that meeting was peace and joy—yes, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. We may give our better feelings leave to flow and our higher imagination to play while we think of the reconciliation, hearty and unfeigned, that those happy moments witnessed between Peter and the brethren. Nor shall we doubt that, for his fidelity and unflinching consistency in a moment's trying "ill report," he is henceforth held in higher honour and surer trust by those same brethren.—B.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The surprises of the grace of God.* Some six or seven years had passed since the martyrdom of Stephen, and "the persecution that arose about Stephen." The winds of persecution had now borne far and wide the seeds of Christian truth and faith. In the "ground" of Jewish hearts alone, however, for the greater part of this time had the seed "fallen," so far as men's intentions and purposes had scattered it. In individual cases, however, it had inevitably fallen elsewhere; and besides, as carried by some "Grecians" of the number of the "scattered," so it was freely given, by these at least, to Grecians again, who were not of the pure "Hebrews," and not of "the circumcised." Many "Grecians" thus "believed, and turned to the Lord" (ver. 21). The sacred history returns in some degree upon its steps to speak of these things, and to record, after the signal given of the fulness of the Gentiles being brought in, how it had meantime been faring with these more nondescript Grecians. There is a certain degree of the *enigmatic* in these two verses. To remove this will at the same time unfold the truth which the Spirit may have intended to teach in this place. We seem to see—

I. AN ELEMENT OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY. "Tidings" that presumably were of the best kind, and could mean nothing *but good*, are apparently not received as such, and are visited with some sort of scrutiny. The facts are exactly so. But it is to be noted that the authority that moved was one that moved itself, and is not an instance of an individual usurping ecclesiastical authority. The authority is not either arbitrary or that of an external hand. It is *the Church* itself. And it is the Church who *delegates* one evidently held in high honour, though *not* an apostle, to go to a long distance to inquire into the "tidings" that have reached itself at Jerusalem.

II. AN INOPPORTUNE EXERCISE OF ECCLESIASTICAL AUTHORITY. If the tidings were on the face of them good, credible in the nature of things, or rather in the nature of what the Church now well knew to be the operation of the Divine Spirit, why need the Church assume the attitude of caution and do the action of apparent suspicion? 1. It is most grateful to note the first dawning exercise of infant powers and discretion

on the part of the Church. This it learnt partly "from above," partly also from bitter and humbled experience of its own. It had already had the faithless within it, and the attempts of the worst worldliness (as in the instance of Simon Magus) to enter within its sacred fold. 2. The real gist of anxiety and of the inquiry proposed turned, no doubt, upon this great *new* gospel that was now coming upon those who had themselves received the gospel in very deed, and which only shook their faith (if it *did* shake their faith) lest it be too great, too good, to be true. The "mighty works" of God are being wrought upon and among all, Gentiles and Grecians, as they had been on the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem. Well may the Church stop and turn aside to see this great sight, and to find out for certain that it is not a vision and that they do not dream. 3. The Church, as results proved, did not act for the sake of mere caution or for the mere sake of enlightenment, least of all from love of cold and suspicious criticism, but, if things were real and true, also to give the right hand of fellowship to those who, like its own present members, were "called."

III. ONE SPECIAL CRITERION LOOKED FOR BY BARNABAS, AND GUIDING HIM. No details lie on the page for us, no sealed instructions are mentioned, no open instructions, no parting suggestions even; and nothing is said of all the thoughts and feelings that chased one another or amid which the very soul of Barnabas muscled as he travelled afar. No; but we are not left without the necessary clue. He reached his destination, and apparently does not hold or offer to hold any court, and call witnesses, and loftily and inquisitorially investigate the state of things. With a large and open eye he surveys the scene. He looks and sees the proofs of "the grace of God" given to them at Antioch, even "the uncircumcised." He listens, and hears the sounds that attest "the grace of God" given to them. He mingles with them, and he sees the works that none could do unless "the grace of God" were given to them. And he is satisfied. The tree is known by its fruits, and there can be no mistake what the fruits are now. Would that the same simplicity of method of judging one another were the *one* method known and followed now and ever! For this beautiful expression, "the grace of God," does not stand for mere feeling and experience or profession of the same, but rather for those "works" and "fruits of the Spirit" which only could come of the imparted grace of God.

IV. THE VERY GLADNESS OF HEART ITSELF OF A HOLY MAN. It is emphatically said, "He was glad." 1. It was a relief to an anxious, inquiring mind, on a subject of thrilling interest. How it had weighed on the mind of Barnabas all his journey—the question itself, and his responsibility as delegated to examine into it! 2. It was a relief to Barnabas to think he could speak with such thorough confidence, and in no halting tone at all, to those who had sent him, when he should render his account to them. 3. It was all joy to his heart to think how day dawned at last on the whole world. What startling, ravishing prospects must have sometimes been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and the early disciples and brethren in those days!

V. THE MINDFULNESS OF A HOLY MAN, EVEN WHEN EXCITED BY JOY. 1. Barnabas was mindful of his own duty, to speak the word of exhortation even in the midst of a scene full of present brightness, hope, confidence. 2. He was mindful of the ever-existing temptation to go back to the world, to love the world, to yield in enthusiasm's hour, but to relapse in the long days of heat and toil and trial. And therefore the burden of his exhortation was that they should "cleave to the Lord," and that "with purpose of heart they should cleave to the Lord."

VI. A SOMEWHAT INOPPORTUNE MIXTURE OF COMMENDATION OF BARNABAS AND HIS INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER WITH MUCH MORE SERIOUS MATTER. Let it seem so; let it be so. Yet this is the condescension of God. This is the sympathy of Jesus. This is the Spirit's comforting aid and honour shown to those who are true. However, as the sacred and abiding page of Scripture inscribes these things to the honour and glory of Barnabas, in the midst of matter which all redounded only to the honour and glory of God, we may observe that the character here given to Barnabas: 1. Justified his selection for a new and delicate and important embassy. 2. Explains the very deep, full, genial joy of his heart, its openness to conviction, and its freedom from the least and last taint of Jewish envy and Jewish exclusiveness. 3. Proves withal that it was God's Spirit who was in all, "working within" him, when he came, when he saw, when he judged rightly, when he was profoundly impressed, when he was glad to the bottom

of his heart, and also when he did *not forget* duty and solemn trying times to come amid the sympathies and congratulations of bright hours. For he was "full of the Holy Ghost."—B.

Vers. 25, 26.—An early co-pastorate. The chronology of the period reaching from the martyrdom of Stephen to the mission of Barnabas to Antioch is obscure, and has at present indeed refused to yield up to us dates—as, for instance, leading dates affecting Saul—of the utmost interest. It is, however, exceedingly probable that six full years had now passed since the conversion of Saul. During the whole of this time he has been—we may say it without a doubt, though perhaps it were not easy to find actual chapter and verse for the statement—"preaching Christ." He has been removed from one station to another for safety's sake twice. He has latterly been for some time at Tarsus, his native place, and it is of his employment during his stay at Tarsus that we know least. While, as already said, there is scarcely room to doubt that there emphatically he would be preaching Christ, it would seem a little remarkable if he did so through a period of one or two years with impunity. Hither, however, Barnabas now comes, to seek a colleague and efficient help in his work at Antioch. Very brief are the touches of the pen which convey to us the situation here. But they portray, nevertheless, something so natural and almost homely, that it is not difficult, and is pleasant and instructive, to fill in the detail of the picture.

I. BARNABAS FINDS AN UNEXPECTED AND A GRAND FIELD OF LABOUR AT ANTIOCH.

1. He came on one errand; he stays on another, and that a great enterprise. He came to inquire about the justifiableness of certain goings on. He is forced to become part and parcel of them, and to embark in them heart and hand and voice. 2. He observes "that a great door and effectual is opened before him" (1 Cor. xvi. 9). Antioch, for its situation, its buildings, and its very various and important people—for its Jewish population, for its Greek fashion, and its Roman military, and its business and commercial connections—cannot be surpassed as a place of importance for preaching Christ from the first moment that it is apparent that not Jews only, but Gentiles also, Greek and Roman, are to be embraced within the blessings of the covenant. 3. When already "much people was added unto the Lord," and "a great number had believed and turned unto the Lord," his heart is "touched with compassion" (as his Master's once and often was) when he saw "the sheep without a shepherd," and "the fields white to harvest," and the harvest one of superlative promise, "but the labourers few." And no doubt he "prayed the Lord of the harvest," and got his answer.

II. BARNABAS CONSULTS AS TO ONE THING ALONE. 1. He wishes, if it be possible, to compass the work. 2. He knows no grain of envy or jealousy or selfish ambition. 3. He will lose a few weeks of time if he may return armed better by far for the work, for he bethinks himself (or otherwise in answer to his prayer has been reminded divinely) of one of remarkable conversion and of surpassing energy. He will be a likely helpmeet. Barnabas has already walked arm-in-arm with him in Jerusalem, and has been surety for him with the Church in Jerusalem. With *this* strong man, who has now been tried, been ripening in comparative retirement, and has borne the trial, would he wish to be associated in besieging, with a view to take, this tempting citadel of Antioch. He is keeping up his character as given us in the preceding verses. He is "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." His eye is single, his best reason and mental judgment are given to the question before him. His motives are pure and his conscience sensitive. 4. He is going to have his man. He will not miss of Saul. He journeys after him to seek him. He believes not in messages nor proxies. He finds him and brings him to Antioch.

III. BARNABAS AND SAUL BELIEVE IN CO-OPERATION. 1. They believe in brotherly love. It was a *somewhat* new thing to believe in, in some aspects of it. Not a few natural kinds of love unite us together. But brotherly love came in largely with the followers of Jesus, viz. that kind of love which brought two men to work together for *religious* ends. 2. They believe in the practical advantages of two working together. (1) One sustains the purpose of the other. (2) The weak side of one character is compensated by the *forte* of the other. (3) Many an enterprise must *pine* for want of sufficient support at the hand of one alone, which may be easily compassed by two, and leave them still spare energy. 3. They disbelieve in unworthy rivalry, in com-

parisons, in personal ambition. Yet *now*, eighteen centuries later, these very things are occasionally heard as among the standard objections to two disciples of Jesus Christ being linked together in equal service for him.

IV. BARNABAS AND SAUL GIVE THEMSELVES FOR A WHOLE YEAR TO BUILDING UP AND EDIFYING THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH. 1. The importance of Church life begins to be recognized, both for itself and for its witness, in the midst of a great people outside. 2. Even nature itself "is vindicating the need and the advantage of teachers and pastors and examples." "They assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people." It was *not* all evangelization, nor all missionary journeys, even in earliest days of Christianity. And this is more remarkable in the light of an example, when we remember that the good work at Antioch had sprung up of what in brief might be called "self-sown seed." Those of the dispersion whose hearts burned within them had been, under the Spirit, the beginning of the work. And it was on account of the proportions to which their work had grown, and the fame of it that travelled to Jerusalem, that Barnabas had been sent to visit Antioch. The flock only need to be hungry to look for a shepherd, and the hungry flock do not fail to look *up* to the shepherd that feeds it. 3. The love of Barnabas and Saul must have been met by much love on the part of those "in and out among whom" they went, teaching them many things. This is *the* Church love. This is the secret of Church harmony. This the humble beginning alike of the holiness and the happiness of the Church above.

V. THE MINISTRY CONJOINT OF BARNABAS AND SAUL IS BLESSED. It is blessed in two directions. 1. It cannot be said to be a conclusion too remote or far-fetched when we assert that there is evidence of the witness that ministry was to the outside world. That "the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch" and at this time means nothing less than these two things. (1) They take a status *in the world*; and this has been verified by history. World-wide their name is known. (2) That status is given them, even if in partial ridicule, *by* the world. The Church of disciples, of saints, of brethren, of followers of Jesus, of Nazarenes, *made its mark* upon them of busy, prosperous, intelligent Antioch. They are not a ragged regiment, nor a rope of sand, nor a quarrelsome litigious clique. They have been doing work and have been living consistently. 2. That ministry has prepared those among whom it was exercised both to feel promptly compassion for their brethren who were to be visited by famine and poverty in Judæa, showing it also promptly by a practical charity and generosity, and also to convey that expression of love in a becoming and grateful manner. Great was the goodness of Barnabas, and great and good was the united ministry and work of him and his chosen, sought colleague, Saul.—B.

Vers. 4—17.—*The efficient answer to objectors.* A man always takes an individual line, in opinion or in conduct, in peril of being misunderstood and called to account by his fellows. And yet the intellectual and moral advance of the race is made only by the pressure forward of individuals who, on some ground, refuse to keep in the old lines, and persist in making their own way even in districts marked by common sentiment as "dangerous." It is often the precise mission of youth to check the strongly conservative tendency around them, and utter fresh truth, or at least truth in fresh forms. This is illustrated in the case of St. Peter. He had come to grasp a truth which was a heresy from his own older standpoint, and a heresy to those with whom he had been working; but he knew it was truth, so, at the peril of being misunderstood, he acted upon the truth. He now knew that Christ's gospel was for Gentile as well as Jew, so he fearlessly went into the Gentile's house, and there preached the Word of life, and baptized the believing household. And he was misunderstood and called to account. The passage before us is his effective defence: to it there could be no reply. He rehearses the whole matter, and says, "God led me, and I followed. God taught me, and I believed. God sealed my work with the witness of his Spirit, and I know I have his acceptance." This is the answer which the sincere man who acts out of the common line may make to all who oppose or object. "I do but follow the Divine leadings and teachings; God sets my witness, and the testimony I make must be at least a portion of the truth of God."

I. GOD STILL OPENS HIS TRUTH TO INDIVIDUAL SOULS. We do not, indeed, expect new revelations. There is a sense in which the book-revelation in the Scriptures is complete:

no man may add thereto or take therefrom; and no man's testimony can be of any value save as it can be tested by the revealed Word. And yet, though this may be fully admitted, we may recognize the fact that, through spiritual insight or through intellectual skill, men do bring to light missed and hidden things, or they do set received truths in forms that are new, and by their newness arrest thought and even arouse opposition. In this way every truth of the Divine revelation is brought prominently before men's thoughts every few years. God sends among us great thought-leaders; stirrs, by their preachings or writings, the stagnancy of religious thought, and makes fresh and living to us truths which had become mere dead formalities. St. Peter had but a fresh hold of an ancient truth, one long revealed by psalmist and prophet: still, he had such a new grip as made him a power; even the agent that fulfilled Christ's will, and "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

II. THE INDIVIDUAL WITH A FRESH TRUTH MUST EXPECT OPPOSITION. It will surely come from: 1. His fellow-workers, who will feel a secret jealousy of his being made the medium of Divine communications, and who will keenly feel how the new truth interferes with their teachings. 2. Those of conservative tendency, who think the absolute and final truth is in their charge. 3. The earnest but timid people who fear that everything fresh must put God's truth in peril. 4. The friends of theological or ecclesiastical systems, who consider their systems complete and needing no changes, nor having any open places in which new truth may fit. St. Peter found that an imperfect report of his doings at Cæsarea had gone before him to Jerusalem, and when he himself reached the holy city, he was assailed from the very narrowest platform, and accused of the very small sin from our point of view, but very large sin from the Jewish point of view, of "eating with the uncircumcised." He very wisely refused a discussion on this mere feature of the matter, and explained fully what had happened. Those who contend often take a mere point of detail, and are best met and answered by putting the question in dispute on the broadest, deepest grounds.

III. PROOF OF DIVINE LEADINGS OUGHT TO SILENCE ALL OPPOSITION. This is the great lesson of St. Peter's conduct and narrative. All through he pleads that he only recognized and followed the Divine will as revealed both to him and to others. God spoke to him in trance, and vision, and providence, and inward impulse. God spoke to Cornelius by angel-form and angel-voice. God sealed the work of St. Peter with the gift of his Spirit, and, as a faithful and true man, he could only go where God led him, and speak as God bade him. To his audience it was the best of all answers, the one that would disarm all opposition. A sincere Jew must be loyal to God's will, however it might be revealed, and however strange to his feeling it might seem. And this is essentially the answer which every thought-leader and every advanced teacher now must be prepared to make and to prove. If he only speaks, as a man, some religious fancies and feelings of his own, we are rightly sceptical; but if it is plain to us that a man has been "taught of God," and if we can see signs of acceptance and Divine benediction on his work, then we too must hear his testimony with open and unprejudiced minds, seeking grace to enable us to express our old faith in the new form, or to add the new thought to our received doctrines. God may, indeed, not speak to us now by dream, or trance, or vision, or voice; but we need not therefore think that direct communication with our soul is impossible. Still we may say, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth;" and still we have with us that Holy Ghost, whose work it is "to lead us into all truth, and to show us things to come." And it should be our abiding conviction and inspiration that "the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his Word."—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*Well-stored memories.* A topic suggested by the expression of St. Peter, "Then remembered I the word of the Lord." Some explanation may be given of "memory" as a distinct mental faculty, but the one on which the acquisition and increase of knowledge greatly depend. A faculty capable of culture, but taking different features in different individuals. Some have verbal memories, others memory for principles. Some have trained memories in particular subjects, but little power to retain general knowledge. Formal aids to memory are suggested, but its true culture lies in its use. As a mental faculty, it comes under Christian sanctifying, as well as into Christian use. In ordinary education attention is paid to the training of this power,

and in the Divine culture attention to it is equally needed. It may even be said of our Lord's preparation of his apostles for their work, that he stored their memories with his words and his works, so that there might be the material on which the Holy Spirit could hereafter work, "bringing all things up into remembrance" on fitting occasions. Consider—

I. STORING MEMORIES. Illustrate what anxious work this is to the parent, the school teacher, and the professor. Due effort is made to ensure (1) adequate stores; (2) well-arranged stores; (3) clearly apprehended stores; (4) moral stores. Two things are found necessary to the holding of things in memory—(1) they must be clearly apprehended; (2) they must be sufficiently repeated. It is found that we hold things in measures of safety dependent on the amount of attention which we have given to them. Apply these principles to the storing of our memories with religious facts and principles; dwelling on the importance of requiring the young to learn the Scriptures, of demanding from our Christian teachers clearness of statement and efficient repetition; showing that, as in St. Peter's case, a man only has the right truth or principle at command, on occasions of need, if these have previously been lodged in the memory. The skill with which our Lord, in his time of temptation, fetched the right weapons from the Scripture armoury with which to defeat and silence his foe, reveals to us the fact that his memory had been well stored with Scripture during his childhood and youth. The duty of seeing that our own mind is well furnished, and that the minds of those directly under our influence are well furnished, with Scripture facts and truths and principles, should be earnestly pressed. We can do no better service to the young than to fill up their thoughts and hearts with "thoughts of Christ and things Divine."

II. KEEPING MEMORY-STORES. There is one great law which applies to the efficient retention of any kind of knowledge we may have. It is that we keep adding more stores of the same kind. We virtually lose out of memory facts relating to botany or astronomy unless we keep on adding to them new botanical or astronomical facts. And the same law applies to religious things—they will fade down and seem to die out of memory unless we constantly add to them. We retain by increasing. Show how this should be a powerful motive urging us to keep up our daily soul-culture, our reading of the Word, our meditations in the Divine truth, our attendance on the means of grace. We cannot keep what we have unless we set ourselves in the way to get more.

III. USING MEMORY-STORES. Just this St. Peter does in connection with our text. Something occurred which suggested a sentence his Lord had once employed. He hardly knew that he had put it among his memory-stores, but he had been attentive to every word that fell from his Master's lips, and they came up before him at the moment when he could use them wisely. We often think that there must be much more in our memories than can ever be of service to us, and we even think that it is useless to teach the young so much of Scripture and of Catechism and of hymns. But no man can foretell what situations unfolding life may make for him, or what moral demands it will present. Take any life, and it will be found full of surprises, and it is a very great thing to ensure that we are reasonably prepared for all possible situations. St. Peter could not have imagined himself in the house of Cornelius and set upon using that particular sentence. So we shall find, as life progresses, that (1) occasions come for the use of our memory-stores; (2) circumstances help to recall them; and (3) God's Spirit brings them up before us, and aids us in finding their proper application and use.

The well-furnished godly memory is no accident. It is a part of the Christian culture, and therefore, for ourselves and for those on whom we are called to exert our influence, we come under solemn and weighty responsibilities. An interesting illustration of the use of a godly memory in time of pressure and need is found in Ezra viii. 21—23, where Ezra's remembrance of God's promises to and gracious ways with his people in the olden time, gave him strength for an arduous and perilous undertaking.—R. T.

Ver. 18.—"*Repentance unto life.*" This expression is not the one which we should expect the Christian brethren to use in the circumstances. The sentence would seem clearer to us if it read, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted admission into the kingdom of Christ," or "to share in the salvation of Christ." The prominence of the word "repentance," and its place as the initial step to "life," are remarkable and sug-

gestive. Repentance is not made of so much importance in our presentations of the gospel as it was by the apostles, but for their use of it we may find some adequate reasons. 1. The teaching of John the Baptist, and his requirement of repentance as preparatory to the reception of Messiah, retained its influence upon them. 2. When their Master had sent them out on their trial mission, he had given them this distinct message, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." 3. When their Lord had been shamefully crucified, by the schemes of the leaders and representatives of the nation, and they had been confirmed in their belief in his Messiahship by his resurrection and ascension, they felt that the judicial murder of the Messiah was the greatest of national crimes, and so they realized how essential was repentance as preceding a profession of faith in him. They had spoken to Jews who, as a nation, through its representatives, had said, "His blood be on us and on our children," and therefore St. Peter, when answering their question, "What shall we do?" on the day of Pentecost, said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (ch. ii. 38). And in his sermon following on the healing of the lame man, he said, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted" (ch. iii. 19). And when called to plead before the great council, he further declared concerning Christ, "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" (ch. v. 31). Having this prominent to their minds as the very gist and essence of the gospel message, the Jerusalem disciples spoke in accordance with it when they accepted St. Peter's explanations, and said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted *repentance unto life*." The force of the combination of these terms, "repentance" and "life," will be felt if we consider—

I. REPENTANCE AS THE FIRST GOSPEL DEMAND. The distinct meaning of the term should be noticed, and the precise meaning of the two Greek equivalents for our one word "repentance" may be pointed out. It is in the higher sense that the term is used by the apostles, and it includes (1) conviction of sin; (2) sorrow for sin; (3) desire to be delivered from sin; (4) serious purpose to put away and resist sin. If the gospel were merely some educational or even some moral scheme for elevating the race, it need make no demand for "repentance." It is a scheme for the deliverance of men from the penalty and the power of sin, and this it can never effect save as it can work along the line of man's own will. And the only sign and expression of a man's sense of sin and desire to be freed from it is this "repentance" which the gospel demands. It is the only attitude which the gospel can meet, the only state of mind and feeling with which it can deal. A man is closed in and buttressed against Divine salvation, redemption by grace, until he "truly and unfeignedly repents," and so feels the need and value of Divine forgiveness, healing, and life. This point may be fully illustrated and enforced, and it may be shown that still the preaching of the gospel fails that does not make first demand for repentance. St. Paul's great address to the learned Athenians has this for its point and application: "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere *to repent*" (ch. xvii. 30).

II. REPENTANCE IS THE FIRST SIGN OF LIFE. The way in which our Lord made his disciples familiar with the term "life" should be pointed out. Right relations with God are spoken of as "life," "eternal life." Those relations into which we may come through the Lord Jesus Christ are emphatically recognized as "life;" the only true, eternal, spiritual life. It is this "life" into which the disciples recognize that the Gentiles are admitted. When this is fully apprehended, the place of repentance in relation to the life will be readily recognized. To feel sin and the need of a Saviour is the first sign of the life; it is its first breath; with it the life necessarily begins. Men absorbed in self find a new life when self is crushed in the dust. Men "dead in trespasses and sins" are raised up, to look and breathe and speak, when sorrow for sin comes to them. This is well illustrated in T. Moore's familiar poem of 'Paradise and the Peri,' in 'Lalla Rookh.' The most precious thing on earth, that which may even open heaven's gate to the banished peri, is the tear that falls from the eye of the penitent sinner.

III. REPENTANCE GIVES PLACE TO LIFE. It is here called "*repentance unto life*." Repentance is a step up to something else. Repentance is a temporary condition of mind and feeling, through which a man passes to something better; something permanent. Show how it passes (1) into the joyous sense of forgiveness; (2) into the blessed

life of trust in the living Saviour; and (3) into the infinite happiness of setting our love upon Christ, and finding ourselves sanctified by the responses and gracious workings of his love to us.

In conclusion, urge that repentance is still the one and only threshold of life. "Humbled" we must be "under God's gracious hand," before we can be "exalted in his due time." We dare not hold back to-day our Lord's demand of "repentance unto life."—R. T.

Ver. 24.—Good Barnabas. We have had this man introduced to us before, but his character is most fully described in this passage. It may reasonably be asked why St. Luke, in writing the Book of the Acts, should take this opportunity of recording the received opinion about Barnabas. The most simple answer is that he had subsequently to record the dispute between St. Paul and St. Barnabas over Mark, and he was therefore anxious to ensure that his readers did not get a wrong impression, from that incident, of the temper and spirit of Mark's relative. Deeply as we may regret that sad misunderstanding between the two earnest missionaries, we must not let it throw its dark shadows over Barnabas, for "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." The immediate occasion of sending Barnabas to Antioch has been differently explained. It is remarked, in ver. 19, that the scattered disciples went "as far as to Antioch," but they "preached the Word to none but unto the Jews only." Then it is noticed that some preachers came from Cyprus and Cyrene and Antioch, and they preached *unto the Grecians*. Now this term may mean either Hellenistic Jews or Gentiles. The best manuscripts have the word *Greeks*, and this should be distinctly referred to the heathen, or Gentile, population. If it were so that these disciples preached the gospel to the *heathen*, and news of this came to the Church at Jerusalem soon after St. Peter's account of what had taken place at Caesarea, there was good ground for sending Barnabas to inquire into matters at Antioch, to explain the new view of the scope of the gospel as revealed to St. Peter, and to ensure harmonious working between those who laboured for the Jew and those who laboured for the Gentile. If this was the mission of Barnabas, it is important for us to be told concerning his personal character; for upon it the success of his mission would very largely depend. Only a man of great goodness and generous feeling would be likely to meet aright the difficulties that would be presented. There are many circumstances in life in which "character" can do more and better than "talent," and talent wins its noblest triumphs when it is united with and sanctified by godly character. Three things are especially noticed in relation to Barnabas.

I. HE WAS GOOD IN CHARACTER. "A good man." Our attention is directed by this term to his natural excellences of disposition. There was amiability, kindness of purpose and manner, generosity of spirit, considerateness for others, and readiness even to sacrifice his own things for the good of others. He was just the kind of man to win the confidence and esteem of all those among whom he worked; and it would seem that his very failing, in the matter of his dispute with St. Paul, arose from the warmth of his affection for his young relative Mark, and his too great readiness to make excuses for him. "His very failing leaned to virtue's side." His "goodness" may be seen and illustrated from each of the incidents in which he is introduced to us. 1. He seems to have set the example of devoting his property to the needs of the early Church (ch. iv. 36). 2. He it was who overcame the apostolic suspicion of the newly converted Saul, in the generosity of his trustful disposition. When they were all afraid of Saul, "Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles," etc. (ch. ix. 26—28). 3. His trustfulness is further shown in his making Saul, the new convert, his companion in his missionary labours. It may be urged that, while Christianity masters and corrects naturally bad dispositions, it wins its noblest and most beautiful triumphs when it inspires and sanctifies the naturally amiable and generous and trustful disposition. It is a thing to be ever devoutly thankful to God for, if he has given us characters that may win the love and esteem and confidence of our fellow-men.

II. HE WAS FULL OF FAITH. This is something more than natural trustfulness, though closely allied to it. Two things may be included. 1. He had a strong grip of the gospel truth, and was not troubled with weakening and depressing doubts. He held, fast and firmly, the Messiahship and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and all that

these involved. And only men of faith can be men of real power as God's witnesses and preachers. Men do not want to hear from ministers about their questionings and doubtings. The great cry is, "What do you know of God and truth and duty? What do you believe?" 2. He had a clear vision of the broader aspects of the Christian system. He was a follower of Stephen. He was prepared for the admission of the Gentiles to Christian privileges. And so he was just the man to go down to Antioch and deal with the difficulties that might arise from breaking down the old Jewish bondages. And there is constant demand for such men of faith, who can hopefully accept the passing changes of thought and feeling within the Church, even when they cannot personally sympathize with them. We need men of *faith* in the sense of broad outlook and high hope for the future.

III. HE WAS FULL OF THE HOLY GHOST. That Holy Ghost came as the seal of all sincere believers, but it is here suggested that the measures and degrees of his gracious inward workings directly depend on the moods and attitudes and character of the man. And here lies the practical application of our subject. Barnabas, because he was a good man and full of faith, was also full of the Holy Ghost. And we shall find that anxious and careful culture of Christian character will also open our hearts, lives, and workings to the full energies of God the Holy Ghost.—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*Antiochene Christians.* "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." Before this time they seem to have had no recognized name. Others may have called them "Nazarenes," or perhaps "Galileans." They spoke of their teaching as "the Way," but do not seem to have found any other name for themselves than that of "disciples." It was left to circumstances to provide a name which all might accept, and, though the origin of the name "Christian" is very strange, its appropriateness has been universally recognized. The very essence of the gospel is the presentation of Christ to men, and the pressure of his claims to men's love and trust; and therefore those who receive Christ as their Saviour, and obey him as their Lord, are properly denominated "Christians." It is usual to call disciples after the name of their master or teacher, as may be seen in the terms "Mohammedan," "Buddhist," "Wesleyan," etc. Sometimes classes of men are named after the central principle which they have adopted. This we cannot do, because our central principle is "Christ"—not even some truth about Christ, but Christ himself. So we can have no name but that which the people of Antioch found when they discovered how prominently Christ was set forth in the early preaching.

I. THE THOUGHT OF THOSE WHO FIRST NAMED THE DISCIPLES "CHRISTIANS." It has often been pointed out that the name was started as a nickname. The idea of making so much of One who was known to have been crucified as a malefactor and impostor may well have excited the ridicule of humorous people, and we know how constantly the disciples were taunted with worshipping the Crucified. A caricature of the early times has been discovered, representing a person, with the head of an ass, stretched upon a cross, and a figure kneeling before it. Underneath is this inscription: "Alexamenos worshipping his God." In this spirit the name was first given, much as the term "Methodists" was applied to the followers of Wesley.

II. THE THOUGHT OF THOSE WHO ACCEPTED THE NAME. Perhaps in their modesty they did not think themselves worthy to bear their Master's name; but when others gave it to them they felt that they could accept it. And no name could be to them so honoured. Their hesitation, however, might have arisen from another cause. To accept a distinctive title was to break away from Judaism, and take a position as a separate and independent sect. We can well understand how the disciples would hesitate to accept so defined a position. They thought of themselves as still Jews, seeking, some would say, the reformation of Judaism; and others would say, the spiritual fulfilment of Judaism; but anything savouring of sectarianism or separation would be distressing to them. Yet many times in Church history men have been compelled to take decided positions against their own wills, but their distinctness and separateness have proved to be for the world's permanent good.

III. THE THOUGHT OF THOSE WHO NOW BEAR THE NAME. For so many persons its deeper significance has faded out. It is so universally applied, and made so all-inclusive, as to have become a meaningless term. And yet how full of force and inspiration it

should be to us (1) for the sake of the history which the term embodies—the long story of Christian witness and struggle; and (2) for the depths of meaning which we may now find in it, for to us it may mean not merely “followers or disciples of Christ,” but *Christ-like* men and women, who are daily being “changed into his image from glory to glory,” and who want to be “like him in all things”—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XII.

Ver. 1.—*Put for stretched*, A.V.; *afflict for vex*, A.V. The phrase, About that time, as in ch. xix. 23, points to what had just before been related (Meyer). The interposition of the narrative in this chapter between ch. xi. 20 and xii. 25 evidently implies that the bulk or rather the chief of the events narrated happened in the interval. Which of the events was the chief in the mind of the narrator with reference to his general narrative, and what are the coincidences which he wished to note, it is not easy to say with certainty. The narrative in this chapter doubtless overlaps at both ends the embassy of Paul and Barnabas, but perhaps the object was to show the harassed state of the Church from famine and persecution at the time that Paul and Barnabas were at Jerusalem. Herod the king here mentioned is Herod Agrippa I., grandson of Herod the Great, and son of Aristobulus and Bernice. During the reign of Tiberius he resided at Rome, in alternate favour and disgrace, sometimes banished, sometimes a prisoner, sometimes a guest at the imperial court. He was a great friend of Caius Cæsar Caligula, and, on his succeeding to the empire on the death of Tiberius, was promoted by him to the tetrarchy of Herod Philip, with the title of king. He was further advanced three years afterwards to the tetrarchy of Herod Antipas; and, on the accession of Claudius to the throne, Judæa and Samaria were added to his dominions, which now comprised the whole kingdom of his grandfather, Herod the Great. Agrippa, in spite of his close intimacy with Drusus, Caligula, Claudius, and other Roman magnates, was “exactly careful in the observance of the laws of his country, not allowing a day to pass without its appointed sacrifice;” and he had given proof of his strong Jewish feeling by interposing his whole influence with Caligula to prevent his statue being placed in the holy of holies. This spirit accounts for his enmity against the Church. He was a man of very expensive and luxurious habits, but not without some great qualities.

Ver. 2.—James, the son of Zebedee, or James the Eldor, to whom, with his brother John, our Lord gave the surname of Boan-

erges (which is a corruption of *בני רגל*), sons of thunder. Nothing is recorded of him in the Acts but his presence in the upper room at Jerusalem after the Ascension (ch. i. 13), and this his martyrdom, which was the fulfilment of our Lord's prediction in Matt. xx. 23. His being singled out by Herod for death in company with Peter is rather an indication of his zeal and activity in the Lord's service, though we know nothing of his work. Eusebius relates an anecdote of his martyrdom, extracted from the lost work of Clement of Alexandria, called the *Προσπάσεις* (or in Latin *Adumbrationes*), which Clement professed to have received by tradition from his predecessors, to the effect that the informer who accused James was so struck with his constancy in confessing Christ before the judge, that he came forward and confessed himself a Christian too. The two were then led off to execution together; and on the way the informer asked James's forgiveness. After a moment's hesitation, James said to him, “Peace be unto thee,” and kissed him. They were then both beheaded (*Eccl. Hist.*, ii. ix.). As Clement flourished about A.D. 190, the tradition need not have passed through more than three persons. It has been thought strange that Luke relates the death of a chief apostle with such brevity. But it did not bear on the main object of his work. Lightfoot (*Works*, vol. viii. p. 282, etc.) mentions a fanciful story related by Rabanus Maurus, that about this time the apostles composed the Apostles' Creed, each contributing one clause, and that the clause contributed by James the brother of John was, “And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.”

Ver. 3.—*When for because*, A.V.; *that it pleased for it pleased*, A.V.; *proceeded for proceeded further*, A.V.; *seize for take*, A.V.; *and those for then*, A.V. He proceeded to seize (*προσέτερο συλλαβεῖν*) is a Hebraism. This trait of his pleasing the Jews is in exact accordance with Josephus's description of him, as *τῷ βίον ἐν εἰσημίᾳ χαίρων*, loving popularity, and as being very kind and sympathizing with the Jewish people, and liking to live much at Jerusalem (*Ant. Jud.*, xix. vii. 3). The days of unleavened bread; i.e. as expressed by Luke xxii. 1, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called

the Passover." It lasted seven days (Exod. xii. 15—18), from the 14th to the 21st of Nisan, or Abib (Exod. xii. 18—20; Lev. xxiii. 5, 6; Deut. xvi. 1—4), the Passover being eaten on the night of the 14th.

Ver. 4.—*Taken for apprehended*, A.V.; *guard for keep*, A.V.; *the Passover for Easter*, A.V. Four quaternions; i.e. four bands of four soldiers each, which were on guard in succession through the four watches of the night—one quaternion for each watch. *The Passover*. This is a decided improvement, as the use of the word "Easter" implies that the Christian feast is here meant. But perhaps "Feast of the Passover" would have been better, as showing that the whole seven days are intended. This is, perhaps, the meaning of τὸ πάσχα in John xviii. 28, and certainly is its meaning here. We have another characteristic trait of the religion of Agrippa, and of his sympathy with the feelings of the Jews about the Law, that he would not allow a trial on a capital charge, or an execution, to take place during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (comp. John xviii. 8). To bring him forth to the people. Still the same desire uppermost, to propitiate the people by gifts or shows, or by blood; ἀναγαγεῖν means exactly "to bring up" (ch. ix. 39; Rom. x. 7, etc.), either on to a stage or on some high ground, where all the people could see him condemned, which would be as good to them as an *auto da fé* to a Spanish mob, or a gladiatorial slaughter to a Roman audience (see ver. 11).

Ver. 5.—*The prison for prison*, A.V.; *earnestly for without ceasing*, A.V. (ἐκτενῆς, or as in the R.T. ἐκτενῶς, has the sense of intensity rather than duration; see Luke xxii. 14, T.R.; 1 Pet. i. 22; iv. 8). As the last of the days of unleavened bread approached, the prayers of the Church would be more and more intense in their earnestness. We have but to read the preceding chapters to judge how precious to the Church the life of Peter must have been.

Ver. 6.—*Was about to bring for would have brought*, A.V.; *guards for the keepers*, A.V. What a picture we have here! The dungeon; the double chain fastening the prisoner to two soldiers; the other two soldiers of the quaternion keeping watch at the first and second ward, or station; the iron gate securely fastened; the population of the great city expecting with the morning light to be gratified with the blood of the victim of their bigotry; the king having made his arrangements for the imposing spectacle which was to ingratiate him with his people and obtain the applause he so dearly loved; and then the servant of Jesus Christ sleeping calmly under the shadow of God's wings; and, a little way off,

the Church keeping her solemn watch and pouring forth her intensest prayers through the silence of the night! And the issue, the triumph of the few and the weak over all the power of the many and the strong.

Ver. 7.—*An angel for the angel*, A.V. (see note on ch. v. 19); *stood by him for came upon him*, A.V. (comp. Luke ii. 9); *cell for prison*, A.V.; *awoke him for raised him up*, A.V. (ἤγειρεν αὐτόν); *rise for arise*, A.V. Cell. The word οἶκημα, a dwelling, was used by the Athenians as an euphemism for a prison. It only occurs here in the New Testament, though it is a common Greek word. His chains fell off from his hands, showing that each hand had been chained to a soldier. The loosening of the chains would enable him to rise without necessarily awakening the soldiers to whom he was fastened, and who would feel no difference in the chain which was attached to them.

Ver. 8.—*He did so for eo he did*, A.V. Thy garment (ἱμάτιον); especially the outer garment, which was worn over the χιτῶν, or tunic (see Matt. ix. 20, 21; xiv. 36; xxiii. 5, etc.). The girding, therefore, applied to the inner garments, and περιβαλοῦ to the cloak which went over them.

Ver. 9.—*Followed for followed him*, A.V. and T.R.; *he wist for wist*, A.V.

Ver. 10.—*And when for when*, A.V.; *into for unto*, A.V.; *its for his*, A.V.; *straightway for forthwith*, A.V. The first and the second ward. The φυλακή, here rendered "ward," may mean either the station where the guard was posted or the guard itself. One street; ὁμῆ, as in ch. ix. 11, note. Departed; ἀπέστη, in contrast to ἐπέστη, rendered "stood by" in ver. 7.

Ver. 11.—*Truth for surety*, A.V.; *sent forth for sent*, A.V.; *delivered for hath delivered*, A.V. Peter's recognition of the Lord's hand in sending his angel is exactly echoed in the Collect for Michaelmas Day, "Grant that as thy holy angels alway do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth."

Ver. 12.—*And were praying for praying*, A.V. When he had considered; better, with Meyer and Alford, *when he perceived it*, viz. the truth of his deliverance. The mother of John was aunt to Barnabas (Col. iv. 10). If Paul and Barnabas were not in her house at the time (which there is no evidence that they were), it is likely that all the particulars of Peter's escape may have been communicated to Paul by John Mark, and by him repeated to Luke. That they went to the house of Mary before their return seems certain from their taking Mark with them to Antioch (ver. 25), possibly to

deliver him from the danger Christians were in at Jerusalem at this time.

Ver. 13.—*When he for as Peter, A.V. and T.R.; maid for damsel, A.V.; to answer for to hearken, A.V. (ὑπακούειν).* The door of the gate (see ch. x. 17, note). To hearken or listen seems the best rendering. It is the phrase proper to a doorkeeper, whose business it is to go to the door and listen when any one knocks, and find out what their business is before opening the door. This is the primary sense of the word; that of *answering* after listening is a secondary sense. At a time of such alarm to Christians a knock at the door in the dead of the night would carry terror with it, and careful listening to ascertain whether there was more than one person, and then to ask who was there and what was his business, was the natural course.

Ver. 14.—*Joy for gladness, A.V.; that for how, A.V. When she knew Peter's voice.* This evidence of Peter's intimacy with the family of Mary is in remarkable agreement with 1 Pet. v. 13, "Greet Marcus my son."

Ver. 15.—*Confidently for constantly, A.V. (for the same use of ἀνεπισημαίω, see Luke xxii. 59); and they said for then said they, A.V. It is his angel; meaning probably his guardian angel (Matt. xviii. 10). But the expression is obscure, and we do not know exactly the nature of the belief on which it was grounded. They must have thought that perhaps Peter had been put to death in prison that very night, and that his angel, speaking with his voice, was sent to announce it to the Church. The narrative is a striking instance how "slow of heart to believe" are even the most devout. They were praying very earnestly for Peter's life; their prayer was granted; and yet the announcement of it only draws out the answer, "Thou art mad!" and then, as an alternative, the explanation, "It is his angel!"*

Ver. 16.—*Opened for opened the door, A.V.; they . . . and for and . . . they, A.V.; amazed for astonished, A.V. (see ch. viii. 9, note).*

Ver. 17.—*Brought him forth for brought him, A.V.; tell for go show, A.V.; to for into, A.V. Beckoning, etc.; κινῶσθαι τῆ χειρὶ (see ch. xiii. 16; xix. 33; xxi. 40). It is the action of one having something to say and bespeaking silence while he says it. Unto James. This, of course, is the same James as is mentioned in Gal. i. 19 as "the Lord's brother," and who, in Gal. ii. 9, 12, and ch. xv. 12 and xxi. 18, as well as here, appears as occupying a peculiar place in the Church at Jerusalem, viz. as all antiquity testifies, as Bishop of Jerusalem. So Hege-sippus, quoted by Eusebius ('Eccel. Hist.,' ii. 23), "James the Lord's brother, called by*

universal consent the Just, received the government of the Church together with the apostles;" and in ii. 1 he quotes Clement of Alexandria as saying that, after the Ascension, Peter, James, and John selected James the Just, the Lord's brother, to be the first Bishop of Jerusalem. And Eusebius gives it as the general testimony of antiquity that James the Just, the Lord's brother, was the first who sat on the episcopal throne of Jerusalem. But who he was exactly is a point much controverted. The three hypotheses are: 1. That he was the son of Alphæus or Clopas and Mary, sister to the blessed Virgin, and therefore our Lord's cousin-german, and called his brother by a common Hebrew idiom. According to this theory he was one of the twelve (Luke vi. 15), as he appears to be in Gal. i. 19, though this is not certain (see Bishop Lightfoot, *in loc.*). 2. That he was the son of Joseph by his first wife, and so step-brother to the Lord, which is Eusebius's explanation ('Eccel. Hist.,' ii. 1). 3. That he was in the full sense the Lord's brother, being the son of Joseph and Mary. This is the opinion of Alford (*in loc.*), fully argued in the 'Proleg. to the Epistle of James,' and of Meyer, Credner, and many German commentators. According to these two last hypotheses, he was not one of the twelve. "The apostolic constitutions distinguish between James the son of Alphæus, the apostle, and James the brother of the Lord, ὁ ἐπίσκοπος" (Meyer). It may be added that ch. i. 14 separates the brethren of the Lord from the apostles, who are enumerated in the preceding verses. The hypothesis which identifies James the Lord's brother with James the son of Alphæus or Clopas and Mary is well argued in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' art. "James" (see also the able Introduction to the Epistle of James in the 'Speaker's Commentary'). It seems impossible to come to a certain conclusion. The weakest point in the hypothesis which identifies James the Lord's brother with the son of Alphæus is that it fails to account for the distinction clearly made between the Lord's brothers and the apostles in such passages as John ii. 12; vii. 3, 5, 10; ch. i. 13; Matt. xii. 46, 49; 1 Cor. ix. 5. For the effect of these passages is scarcely neutralized by Gal. i. 19. But then, on the other hand, the hypothesis that the Lord's brethren, including James and James, were the children of Joseph and Mary, seems to be flatly contradicted by the mention of Mary the wife of Clopas as being "the mother of James and James" (Mark xv. 40; John xix. 25). He went to another place. Whether Luke was not informed what the place was, or whether there was some reason why he did not

mention it, we cannot tell. The Venerable Bede ('Prolog. in Expos. in Act. Apost.'), Baronius, and other authorities of the Church of Rome, say he went to Rome, and commenced his episcopate of Rome at this time. Dr. Lightfoot thinks it more probable that he went to Antioch ('Comm. on Acts,' in vol. viii. pp. 273, 289). Some guess Cæsarea; but there is no clue really.

Ver. 19.—*Guards for keepers, A.V.; tarried there for there abode, A.V.*

Ver. 20.—*Now he for and Herod, A.V. and T.R.; and for but, A.V.; they asked for for desired, A.V.; fed from for nourished by, A.V.* Highly displeas'd (*θυμολαχὸν*); only here in the New Testament, but used by Polybius, as well as the kindred word *ψυχολαχέων*, in the sense of having a hostile spirit against any one, maintaining a strong resentment. It describes a state of feeling which may exist before war, during war, and after war when only a hollow peace has been made. Tyre and Sidon at this time were semi-independent cities under the Roman supremacy. The occasion of Herod's displeasure is not known. Chamberlain; literally, *the officer over his bedchamber*—his chief groom of the chambers—an office which would give him easy access to the king's private ear. Was fed. This commerce, by which Palestine supplied Tyre and Sidon with wheat in return for timber, was as old as the time of Solomon at least (1 Kings v. 9, 11); see too Ezek. xxvii. 17, and the decree of Caligula, in which he speaks of the large exportation of corn to Sidon from the Jewish harbour of Joppa ('Ant. Jud.,' xiv. x. 6).

Ver. 21.—*Arrayed himself for arrayed, A.V.; and sat for sat, A.V. and T.R.; on the throne for upon his throne, A.V.* On the throne. *Βῆμα* does not mean "the king's throne," and is nowhere so rendered in the A.V. but here. It means any raised stage or platform upon which a judge, or an orator, or any one wishing to address an assembly, stands. Here it means a high platform in the theatre at Cæsarea, from whence the king, raised above the rest of the audience, could both see the games and make his speech to the people.

Ver. 22.—*Shouted for gave a shout, A.V.; the voice for it is the voice, A.V.*

Ver. 23.—*An angel for the angel, A.V. (oh. v. 19, note)*

Ver. 24.—The word of God grew and multiplied in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, in spite of Agrippa's persecution. The blood of the martyr James was the seed of the Church, and the speedy vengeance taken by God upon the persecutor doubtless gave fresh courage to his people to confess the Name of Jesus Christ. As regards the preceding account of Herod

Agrippa's death, it is corroborated in the most remarkable manner by the narrative in Josephus ('Ant. Jud.,' xix. viii. 2). He there tells that when he had been three years King of all Judæa (see ver. 1, note) he went to Cæsarea. And that on occasion of a festival celebrated "for the safety of Cæsar" (some think to celebrate his return from Britain, while others, as Wieseler, think that they were the ordinary Quinquennialia, celebrated in the provinces), he exhibited games and spectacles in honour of Claudius. On the second day of these games, when a vast number of people were assembled in the theatre, Agrippa came in, clothed in a garment wholly made of silver, which reflected the rays of the morning sun with a most dazzling and awful brilliancy. Whereupon his flatterers cried out that he was a god, and offered prayer to him. The king, he adds, did not rebuke them nor reject their impious flattery. He was presently seized with a violent pain in his bowels, which soon became so intense that he was carried out of the theatre to his palace, and expired after five days of excruciating pain. It is curious that in the above account Josephus says that Agrippa saw an owl sitting over his head, which he recognized as a messenger (*ἀγγελον*) of evil to him. Eusebius, quoting Josephus ('Ecl. Hist.,' ii. x.), leaves out the owl, and says that Agrippa saw an angel sitting over his head, whom he recognized as the cause of his sufferings. Whiston, in a note, seeks to exonerate Eusebius from unfairness in the quotation, by suggesting that the manuscript of Eusebius is in this place corrupt; but Bede quotes Josephus just as Eusebius does, unless perchance he is quoting him at second hand from Eusebius.

Ver. 25.—*Ministration for ministry, A.V.; taking for and took, A.V.* The fact here stated of their taking John Mark with them, is very interesting in connection with ver. 12. Whether or no Saul and Barnabas were in the house of Mary at the time of Peter's deliverance from prison, they evidently went there shortly before or shortly after. As regards the sequence of events related in this chapter, it is by no means necessary to suppose that Barnabas and Saul did not leave Jerusalem till after the death of Agrippa. Luke, connecting the death of Agrippa with his murder of James and his intended murder of Peter, as Eusebius and Chrysostom and others rightly say, would naturally follow up the narrative of the persecution by the narrative of the persecutor's awful death; and then go on to relate the return of the two apostles to Antioch in continuation of ch. xi. 30. We have no means of deciding whether, in point of fact, they returned before or after

Agrippa's death. It seems most probable that they returned before, as, under the circumstances, they would not tarry at Jerusalem longer than was necessary for the fulfilment of their ministrations.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—25.—*The world and the Church.* There is, perhaps, no passage in Holy Scripture which contrasts more sharply the principles of the world and of the Church respectively, and the practice flowing from those principles, than the chapter before us. The results of each stand out no less sharply defined.

I. THE WORLDLY PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE. Not right, or truth, or justice, but self-seeking policy; to gain some selfish end without regard to the will of God or the welfare of man; the unscrupulous use of any means by which the wished-for end can be attained; the employment of craft or violence, according to circumstances; utter contempt for the rights and feelings of others; utter disregard for the happiness of individuals or communities which stand in the way; taking everything into a man's own hands;—in a word, self-will and self-seeking, as the beginning and ending of human action.

II. THE CHURCH, OR CHRISTIAN, PRINCIPLE. To do the will of God irrespective of self-will; to love all men, "specially those that are of the household of faith," and consequently to work ill to no man, however great the apparent gain may be; to suffer, rather than do, wrong; to endure evil meekly and patiently; to help and comfort others in their time of need at his own cost; to leave all in the hands of God.

III. THE RESULTS OF EACH. 1. *The worldly policy ends in failure.* The well-laid schemes end in disappointment; momentary successes slide into defeat and discomfiture; expected glory turns into lasting shame. 2. *The Christian practice, on the contrary, though its beginnings may be in clouds and darkness, ends in sunshine and in light.* Right has a vital principle in it. It bursts out into success at last. Being linked to the will of God, it partakes of the power and life of God. Momentary shame turns into lasting glory. The cross becomes the crown. See all this exemplified in the history before us. Agrippa was the perfect type of a successful man of the world. The friend of emperors and kings; himself a prosperous king of fair character for the times, of pleasing manners, and considerable power of kingcraft, he stood high among his equals and contemporaries. His liberality and magnificence secured him a fair share of admiration and popularity among his subjects. His zeal for religious observances, his scrupulous performance of the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish Law, brought him a fair amount of respect from the priests and Pharisees of his day. And this popularity was as the breath of his nostrils. To be applauded; to be well spoken of; to be admired; to make a sensation wherever he appeared; to be on terms of friendship with Tiberius, with Drusus, with Caligula, with Claudius; to be a great man among the petty dependent kings of the neighbouring countries; and to be an authority with the priests and people of the Jews;—all this was his ambition, was what he lived for. As to the means of obtaining it he was not scrupulous. By flatteries, by mean compliances, by large expenditure of money, and even by shedding innocent blood, this end of self-idolatry was to be compassed. The murder of a saint like James, the imprisonment and intended execution of an apostle like Peter, were in his eyes on a par with splendid games or magnificent largesses, as means of purchasing or retaining the good pleasure of the Jews, perhaps with the further design of strengthening his influence with Claudius by showing how he could keep a turbulent province in quiet subjection to imperial Rome. And so at last he seemed to have attained the highest pinnacle of the coveted glory when, all glittering with the silver robe, which reflected the rays of the morning sun, and seated on the *bema* to make his oration to the people, he was greeted with acclamations which told him he was no longer a mere mortal in their eyes, and that he spoke, not with the voice of a man, but with the voice of God. Five days of agony, and he lay amidst all his splendour a lifeless corpse. Now let us turn to the Church. We have four pictures presented to us of Church life. 1. *The love of the Church of Antioch for their unseen brethren of the Church of Jerusalem.* They were poor themselves, it is likely; they had dangers, and difficulties, and wants, and necessities, no doubt, at home.

But no sooner do they hear of the approaching famine in Judæa than they make collections, every man according to his ability, for the relief of their fellow-Christians, and send two of their most trusted members to carry the gift from Antioch to Jerusalem. Surely a beautiful sight, that loving-cup passed from Gentile to Jew, a pledge of their unity in Jesus Christ. 2. *The defence of the Church of Jerusalem against the tyranny of the world.* The strong hand of unscrupulous power has slain one of their most valiant leaders. Another greater still is shut up in a dungeon, expecting immediate death. The whole Church is in danger of destruction. It must defend itself against its terrible foe; it must sharpen its sword; it must put on its armour; it must prepare for the fight. And how does it do this? Our second picture shows us. It is night. The great city is hushed in sleep; its hum has ceased. The weary are at rest. The prisoner's eyes are closed in forgetfulness, and all things are shrouded in darkness. But in one house in the city sleep has no place. Under its roof are gathered together many of the soldiers of Jesus Christ. And in that dead hour of the night they are watching unto prayer. From one and another the voice of prayer and supplication is going up to Heaven—prayer for Peter's safety; prayer for the preservation of the Church; prayer for the mighty help of the Holy Ghost; prayer for holy patience; prayer for holy courage; prayer for wisdom how to act and for strength to act; prayer for the weak in faith; prayer for the tempted and irresolute; prayer for their enemies, persecutors, and slanderers;—in short, every variety of the cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!" is breaking the stillness of the night, and is the Church's preparation for battle and for victory. 3 and 4. We have in these *the portraiture of two individual members of God's Church.* The first, James, we see only in his death—the blessed death of a martyr of Jesus Christ; a death which tells of the life which went before, and also of the life that shall follow after and have no end. He was a son of thunder in his assaults upon the strongholds of Satan; a witness for Jesus Christ and his cross and his salvation, before the hard materialism of Roman power, and the withered formalism of Jewish bigotry and hypocrisy. As we think of him, as of his saintly brother John, we think of the unworldly faith with which, leaving his father and all that he had in this world, he was obedient without delay to the calling of Jesus Christ; we think of the indignant zeal which flashed out when the Master whom he loved was rejected by the Samaritans; we think of him as persevering steadily, through ten years of opposition and contradiction from elders, and priests, and Pharisees, and Sadducees, in the one great purpose for which he lived, at the end of which, as he had long since been warned by the Lord, there was a cup of suffering to be drunk, and a baptism of blood to be baptized with. But he shrank not nor drew back. To him to live was Christ, and to die was gain. And so his end came—the end of his toil. But surely he is among those whom his brother John saw in vision half a century afterwards: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, . . . and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Blessed in his death and glorious in his resurrection, he will shine forth with a brighter glory in the kingdom of his Father than Agrippa his murderer did in his silver robe of marvellous texture in the theatre of Cæsarea. Our last portrait is that of Simon Peter, the Galilæan fisherman, called by Jesus Christ to be fisher of men. What a life was his!—gathering three thousand souls into his net at the very first haul; laying the foundations of that building which during eighteen centuries and a half has gone on growing towards those vast proportions which will at last fill the whole earth and mingle with the skies in its length, and breadth, and depth, and height; unlocking the gates of the kingdom of heaven with his keys of office for myriads and millions to enter in. What a life of toil and danger!—journeying, preaching, healing, teaching, like his Divine Master before him, with his life ever in his hand; now escaping, now returning to the scene of persecution, but always intent upon the work of Christ. Ah! surely he has fallen at last; the hand of the tyrant has found him out. He is fast in prison. He is fastened with two chains to his jailors. He is sleeping his last sleep on earth. To-morrow's sun will rise upon him for the last time, and before it is noon he will have joined his brother James in the land where all things are forgotten. So thought man. So thought the Jews. So thought Agrippa. So thought Peter himself when he closed his eyes in sleep under the protection of God's wings. So had God not ordained. The night watches had advanced. The great city lay in stillness and darkness. The sons of toil

and of pleasure had all left the busy thoroughfares, and the streets were a desert. But lo! the iron gate of the prison opens noiselessly upon its hinges, and two men issue forth into the open way. They walk rapidly along, and then one vanishes and only one is left. He stops for a moment's thought, and then goes to the house of Mary. Yet another moment, and he is in the midst of a praying Church, which he never thought to have seen again in the flesh; and the brethren are all around their great primate, whom they thought to have seen no more for ever. It was a great surprise. But how great the joy to know that it was God's doing! Now they knew that their dangers, their sorrows, their fears, and their prayers, were all known of God. Now they knew that their lives were precious in God's sight, and that he that was for them was stronger than he that was against them. Peter's hour was not yet come; his work was not yet finished, and till it was, all the power of Herod and all the expectation of the people of the Jews would be baffled and disappointed, not a hair of his head should perish; and instead of the Church being wasted and destroyed, the Word of God should grow and multiply. It is growing and multiplying still. Peter's work is not yet finished. What he began is still going on. The overseers are still feeding the flock of Christ; and they with him, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—19, 24.—*Sin in high places.* Sin has many aspects, and it is not only curious but instructive to see how it shows itself under different conditions. Here we have it manifesting its evil spirit in "high places." Herod's action at this juncture reminds us of—

I. ITS CONTEMPTUOUSNESS. "Herod . . . stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church" (ver. 1). He did not stay to inquire whether these men were in the right or not. They had with them the most convincing credentials—strong evidence, miraculously power, a truth which met the necessities of the human heart and life; but all this went for nothing. From his place of power he looked down superciliously on this new "way," and with a light heart he determined to vex its adherents. How often does a high place beget an unseemly, unwholesome, injurious arrogance which, smiting others, inflicts a death-blow on itself!

II. ITS BRUTALITY. "And he killed James . . . with the sword" (ver. 2). What was the life of an enthusiast to him? "He commanded that the keepers should be put to death" (ver. 19). What signified it to him that a few soldiers were executed? It would not spoil his meal nor disturb his slumber that, at his bidding, a few of his fellow-men had their lives cut short and that their families and friends were mourning. This was the spirit of the age, an unchristian age: it was especially the spirit of human tyranny. The ruler on his throne, too often attained by violence and cunning, was indifferent to the blood he shed, to the rights he violated, to the sorrows he caused. Such has been the history of sin in high places from the beginning until now, from one end of the earth to the other.

III. ITS MEANNESS. "Because he saw it pleased the Jews," he proceeded further (ver. 3) in the same course. What a miserable reason for imprisonment and execution of subjects! Not because any crime had been committed, or any folly wrought, or any danger incurred; but "because it pleased the Jews," more violence was to be done, more wrong inflicted, more grief and lamentation called forth. To such shameful depth will sin in high places stoop, "justice" prostituting its high vocation (1 Pet. ii. 14) to win a mean and despicable popularity at the expense of innocence and truth.

IV. ITS IMPOTENCE. 1. How vain are bolts and bars to shut in a man whom God intends to be his agent among men (vers. 4—10; see ch. v. 19; xvi. 26)! 2. How vain are swords to slay and prison doors to confine the living truth of God! A James may be killed and a Peter imprisoned, but the chapter which narrates these incidents of human tyranny does not close without recording that "the Word of God grew and multiplied." We may learn these two lessons. (1) We may well be contented with our humbler lot. Obscurity and comparative powerlessness are far less attractive to an ordinary eye than eminence and power. But who of us can say that a "high place"

might not prove to be a "slippery place," wherein virtue and purity would fall, never to rise again; or on which some of the finer graces would be dulled and dimmed, even if some of the sadder sins were not nourished and practised? (2) We may well rejoice to be on the side of the Lord our Saviour. His cause will meet with such checks as this chapter records; there will be times when his disciples will mourn the loss of one champion and be alarmed for the safety of another; but unhopèd-for deliverance will come, God will appear for us in ways we dare not expect, and the end will be the growth and multiplying of his living and life-giving Word.—C.

Vers. 1—19, 25.—*The strength and weakness of Christian discipleship.* These verses bring out very strikingly the fact that there is both power and weakness in us who are the followers of Christ. We see it—

I. IN APOSTOLIC FUNCTIONS. The apostles of our Lord were invested by their Divine Master with unusual powers. The Holy Ghost descended upon them and conferred great gifts on them (see ch. v. 15, 16; ix. 31—41). Peter was the chief channel through which this Divine efficacy flowed. But while he was charged to do such great things for others, he was not permitted to do anything for himself; his function of working miracles stopped when he was personally concerned; he was not at liberty to open a bolted prison door that he himself might escape. We may find a certain illustration of this strength and weakness in the case of those who have such strength to arouse the souls and stir the activities of others, but who are painfully and pitifully weak in controlling their own spirit.

II. IN APOSTOLIC AND ORDINARY CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE. One short verse (ver. 2) disposes of the fate of the Apostle James. We have no graphic account, as in Stephen's case, of his martyrdom. But it is enough that we know the event. We naturally place it beside the predictive words of the Lord (Mark x. 38, 39). And we see here how weak and yet how strong Christian discipleship can be. *Weak enough* (1) to cherish a mistaken ambition (Mark x. 37); (2) to under-estimate altogether the sufferings of its Lord—they said, "We can;" (3) to under-estimate the severity of its own martyr-witness, for James and John had little thought at that time of the future that was in store for them. *Strong enough* to accept with cheerfulness the trying lot when called upon to endure it. We may take it, though we are not told it, that James drank without a moment's hesitation the bitter cup of sudden and violent death when Herod's sword was drawn to slay him. How frequently do we find the same thing with us now! At one hour, the weakness of serious misconception of Christian truth or of Christian life, or, it may be, serious failure to attain the spirit or illustrate the principle of Christ; at another hour, beautiful resignation to the will, or admirable exemplification of the truth, or noble devotedness to the work, of the Lord. 1. We should not judge hastily; the error or shortcoming of one period may be more than redeemed by the excellency or even heroism of another. 2. We need not be exceedingly depressed by our own failure; we should be truly penitent when really at fault, but we may hope that, further on, our Master will give us an opportunity of drinking of his cup, of having fellowship with his sufferings.

III. IN THE MATTER OF DEVOTION. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for Peter" (ver. 5). It may be confidently concluded that the "many who were gathered together praying" at Mary's house (ver. 12) were asking for his deliverance. His escape, then, should have been the very thing they were expecting. If their strength had not been exercised in weakness, they would have anticipated the knock at the door, which they refused to believe was from the hand of Peter. We know how great was their astonishment that their prayers were heard and answered (vers. 15, 16). Prayer is the strength of the Christian man, of the Christian Church; but when in the very act and exercise of this our privilege and power, how great is our weakness! how unspiritual is, too often, our word! how languid our strain! how slight our hope! how faint and feeble our expectation!

IV. IN OUR RELATIONS WITH OUR FELLOWS. (Ver. 25.) Barnabas and Saul returned from their ministry in Jerusalem, carrying with them the blessings of the poor whom they had relieved. But they also carried with them one, John Mark, who was to be the occasion of a bitter quarrel and a lifelong separation. While they were rejoicing in their hearts that the ties between the brethren of Antioch and Jerusalem were so

happily strengthened, there stood by their side a man whose action was to cut in twain the bond which bound them in loving and active brotherhood. As fellow-members of the Church, we feel and do many things which bring out into bold relief our most Godlike affections and aspirations; but as those who worship and work side by side, we often do things which give displeasure to our Lord and should give pain to ourselves.—C.

Vers. 20—23.—*Human pride and Divine retribution.* The main lesson which this incident conveys is the folly of human presumption. But there are side truths which the narrative suggests. 1. The interdependence of one nation on another: "Their country was nourished by the king's country" (ver. 20). One land has metals in abundance; another has corn; another, cotton; another, timber, etc. It was clearly the intention of the Father of all that all peoples should live in close friendship and constant intercourse with one another. Yet the heathen idea was that the natural relation between neighbouring nations was war. The motto of Christianity is "Peace;" its spirit is that of brotherhood; its counsel and fruit are active interchange of services and resources. 2. The evil of autocracy: "Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon" (ver. 20). It may have been some slight affront he had received, and which he was determined to avenge. All responsibility rested with him, and the caprice or resentment of one single soul would have been sufficient to plunge the thousands of Tyre and Sidon—men, women, and children—into terror and distress. We may unite to thank God that the sword is being taken out of the hand of the autocrat. 3. The drawbacks to human greatness. Herod Agrippa was a man in a very fine position, and he was no doubt envied by thousands of his subjects; doubtless he often congratulated himself on the success of his subtlety. Yet he was (1) much at the mercy of venal counsellors,—probably rich presents had found their way into the treasury of Blastus before that chamberlain spoke honeyed words of peace in Herod's ear (ver. 20); (2) the dupe of base flatterers (ver. 22),—he must either have been constantly engaged in weighing words and distinguishing the false from the sincere, or else he must have been continually deceived. But to read the lesson of the text we turn to—

I. THE HEIGHT TO WHICH HUMAN PRESUMPTION WILL RISE. The scene which is briefly sketched in the text (ver. 21) has been more fully described elsewhere (see Farrar's 'Life of St. Paul,' ii. pp. 315—317). It may seem incredible to those who move in humble spheres that a mortal man could ever be so inflated with a sense of his own greatness as to accept Divine honours when they were offered. History, however, fully proves that arrogance may rise even as high as this. "The spirit of self-exaggeration," "the insolent exaltation of himself," with which Channing charges Napoleon Bonaparte, is a spirit which has been exemplified in every age and nation in greater or less degree. The acquisition of honour does not satisfy but only inflames ambition, and from height to height it rises until, leaving far behind it merely unwarrantable hope, it reaches shameful arrogance and even, as here, a horrible impiety.

II. THE DEPTH TO WHICH IT MUST FALL. It ends in shame and ruin. Sometimes, as here, in terrible torture. It is noticeable that some of the worst persecutors of their race have come to a frightful end at death: witness, Herod the Great; this man, his grandson; Antiochus Epiphanes; Philip II. of Spain, etc. But where this is not the case, the end is dishonour. God "will not give his glory to another." Pride must perish, and great must be its fall. From its high pedestal it topples down. No angel-hand is needed to secure the overthrow; its foundations are certain to be undermined, and the god who was at the summit lies, a broken and shattered idol, at the base.

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HEROD'S DEATH. It says to those who wonder at the delays of providence and speak of—

"Truth for ever on the scaffold,
Wrong for ever on the throne,"

Wait! God will reveal himself in righteousness. Go into the sanctuary (Ps lxxiii. 17); look back on the page of history, and *understand their end*; and see *what* "the end of the Lord" is. Wait a while, and the enthroned king, enrobed in issued silver, receiving the acclamations of the people, accepting their ascriptions of

deity—behold! he lies writhing in awful agony; he passes away—he is dust of the ground. And that despised sect, smitten, suffering, degraded—behold! it rises to honour, to power, to influence; it will be enthroned on the intelligence and conscience of mankind. Herod Agrippa gave up the ghost, “but the Word of God grew and multiplied” (ver. 24).—C.

Vers. 1—25.—*The persecution at Jerusalem.* I. THE PUTTING TO DEATH OF JAMES. AND THE SEIZURE OF PETER. The narrative of the former event is short and dry. But remarks a commentator, whatever the reason of this may be, it is certain that the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration this history was given, manifested a peculiar wisdom in this very brevity. The holy silence is a sign to us that that which is highest and most pleasing to God is not precisely that of which men love to know and speak. “Our life is hid with Christ in God.” The peculiar life in life, and the holy dying in death, these are hidden with Christ in God, not merely from the world, but from the children of God; precious, nevertheless, before God, a work following the soul into eternity. The frivolous persecutor, who has been an enemy of the Jews, now, to please them, sacrifices the Christians. The cruelty and frivolity of tyrants has been permitted to work much evil and cause much bloodshed. Our only consolation in meditating on such facts is to reflect that Christianity is an ideal system, and has compensations not of this world.

II. THE DELIVERANCE OF PETER. 1. His imprisonment fell in the days of unleavened bread—the Passover-time; doubtless reminding him, not only of the passion and resurrection of the Saviour, but of his own frailty and denial of him. Now was the prophecy of Jesus fulfilled: “Hereafter thou shalt follow me.” All in the scene, the memories, the immediate prospects before Peter’s mind disposed him to sad and serious thought. 2. The strong guard placed over him seems to bear witness to the respect felt for his person, the fear of his influence. The parts of the prisoner and that of the tyrant are often really reversed; he is at peace, they tremble when they have him most in their power. Behind the scene a purpose was working mightier than all human force. The persecutors intended to bring him after the Passover feast; but God intends to save him. Herod plots Peter’s death, while God wills the preservation of Peter and the death of the murderer. Another view of spiritual force working to counteract physical force is given in the statement of the unceasing prayer of the Church on Peter’s behalf. “God can refuse nothing to a praying Church.” “One true prayer can strike down the whole power of hell; why not Herod with his sixteen soldiers?” “By the blood and prayers of Christians Herod’s arm was maimed, his sceptre broken, and the Roman empire brought to ruins.” Peter in the prison may remind us to pray, “That it may please thee to show pity upon all prisoners and captives!” Meanwhile Peter sleeps; as a child flung into the strong arms of a father, so in the extremity of his distress he has flung himself on God, and rests. And over him Divine love watches with all the tenderness of the parent’s eye and heart. 3. The delivering angel. The angels are ministers of God to the bodies and souls of the “heirs of salvation.” Whether we speak of angels, or of instruments, or providential means, the truth at bottom is the same. All agents and instruments may be considered Divine which are set in motion by the Divine power and love, and providentially meet the need of the hour. So too the shining effulgence which accompanies the angel’s visit. We do not expect such phenomena now; but the light in the heart, the joy which comes of having surrendered the soul to God and of being conscious of his presence, is not less real than ever. “To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.” We may if we please allegorize what follows to our own account. “Arise quickly!” and the chains fell from his hands. For the word of the Lord no iron is too hard, no stone nor bolt too strong. There are worse prisons than those of stone.

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.”

It is our own fettered thoughts which cramp and oppress the soul. Again, with the Divine command, “Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals,” the power to obey comes. And so again when he is bidden to cast around him his garment and to follow. A reason, attentive to the smallest details, is discovered in every call to duty and freedom.

And all this passes as in a dream. So often when swift help and wondrous deliverances come by the Divine hand. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were as them that dreamed." So doubtless in the last conflict, the escape from life and all its troubles will appear as a dream to the departing soul. So swiftly on, through the first and second guard, to the iron gate leading into the city, which opens of its own accord; the street is reached, and the angel departs. The extraordinary and the marvellous lasts no longer than it is needed. We are governed and guided by constant law, which is the expression of loving and constant will. We are taught by experience to build on the constancy of law; but lest we should adore law instead of God, he appears from time to time from behind law, as will, personality, love. The knowledge left behind on Peter's mind is that God has interfered for his deliverance from the hands of his enemies. That is the lesson for us, whenever by a change of circumstances, not to be foreseen and not to be commanded by human forethought, God's ways with us give rise in retrospect and reflection to thankfulness. We see not the good hand that is leading us, the wisdom that causes all things to work together for good, before we have reached the goal and end of his purpose.

III. PETER'S REUNION WITH THE DISCIPLES. 1. *Notice the coincidences of events.* For his refreshment, Peter is led from the cold prison and the rough society of soldiers into that of praying brethren. And they who had been in the depth of trouble because of his supposed loss, behold the beloved brother in the midst of them—for the strengthening of their faith. 2. *The struggle of faith with unbelief.* Here, though they had been praying, and praying doubtless for Peter's release, when the answer comes, they find it difficult to accept and believe. How true is this to the human heart! People are not conscious that they are not quite sincere in their prayers until some event like this brings them face to face with their own thought. When Rhoda tells the simple news of joy, they reply, "Thou art mad!" Faith in the heart says, "God can work wonders if he will;" an opposite feeling says, "It is not likely that he will work them." A man may argue, "My faith in the goodness of God is shadowy, but my faith in the constancy of his laws in nature is absolute: it is the contrast of one faith with another." We cannot find a solution to this contradiction; but it does seem in the course of events as if it were solved for us by a higher light and leading. 3. *The result.* Peter continues knocking, till those within open, see him, and are astounded. After grasping their hands in friendship, he tells the story of his deliverance, bids them repeat it to James and the brethren, then departs to another place. So had the Lord commanded (Matt. x. 13). The protection of Providence does not supersede the exercise of caution and prudence; it should rather encourage us to observe these. By removing Peter, the main pillar of the community, the Church was taught that no one man was indispensable to its existence and welfare. They were to learn to stand without him. The break of day brought a great disturbance among the soldiers. "What had become of Peter?" Herod takes prompt measures for his arrest, and betakes himself to Cæsarea. So ends an episode of apostolic history. We may extract from it the following lessons:—(1) The time of trial is the time of Divine education. Faith in the trial of fire is proved more precious than the gold which perisheth. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." (2) Brotherly love in affliction, in watching and waiting; power of soul in rest and endurance; Divine power in healing and saving;—these are the fruits and energies which spring up in the soil of persecution; these the "precious pearls for which men dive in sorrow's sacred stream." (3) The arms and defences of the Church against its foes are—unflinching courage in witness, calm patience in suffering, unwearied urgency in prayer.—J.

Vers. 20—25.—*The death of Herod.* I. THE CIRCUMSTANCES. In the height of his power and haughtiness he is suddenly cast down. While raising himself arrogantly against the Majesty on high, by that Majesty he is brought low and put to shame. Also it is while he is being sought by petitioners, and hailed by the flattering voice of the multitude as a god. These features have all the elements of the most solemn tragedy. The messenger of Divine judgment smites him straightway, and he perishes miserably.

II. ITS MORAL. 1. "Because he gave not the glory to God" is the reason of the judgment. To God alone belongs honour. He is the Fountain of power, the Foundation

of all stability. He who forsakes God ruins himself and causes destruction to others. God "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." 2. The moral is seen also in contrast. Those who honour God, as Barnabas and Saul, receive honour from God. The persecutor is cast down, while the persecuted flourish and the work goes on. The blood of the martyr waters the field of the Church, and the tyrant fertilizes it with his bones.—J.

Vers. 1—19.—Herodian persecution of the Church. Connection of events showing the working of Divine providence. After Stephen's murder, Caligula persecuted the Jews; hence the diversion of their enmity coincident with conversion of Saul. On the accession of Claudius, a time of comparative peace. Appointment of Herod Agrippa renewed their hopes; hence their attempt to crush the Church. The contrast between the Jews and the Christians is seen at this point. They put themselves in the hands of Agrippa, appointed successor to Herod Philip, with the whole Syrian province under him, by their persecutor Caligula, and lately under Claudius, receiving Judæa and Samaria; so that he was equal in power to his grandfather, Herod the Great. He was a shameless blasphemer, and feared neither God nor man. Yet the Jewish rulers, in their exasperation, incited him against the Christians. The simplicity of the narrative testifies to the simplicity and sincerity of the disciples. The *second martyrdom* has only a single line given to it. But how eloquent the silence! The position of Peter was a more prominent one. Herod's wickedness became bolder. He aimed a blow at the very leader of the Church. Contrast the two histories of James and John—one so early cut off, the other surviving to the end of the century. The narrative illustrates—

I. THE SUPERINTENDING CARE OF GOD OVER HIS PEOPLE.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH IN SUSTAINING COURAGE AND CALMNESS IN TIME OF TRIAL. Peter slept.

III. THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

IV. THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF THIS WORLD. 1. The ease of Divine victory. 2. The peaceful brotherhood over against the cruel tyranny of Herod. 3. The manifestation of the Spirit contrasted with the vain show of power and display of authority. Withdrawment of Herod to Cæsarea a sign of defeat.—R.

Vers. 20—23.—Judgment on the royal persecutor. I. THE WORLDLY POLICY, AND WHAT IT LEADS TO. Idolatry. Blasphemy. The atmosphere of corruption attacks the vitals. The man lives in a moral pest-house. He himself is at last devoured by the filth of his own sins. Examples in all history. The French king in eighteenth century. Napoleon III.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE PROTECTION. He takes away the evil man. He disperses the dark cloud. Blessed are those that wait on his will.—R.

Ver. 24.—Sanctified affliction. "But the Word of God grew and multiplied."

I. THE TROUBLES ARE BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE. 1. Drawing the believers together. 2. Revealing the weakness of enemies. 3. Calling out faith and prayerfulness. 4. Occasioning new manifestations of Divine power on behalf of the Church.

II. THE KINGDOM OF GOD UNDER DIVINE CONTROL AND INDEPENDENT OF HUMAN AGENCY. A time of famine and persecution and mourning, but still a time of increase. The earthly rulers against the Word, but still it grows. The Church afflicted, but still speaking to the world, and its speech all the more powerful that it comes forth from the troubled depths of suffering hearts. Instances. The blood of the martyrs the seed of the Church. Madagascar. When we are weak then are we strong. "Not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit."—R.

Ver. 25—ch. xiii. 3.—Ordination of Barnabas and Saul to the missionary work. I. THE SPIRIT OF MINISTRATION will always find its opportunities opened to it. Antioch full of the zeal of new converts. Signs of the Spirit there. Eminent men—representing both wide sympathies and considerable culture and intellectual power, probably accompanied with some wealth.

II. The NEW ENTERPRISE should be undertaken in the spirit of prayerful dependence and self-consecration.

III. ORDINATION an act of brotherhood and recognition of spiritual gifts as essential to the ministry.

IV. DIVINE GRACE unites with human judgment and effort. Barnabas and Saul had approved themselves faithful by their visit to Jerusalem. Commendation by the brethren there; desire to enter on the larger field; apparent fitness for it. Loss as it was to Antioch, a Church which looks far ahead for its blessings always receives them abundantly. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth."—R.

Ver. 5.—*The Church in prayer.* The primitive Church is here found, amid circumstances so full of interest that they even tempt attention, in prayer for an acknowledged leader, a prized teacher and pastor and an undoubted apostle. The Church now is praying to God for *one* thing, in submission to his will—that Peter may be spared to it and spared to the world. The essentials of effectual prayer in the Church cannot differ intrinsically from those in the individual; but they are strikingly presented to the mind here. Under the one word "prayer," a variety of spiritual exercise, as is well known, is continually included, viz. the outpourings of adoration of the one great Object of prayer, the according of grateful praise and thanks to him, the penitential confession of our sin, and self-humiliation on account of it. But there are very many who will join in all this, and from the heart believe in it, who yield either no assent or a heartless assent to what is after all the chief thing in prayer, its chief wonder and chief privilege, namely, *petition*. Without studying the theory, let us notice one striking instance of the practice of prayer. True theory is never overthrown by fact, but facts often put to rout theory falsely so called, and expose its weak points. We may observe, then—

I. THE QUALITIES THAT MARKED THE PRAYER OR PETITION OF THE CHURCH. 1. *It was most distinct in its object.* The safety of Peter is the one desire of the heart of all who joined to pray. Individual prayer and private prayer are very likely to become vague, vague and multifarious, vague and indiscriminating, vague and inevitably indifferent. Perhaps the tendencies of public and united prayer are yet more exposed to this snare, for the obvious reasons (1) that the thoughts of many hearts must be considered for; and (2) that intercession, which must be the memory of many in want, will generally form a large portion of that prayer. It is well when heart and mind and devotion follow each of these with intelligent distinctness. 2. *Sincerity of faith marked the Church's prayer at this crisis.* He who cometh to God in prayer must believe (1) that he is; but (2) none the less that he lends a willing, gracious ear to prayer; in order (3) that he may duly, in his own wise time and wise way, *answer* it, and do *nothing less* than answer it. Prayer with the mock humility of a timid fear that it is presumptuous to pray, never brought a blessing. The heart's glory in prayer is, if (with George Herbert) it "gasp out," *Et vult et potest*, of God as the Object and the Hearer of prayer. 3. *Great earnestness in petition was displayed by the Church.* The heart's desire and prayer to God on the part of those composing it was for the saving of Peter's life. Herod is known to be full of cruelty. He has just "killed with the sword James the brother of John." And he is known to be goaded on by that worst sting, the sting of "desiring to please" certain fellow-creatures. There is only One with whom we are *safe*, and *always* safe, in wishing and aiming to please him. Far enough off from Herod's eye and thought was that One. He was torn, and therefore in turn cruelly and guiltily tore others, by a *vain, weak, contemptible* desire for a moment to "please the Jews." The Church did not cower but did pray accordingly, prayed with earnestness. 4. *Patience marked this great instance of prayer.* It was, nevertheless, not the patience of silence, but of speech; it was not the patience of sitting down with folded hands, but of kneeling down with clasped hands; it was the patience of importunity, that very characteristic to which Jesus himself in the days of his *flesh* gave such prominence and such conspicuous honour (Luke xviii. 1—8).

II. PRAYER WAS IN NO SENSE AT A DISCOUNT BECAUSE IT WAS AN AGE OF MIRACLE, AND OF ABUNDING MIRACLE. 1. However conspicuously God *does* the work, and the Word of Christ is at work, and the Holy Spirit's energy is essential and must be confessed, nothing is diminished of the act of prayer (if we may for a moment so call

it) in all this history. Men pray, pray constantly, pray even before miracle, and prayer is an actual deed honoured of Heaven. It has been truly said that a correct *alias* for the Acts of the Apostles would be "The Acts of the Holy Ghost," and this is most true. Another not altogether inapt style of the book might be "The Acts of Prayer." For here they abound and in the most significant situation, from those of the first chapter (i. 14, 24) to that of the last (xxviii. 8). 2. The distinctness and promptness of reply to prayer, which miracles wrought made occasionally very evident, even had the tendency to increase faith in prayer. Men would not lie by and do nothing when they remembered how only yesterday God graciously and marvellously interposed undeniably for even eye of sense. Yet the lesson that the temporary dispensation of miracle should have taught the Church for evermore, when miracle of sense was gone is, alas! often lost now. Need the thing signified be lost and wastefully sacrificed because the mere outside sign is gone? It is all our own fault if we do not oftener see for ourselves the fulfilment of the word of Jesus, "Ye shall see greater things than these." It is undeniable that *one spiritual* miracle, e.g., that of the conversion of Saul, counted for more, counts still for more, will ever count for more, than all the miracles wrought upon the body, that ever were. Let the Church's prayer *to-day* oftener challenge some *spiritual* miracle, and who will doubt the issue?

III. In conclusion, two things might be well observed, as justly to be gathered from this subject. 1. That the *very heart* of prayer lies in petition. Petition may be considered as the *crucial* question which prayer involves, and the crowning privilege of it. The petition of the sinner for mercy, pardon, salvation, being ever to be ranked as the *typical* petition. 2. That it may be placed among the moral defences of prayer, that the qualities which make it real, which make it strong, which make it a convincing and mighty power, are just the same with those which make *work* real, strong, and full of fruit. Distinctness of object, sincerity of faith in your practical object, earnestness in the pursuit of it, and patient, persevering determination are the qualities that win the day. And they do so by the verdict of the world. It is an indication that prayer and work have known one another this long time, and, so far from disclaiming a family relationship, persistently assert it. They are the union of the Divine and the human.—B.

Vers. 6—17.—*One instance of the manner of Divine working.* When we read the "mighty works" of Jesus or of those commissioned by him, whether apostles or angels, it is an easy thing to permit our attention to be diverted from anything else contained in them, under the influence of the fascination of the *power* which they display. For this very thing is often done, and the *moral* quality, the moral beauty, and even the moral imitableness of what we call the miracle, is ignored. The loss is as gratuitous as it is wasteful, nor is it free from an element of perverseness, when it exhibits us stricken by the wonder of the power we cannot, negligent of the grace we might, learn. Meantime the various character and aspect of the miracles recorded in Scripture are neither less astonishing nor less pleasing than the various colour and hue and fragrance of the flowers of the garden. The impression may be described as a whole as the charm latent, or sometimes less latent than evident, in the *Divine working*. To contemplate this must ever add to our *sense* of Divine gracefulness, may in some degree improve our own approach to it and growth in it. Let us in this sense consider the Divine interposition here recorded. For whatever reason, it is mercifully resolved on. Prayer unceasing has brought help. The Divine wisdom has determined the trenchant and decisive character of the help. And in humbled yet grateful and joyous feeling nevertheless, we may note the contrasts suggested by the Divine work and too much of our own. Observe—

I. THE ACTUAL LIGHT WHICH IS THROWN ROUND ABOUT DIVINE WORK. (Ver. 7.) "Clouds and darkness are round about" God himself, his incomprehensible character, his hidden purposes, his sovereign will. This is very true. But when he comes to work distinctly for men and among them, his footsteps are not in the stealthy dark. The angel comes in light, and the prison is lighted up, whoever is awake to see and whoever has eyes to see.

II. THE FINISHED COMPLETENESS OF THAT WORKING. The angel brings all necessary instruction; does *all* that could be needful, or helpful; condescends to the meanest

instructions. He strikes Peter so as to awake him; he gives him a hand; he tells him to be quiet; he snaps the chains off his hands; he bids him dress and put on his shoes, and throw his garment about him, and follow whither he would lead. All the work is known and facile, and orderly and swift, without grating or a jar, and to such a degree that the very subject of it can think it is a vision and dream of an unbroken sleep.

III. THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF DIVINE WORKING. Often as we murmuringly and impatiently may chide what seems its lingering, halting step, when it comes how grateful its advent! how true to exact need and to the nick of occasion! How simple in its helpfulness and real in its usefulness! There is so little sound of profession about it, but all is deed.

IV. ITS CONDESCENDING WILLINGNESS TO FORM PART OF HUMAN WORKING. The interposition that is most marked for its superhuman element does not hold itself in lofty and haughty isolation, but begins from some human suggestion, and leaves just as though it put the rest trustingly into man's hand again. The angel did all that was needful to get Peter outside the prison, and passed with him safely the first ward and the second ward, and through the iron gate that knew the step of its master and opened of its own accord, and "through one street," and then departed. And Peter sees after that for himself, and understands and carries on the work, showing himself to many praying friends (ver. 12), sending express word to "James and the brethren" (ver. 17), and putting himself beyond present danger, as one more mindful of Divine protection and goodness than rashly courting danger and notoriety.

V. THE JOYFUL SURPRISE IT WILL REPEATEDLY SPREAD. From the rescued Peter himself to the delighted damsel Rhoda, to the party of the pious praying at the house of her of the auspicious name, Mary, to the fellow-apostle James and to the brethren, the tones of glad surprise die down, only to wake and revive again and again. The echoes of human sorrows, sighs, wails, are not, after all, the only echoes heard in this world. These others ring through the circles of the earth's air and the heaven's with lighter, merrier bound, and fail not to give some forewarning of the endless echoes of "gladness and joy and singing" that shall be ere long.

VI. AFTER ALL, ITS SUPREME AND DECISIVE CONFOUSION OF HUMAN OPPOSITION. Many an earthly conflict, settled with all the wisdom and devotion that human mind and heart can bring to bear, seems still left an unsettled conflict. The wound is not certainly healed up; the difference is not absolutely removed; the victory is not really satisfactory. But how is it when God interposes? How is it when Jesus speaks, whether to wind and sea or to saint or sinner? How is it when the Spirit comes upon the scene into the heart? And this was well illustrated now. Where now are the prison, and the chains, and the soldiers, and the keepers? And where is the guilty temporizer himself, Herod? They none of them can bear the light of that next morning. They cannot "abide the day of his coming." After no "small stir" the soldiers lose rank, the keepers lose life, Herod abundantly loses dignity, and "goes down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and there abides," probably sorry he ever went up or began to care "to please the Jews." And past the storm, the song of the servant of Christ is heard, repeating itself and confirmed, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews." Who so safe, who so blessed as those "delivered" by the Lord from their foes and his, and kept thenceforth in his sure place and the secret hiding-place of his pavilion?—B.

Vers. 21—23.—*Hollow grandeur exposed.* There is no doubt that the time of our Saviour and the apostles was a time which witnessed some of the worst, the lowest, and the most malign forms of bodily disease. Similarly the time owned to some of the most monstrous types of moral deformity. The same chapter that tells us of the kindly, pitiful, "very present help in time of trouble" that the innocent and God-fearing Peter found, records, as if for telling contrast's sake, the judgment that was divinely aimed at Herod, "suddenly and without remedy" visited on one who now had filled up the measure of his iniquities. A triple type of cruelty, vain-glory, and irreligion is here before us. It is, however, more particularly the crowning and at the same time killing point of a godless career which demands now attention.

Notice—

I. A GRAND RECEPTION. 1. It is a reception given by Herod. He wields great power; he is conscious of it. It is no moral power. It is the result of no intellectual force; of no lofty character; of no social attractiveness; of no love to be kind, courteous, helpful in smoothing the ruggedness and softening the hardness of daily life and work. He is on no sort of level whatsoever with those whom he is pleased to allow to swell his vanity and feed the bad fires of his heart. 2. It is a reception given to a large number of those who were for the moment in the position, not of mere subjects, but of abject dependents on Herod. They had already felt his "high displeasure." Because of it they feared for their very bread. More ignorant than he, and driven by the supreme motives of desire of livelihood and business, they have already succumbed, bribing probably Herod's chamberlain, and crouching in their approach to make representations to himself. Yes; they were driven by *motive* the pinch of which *he* had never been likely to know. 3. It was a reception which was to be a token of reconciliation; but a reconciliation founded on the entire *yielding* of the one part and the undisputed *victory* of the other. That victory was certainly the victory of might, and with every probability the victory of might over right. There had been no genuine compromise, no giving and taking, no kindly consideration for aggrieved feeling and "wounded spirit." Therefore the grand reception was all to the honour and glory of one called Herod Agrippa the First.

II. A GRAND SPEECH. Not one word of this speech is saved on the page of history. And that loss we may without hesitation count gain. It spares pain to others, and spares something of distinctness of outline to the shame and disgrace attaching to Herod. The circumstances, however, suit nothing else than what shall profess and purport to be a grand speech. The "day" is fixed; there is nothing of an impromptu character about the occasion. The "royal apparel" is brought into requisition; the eyes of many beholders shall flash in the reflection of gold and colour, to learn a vulgar wonder and to improve in the commonest covetousness. And the "throne" is set and mounted. None can doubt of what sort the "oration" that followed. It is magniloquence. It is condescendingness. It is self-glorification. It is (on approaching the subject which brought the embassy) sham magnanimity. And under cover of this is a manifesto of take all or the utmost possible, give nothing or the least conceivable. The grandeur of the oration was the grandeur of hollow brass. How much grand speech differs from (1) simple, truthful speech; (2) speech the unmixed object of which is usefulness; (3) kindly and sympathetic speech; (4) speech of unaffected gracefulness and beauty!

III. A GRAND SHOUT. That shout entered into the ears of Herod like the very ministry of satisfaction itself—satisfaction in its most exigent degree, self-satisfaction. Supreme vanity must love a shout rather than articulate language for obvious reasons. The vague looms larger, goes further, amplifies to the gift of the excited imagination, and cannot be held bound afterwards to justify itself. But this shout found words as well, and grand words they were indeed, if true. "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men" (ch. xiv. 11) was a testimony, if mistaken in its form, yet true to some extent in its spirit. And if the present testimony have any such substance of truth and of honesty in it, it shall be accepted according to that which it hath, and not condemned for that which it hath not. The *words*, too, of this shouting are grandly chosen; they are sententious; they are in a sense antithetic; they speak the perfection of commendation for human tongue, which the psalmist would tell us is "the glory" of man's frame. "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" Herod had taken his seat, and "not angels' voices" could for his ears "have yielded sweeter music" than that shout and the recitative that rose out of it. The supreme point of a delicious intoxication of the conscience's very worst opiate had that moment arrived.

IV. A GRAND EXPOSURE. 1. Herod is *proclaimed* before men and angels and before all time, as much as though all time were there and then present, as a typical instance of the man who knows not that his "chief end is to glorify God." Either he knows; it not, or he forgets it at an awful moment, or he defies it at the *turning* moment of his existence. Long proving-time has been his—the decisive crucial moment has come. And *this—this*, alas!—is its revelation. 2. Herod's "grand speech," of which not one word remains to us (and possibly enough few of its words were heard intelligently by a people who were wrought up and highly excited), is proclaimed to

be one that has had for its sole object to lead up to this profane glorification of self, and has been guilty of forgetfulness to glorify God or even of denying glory to God. 3. The very shout of the people and the voice that gave subsequent articulateness to the shout are proclaimed to be *really less their shout and their voice than those of Herod himself*. Their throats and lips made the sound, but *he* found the breath for it, and all else, as, e.g. the place, occasion, motive, or inducement. A finale of this kind had been premeditated, if not prearranged and actually organized and got up. (1) The people had a thousand pressing inducements or *temptations* to do as they did, and to lend their voices for a moment to a cry which their hearts very probably abhorred; their temptations were as numerous as all the reasons for which they loved the "nourishment" of "their country." And they shall be undoubtedly judged for what they did, and judged with righteous judgment, when their time too is ripe. But they had not the opportunity of knowledge and the sovereign ease and self-disposition which were at the command of Herod. (2) Herod is tenfold guilty; he is wrong himself without anything to account for it but the worst cancerous craving of a wicked heart, and he leads a number of innocent "sheep" (2 Sam. xxiv. 17) into temptation, sin, danger. It is evident—nay, 'tis the one revelation involved in the *exposé* of this memorable moment—that the all-seeing eye, the all-just judgment, the casting vote of Heaven, the verdict that puts an end to all dispute, credits the major responsibility, the overwhelmingly preponderant responsibility for what had taken place—to the *account of Herod*. 4. Position, power, splendour, wealth, an earthly throne, arbitrary governing, and all the rest of it, are proclaimed here at their true worth. They are shown up as the flimsy covering only of the *real* in a man, let that real be what it may. They *don't* keep the weather out; they don't keep disease out; they don't keep malignant and loathsome disease out; they don't shield conscience, heart, or body; they don't keep God out, no, not for a moment. But they do avail to do *one* thing—they suffice to throw out into amazing prominence the contrast between truth and falsehood, when God enters into judgment, and casts down those whom he never uplifted, and "removes the diadem and takes off the crown" (Ezek. xxi. 26), and rends in twain the gorgeous royal raiment, none of which his hand had bestowed. Then even on earth is seen the manifest beginning of the "everlasting shame and contempt." 5. Last of all, it is here emphatically proclaimed that to *omit* to take right action and to *omit* to utter right speech may sometimes justly be exposed to bear all the same blame as to do and to speak the wrong. The apostles: once and again, when offered Divine honours, exerted themselves with the utmost energy to refuse it, and gave their abhorrence of the idolatrous offering to be abundantly plain. This was the least that Herod should have done, and what he surely would have done if he had not already willingly "regarded iniquity in his heart." So, when the people gave a great shout and said, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!" and Herod never protested a word, it is the same as if he had done all the preparation, pulled the wires, and spoken the impious words himself. For God searcheth and trieth and knoweth "the thoughts and intents of the heart." And he will not be robbed of his own.—B.

Ver. 5.—*The power of united prayer*. This subject is not here to be treated in its more general bearings, only so far as it finds illustration in the circumstances connected with the text, and in the sentence, "Prayer was made earnestly of the Church unto God for him;" i.e. for imprisoned St. Peter. The persecution of the early Christians arose from distinctly different causes; and the narrative associated with this text introduces a distinctly new kind of persecution. Previously the Sanhedrim, as the central authority among the Jews in all matters of religious doctrine and discipline, had endeavoured to crush the young, and to their view mischievous, sect. Now Herod, as the representative of the state, endeavoured to destroy the party by aiming directly at its leaders; and this he did for what we may call "diplomatic" reasons. It may be well to notice that the Herod introduced here was Herod Agrippa I., son of Aristobulus, and grandson of Herod the Great; and that the events occurred about A.D. 41. According to Josephus, Agrippa desired to be thought a devout Jew, and so would easily be excited to persecute the Christian party, when he found that this would ensure for him the confidence of the leading Jews. With Herod's scheme for striking down

the chief teachers, compare Diocletian's subsequent scheme for finding and burning the Christian books. Neither scheme was allowed to succeed. Another point of importance in introducing the subject is the recognized position of leadership which St. Peter had evidently gained. St. James, as one of the three specially favoured disciples, may have been equally prominent. Of St. John we learn very little during the first period of the early Church history. St. James's sudden removal left St. Peter the recognized head of the Christian sect. It appears that only the intervention of the feast-time (humanly speaking), preserved St. Peter from the sudden fate which overtook St. James. The delay, during which St. Peter was in prison, gave opportunity for human intercessions and Divine interventions. Some may serve God in a yielded life, others by being made the subjects of Divine rescuings and deliverances. The first thing to be noticed in the narrative is—

I. HELPLESSNESS THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES. The Church was thoroughly overborne by the suddenness, activity, and vigour of this new persecution. They could do nothing. St. James was gone; St. Peter was in prison. They did not know where the next blow would fall. They could not open the prison doors. They were paralyzed. And so it often is with us in life. We incline to say, "All these things are against me." Our way seems to be blocked in all directions, as truly as was the way of the fleeing Israelites when the Red Sea rolled before them, the mountains hemmed them in, and a raging foe pressed on their rear. At times in our lives we are compelled to feel that we can do nothing; and the experience is a great testing of patience, faith, and feeling. Compare David, convinced that circumstances were hopelessly against him, and despairingly saying, "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul."

II. APPEAL TO THE LORD OF CIRCUMSTANCES. This is always left to us. It is our last possibility, and it is our best. 1. It is important that we realize fully that our God *can* control all circumstances. Nothing is too hard for him. He may not always show his mastery by miracle, but he can always prove his mastery by his providences. It is our belief that over all laws, relations, and orderings of events our living God presides, never losing his hands or failing to guide all so as to fit into and, either quickly or slowly, work out his gracious purposes. 2. We must realize that to know the power of our God may not suffice; we must personally inquire of him, commend our case to his care, and submit ourselves to his leadings. For all the arrangements of our circumstances, as well as for all supplies of grace, "he will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." The Divine foreknowledge and omniscience may never be so presented as to lift off men the claim of prayer. Whatsoever may be our trouble or our need, we *may* pray; we *must* pray, God would have us "cast our care on him." So the disciples were doing the best thing possible, altogether the most hopeful thing, when they "prayed earnestly" for the imprisoned St. Peter.

III. THE FORCE OF UNITED PRAYER TO OVERCOME CIRCUMSTANCES. It has pleased God to give special assurances to those who *unite* in prayer. God responds to the faith and fervour of the individual seeker; but in all matters of general interest, in everything bearing upon the well-being and progress of his Church, God wants us to blend together in our supplications. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father." By this requirement God: 1. Checks the tendency to isolation and to distinction of interests among his people, binding them ever closer together in the expression of their common wants. 2. Assures earnestness and fervour of feeling, as one devout soul inspires another. 3. Prepares the way for his answer by ensuring a state of mind fitted to receive the answer, and make it a blessing indeed. 4. Is enabled to respond by ordering the circumstances of his providence so as to secure the general good of many rather than the particular desires of one. It may be shown, in conclusion, how a common point of interest or a common trouble may serve to bring many souls together in a blessed *unity of prayer*.—R. T.

Vers. 7—10.—*Miraculous deliverances.* The series of miracles wrought by our Lord during his ministry, and the miracles associated with the history and work of his apostles, require to be very carefully compared. Sometimes miracles were wrought *by* the apostles as agents, and sometimes *for* them as teachers whose ministry it was

important to preserve. And yet, when God would secure the deliverance of his imperilled servants, he did not always employ miraculous agencies. Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, but they were rescued by natural means; an earthquake proved effective to the loosening of their bonds, and the jolting open of the prison doors. There must have been some special reasons for the miraculous form in which St. Peter's deliverance was effected. Two things require attention, as introductory to this subject.

1. The nature of New Testament miracles, and their particular mission to the age in which they were wrought.
2. The ideas of angelic ministry which had passed over to the apostles from Judaic associations. The intervention of angels had occurred again and again in the earlier history, and such an event as St. Peter's rescue would not start doubts in a Jewish mind. God's revelations to men, "in sundry ways and in divers manners," were better apprehended by Jews than by Christians now. From this incident we may be led to consider—

I. THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE MIRACULOUS. Here should be given an historical review of Divine interventions, with some classification of their character and of the circumstances under which the miracles were wrought. It will be found that there are cases in which (1) natural agencies sufficed, under the ordering of Divine providence, to remove the difficulty; (2) in which miraculous intervention did not come when we might reasonably have expected; (3) and in which miraculous agencies were used when we did not expect them. These points may be illustrated to show that the employment of the miraculous is (a) a matter of Divine sovereignty, and never offered in response to any compulsion of man or of circumstances; and (b) that it is therefore still a Divine reserve, and we dare not affirm that the age of miracles is past, because the employment of them is to be regarded as entirely dependent on the Divine judgment and will; and as that will acts upon considerations of the higher and spiritual well-being of man, it may quite conceivably be that in some of man's moral states the miraculous may be the most efficient moral force. It is true that miracles may not be wisely employed in a characteristically scientific age such as ours may be called; but the scientific is only a passing feature, and from it there may conceivably come a rebound to a characteristically *imaginative*, or as some might call it *superstitious*, age, to which miracle might again make efficient appeal. The incident of St. Peter's release is a peculiar case of employment of the miraculous—peculiar in that (1) it differs materially from all the other apostolic miracles; and (2) in that it carries the style of Old Testament miracles over into the New, and is to be classed with the deliverance of the three Hebrew youths from the furnace, and of Daniel from the lions.

II. THE LIMITATIONS OF THE MIRACULOUS. These are even more striking than the uses. In the case of our Lord's miracles the general principle of the limitation is indicated. Miracles he never wrought for the supply of his own needs, only for the exertion of a gracious moral influence on others. These two limitations may be illustrated.

1. A miracle is never wrought unless it can be made the enforcement or illustration of some moral truth.
2. A miracle is never wrought unless those in whose behalf it is wrought are in a duly receptive state of mind and feeling, and so can be benefited by the miracle. It does not affect this principle of limitation that some of those who are related to a miracle may be rather hardened by it than taught and blessed. St. Peter was not miraculously delivered for his own sake, but for the sake of the confidence which the praying Church might gain from such a proof of the Divine defence and care.

III. THE ADAPTATIONS OF THE MIRACULOUS.

1. To the particular occasion.
2. To the tone and sentiment of the age.
3. To the Divine dispensation, with which it has to be in harmony.
4. To the precise underlying purpose for the sake of which it is wrought. On these principles we may even discern miraculous workings in these our times, though they take forms of adaptation to our thought and associations, and are not after the precise Old Testament or New Testament patterns. We look for direct Divine agencies in the moral and spiritual rather than in the physical and material world.

IV. THE RESULTS ATTAINED BY THE MIRACULOUS. How far it can be used as evidence or proof needs to be carefully considered. Wiser men only use miracles as auxiliary evidence of the truth of Christianity. And for this use the *character* of the miracle rather than the *power* in the miracle are of chief importance. In connection with our text we find one result on which it may be profitable to dwell in conclusion. The Divine rescue of St. Peter brought to the praying and persecuted Church a *sense of*

God's protective presence. So suddenly had persecution burst upon them, so overwhelming did it seem, that they were for the moment paralyzed with fear—just as the servant of Elisha was when the Syrian army surrounded the house—and nothing could so immediately and efficiently recall them to calmness and trust as this wonderful rescue of St. Peter, convincing them, as it did, how tenderly near to them was their living and almighty Lord. Such a moral result will in every age suffice to explain a Divine miraculous revelation or intervention.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*Testimony versus reasoning.* The subject is suggested by the persistence of Rhoda and the incredulity of the disciples. Upon the evidence of her senses Rhoda constantly affirmed that it was St. Peter who stood at the gate. The disciples vigorously argued that it could not be he, and tried to reason away her testimony, St. Peter was in prison, and it was simply impossible that he could be knocking at the gate. So much is made in our time of the demand for facts and evidence and verification of all statements, and it is so often assumed that reasoning can destroy testimony, or that testimony, as we have it on the Christian theme, is insufficient to support our elaborate reasoning, that the trustworthiness of each, and the relations in which each stands to the other, may be profitably considered.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF TESTIMONY. Our senses are the appointed media for our communication with the outer world, and they are both the first and constant sources of our knowledge. We learn to trust them. We readily receive the testimony of others as to what they have seen and heard, and, with limitations, as to what they have felt. There is, then, (1) knowledge received directly upon the testimony of our own senses; and (2) knowledge received indirectly upon the testimony of others who tell us what they know through the senses. And as the sphere directly open to each one of us is very limited, we are very largely dependent for our knowledge on the testimony of others, upon such witness of personal knowledge as Rhoda gave. In the matters of the Christian religion we are wholly dependent on this indirect witness of the senses. What the apostles themselves saw, and tasted, and handled, and felt of the Word of life, that they declare unto us. The four Gospels come to us as the testimony of the senses of men who looked on Christ, lived with him, listened to him, and knew him in the intimacy of a close and dear friendship. We cannot too constantly or too earnestly urge that Christianity rests upon a basis of sensible facts, and that of them we have the testimony directly from the very persons who witnessed them. Therefore, though all the world may please to declare that we are mad, as the disciples said that Rhoda was, we too shall constantly affirm that it is even so as we have testified. No facts of human history can be received by us save on principles which compel us also to receive the facts of our Redeemer's life and death.

II. HUMAN TESTIMONY MUST ALWAYS BE UNCERTAIN. This should be fully admitted. It is uncertain, because (1) our senses may be untrained and so unfit to receive impressions; or (2) diseased, and so likely to receive distorted impressions; or (3) the subjects with which they are concerned may be altogether new to us, and we may thus be unprepared duly to correct impression. Still, so far as the bare facts are concerned, the uncertainty is not such as to prove a practical disability. In the range of fact men are found generally to agree.

III. HUMAN REASONING IS NECESSARILY UNCERTAIN. As in the case of the disciples who reasoned against Rhoda. The uncertainty comes out of: 1. Prejudice and bias (see the *idola* of Bacon). 2. Insufficient facts; some of the worst reasoning is explained by incomplete knowledge of the facts on which the reasoning is based. 3. False methods (see the *fallacies* explained in books on logic).

IV. THE TRUTH MAY BE REACHED BY WISE REASONING UPON SUFFICIENT TESTIMONY. To receive testimony alone may be mere credulity. To receive upon argument alone may be to yield to mere human force, to the power of superior intellect. But with due inquiry into basis-facts, and careful reasoning upon the facts, we may arrive at satisfying apprehensions of the truth. Apply to the acceptance of Christianity, with its difficulty of the miraculous. The four Gospels are a fourfold testimony to the great Christian facts. We must build our reasoning on the facts; just as those disciples should have received Rhoda's fact, and followed it up with their reasoning, and not made their reasoning oppose the facts.—R. T.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The sin of accepting Divine honours.* The explanation of this incident is given in the exegetical portion of this Commentary. Several points of interest come out upon comparison of the Scripture narrative with that given by Josephus. The Jewish historian is fuller on the adulation offered to Herod than is St. Luke. He notices the remarkable silver garment which Herod wore on the occasion, and the effect it produced on the people, adding that “presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place and another from another, though not for his good, that he was a god. And they added, ‘Be thou merciful to us, for although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.’ Upon this the king *did neither rebuke them nor reject their impious flattery.*” St. Luke distinctly makes the same charge, stating that he was smitten because *he gave not God the glory.* He permitted himself to listen to and accept the flattery, and failed to see that in so doing he openly and publicly insulted the Divine majesty. This God never will permit. He is jealous—in the high sense of that term—of his sole and sovereign rights, and immediately punishes all who dare to claim the honour which is due alone to him. Flattery of the creature may never rise to this height. Man can commit no sin so heinous as that of assuming Divine honours and rights. The most striking illustration is that of Nebuchadnezzar, whose pride swelled to a claim of Divine power and honour, and was, immediately upon his boastful utterance, smitten of God with a most humiliating disease. It is said that Antiochus the Great, because he sinned in a similar high-handed way, was brought low by a disease like that which afflicted Herod. We may consider some of the reasons why there is such jealousy of the Divine rights, and why Jehovah’s honour he will never give to another.

I. THE SOLE CLAIM OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR RIGHT RELATIONS WITH HIM. We are required to love God with *all* our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. We cannot unless he be indeed the one and only God. We are to recognize our relations with him as *Creator*, and to admit the claims which this relationship brings. But we cannot conceive of two Creators; he hath made us, and he alone. Our life is to be under *his present gracious lead*; in all our ways we are to acknowledge him, and to feel that he directs our paths; but only confusion can come into our thought and life if our daily allegiance is to be in any sense divided. Sin only gains its heinousness in our sight when it is thought of as committed against the one supreme will, and redemption has no point if it be not our recovery to the harmony of that one will. Illustrations may be taken from the confusion created by dualistic and polytheistic systems. Men never could be quite sure that they had propitiated the right god, and a constant anxiety wore away the hearts of even the sincerely pious.

II. THE SOLE CLAIM OF GOD IS THE FOUNDATION OF MORALS. The connection between the two tables of the Law needs to be carefully considered. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” is an injunction without force save as it follows on the great command to “love God with all our heart.” The life of morality is love to the one living God. The spirit of sonship is the inspiration of brotherhood. If a man truly loves God he will love his brother also. Illustrate from the uncertainty of all moral systems associated with polytheism. Some of the gods became even the patrons of impurity and immorality. Our one God being the “ideal of goodness,” his service must be wholly pure.

III. THE CLAIM OF MAN TO DIVINE HONOURS REVEALS HIS UTMOST DEGRADATION. The claim has been made again and again, but only by men utterly abandoned, mastered by pride and self-conceit, and only after the crushing down of all reverence. Self-will may go great lengths and keep within human limits; it becomes Satanic when it dares to rival God and claim for itself Divine rights. When such heart-baseness is declared, the man must come under the immediate and awful judgments of God, even as Herod did.—R. T.

Ver. 24.—*The growings of the Word.* The terms used here indicate a continuous expansion. “Grew and multiplied” is a blending of figures, and does not easily fit into the term, “Word of God.” Probably St. Luke associated the word with our Lord’s parable of the “sower;” and thought of it as *seed*, growing up and bringing forth its hundredfold. Two things are suggested by the sentence taken as a text
 1 St. Luke notices, as a remarkable thing, that, in spite of all the persecutions and

hindrances of those evil times, the Word of God grew. 2. And that a sudden revival of zeal, earnestness, and success followed on the dreadful judgment and sudden removal of the Church's great persecutor. It is to the first of these two points that we now direct attention.

I. THE APPARENT HINDRANCES OF TROUBLOUS TIMES. The recent history of Madagascar Christianity provides most effective illustration; or instances may be found in the histories of Lollards, Waldenses, etc. Persecuting times seem to be ruinous; their influence is directed to (1) the removal of the Christian leaders; (2) the silencing of Christian teachers and writers; (3) the stoppage of Christian worship; (4) the destruction of Christian books, and especially of the Divine Word. But it has never been found that physical violence has been more than *apparent* hindrance. The nearest approach ever made to success is probably the crushing of French Protestantism by the Massacre of St. Bartholomew. We are learning well the lesson that intellectual evils must be met by intellectual resistances and corrections, and that moral evils must be removed by moral agencies. "The weapons of our Christian warfare are not carnal, but spiritual," and it is vain work for any to oppose us with mere shield and sword and spear. Illustrate from the martyrdom of John Brown, the advocate of freedom for the slave. Persecution seemed to succeed, and

"John Brown's body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
But his soul is marching on"—

marching on to triumph in the vast lands of America, and marching on to another glorious victory in the newly found highlands of mighty Africa. Persecution cannot stop the onward progress of man's thought or man's love.

II. THE REAL HELPFULNESS OF TROUBLOUS TIMES. The marvel is that the seed actually grows and multiplies in such times. We think the rainstorms hopelessly beat down the young and tender blades. Nay, they really nourish the roots, and prepare for vigorous upspringing and richer fruitage. Moral harvests wave where martyrs' blood was shed. We may recognize the helpfulness of troublous times if we notice: 1. How they tend to bind men together. Differences of opinion and judgment are for a time forgotten. The common ground is fully recognized. Suffering throws each one upon the loving interest and care of the others, and lessons of the Christian brotherhood are then learned as they can be under no other circumstances. Prosperity and times of peace tend to bring prominently forward men's diversities, and in such times sects are multiplied. Troublous times make men forget their peculiarities in facing a common foe and in sharing a common woe. 2. How they increase enthusiasm and develop energy. Nothing calls forth the latent powers of men like resistance to liberty of opinion. Let a scientific truth be opposed, and the whole energy of the discoverer is called forth for its maintenance, and to him that truth grows tenfold more important and more precious. So with the Christian verities, we "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" only when that faith is being contended against. 3. How they bring men more fully to lean on the Divine power. They bring that sense of personal helplessness which makes us cling to the assurance, "Greater is he who is with us than all who can be against us." We feel we may walk alone if it is all light about us. We must lean hard on God if it is night-time and stormy all about us. 4. How they draw public attention to the Christian workers. There is no advertising agent comparable for a moment in efficiency with persecution. Age after age Christ's enemies have done Christ's work, and witnessed among all lands for him, as they have martyred his servants and persecuted his Church. Suffering has a sacred power on human hearts everywhere, and Christ's suffering Church wins men for Christ.—R. T.

Ver. 25.—*The character of John Mark.* This man is not introduced to us for the first time in this verse, but this may be regarded as his formal introduction. For the sketch of his life, which should prepare for our study of his character, our readers are referred to our Commentary on St. Mark's Gospel. We only recall to mind a few prominent points. 1. He was evidently at this time a comparatively young man. 2. He was directly associated with the early disciples, as they seem to have met at his mother's house. 3. It is more than probable that he had personally known the Lord

Jesus Christ. 4. He was closely related to Barnabas, being his sister's son. 5. He was, very probably, a rich young man, and devoted his wealth to the missionary work of the Church. 6. His office, as minister or attendant on Barnabas and Paul, was one necessitated by the difficulties and perils of travelling in those times. 7. In spirit and character John Mark should be carefully compared with Timothy. We note that he always occupies a subordinate position, but that there was a precise sphere which he could occupy, and a useful work given him to do. His failure from missionary work may be regarded as an indication that he had not, at that time, found his proper sphere. The man who was to prepare a written Gospel had not the kind of boldness and energy that was necessary for dangerous travelling. As suggestive and opening the way for a full study of his character, we notice that he was *sincere, studious, timid, impulsive, and patient*.

I. **SINCERE.** His failure was in no way a sign of unfaithfulness to Christ. He left Barnabas and Saul, but he did not cease to minister to Christ. Years after he is spoken of for his profitableness, and he was evidently a sincere Christian. It may be shown how sincerity is the leading Christian virtue, and how it will abide and sanctify all varieties of disposition, character, talent, and adaptations for service. We can all be sincere.

II. **STUDIOUS.** Of a meditative and thoughtful habit, finding his right place when collecting the records of our Lord's words and deeds, and possibly doing so under St. Peter's supervision. God needs studious men, but they are seldom fitted for any other than their own particular work. They are hardly ever prepared for the public conflicts of life, and they have even some characteristic moral frailties. St. Paul knew the weakness of the studious Timothy, and bids him "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

III. **TIMID.** This was the secret of his unwillingness to venture on the perilous journey into Asia Minor. Shrinking from danger, and even from exertion and enterprise. Such men never can be leaders. They had better stay at home. They seldom can be men of great faith. Their mental history matches their material history—they are timid about the truth, seldom quite sure of their own hold of it, and ever ready to join the foolish cry, "The Church is in danger." We get no heroic champions from the class to which John Mark belonged.

IV. **IMPULSIVE.** Some have thought that the young man who was nearly arrested with Christ was John Mark, and that he had heard the noise, and impulsively rushed out of his house to see what was going on, and had forgotten his outer robe. The same impulsiveness is seen in his refusing to go on with the missionaries. But notice how it differs from the impulsiveness of St. Peter or of St. Paul. It was a kind of negative impulsiveness, not urging him to do, but keeping him from doing. A dangerous spirit to cherish into strength.

V. **PATIENT.** This we may see illustrated in his Gospel, remembering that he had not the personal experiences of St. Matthew or St. John, and had to collect and collate his materials.

From John Mark we may learn these things. 1. A man has his own particular work for which he is divinely fitted. 2. If a man makes the mistake of trying to do somebody else's work, it is a blessed thing that God's providence stops him, and turns him into the path where he may work efficiently and successfully.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ver. 1.—*At Antioch, in the Church that was there for in the Church that was at Antioch, A.V.; prophets, etc., for certain prophets, etc., A.V. and T.R.; Barnabas, etc., for as Barnabas, etc., A.V.; Symeon for Simon, A.V.; the foster-brother of for which had been brought up with, A.V. At Antioch, in the Church, etc. Κατὰ τὴν οὐσαν ἐκκλη-*

stav rather means "the existing Church," just as *αἱ οὐσαι ἐξουσίαι* means "the existing powers," "the powers that be," in Rom. xiii. 1, A.V. and T.R. *Tha then Church* seems more the meaning than *the Church there*. Luke writes from the standpoint of many years later. Prophets were a regular part of the ministry of the then Church (see ch. xi. 27; xxi. 9, 10; Rom. xii. 6, 7; 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28; xiii. 2, etc.; xiv. 1, 3, etc.,

22, 24, 31, 32; Eph. iv. 11. See also note on ch. iv. 26). Teachers (*διδάσκαλοι*) are coupled with *prophets*, as here, in 1 Cor. xii. 28, 29; Eph. iv. 11. The *teachers* would appear to differ from the prophets in that they were not under the ecstatic influence of the Holy Spirit, and did not utter exhortations or prophecies in a poetic strain, but were expounders of Christian truth, under the teaching of the Spirit. What they spoke was called a *διδασχά* (1 Cor. xiv. 26), and their function was *διδασκαλία*, as Rom. xii. 7, where *διδασκαλία* is reckoned among the *χαρίσματα*, the gifts of the Holy Ghost. It was forbidden to women to *teach* (*διδάσκειν*: 1 Tim. ii. 12), though they might prophesy (ch. xxi. 9). It is thought by Meyer, Alford, and others that the position of the particles *τε* attaching the two following names to Barnabas in the first place, and one name following to Manaen in the second, indicates that Barnabas, Symeon, and Lucius were prophets, and Manaen and Saul teachers. Lucius has by some been falsely identified with St. Luke. The foster-brother; *σύντροφος* may equally mean a foster-brother, one nursed at the same time at the same breast, which would indicate that Manaen's mother was wet-nurse to Herod the tetrarch; or a playmate, which would indicate that he had been *sodalis* to Herod. It is only found here in the New Testament, and is used by Xenophon, Plutarch, etc., and in 1 Macc. i. 7; 2 Macc. ix. 29. In this chapter and onwards the scene of the great drama of Christianity is transferred from Jerusalem to Antioch. The first part, which has hitherto been played by Peter and John and James, is now taken up by Barnabas and Saul, soon, however, to be classed as Paul and Barnabas.

Ver. 2.—*And as for as*, A.V. They ministered; i.e. not, as Meyer explains it, the whole Church, but the prophets and teachers, doubtless at an assembly of the Church. The word *λειτουργούντων*, here rendered "they ministered" (from which the word "Liturgy" is derived), signifies any solemn ministrations or holy service. In the Old Testament the LXX. use it as the rendering of *לָמַד*, to minister (often with the addition "to God," or "to the Lord"), which is a general word applying to the ministrations of priests and Levites (Exod. xxviii. 35; Numb. viii. 26, etc.). Hence its use in Heb. x. 11 (see too Luke i. 23; Heb. ix. 21). Joshua too is called Moses' minister (*לְמַדְּךָ*) in Josh. i. 1, etc., and the angels are called *λειτουργικά πνεύματα*, "ministering spirits" (Heb. i. 14). Just as the Church transferred from the Jewish congregation so many other words and things, so also the use of the words *λειτουργία*, *λειτουργεῖν*, to

ACTS.

signify "Divine service," without specifying the particular office, whether prayer, or preaching, or Holy Communion, or ordination, or any other part of the worship of God. Its classical use was to designate any office performed by an individual for the public good. Hence in the New Testament its application to Church alms (2 Cor. ix. 12), to gifts for the support of the ministry (Phil. ii. 30), to the office of magistrates (Rom. xiii. 6), etc. The restricted application of the term *λειτουργία* to the service used in the celebration of the Eucharist was of much later growth, as is evident from Chrysostom explaining the word here of preaching. "What means ministering? Preaching" (Hom. xxvii.). It seems to have arisen from the fact that the first forms of prayer were those composed for the office of the Holy Communion. This passage, therefore, does not give the slightest support to fasting Communion. What was the exact occasion of the service and fast here spoken of it is impossible to say. The Holy Ghost said, etc. This is the origin of the question in the Ordination of Deacons, "Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" Separate me (*ἀφορίσατε*). The act of separation, or ordination, would be by the laying on of the hands of Symeon and Lucius and Manaen, as Chrysostom says (at least of the two last named), in the presence of the whole Church, but the separation by the Holy Ghost, at least as regards Saul (*δ ἀφορίσας με*), had been from his mother's womb (Gal. i. 15). Observe, too, the *καλέσας* of Gal. i. 15, and the *προσκέκλημαι* here. This is another instance of the very close resemblance between parts of the Acts and the Epistle to the Galatians, which looks as if St. Paul was writing it about the same time as he was giving to St. Luke the details of his own history (see ch. viii. 19, note). The ordination was to the apostolate (Chrysostom). Barnabas and Saul are never called apostles till after their ordination or consecration (ch. xiv. 14).

Ver. 3.—*Then for and*, A.V. It does not follow that the laying on of hands was on the same day. On the contrary, the mention of the fasting again in this verse makes it impossible so to understand it. Doubtless, on receiving this intimation of the Spirit, they fixed a day for the ordination, and prepared for it by fasting and prayer. The ember days of the Church before ordinations are in accordance with this precedent of Holy Scripture. With this departure of Barnabas and Saul commences the second and main part of the Acts of the apostles.

Ver. 4.—*Went down to for departed unto*,

A.V. (κατήλθον). Seleucia was the sea-port of Antioch, about sixteen miles from it, and five miles north of the mouth of the Orontes. It was a free city by a grant from Pompey. It is now in ruins, but "the masonry of the once magnificent port of Seleucia is in so good a state that" it might be repaired and cleared out "for about £31,000" (Colonel Chesney, quoted in Lewin, i. p. 119). They sailed to Cyprus. Barnabas, no doubt, took the lead, and was naturally drawn to his native island of Cyprus—within a hundred miles of Seleucia, and, on a clear day, visible from it. The number of Jews in the island, and the partial evangelization of it which had already taken place (ch. xi. 19, 20), and which promised them assistance and support, no doubt further influenced them. John Mark went with them, as we learn from the fifth and thirteenth verses, and possibly other brethren as deacons and ministers (see next note). They sailed straight to Salamis, "a convenient and capacious harbour," in the centre of the eastern end of the island, and the principal or one of the principal towns. It had a large population of Jews. It was destroyed in the reign of Trajan, in consequence of a terrible insurrection of the Jews, in which they massacred 240,000 of the Gentile population. No Jew was ever after allowed to land in Cyprus.

Ver. 5.—*Proclaimed for preached, A.V.; as their attendant for to their minister, A.V. (ὑπηρέτης).* It is a word taken from the synagogue, where it denotes an inferior minister (see Luke iv. 20). In ch. v. 22 the ὑπηρέται are the apparitors of the high priest. Here it is synonymous with δίδκονος, a deacon. John was to Barnabas and Saul what Joshua was to Moses, Elisha to Elijah, etc. Peter, when he went to Cassarea, was accompanied by six brethren (ch. xi. 12).

Ver. 6.—*The whole island for the isle, A.V. and T.R.* Paphos; on the south coast at the further extremity of the island, now *Baffa*. It had once a convenient harbour, which is now choked up from neglect. The chief temple of the Cyprian Venus was here. A certain sorcerer. The Greek word μάγος, whence *magic* and *magician*, is the same as in Matt. ii. 1 is rendered "wise men." But here, as in ch. viii. 9, it has a bad sense. It is a Persian word, and in its original use designated a Persian religious caste, famous for their knowledge, wisdom, and purity of religious faith. They were attached to the court of the Babylonian monarchs, and were deemed to have great skill in astrology, in interpretation of dreams, and the like (see Dan. i. 20; iv. 7 [4 in the LXX.]). In Jer. xxxix. 3, 13, the name *Rab-mag* seems

to mean "the chief of the magi." But in process of time the word "magus" came to mean a sorcerer, a magician, a practiser of dark arts, as e.g. Simon Magus (see the chapter on magic in Pliny, 'Nat. Hist.' lib. xxx. cap. i.).

Ver. 7.—*The proconsul for the deputy of the country, A.V.; a man of understanding for a prudent man, A.V.; the same for who, A.V.; unto him for for, A.V.; sought for desired, A.V.* The proconsul (ἀνθύπατος); here and vers. 8, 12. This is an instance of Luke's great accuracy. Cyprus had become a proconsular province in the reign of Claudius, having previously been one of the emperor's provinces governed by a proprætor, or legatus.¹ A man of understanding (ἀνδρὶ συνετώ). Συνετός is a rare word in the New Testament, and is always translated in the A.V. "prudent" (see Matt. xi. 25; Luke x. 21; 1 Cor. i. 19). It is common in the LXX., where it represents the Hebrew words מְבִינ, מְבִינ, and מְשָׁפֵל, all signifying "intelligence," "skill," "knowledge," and the like. The substantive σύνεσις has the same scope (see Luke ii. 47; Eph. iii. 4; Col. i. 9, etc.); ἀνὴρ συνετός, therefore, means something more than "a prudent man." It means a man of knowledge and superior intelligence and understanding. And such was Sergius Paulus, a noble Roman, who is twice named by Pliny in the list of authors placed at the commencement of his work as the authorities from whom he derived the matter contained in the several books. It is not a little remarkable that the two books, lib. ii. and lib. xviii., for which Sergius Paulus is quoted are just those which contain accounts of the heavenly bodies, and prognostications from the sun and moon and stars, from thunder, from the clouds, and such like things, which doubtless formed the staple of Elymas's science; so that there can be little doubt that Sergius Paulus had Elymas with him, that he might learn from him such matters as might be useful for the book which he was writing. There is also a curious passage in lib. xxx. cap. i. of the 'Hist. Nat.' (quoted by Lewin, vol. i. p. 128), in which Pliny, after enumerating the most famous teachers of magic, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, and others, adds, "There is also another school of magic which springs from Moses and Jannes, who were Jews, but many thousand years later

¹ Howson and Lewin give from Akerman a coin of Claudius Cæsar, with the reverse, Κυπρίων ἐπὶ Κομινίου Πρόκλου ἀνθυπάτου. Cominius Proclus is thought to have been the successor of Sergius Paulus in the proconsulate of Cyprus.

than Zoroaster; so much more recent is the school of Cyprus;" showing that he knew of a school of magic art at Cyprus taught by Jews, and leading us to infer that he had acquired this knowledge either from the pen or the mouth of Sergius Paulus. Anyhow, a remarkable confirmation of St. Luke's narrative. Another Sergius Paulus, who might be a son or grandson of the proconsul, is highly commended by Galen for his eminent philosophical attainments (Lewin, vol. i. p. 127). One L. Sergius Paulus was consul suffectus in A.D. 94, another in A.D. 168. Renan thinks they may have been descendants of the Sergius Paulus in the text.

Ver. 8.—*Turn aside for turn away*, A.V.; *proconsul for deputy*, A.V. Elymas, from the Arabic *elim*, plural *oulema*, a wise man, a wizard, a magician. But Renan thinks this derivation doubtful. Elymas withstood Barnabas and Saul just as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses (2 Tim. iii. 8, *ἀντιέστησαν*).

Ver. 9.—*But for then*, A.V.; *is also for also is*, A.V.; *fastened for set*, A.V. (above, ch. iii. 4, note). Who is also called Paul. The explanation of Jerome, Augustine, Bede, and many modern commentators, as Meyer, Olshausen, etc., and not rejected by Renan, is that Saul took the name of Paul on the occasion of this remarkable and important conversion of Sergius Paulus. Saul's future intercourse with Gentiles made it desirable that, after the common custom of the Jews of his day—as seen in Peter, Stephen, Mark, Lucius, Jason, Crispus, Justus, Niger, Aquila, Priscilla, Drusilla etc.—he should have a Gentile name, and so, in honour of his illustrious convert, or in memory of his conversion, or at the special request of Sergius Paulus (Baronius), he took the name of Paul, which in sound was not unlike his Hebrew name. The fact of this change of name being recorded by St. Luke at this precise moment makes this the most simple and natural explanation. Compare Gideon's change of name to Jerubbaal (Judg. vi. 32; vii. 1; viii. 29, 35). Alford, on the other hand, thinks it strange that any one should make such a mistake as Jerome's, and says that "this notice marks the transition from the former part of his history"—"gathered from the narratives of others"—to "the joint memoirs of himself and St. Paul." But this gives no account of the coincidence of the two Pauls, nor is it true that the latter half of the Acts begins here. It began at ver. 1, and the name of Saul has been retained three times in the early part of this chapter. Farrar speaks of this explanation as "long and deservedly abandoned," and as having in it an element of vulgarity. Howson thinks that Paul had

long been his Roman name, but that the conversion of Sergius Paulus, as it were, stereotyped the Roman name as that by which the apostle was henceforth to be known. The idea of Augustine and others, that he took the name of Paul (*Paulus*, small) from humility, to indicate that he was "the least" of the apostles, is fanciful. Neither is Chrysostom's assertion, that he changed his name at his ordination or consecration, borne out by the facts. Renan ("Saint Paul," i. 19) notes that "Paul" was a very common name in Cilicia. No certainty can be arrived at in the matter.

Ver. 10.—*All guile and all villainy for all subtilty and all mischief*, A.V.; *son for child*, A.V. The word *βδίουπυλα*, reckless conduct, villainy, wickedness, is only found here in the New Testament. The kindred form (*βδίουπρημα*) occurs in ch. xviii. 14. Thou son of the devil (comp. John viii. 33, 44; 1 John iii. 10). Elymas showed himself a child of the devil in his endeavours to resist the truth of the gospel, and substitute his own falsehoods and imposture. Compare the severity of Peter's language in rebuking Simon Magus (ch. viii. 20—23). Probably, too, he *accused* (*διέβαλεν*) Paul and Barnabas, and *traded* their motives before the proconsul, when he saw his own influence being undermined, and his gains likely to be stopped.

Ver. 11.—*Is upon thee; or rather, against thee* (Matt. x. 21; xxvi. 55; Luke xi. 17; and ver. 50 of this chapter). For a season. It has been well observed that this limitation in time is an indication that there was place for repentance. It was a remedial chastisement. A mist (*ἀχλὺς*); only here in the New Testament; but it is a medical term, very common in Hippocrates, to express a darkening and dimming of the eyes by cataract or other disease. As regards the reason why the particular punishment of blindness was inflicted upon Elymas, it might be to put a forcible interruption upon those observations of the stars and clouds by which the magician pretended to foresee the future. It would exhibit, too, to Sergius Paulus the utter helplessness of the great necromancer. Some to lead him by the hand (*χειραγωγῶν*), as Saul had needed *χειραγωγῶντας* when he was struck blind by the vision of the Saviour's glory (ch. ix. 8).

Ver. 12.—*The proconsul for the deputy*, A.V.; *teaching for doctrine*, A.V. Believsd. We cannot, perhaps, conclude positively from this that Sergius was baptized and became an avowed Christian, though the usual language of the Acts rather leads us to infer it (see ver. 48; ch. ii. 44; iv. 4; viii. 12, 13; xi. 21; xix. 18). Farrar thinks that if so marked a person had become a lifelong convert, we should have heard of him as such

in other writings. Renan says, "La conversion d'un Romain de cet ordre, à cette époque est chose absolument inadmissible." Alford and Olshausen speak doubtfully. Lange and Howson and Meyer look upon him as a genuine convert. The 'Speaker's Commentary' speaks of him as "the first-fruits of heathenism." Being astonished at the teaching. "For the connection of the judgment concerning the doctrine with the miracle seen, comp. Mark i. 27" (Mayer).

Ver. 13.—*Now for now when, A.V.; set sail for loosed, A.V.; and came for they came, A.V.; departed . . . and returned for departing . . . returned, A.V.* A very marked change may here be observed in the relations of Barnabas and Paul. Hitherto Barnabas has always occupied the first rank. It has been "Barnabas and Saul" (ch. xi. 30; xii. 25; vera. 2, 7). But now the whole mission, including Barnabas, is described as of *πρὸς τὸν Παῦλον*, Paul and his company, and ever after it is usually "Paul and Barnabas" (vera. 43, 46, 50; ch. xv. 2, 22, 35); though in ch. xiv. 14 and xv. 12, 25, the old order is retained. Renan dwells much on the beauty of Barnabas's character as seen in his cheerful acquiescence in this change of relative position, and his single-minded devotion to the success of the work. Came to Perga, the capital of Pamphylia, in that part of the coast of Asia Minor which looks due south. Perga was about seven and a half miles inland, on the river Cestrus, which is navigable. There was a constant intercourse between Paphos the capital of Cyprus, and Perga the capital of Pamphylia, fostered probably by the two famous temples of Venus and Diana. The word for set sail (*ἀναχθέντες*) is a nautical term, meaning sailing from the shore or harbour into the open sea (see ch. xvi. 11; xxi. 1; xxvii. 12; Luke viii. 22). At Perga John Mark left them. Perhaps his position as Barnabas's cousin was less pleasant now that Paul took the first place; perhaps his courage failed him now that they were fairly launched out into the heathen world, where, unlike Cyprus, his Jewish kinsmen were a small minority, and the dangers and fatigues were great. Pamphylia was now governed by a propraetor, being an imperial province. Its name denotes that it was inhabited by a mixed race—men of all tribes, aborigines, Cilicians, Greeks, etc.

Ver. 14.—*They, passing through from Perga, came for when they departed from Perga they came, A.V.; of for in, A.V.; they went for went, A.V.* Travelling due north into the interior for over a hundred miles, they would reach Antioch in Pisidia, now a Roman colony. It would be a difficult and dangerous road, infested with

robbers (2 Cor. xi. 26), mountainous, rugged, and passing through an untamed and half-savage population. Pisidia was part of the province of Galatia. The direction of their route was probably determined by the locality of the Jewish populations, which were always their first object, and their door of access to the more pious heathen. Sat down; perhaps, as many think, on the seat of the rabbi—those "chief seats in the synagogues," which our Lord rebukes the scribes for loving (Mark xii. 39), but which "Paul as a former Sanhedrist, and Barnabas as a Levite," had a fair claim to occupy; but more probably on the seats of ordinary worshippers, where, however, the presence of strangers would at once be noticed.

Ver. 15.—*Brethren for ye men and brethren, A.V.* The order of the synagogue service was first the prayers, read by the *Shekiach*, or angel of the synagogue, the people standing. Then came the reading of the Law in Hebrew by the reader, and the interpretation by the interpreter, who, outside of Judæa, generally used the version of the LXX. This reading, or lesson, was called the *Parashah*. Next came the reading and interpreting of the prophets, called the *Haphtorah*, either by the regular reader or by any one invited by the ruler of the synagogue (Luke iv. 16, 17). Then came the *Midrash*, the exposition or sermon, which Paul undertook at the invitation of the ruler of the synagogue. Our Lord at Nazareth seems to have delivered the *Midrash* sitting (Luke iv. 20); here St. Paul stands (ver. 16).

Ver. 16.—*And for them, A.V.; the for his, A.V.; hearken for give audience, A.V.* Beckoning with the hand (see ch. xii. 17, note). Ye that fear God; addressed to the devout heathen who attended the synagogue service (see ch. x. 2, note, and 22; ver. 43 of this chapter; xv. 21; xvi. 14; xvii. 4, 17; xviii. 7).

Ver. 17.—*Israel for of Israel, A.V.; sojourned for dwell as strangers, A.V.; a for an, A.V.; led he them forth for brought he them out, A.V.* The word *ὑψώσας*, exalted, is thought by some to be borrowed from the LXX. of Isa. i. 2 (*רִיבְרִיב*), "I have brought up" (A.V.), but this is very doubtful, as *ὑψώσας* is frequently used in the New Testament in the sense of exalting from a low to a high estate (see Matt. xi. 23; xxiii. 12; Luke i. 52; x. 15; xiv. 11; ch. ii. 33; see too Gen. xli. 52 (LXX., Cod. Vat.) and xlviii. 19). The resemblance of this exordium to that of Stephen's speech in ch. vii. must strike every one. The natural conclusion is that that speech made a deep impression upon St. Paul when he heard it at Stephen's trial. The common purpose in the two speeches is to conciliate and gain the attention of the

Jewish hearers by dwelling upon the great events of the history of their fathers, of which they were proud, and claiming for Christians an equal heritage in that history. The speeches diverge in that Stephen sought to show in that history instances of the same stubborn unbelief in their fathers which had led the children to crucify the Lord of glory; but St. Paul rather sought to show how the promises made to their fathers had their fulfilment in that Jesus whom he preached unto them, and how the crucifixion of Christ by the Jerusalem Jews was an exact fulfilment of the Law and the prophets which had just been read to them in the synagogue. In both speeches it is a great point to exhibit Christianity as the true development of Judaism (comp. Heb. i. 1 and throughout).

Ver. 18.—*For about for about*, A.V. Suffered he their manners (*ἐτροποφόρησεν*). This word *τροποφορέω*, to bear or put up with any one's (perverse) manners, is found nowhere else in the New Testament. But in the Cod. Alex. of the LXX. it is the rendering of Deut. i. 31, instead of *ἐτροφορήσεν*, he bare or carried, as a nursing father carries his child, which is the reading of the Cod. Vat. and of the margin of the R.T. here. The Hebrew *נָשָׂא* is capable of either sense. From this quotation from Deuteronomy it is conjectured that the *Parashah* on this occasion was from Deut. i., and if the *ὑψώσεν* of ver. 17 is taken from Isa. i., that would seem to have been the *Haphtorah*, and it is curious that Deut. i. and Isa. i. are read in the synagogues now on the same sabbath (but see note on ver. 17). Forty years is invariably the time assigned to the dwelling in the wilderness (Exod. xvi. 35; Num. xiv. 33, 34; xxxii. 13; xxxiii. 38; Deut. i. 3; Ps. xcv. 10, etc.).

Vers. 19, 20.—*Canaan for Chanaan*, A.V.; *he gave them their land for an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years: and after these things he gave them judges, etc., for he divided their land unto them by lot: and after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, etc.*, A.V. and T.R. It is difficult to say what is the meaning of the R.T. in regard to the four hundred and fifty years, what is the terminus *a quo* or *ad quem* intended by it. The usual explanations of the reading of the R.T. (adopted by Lachman, Bishop Wordsworth, and others) is that the years are dated from the birth of Isaac, and that the meaning is that the promise to give the land to the seed of Abraham was actually performed within four hundred and fifty years (*ὡς ἔρεσι*) (after the analogy of Gal. iii. 17), which gives a good sense and is not at all improbable (see Bishop Wordsworth's note). The reading of the T.R. has

grave objections on the score of chronology as well as grammar. Duration of time is expressed by the accusative case, as vers. 18 and 21; the measure of time in which a thing is done by the dative. So that the natural rendering of the T.R. would be that he gave them judges four hundred and fifty years after the entrance into Canaan; which of course cannot be the meaning. The other objection is that, if the times of the judges from the final conquest of the land to the judgeship of Samuel was four hundred and fifty years, the whole time from the Exodus to the building of the temple must have been about six hundred and forty years¹ (37 from death of Moses to Othniel + 450, + 30 for judgeship of Samuel, + 40 of Saul's reign, + 40 for David's reign, + 3 years of Solomon, + and the 40 years in the wilderness, whereas 1 Kings vi. 1 gives the time as four hundred and eighty years; while the genealogies suppose a much shorter time—about two hundred and eighty years. It is an immense gain, therefore, to get rid of this four hundred and fifty years for the time of the judges, and by the well-supported reading of the R.T. to get a calculation in agreement with Gal. iii. 17 and with the chronology of the times. Gave them . . . for an inheritance. The T.R. has *κατεκληροδότησεν*, the R.T. has *κατεκληρονόμησεν*, which words are not unfrequently interchanged in different codices of the LXX. (see Josh. xix. 51; Deut. i. 38; xxi. 16, etc.). They have nearly identical meanings, "to give as an inheritance by lot." Neither word occurs elsewhere in the New Testament.

Ver. 21.—*Asked for for desired*, A.V.; *Kish for Cis*, A.V.; *for for by*, A.V. The forty years assigned to Saul may very probably include the seven years and six months (2 Sam. v. 5) which elapsed before David's kingdom was established over all Israel, while the house of Saul was still in power. The first twenty or thirty years of his reign after the rescue of Jabesh-gilead are passed over in absolute silence. The narrative from 1 Sam. xiii. to xxxi. relates only to about the last ten years of his life (for the correction of the A.V. of 1 Sam. xiii. 1, see 'Speaker's Commentary').

Ver. 22.—*Raised up for raised up unto them*, A.V. and T.R.; *bare witness for gave testimony*, A.V.; *my for mine own*, A.V.; *do for fulfil*, A.V.; *who for which*, A.V. This is not an exact quotation, but the combined meaning of 1 Sam. xiii. 14 and Ps. lxxxix. 21.

¹ According to Africanus, 784; Clement Alexandrinus, 641; Theophilus, 566; Paschal Chronicle, 632; Georgius Syncellus, 659; and St. Paul, according to Eusebius, 600; Josephus, 592.

Ver. 23.—*Promise for his promise, A.V.; brought for raised, A.V. and T.R.* (comp. Isa. xlvi. 15; Heb. i. 6). This verse leads to the great announcement which Paul had to make of the next great step in God's dealings with Israel, for which the preceding ones of the redemption from Egyptian bondage, and the kingdom of David, were preparatory, viz. the actual coming of the Son of David, the Messiah, to save his people Israel.

Ver. 24.—*His coming (τῆς εισόδου); his entrance upon his ministry, with reference to the ὁδὸς (the way) of Isa. xl. 3 and Mal. iii. 1 (for the use of εισόδος, see 1 Thess. i. 9; 2 Thess. ii. 1).*

Ver. 25.—*Was fulfilling for fulfilled, A.V.; what suppose ye for whom think ye, A.V. and T.R.; the shoes of whose feet for whose shoes of his feet, A.V.; unloose for loose, A.V.* St. Paul, as reported by Luke, follows very closely the narrative in Luke iii. 3, etc. Compare the words Προκηρύξαντος Ἰωάννου . . . Βάπτισμα μετανοίας with Luke iii. 3, Κηρύσσων βάπτισμα μετανοίας. Compare Πρὸ προσώπου τῆς εισόδου with τὴν ὁδὸν Κυρίου, Luke iii. 4. Compare Παντὶ τῷ λαῷ Ἰσραὴλ with the mention in Luke iii. 9, 10, of the multitude of the people, and the enumeration of the different classes of people. Compare the question, "Whom [or, 'what'] think ye that I am?" with the statement in Luke iii. 15, that all men were musing in their hearts of John whether he were the Christ or not. Compare the construction of the phrase, Ἐρχεται μετ' ἐμὲ, οὐ οὐκ εἰμι ἄξιος τὸ ὑπόδημα τῶν ποδῶν ἰδοῦσαι with Luke iii. 16; and in ver. 26 compare the τίλοι γένους Ἀβραάμ with the Πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ, and the τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ with Luke iii. 8. There is also a strong resemblance to John i. 19—28. St. Paul fortifies his own witness to Jesus as the Christ by that of John the Baptist, probably from knowing that many of his hearers believed that John was a prophet (see Luke xx. 6; Matt. xxi. 26; comp. Peter's address, ch. x. 37).

Ver. 26.—*Brethren for men and brethren, A.V., as ver. 15; those among you that fear for whosoever among you feareth, A.V.; to us for to you, A.V. and T.R.; sent forth for sent, A.V. and T.R.* The same address in substance as that in ver. 16, comprising the Jews and the devout heathen. To us; see ver. 33; but on the other hand (ver. 38), "to you," seems preferable. This salvation; proceeding from the Saviour, mentioned in ver. 23 (comp. ch. x. 36, "The word which God sent").

Ver. 27.—*In for at, A.V.; nor for nor yet, A.V.; sabbath for sabbath day, A.V.; fulfilled . . . by for they have fulfilled . . . in, A.V.* For they, etc. It is not clear what is the force of the γὰρ in this verse. Meyer (follow-

ing Chrysostom), Alford, and others, make it mark the contrast between the Jews addressed by Paul and the Jews at Jerusalem. "This salvation is sent forth to you [according to Bengel, 'from Jerusalem,' according to others, 'from God'], for the Jerusalem Jews have rejected Christ." And in consequence of their rejection, you, who had no share in crucifying the Lord of glory, are invited to take their place. But it may be taken as expressing the cause why this salvation is complete and capable of being offered to them. This salvation is preached to you because, through the instrumentality of those that dwell at Jerusalem, all that was written in the Scriptures concerning Christ has been fulfilled. Christ has been crucified and raised from the dead, and so now remission of sins is proclaimed to you through him (vera. 38, 39; comp. ch. iii. 13—20). Which are read every sabbath. Note the value of the constant reading of Holy Scripture in the congregation.

Ver. 28.—*Asked they of for desired they, A.V.* The narrative of this verse is exactly that of Luke xxiii. 4, 5, 14—23.

Ver. 29.—*All things that were for all that was, A.V.; tomb for sepulchre, A.V.* The reference is to his being crucified between two thieves (Luke xxiii. 32, 33), to parting his raiment among them (ibid. 34) to offering him vinegar (ibid. 36), to the commendation of his spirit to his Father (ibid. 46). The words καθελόντες and ἔθηκαν εἰς μνημεῖον are the same as Luke xxiii. 53, ἵ (μνήμα and μνημεῖον being interchanged).

Ver. 31.—*For many days for many days, A.V.; that for which, A.V.; we are now for who are, A.V. and T.R.* St. Paul thus confirms the statement in ch. i. 3 (see note to ch. i. 11). From Galilee to Jerusalem. Who are meant? and what ascent from Galilee to Jerusalem is here intended? The answer to the first question is, the eleven apostles whose special office it was to bear witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (ch. i. 22, note). The answer to the second is, that the ascent from Galilee, where most of our Lord's appearances took place, to Jerusalem, shortly before the Ascension, is here intended, and that this passage is a distinct recognition by St. Luke of the Galilean appearances. There is, as is well known, great obscurity, and apparent discrepancies in the accounts of our Lord's appearances after the Resurrection. St. Matthew seems to place them exclusively in Galilee (Matt. xxviii. 7, 10, 16). St. Mark likewise (xvi. 7); but in the section 9—20 he mentions the appearance to Mary Magdalene and to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, but gives no clue as to where the appearance to the eleven took place. St. Luke seems to place them exclusively in Judæa, but very of 4-

only puts a mention of Galilee in the angel's mouth in the very place where, according to St. Matthew, he announced the Lord's appearance in Galilee. St. John, again places the three first appearances in Jerusalem (John xx.), but describes at length a third as having taken place in Galilee (John xxi. 2, 14). St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 6) speaks of an appearance to five hundred brethren at once, which in all probability took place in Galilee, as only a hundred and twenty names were numbered at Jerusalem (ch. i. 15). It is, therefore, satisfactory to have this confirmation of the residence of the apostles in Galilee between the Resurrection and the Ascension in St. Luke's report of St. Paul's speech. Observe that St. Paul distinctly separates himself from these witnesses by the emphatic *ἡμεῖς* in ver. 32.

Ver. 32.—*Bring you good tidings of the promise made for declare unto you glad tidings how that the promise which was made, A.V.*

Ver. 33.—*How that God for God, A.V.* ("how that" being in ver. 32); *our children for us their children, A.V. and T.R.; raised up for hath raised up. . . again, A.V.; as also it is for as it is also, A.V.* Our children. The reading of the R.T. is not adopted by Meyer or Alford, and is scarcely an improvement upon the T.R. There can be no reasonable doubt that *ἀναστήσας*, raised up, means here, as in ver. 44, raised from the dead. Observe with what skill the apostle speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of God's promise to their fathers, which it was to be presumed they were anxiously expecting. The second psalm. Many manuscripts and editions have, "the first," because the first psalm was often reckoned not numerically but as an introduction to the whole book, so that the second psalm was numbered as the first. This is probably the reason why the eighteen psalms as reckoned by the Jews include Ps. xix., though Joshua ben Levi explains it by the rejection of the second psalm, on account, no doubt, of its testimony to Messiah as God's begotten Son. But the rabbins generally acknowledge the application of this psalm to Messiah (Lightfoot, 'Exercit. on the Acts'). Thou art my Son, etc. This application of the second psalm to the Resurrection is best explained by Rom. i. 4. The reference in both passages to David is remarkable (vers. 22, 23). Christ, who was begotten of the Father before all worlds, was declared before men and angels to be the Son of God, when he was raised from the dead in the power of an endless life.

Ver. 34.—*Hath spoken for said, A.V.; holy and sure blessings for sure mercies, A.V. No more to return to corruption. This is*

added to show that Christ's resurrection was a final victory over death; not like that of Lazarus, or the Shunammite's son, or Jairus's daughter, but, as St. Paul himself says (Rom. vi. 9), "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over him." Here he tells us that this eternal exemption of Christ from death was promised or signified in Isa. lv. 3, which he quotes from the LXX., only abbreviating the *διαθήσομαι, κ.τ.λ.*, into *δώσω*, I will give. What, then, is meant by the *ὁσια Δαβὶδ τὰ πιστά*? The Hebrew has *יְדִי יְהוָה יְהוָה*, which can mean nothing else but "the sure mercies of David," the favour and mercy promised to David in God's everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure. And in like manner, in 2 Chron. vi. 42, *ὁσια Δαβὶδ* means "the mercies of God to David." And if we turn to the account of this covenanted mercy in 2 Sam. vii., we shall see that it comprises the setting of David's seed upon his throne for ever (see specially vers. 12—16). In ver. 15 it is said, *יְהוָה יְהוָה לֹא יִסָּד מִפָּנָי*, "My mercy shall not depart from him." And in the next verso his house and his kingdom are described as being *בְּאֵימָן יְהוָה* "sure," or "established for ever," which, when applied to the personal Christ, the Son of David, manifestly implies his eternal exemption from death and corruption (see also Ps. cxxxii. 4). The sense of the Hebrew, therefore, is clear and certain, and it is equally certain that the LXX. meant to represent this sense in the version here quoted by St. Paul. *Ὁσιος*, though properly meaning "holy, pious," and thence "mild" and "merciful" (*εἰρημικός*, Hesych.) as applied to man, came to be applied in the same senses to God (Rev. xv. 4; xvi. 5; and here and in the LXX.¹ Beyond doubt, therefore, the passage before us is rightly rendered in the A.V., "the sure mercies of David;" the plural, *ὁσια*, represents the *יְהוָה* of the Hebrew. Clemens Alex. (quoted by Schleusner) uses it in the same way for "mercies or "benefits:" *Πόσα αὐτῷ ἀφειλόμεν ὁσια*: "For how many mercies are we indebted to Christ!" In a similar way, the Latin *pietas* is used for God's "justice" or "kindness" ('Æneid,' i. 536; v. 688). "Trini pulses pictatem" (on a sepulchral monument, A.D. 1427): "Beat at the door of God's mercy."

¹ Gronovius, in his note on 'Ælian. V. H.,' viii. 1, where he ascribes to *ὁσιος* the primitive sense of what is "just" and "due," from man either to God or to his fellow-man, adds, "Tribuunt quidem LXX. interpretamur Deo τὰ ὁσια: sed etiam tum significat quoddam quasi officium benignitatis in homines pios, Deo decorum."

Ver. 35.—*Because for wherefore*, A.V. and T.R.; *thou wilt not give for thou shalt not suffer*, A.V. (see ch. ii. 27, note); *thy for thine*, A.V. It is remarkable that St. Peter and St. Paul should both quote this sixteenth psalm, and use precisely the same argument.

Ver. 36.—*In his own generation served the counsel of God for served his own generation by the will of God*, A.V. Many good commentators construe the words as the R.T. does, only some, instead of in his own generation, render “for,” i.e. for the good of, “his own generation.” But the A.V. is the most natural division of the sentence, and gives the best sense, only the punctuation should connect the words “by the will of God” with “fell on sleep.” There is an allusion to 2 Sam. vii. 12 and 1 Kings ii. 1, 10, and it is intimated that God was still caring for David in his death. But there was this vast difference between David and Christ. David had a work to do limited to his own generation, and when that work was done he died and saw corruption. But Christ had a work to carry on for eternal generations, and so he rose and saw no corruption.

Ver. 37.—*Raised up for raised again*, A.V. “*ἤγειρεν*,” “raised from the death of sleep,” as ch. v. 30; 1 Cor. xv. 42—44; 2 Cor. iv. 14; Eph. v. 14, etc. The two words (*ἀνίστημι* and *ἐγείρω*) are combined in ch. xii. 7. “*Ἐγείρω* is “to arouse,” or “awaken;” *ἀνίστημι*, to “make to get up.” Or in the passive *ἐγείρομαι* to be “awakened,” and in the neuter, *ἀνέστην*, to “get up.”

Ver. 38.—*Brethren for men and brethren*, A.V., as before, vers. 26 and 15; *proclaimed for preached*, A.V.; *remission for the forgiveness*, A.V.

Ver. 39.—*Every one that believeth is for all that believe are*, A.V. Here, then, is the great gospel message of grace, “the gospel of the grace of God,” as St. Paul speaks in ch. xx. 24; the proclamation, consequent upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, of a free and full forgiveness of sins to all that repent and believe the gospel (ch. xx. 21); see ch. ii. 38; iii. 19; iv. 12; v. 31; Col. i. 14, etc., and Matt. i. 21; Luke i. 77. Note, too, how adroitly the apostle points out the superiority of the gospel which he was preaching to them over the Law, and the pre-eminence of Christ over Moses.

Ver. 40.—*Spoken for spoken of*, A.V.

Ver. 41.—*If one for though a man*, A.V. “*Though*” best expresses the *ἐάν* and the *אם* of the Hebrew. The passage is quoted nearly verbatim from the LXX. of Hab. i. 5. The difference from the Hebrew arises from the LXX. having read in their copy *בְּרִיב*, proud, arrogant men (*καταφρονήται*), for *בְּרִיב*, among the heathen, as is clear from

their rendering the Hebrew *בְּרִיב*, in Hab. i. 13 and ii. 5, by the same word (*καταφρονήντας* and *καταφρονήτης*). The rendering *καὶ ἀφανίσθητε*, and perish, for the Hebrew *וַיִּמָּוֶת* (another form of the preceding verb *וַיִּמָּוֶת*), which in the A.V. is construed with it, and the two together rendered “wonder marvellously”), is not so easily explained. The two best explanations seem to be (1) that the LXX. read *וַיִּמָּוֶת* instead of the present order of the words, and so rendered the first word *θαυμάσατε*, wonder, and, taking the next word from another root, *וַיִּמָּוֶת*, rendered it *ἀφανίσθητε*, perish; (2) that, reading the words in the same order in which they now stand in the Hebrew text, they rendered the first *θαυμάσατε*, or, with the intensive addition, *θαυμάσια*, and took the second in the sense it has in Arabic, “to be altered” or “changed for the worse,” and expressed it by *ἀφανίσθητε*, meaning “change countenance from fear and astonishment.” And in favour of this explanation the use of *ἀφανίζουσι τὰ πρόσωπα* in Matt. vi. 16 (“they disfigure their faces”) is quoted (see Rosenmüller on Hab. i. 5). St. Paul took the LXX. as he found it. Perhaps he saw signs in some of that unbelief and perverse opposition which afterwards broke out (ver. 45), and so was led to close his sermon with words of awful warning.

Ver. 42.—*And as they went out for when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue*, A.V. and T.R.; *they for the Gentiles*, A.V. and T.R.; *epoken for preached*, A.V. They besought. The R.T. is that of Chrysostom and the best manuscripts, and is adopted by Meyer, Olshausen, Lange, Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, the ‘Speaker’s Commentary,’ etc. There is a difference of opinion as to who is meant by *they*. The simplest explanation is that *they* means Paul and Barnabas, who went out of the synagogue before the formal dismissal of the congregation; and, as they were going out, received an invitation to repeat their instruction on the next sabbath.

Ver. 43.—*The synagogue broke up for the congregation was broken up*, A.V.; *the devout for religious*, A.V.; *urged for persuaded*, A.V. This verse manifestly describes something subsequent to the event recorded in the preceding. The congregation had asked Paul and Barnabas, perhaps through the ruler of the synagogue, to return next sabbath. But when the congregation broke up, many Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas to their own house and received further instructions and exhortation to continue in the grace of God. No doubt Barnabas had his full share in this more private ministry of exhortation (ch. iv. 36, note, and xi. 23). (For the meaning of

“to continue in the grace of God,” see Gal. v. 4.)

Ver. 44.—*Sabbath for sabbath day, A.V.; almost the whole city was gathered for came almost the whole city, A.V.* We may suppose that as many as could crowded into the synagogue, and that a multitude stood outside in the street.

Ver. 45.—*Jealousy for envy, A.V.; contradicted the things for spake against those things, A.V.; and blasphemed for contradicting and blaspheming, A.V. and T.R.* Jealousy. Neither word exactly expresses the ζήλος. The indignation of ver. 17, A.V. (where see note), is nearer the sense; though jealousy of the influence of the two strangers may have entered into the fierce passion which was stirred up in the Jewish mind, as well as jealousy for their own religion, which they saw was being superseded by the doctrine of Paul.

Ver. 46.—*And for then, A.V. and T.R.; spake out boldly for waxed bold, A.V.; be for have been, A.V.; seeing for but seeing, A.V. and T.R.; thrust for put, A.V.; eternal for everlasting, A.V.* Spake out boldly. Observe that Barnabas as well as Paul resented the unseemly opposition of the Jews. It was necessary. The necessity arose from the command of Christ (Luke xxiv. 47; ch. i. 8; iii. 26). It is in accordance with this purpose of God that St. Paul says of the gospel that “it is the power of God unto salvation . . . to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. i. 16). Compare, too, our Lord’s saying (Matt. xv. 24) and the woman’s reply (ibid. 27). In point of fact, this had been the practice of Paul and Barnabas no less than of Peter, and was the very motive that had brought them to Antioch. Lo, we turn to the Gentiles. These were, indeed, bold words to speak in a Jewish synagogue; the speakers had doubtless sought courage from the Holy Ghost (see ch. iv. 29).

Ver. 47.—*For a light for to be a light, A.V.; the uttermost part for the ends, A.V.* The quotation is from the LXX. (Cod. Alex.) of Isa. xlix. 6. Compare the frequent quotations by St. Paul from Isaiah in Rom. xv. The additional words which appear in the LXX., εἰς διαθήκην γένους, have no counterpart in the Hebrew, and are probably corrupt. The application of the passage is, God declared his purpose by Isaiah, that his Servant Messiah should be the Light and Salvation of the Gentiles, and we are commissioned to give effect to that purpose by our preaching.

Ver. 48.—*As for when, A.V.; God for the Lord, A.V. and T.R.* As many as were ordained to eternal life believed. This can only refer to the predestination or election of God, viewed as the moving cause of their faith (comp. Eph. i. 4, 5, 11, 12; Phil. i.

6; 2 Tim. ii. 9; 1 Pet. i. 2. See the Seventeenth Article of Religion).

Ver. 49.—*Spread abroad for published, A.V.* As the persecution after the death of Stephen led to the preaching of the Word in Judæa and Samaria and beyond, so here the contradiction and opposition of the Jews led to the free preaching of the gospel for the first time among the heathen population of Pisidia.

Ver. 50.—*Urged on for stirred up, A.V.; the devout women of honourable estate for the devout and honourable women, A.V. and T.R.; stirred up a for raised, A.V.; cast them out of their borders for expelled them out of their coasts, A.V.* Urged on (παρότρυναν). The word only occurs here in the New Testament, and is not common elsewhere. The devout women of honourable estate: εὐσχήμων is, literally, well-formed; then decent, becoming; and then honourable, well-to-do (comp. ch. xvii. 4, γυναικῶν τῶν πρώτων). See Mark xv. 43, where Joseph of Arimathea is described as εὐσχήμων βουλευτής, “an honourable counsellor.” The devout women (αἱ σεβόμεναι) were the Gentile proselytes who worshipped God, as in ver. 43. So of Lydia (ch. xvi. 14), and of “the devout Greeks” (ch. xvii. 4, 17; xviii. 7). The chief men (τοὺς πρώτους), as in ch. xvii. 4 (γυναικῶν τῶν πρώτων).

Ver. 51.—They shook off the dust, etc.; according to the Lord’s injunction (Luke ix. 5; comp. ch. xviii. 6). And came unto Iconium; a distance of about sixty miles south-east, a five days’ journey (Renan). Iconium lay on the high road from Antioch in Syria to Ephesus. It is now called Cogné, and has a population of nearly thirty thousand souls. Iconium is assigned by Xenophon to Phrygia; by others to Pisidia; and again by others (Cicero, Strabo, etc.) to Lycaonia. At this time it was the capital of a separate tetrarchy (Lewin, ‘Saint Paul’), but Renan calls it “the capital of Lycaonia” (‘Saint Paul,’ p. 41).

Ver. 52.—And the disciples, etc. Nothing can be more beautiful than this description. In spite of the persecution, in spite of the danger, in spite of the banishment of their teachers, the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost (see 1 Thess. i. 6; Heb. x. 34). With regard to this important incident at Antioch, Renan observes on its powerful influence in turning St. Paul’s mind more decisively to the conversion of the Gentiles as the great object of his apostleship. He adds, “The character of that great soul was to have a boundless power of expansion. I know none to be compared with it in respect of its inexhaustible freshness, its unlimited resources of will, and readiness to make the most of every opportunity, except that of Alexander the Great.”

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—15.—*The invasion of heathendom.* It has been well remarked that Antioch was the true centre of direct missions to the heathen world. An Ethiopian eunuch, and a Roman centurion, had indeed been gathered into the fold of Christ. But they were both closely connected with the land of Judah, and their conversion had not led to any further extension of the gospel of Christ. At Antioch the seed of Christian truth first fell in abundance upon heathen soil; from Antioch first went forth the preachers of the gospel with the express purpose of disseminating it among the nations of mankind. It is a deeply interesting study to mark the various steps by which the providence of God brought about this great event. There was first the moulding of the great soul of Saul into a fitting instrument for this momentous ministry by the circumstances of his conversion. The tenderness of heart caused by the memory of his persecution of the Church of God; the gradual loosening of the ties which bound him to the Jews' religion, through the bigotry, the distrust, and the repulses of his Jewish countrymen, which drove him from Jerusalem; the friendship of the kind and sympathetic Barnabas; his enforced retreat to his native Tarsus, within easy distance of Antioch;—these were the preparatory steps by which God was bringing about his great purpose. Then, as the work grew among the Gentiles, Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the Church of Jerusalem; thence, needing more help, he went to Tarsus and sought Saul and brought him to Antioch. Then followed a full year's ministry in that great heathen city. That year brought a rich experience of things sad and of things joyful; experience of heathen darkness, experience of God's grace; widening knowledge of the thoughts, the wants, the misery of heathenism; deepening knowledge of the power of a preached gospel; a further loosening of the strait bands of Judaism as fettering Christian liberty. And then, when the ground was thus prepared, came the direct call of the Holy Ghost, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And what a work it was! It requires some knowledge of the degradation of human nature as manifested in all the vileness of the voluptuousness and impostures of the East, in the incredible and growing flagitiousness of the once noble Roman character under the shameful profligacies of the empire, and of the general spread of vice, oppression, and cruelty in the Roman world, to take a just measure of the work to which Barnabas and Saul were called. It was a work of hopeless difficulty if measured by the strength of man; it was a work of incalculable importance if measured by its world-wide influences and results—a work than which no greater has ever been undertaken either by man or for man. To revolutionize the whole relations of man with God; to upset and root out all the old thoughts of the whole world concerning God and the service of God; to give a new direction to man's thoughts about himself, about his duty, and about eternity; to transform human life from sin to holiness; and to do all this by the power of words,—was the task given to Barnabas and Saul. And they did it. That we know and love God; that we believe in Jesus Christ for the remission of our sins; that we live righteous lives; that we have a good hope of the resurrection to eternal life—is the fruit of the mission of Barnabas and Saul. They invaded heathendom with the sword of faith, and heathendom fell before their onslaught. O God, raise up in our days such soldiers of the cross that all the kingdoms of the world may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ!

Vers. 16—41.—*The New Testament in the Old.* The expositions of the Scriptures of the Old Testament by the writers and speakers of the New Testament are worthy of our deepest attention. Not only do they draw out from those Scriptures particular instruction which of ourselves we should never, perhaps, have found there, but they supply us with irrefragable proofs of the unity of purpose which ordained the long sequence of events themselves, through many centuries, and also ordained that a faithful record of them should be preserved in the sacred archives of the Jewish people. There is probably no evidence of more overwhelming power of conviction, when once it is grasped, that the Scriptures are from God, and that they are a revelation of the very mind of God, than that which is supplied by the continuity of events whose

historical truth rests upon a solid basis, and whose meaning and purpose receive their only and full explanation in another set of events whose basis of historical evidence is no less firm and solid than the former. This double testimony to the truth of the gospel, supplied by the direct evidence of those who went in and out with the Lord Jesus, on the one hand, and by the prophetic preparation for those events, and the significant types of them, exhibited centuries before, on the other hand, together form a moral demonstration which, when apprehended, is simply irresistible. It is this which gives such force to those apostolic and other sermons which are recorded in this Book of the Acts. In this sermon of St. Paul's we have the election of Israel to be the people of God, their redemption from Egyptian bondage, their planting in the land of Canaan according to God's promise, first held up to view. Could any one deny the truth of those events? Were not the Jewish people still in actual possession of the land of Canaan? Living in the midst of heathens, were they not, and were not they alone, worshippers of the true and living God? Did they not possess the sacred oracles? And if they went back century by century, did they not come to the time when the seven nations of Canaan possessed the land, and when their fathers dispossessed them of it? If they went further back still, was there not the Egyptian bondage described in their ancient records, living in their traditions and sacred songs, engraved in the monuments and annals of Egypt? Yes; God had dealt with them as he had dealt with no other people. They were the children of miracle, the heirs of Divine promises, the depositaries of a Divine plan, the ordained instruments of a great and eternal purpose. Every page of their history proved it, as that history was slowly unfolded in the course of successive ages. And the purpose itself was partially revealed from time to time. Let them bethink themselves of David and his throne; his humble origin, and his exalted power; the hand which raised him, the promises which surrounded him, the expectations which clung to his name. Did he not live in the hearts and hopes of the people through ages of oppression and wrong? Did not his name still glow on the page of prophecy, as the heir of mercy, as the future prince of Israel, as the founder of Israel's glory? What did all these things mean? What was the hidden truth that swelled and was ready to burst under all these images? What was the womb of time so big with in the days which had come upon them? There was an answer, and one only answer, to these questions. The history of their fathers was explained by one and only one fact, and that was the birth of Jesus Christ, of the seed of Abraham and of the lineage of David, to be the Saviour of Israel, and not of Israel only, but also of the whole world. And he Paul was there to tell them of Jesus Christ: how he was born in the city of David; how John the Baptist bore witness of him; how in him was fulfilled all that was written in the Law of Moses and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning the Christ that should come. Let them turn to those prophets and to those Psalms, and see what was there written concerning the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. It had all been fulfilled. The Man of sorrows had been despised and rejected; his hands and his feet had been pierced on the tree; they had parted his raiment among them and cast lots upon his vesture; he had gone to the grave and to hell; he had risen again and seen no corruption; his old companions had seen him many days after his resurrection; they had eaten and drunk with him, and in their sight he had gone up to heaven. What further proof could they have that he was very Christ, the promised Saviour, the Son of David, of whose kingdom there should be no end? Let them believe in him, and he would justify them from all their sins. Let them not by their unbelief bring upon themselves the curse denounced by the prophet upon the despisers of God's Word. Thus it was that the fulfilment in the New Testament of all the types and promises of the Old was as the seal of God to the truth of both. The testimony of nearly two thousand years, in which words, deeds, persons, things, events, pointed with steady consistency to one Person that should come, was all concentrated upon Jesus Christ, who did come in the fulness of time. And the 1850 years which have elapsed since Jesus rose again have added their testimony, too, to all that went before. So that our age will be altogether without excuse if, shutting its eyes to the light of truth, it rejects the Son of God and misses the great salvation which he has brought to our sinful and fallen world.

Vers. 42—52.—*The savour of death and of life.* We have here a memorable example of the same gospel being a savour of life to some and of death to others, according to the reception given to it in the heart of the hearers. Here was a mixed congregation of Jews and proselytes and Gentiles. They had all the same advantages; they all heard the same gospel at the mouth of the same preacher. Some, when they heard, believed; a hunger sprang up in their souls to hear and to know more of the salvation of God. They followed the preachers out of the synagogue; they hung upon their words; they listened to their exhortations. The next sabbath found them in the synagogue again. We can imagine that the pressing thought in their hearts was, "What must I do to be saved?" We can imagine how they struggled out of the darkness into the light of Christ; how the new message of redeeming love and justifying grace kindled new thoughts in their inmost souls; how they followed the words which led them till they found peace and life in Jesus Christ. The gospel was to them "a savour of life unto life." But others heard and believed not. Their conscience was not pricked with sin; their souls were not moved by the love of God; they did not yearn after more light, more knowledge of the glorious Lord; they were not humbled before the cross; but their self-love was wounded, their pride was aroused, jealousy and hatred were kindled within them at the success of the gospel. They spurned the truth which would lower their importance; they scorned the light in which their own glory would grow pale; they hated the goodness before which their own goodness withered into sin. They knew Christ only to contradict him; they knew his Word only to blaspheme him. The gospel of God's grace had come to them, but their last state was worse than the first. The gospel was to them "a savour of death unto death."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*An illustrious Church.* Antecedently it might have been expected that the Church of Jerusalem would prove to be the most influential and illustrious of all Christian communities, and that from all lands and ages men would look back to it as the most potent factor in the early history of "our holy religion." But in this respect it must give place to "the Church that was at Antioch." This community was remarkable for four things.

I. ITS HUMAN COMPOSITION. (Ver. 1.) Great names have been entered on the rolls of many Churches; but very few indeed, if any, could compare with the list which included the names of Barnabas and Saul, as well as that of a man (Manaen) who was the foster-brother of Herod Antipas. A Church is influential, not only according to the number of souls it can count in its communion, but according to the character of the men who are included in its ranks. A Church which can win and can train and send forth a most useful minister, or a most successful missionary, or a most powerful writer, may do a work which, in the balances of Heaven, weighs more than that of another which has five times its number on the lists. Nowhere more than here does quality, character, spiritual worth, tell in the estimate of truth and wisdom.

II. ITS DIVINE INDWELLING. The Church at Antioch had "prophets and teachers" (ver. 1). This statement implies that there were those amongst the brethren who received occasionally such Divine impulse that they spoke under the consciousness of his inspiration. And to them, or to one of them, the Spirit of God made known the Divine will that they should set apart two of their number for special work (ver. 2). Evidently this Church was one in which, as in a temple, the Holy Ghost dwelt. The fact of the indwelling of the Spirit is not, indeed, anything which is itself remarkable; for no Church of which this cannot be said is worthy of its name. But of "the Church that was at Antioch" this was strikingly and eminently true, if we may take this short passage of its history as of a piece with the rest.

III. ITS RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY. We know that Barnabas and Saul "taught much people" (ch. xi. 26); the work of evangelization went on actively at Antioch. We may gather from our text—"they ministered to the Lord, and fasted"—that the Church was diligent in its devotions; not only worshipping when it was convenient and agreeable to the flesh, but to the extent of self-denial: twice in two verses we read of

the members fasting (vers. 2, 3). Fasting, for the sake of fasting or with a view of pleasing Christ, is not enjoined, and both the words of our Lord and the genius of his religion discourage rather than encourage it. But we shall undoubtedly do well to pursue our work and to maintain our worship—"ministering unto the Lord"—up to and within the line of self-control and even self-denial; not only not giving the reins to our bodily cravings, but checking these and restricting ourselves beyond that which is positively demanded, if by so doing we can worship God more spiritually or work more effectively for our fellows.

IV. ITS OBEDIENT ENTRANCE ON AN APPARENTLY HOPELESS ENTERPRISE. (Vers. 2, 3.) The Church was commanded by its Lord to send two of its members on the errand of converting the Gentiles, "and . . . they sent them away." It was not its part to "reason why," but to obey. Had it reckoned the likelihood of the case, dwelt on the difficulties in the way of success, measured the might and number of its adversaries, weighed the strength of two Jews against the learning, the prejudice, the military forces, the material interests, the social customs, the evil habits, the inwrought unrighteousness of a bitterly and even passionately hostile world, it would have hesitated, it would have refrained. But it did not measure these things. It heard the sovereign sound of its Divine Leader's voice, and it proceeded unquestioningly to obey. It "sent them away." And they went forth—those two men—unpractised in the wiles of the world; poor; unarmed; unequipped with any forces which, on mere human lines, could avail anything; determined to preach a doctrine which would be received with the haughtiest contempt, which would clash with men's strongest interests and smite their most cherished sins;—they went forth, with the confidence of the Church behind them (ver. 3), with the hand of the Lord upon them, with the hope of his welcome and his reward before them. It was a splendid action of an illustrious Church, and the nearer we can approach it in our own times and in our own communities, the dearer shall we be to our Master and the greater service shall we render to our race.—O.

Vers. 4—13.—*Frowardness and frailty.* The two leading points in this passage are the frowardness of Bar-jesus and the frailty of Mark. But there are other incidental lessons which spring up by the way. We may learn as we pass: 1. *That good work for others comes home with a blessing before long.* Some of the scattered Christians were men of Cyprus, "who, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Greeks" (ch. xi. 20); and here are men from the Church which the Cypriots helped to form coming to evangelize Cyprus (ver. 4). "Give, and it shall be given unto you." 2. *That the success of any great work is not to be measured by the fruit of the first endeavour.* We read that "when they were at Salamis, they preached the Word of God in the synagogues" (ver. 5); but we do not read of any conversions to the faith. It is fair to infer that their earliest attempt was, if not disappointing, far from a marked success; but they were not daunted thereby. 3. *That it is well worth while for youthful aspiration to attend on mature and established piety.* "They had also John to their minister" (ver. 5). Mark may have been little more than the courier of the apostles, but it was no mean service he was rendering the Church and the world if he did his duty thus. 4. *That when religion is cast out superstition is sure to enter.* Where God is unhonoured the people will resort to the "sorcerer" (ver. 6), the soothsayer, the spiritualist, etc.

I. THAT MAN MAY DEPART SO FAR FROM RECTITUDE AS TO DELIBERATELY FALSIFY THE TRUTH OF GOD. (Vers. 5—8.) "Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?" Here was a man who, for the purpose of retaining a lucrative position, was determinately opposing the truth. Many have been his predecessors and many his successors, who have not scrupled to "fight against God," to act in such a way that they have made what they knew to be right seem to be wrong, what they knew to be wholesome and helpful seem to be injurious; they have twisted round and perverted the right line of heavenly wisdom; they have not only "called good evil and evil good," but striven, for some base motive, to make it seem thus in the eyes of men, resolutely and wantonly deceiving them.

II. THAT THE TIME COMES FOR BURNING INDIGNATION AND STRONG INVECTIVE. "O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all

righteousness!" (ver. 10). It is not often allowable for men to speak thus to one another. As a rule, we must follow the example of the archangel, and instead of "bringing a railing accusation, say, 'The Lord rebuke thee.'" But there are occasions when we *do* well to be angry, when we should rather sin by not being righteously angry than by even passionate indignation. When men are palpably ruining others in order to fill their own treasury, undoubtedly keeping others out of the kingdom in order to secure their own base objects, it is not only permissible but laudable to let our holy indignation boil over in scathing condemnation and rebuke.

III. THAT JUDGMENT HAS ITS PART TO PLAY IN THE DIVINE ECONOMY. (Ver. 11.) It was, of course, only in virtue of the inspiration under which he was acting (see ver. 1) that Paul pronounced this judgment on Elymas. It was a very unusual occurrence. Our Lord himself never, so far as we know, used his almighty power to punish a human being; with the exception of the banning of the fig tree, all his works were those of beneficence. Yet we need to remember that judgment is a part of his whole system. He does condemn and smite. The storm uproots the tree; the locusts lay bare the fruitful field; disease paralyzes the human form; death does its closing work; spiritual blindness darkens the mind and spiritual hardness encrusts the soul,—at his holy and awful bidding. The pleasant theories of the universe, which leave judgment out of the account, are fair enough to look at, but they are *not true*; they are false to the facts of the case as these meet us in many forms and in every sphere of human life.

IV. THAT THE BEST HUMAN SURROUNDINGS WILL NOT ENSURE SPIRITUAL STEADFASTNESS. (Ver. 13.) We might have thought that the presence of such men as Barnabas and Saul would have ensured the stability of John Mark; but it did not. Though under the influence of one man whose unswerving devotedness to Christ has never been surpassed, he yielded to his inclination to return home rather than brave the hazards and endure the privations of missionary work in Asia Minor. Nothing will secure our spiritual steadfastness but the indwelling of Divine power. We must abide in Christ that he may abide in us by his Spirit. It is only when we are "strengthened with all might by his Spirit in the inner man," when we are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," that we are really safe and secure. "When I am weak, then am I strong."—C.

Vers. 14—41.—*The Christian faith.* The Apostle of the Gentiles goes first to the synagogue of the Jews (ver. 14). This partly, perhaps, because he would be most at home there and find a readier audience (ver. 15); partly in accordance with the words of the Lord (Luke xxiv. 47). At liberty to speak by the courtesy of his countrymen, Paul preached the discourse which we have in the text concerning the faith of Christ. He shows—

I. ITS BASIS IN HISTORICAL FACT. (Vers. 17—22, 31.) It is a matter of history. That history commences with the call of Abraham and the redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt (ver. 17); it includes the life in the wilderness (ver. 18) and the early years in the land of promise (vers. 19, 20); it contains the choice of a monarchy (ver. 21) and the elevation of David (ver. 22). From beginning to end, the faith of Christ rests on the solid ground of established facts; it does not depend on dreams and visions, nor on logical deductions or intuitions of the human reason; it is built on well-attested facts; "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you" (1 John i. 1—3). Not "cunningly devised fables," but facts of which truthful men were "eye-witnesses" (1 Pet. i. 16), are the material on which Christian doctrine rests.

II. ITS CULMINATION IN A LIVING ONE. (Vers. 23—37.) "God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (ver. 23); One of supreme rank and majesty, whose shoes the great Baptist was "not worthy to loose" (ver. 25); One slain by his own people, but raised from the dead by the favour and the power of God (vers. 27—30); One whose immortality is the fulfilment of the Divine word (vers. 32—37). In Christianity everything gathers round, centres in, Jesus Christ himself. We are not compelled to subscribe to certain profound propositions, nor to conform to a number of minute requirements either in domestic or social life or devotional habit; we are desired to accept a once-crucified and

now risen One—"a Saviour, Jesus"—as the almighty Saviour, living Lord, Divine Friend, he offers to be to us all.

III. ITS CARDINAL DOCTRINE. (Vers. 38, 39.) "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins;" "By him all that believe are justified," etc. There can be no real religious life without the conscious enjoyment of God's favour; and this cannot be attained until sin has been forgiven. The initial step into the kingdom of God is, therefore, the remission of sins, the justification of the sinner before God. This is the cardinal doctrine of the gospel of Christ; "This [he said] is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28). There may come times when this doctrine will be neglected, but to it mankind will continually return; for it is the sense of sin and the consciousness of condemnation which stand between the soul of man and its heritage in God, and it is the forgiveness of sin and the justification of the sinner which open the gates of the kingdom of peace, of joy, of eternal life.

IV. ITS GLORIOUS COMPREHENSIVENESS. "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience" (ver. 16); "Children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God, to you is the word of this salvation sent" (ver. 26); "By him all that believe are justified" (ver. 39). Already the old and narrowing traditions had been broken; already the strong prejudices had melted away; already the hearts of men had been enlarged, and Gentiles and Jews were invited to believe and to be saved. As missionary work proceeded, and as more light from heaven broke in, the world-embracing thought of God became clearer and fuller to the minds of men.

V. THE URGENCY OF ITS CLAIM. (Vers. 40, 41.) A most sad succession of steps—despise—wonder—perish; but one that has been taken by thousands of the children of men. We cannot oppose ourselves to a "great salvation" without being bruised and broken by our folly (Matt. xxi. 44). The height of blessedness and dignity to which we rise if we accept a Divine Saviour marks the depth of shame and woe to which we fall if we reject him.—C.

Vers. 42—52.—*Ministerial success.* I. THAT IT IS A REAL MINISTERIAL GAIN TO EXCITE RELIGIOUS INQUIRY. (Vers. 42—44.) It was a considerable success to have called forth the interest of the Gentile audience, so that they begged to hear the same truths stated again (ver. 42). It was the beginning of "the grace of God" in their hearts (ver. 43); it resulted in the excitement of still more extensive inquiry, so that "the whole city" was agitated and solicitous (ver. 44). We may thank God for the commencement of religious life, for the sprouting of the seed, for the first signs of spiritual awakening; we need not hesitate to ascribe this to the hand of God on the heart of man.

II. THAT SUCH AWAKENING MUST BE FAITHFULLY FOLLOWED UP BY THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER. Paul and Barnabas "persuaded them to continue," etc. (ver. 43). We must not only plant, but water (I Cor. iii. 6). We should watch for the first signs of religious earnestness, and promptly follow up what has been wrought, by wise, earnest, devout encouragement.

III. THAT THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER SHOULD AVAIL HIMSELF OF EVERY PROVIDENTIAL OPENING. (Vers. 45—47.) The rejection of the gospel by the Jews might have led some half-hearted missionaries to abandon their work. But to those who were here at work it simply acted as an incentive to go forth into a wider field. They took the shutting of one gate to mean entrance through another; the blocking of one way to prove that the finger of God was pointing in another direction, where more ground was to be cultivated and larger harvests were to be reaped. So must we strive to gain good from apparent evil, and look on every adverse event as showing us what other and what better thing our Master would have us do.

IV. THAT GOD'S WORK WILL BE WROUGHT IN SPITE OF MAN'S ENMITY, AND EVEN BY MEANS OF IT. The violent and determined opposition of the Jews (ver. 45) led the apostles to a conclusion in favour of more extensive Christian labour earlier than they could otherwise have reached it. The language of Paul (ver. 46) indicates no little tension of feeling. The enemies of the truth urged onward the chariot of the kingdom, and it rolled forward at full speed. And the fervent words of the apostle met with a prompt and earnest response (ver. 48); the Gentiles "glorified God," and many of

them yielded an intelligent, saving faith to the truths presented. So much of centrifugal force was there in the enmity of the Jews that the gospel was carried far and wide, and "the Word of the Lord was published throughout all the region" (ver. 49). A happy thing it is for us that often "vaulting ambition o'erleaps itself and comes down on the other side," that the wrath of man does occasionally and incidentally work the righteousness and grace of God, that the industry of evil builds up the walls it is seeking to undermine.

V. THAT MINISTERIAL SUCCESS IS CERTAIN TO BE DASHED WITH SOME DISAPPOINTMENT, and that the Christian teacher must mingle reproach with invitation (vers. 50, 51).

VI. THAT FAITHFUL WORK MAY FILL THE MINISTER OF CHRIST WITH HOLY JOY. (Ver. 52.) There is a gladness, an exultation, which may find a home in the teacher's heart which is not holy, and when it cannot be said that he is "filled with joy and the holy Ghost;" that is, when he is congratulating himself with a satisfaction that is selfish, earthly, unspiritual. But when his joy is pure, disinterested, Christian; when he rejoices because Christ is being honoured and men are being raised and blessed, then is his heart happy with a joy with which the Holy Spirit is closely associated, and which "sanctifies and satisfies the soul."—G.

Vers. 1—3.—*Ordination of Barnabas and Saul.* I. THE TRUE WEALTH OF A CHURCH. There were prophets and teachers at Antioch. Nothing is said about its wealth in money, only about its wealth in men. A religious community may possess splendid buildings, wealthy members; may command amply all the external appliances of worship and work; but unless it has men, it has not strength. Intelligence and enthusiasm, piety and genius, constitute the true forces of the Church. Without these, it is feeble with all its worldly resources; with these, it is mighty in poverty.

II. THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST MISSIONARIES. 1. *It was preceded by prayer and fasting.* The moderation of the body gives freedom and clearness to the judgment. There is nothing artificial in the true proceedings of spiritual man. The bodily and the spiritual life cannot be both affirmed at the same time. In denying the body we affirm the Spirit. In casting off the weights of sense we rise into the purer air. 2. *It was accompanied by laying on of hands.* "Order is Heaven's first law," and in the Church "let all things be done decently and in order." The act marks peculiar selection out of the mass of men, and for special and peculiar ends of work. From Antioch in its strength and spiritual prosperity went forth the first missionaries. This is an example. When we are full of thought we long to speak or otherwise give it to the world. When the fire burns within the soul the tongue cannot be mute. In like manner, a vigorous Church will be a missionary Church; the falling off of missionary interest is a symptom that we have less hold upon the truth or have lost the fulness of love from the heart.—J.

Vers. 4—12.—*The mission in Cyprus.* I. THE FALSE PROPHET. Bar-jesus may stand as the type of one class of foes with whom Christianity has to contend. He is described as a "mage" and a "false prophet." It appears that he gave himself the title of Elymas (to which word the modern Turkish *ulema* corresponds)—"wise man" *par excellence*. The essence of the magic calling is the pretension to override the laws of nature and providence in obedience to the wishes and phantasies and caprices of the individual. It would make imagination and feeling the test of truth and right, rather than the fixed truth and Word of God. The spirit of this false prophet is seer in his attaching himself to the proconsul, as the parasite attaches itself to the soun-life, and in the endeavour to divert him from Christianity. Here is a test of the false spirit in the teacher. If we really love the truth and possess it, we have no desire to divert the course of argument from other minds. The more light and discussion, the better for the truth. Suspect the man who tries to silence another by clamour or prejudice the ear of the audience against him.

II. THE TRUE APOSTLE. Paul had been "sent by the Holy Spirit," and now he is filled by the "Holy Spirit." This gives him *boldness* and *directness* in dealing with the impostor. 1. There are times when denunciation may be used by the servant of Christ; for there are times when evil, stripped of its disguises, is manifest, and no terms can be held with it. And the denunciation of the apostle points to the secret

root of evil in the false prophet's life, and which poisons all his teaching. There is *craft, guile*, the design to deceive others for private ends. Then there is a certain *lightness and recklessness* of conduct connected with this, denoted by a peculiar Greek word (*radiourgia*). The false teacher will respect no truth and no sanctity which stands in the way of his objects and ends. Such a man may well be called a "child of the devil." The idea of the devil is that of an accuser or slanderer; and the false prophet will stick at no lies to serve his ends. He is the foe of all that is good, and must be; for the good and right, resting on the principle of truth, is deadly opposed to him, the living lie. He is the perverter of the Lord's straight ways. While the servants of God proclaim, in the words of the ancient prophet, the levelling of inequalities and the making of the crooked straight, the object of the deceiver is to twist the straight into crookedness, and bring back old chaos and disorder. Such are the arrows of denunciation launched at his head; such, in brief words, are the traits of the deceiver, drawn by the firm hand of the apostle. 2. The occasional revelation of Divine judgment against the ungodly. Such acts as that of Paul, in virtue of a Divine authority, in their occasional character, reveal a general principle of judgment. "The hand of the Lord is upon thee," not to strengthen and to illuminate, but to weaken and to deprive of light. The unused or misused sense decays. "From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath." If we use not our intelligence in the cause of truth, we cannot expect to retain it in its clearness. And if our conscience is not guided by love, it will become darkened. And if the light within becomes darkness, how great is that darkness! At the same time, mercy mingles with judgment. It is for a season only, that the opportunity for reformation and repentance may be given, and blessed the suspensions of activities which we have misused, if, in the enforced silence and privation, we are led to reflection and back to God.

III. CONVERSION FOLLOWS THE MANIFESTATION OF THE TRUTH. The fall of error means the establishment of a conviction in the mind. The overthrow of a lie delights the spirit, which is made for truth. Falsehood tempts and enthalls when it appeals to our passions; let the falsehood be exposed, and spiritual emancipation follows. Fear and astonishment are often the means God employs to break up the fatal slumbers of the soul. They are like volcanic forces, which prepare for the working of the genial forces of nature. Every conversion implies in the subject of it the knowledge of the superiority of truth over falsehood, the presence of the soul at a moral victory. Truth in conquering us, sets us free.—J.

Vers. 13—52.—*Paul's missionary discourse at Antioch in Pisidia.* We are introduced to one of those synagogue scenes which are of so much interest in connection with the early progress of Christianity. Here the gospel fought its foes and triumphed by the logic of love; here the seeds were sown which sprang up to cover the world with fruit. According to the ordinary practice, the officers of the synagogue invite the strangers to address the congregation. Paul rises. His address falls naturally into parts. It resembles in general argument and tenor that of Stephen before the Sanhedrim. We may gather from it what were the great reasons which convinced and led to the conversion of the Jews.

I. THE PROVIDENTIAL COURSE OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY. 1. There was the *Divine selection* of a people, not to be for themselves favourites of God, but to be his light and salvation to the ends of the earth. 2. There was the *wondrous deliverance* of this people out of the oppressor's hand—from the land of Egypt. On this memory of a surpassing Divine power joined with Divine goodness, the historic consciousness of the nation was based. 3. There was the *desert discipline*: the giving of the Law, the enforcement of holiness—chastisement, purification, education in obedience. 4. The expulsion of the Canaanite tribes and the foundation of a settled system of government. This, too, was a great epoch; and Israel could not refer to it without the consciousness of her high mission as a nation—called of God to supersede the weak, effete idolatrous nations of the land, and to diffuse holier manners, purer laws. 5. The epoch of the kings. The brilliant but erring Saul; the hero David and his glorious era. Every nation has some similar or analogous points in its history on which its memory rests; landmarks of its way; prophetic moments containing the future; sowing-times for future harvests; endeavours towards an ideal. Think of our own Magna Charta, our Civil War, our

Revolution, our struggle for existence, our chastisements, and our triumphs. Israel's history is the mirror in which every nation may view its own, and trace the hand of the same world-guiding providence.

II. THE CONSUMMATION OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY. In Jesus the line of Israel's greatness was continued. He was of the seed of David according to the flesh. There was an echo of glorious memories in him. He came to revive the kingdom of David and the ascendancy of Israel, although in a far different way from that expected by his countrymen. The testimony of the Baptist was mighty in favour of Jesus. No prophet in these latter days had commanded greater reverence than John the Baptist, the great religious reformer, a preacher of repentance. Now he had distinctly waived his claims to be the Messiah, and had pointed to Jesus; had retired before him with the most lowly confession of inferiority. When we see a great man sincerely willing to take a second place in the presence of a new-comer, it is a witness of the greatest moment to the latter's superiority. The highest human elevation of character—such as John's—can only bend before the Divine. "To you, then," may Paul well say to the Jews, "and that not on the ground of my assertion, but the witness of the greatest man held in honour by you, the second Elijah, is this salvation sent, this good news delivered."

II. THE CONDUCT OF THE SANHEDRIM TO JESUS EXPLAINED. Paul is aware that he has a great prejudice in the minds of his hearers to overcome—the great "scandal of the cross." 1. The ignorance of the rulers. They did not understand the voices of the prophets, nor the meaning of the Scriptures constantly read in their synagogues. But their ignorance was little excuse for them. They *ought to have known* better. If we choose to look at facts in one light only—that of our wishes or prejudices—we suppress a part of the truth; and when this suppressed truth rises up from an unexpected quarter to confront us, the sense of self-condemnation cannot be overcome. The Sanhedrim saw in Jesus the embodiment of suppressed truth, and they hated him. It was like the uprising of a ghost long thought to have been laid. 2. What they could not meet with reason they tried to quell by violence. Jesus was tried, with the result of establishing his innocence. No crime, no fault, no disobedience to the Law, no rebellion against order, could be proved. Yet he was handed to the Roman governor, and his death was a judicial murder. 3. Thus prophecy was unconsciously fulfilled. A suffering Messiah had been foretold, and had now been revealed in a death of martyrdom. Behind the innocence of the sufferer and the guilt of his murderers a purpose of eternal wisdom and love had wrought and fulfilled itself. It is this insight into Divine thoughts which can alone relieve the dreadful tragedies of human passions and events. While in one point of view the death of Jesus is a scene of horror and of darkness, and the thought of it a scandal to the Jew and a folly to the Greek, in another it is a revelation of a Divine love which conquers hate and forgives even guilty ignorance, and converts a revelation of weakness into a revelation of wisdom and of power.

III. THE RESURRECTION. Without this crowning fact the rest had been incomplete. A suffering Messiah would have been a witness of the peoples' sin; a Messiah rising triumphant over death could alone bespeak the victory of Divine love over human hate and sin. Here, then, comes the core of the message. The apostles can never forget that they are "witnesses of the Resurrection." And this was good news—the fulfilment of a promise made to the fathers in olden time. The apostles found in psalms and prophecies of the past which referred in the first instance to events then passing and persons then living, an ideal or prophetic element. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" these words, perhaps referable in the first instance to Solomon, can only in the apostolic thought be properly satisfied in Christ. And so with the other citation. The promise to continue the Divine covenant in the line of the kings is fulfilled above all in Jesus. We must recollect that the kingdom of Judah and the national life as a whole was ideal; that is, it pointed to meanings not at any time within the visible field of experience. If we grasp this thought, it may help us to understand how the apostles viewed Scripture, and how they quoted it; not so much for its literal and primary as for its spiritual and prophetic meaning. The Holy One of God was not to see corruption. But David passed away and mixed with dust. It is, then, in David's "greater Son" that this prophecy must be fulfilled, of an incorruptible and immortal life.

IV. THE REMISSION OF SINS. Through this risen One the blessed boon is proclaimed. The life, the death, the resurrection, would be simply a grand Divine drama, an object of contemplation, a piece of magnificent poetry, were there no practical result like this flowing from it. But it means victory and release from sin. Surrender to the Divine ideal, affiance in the Anointed of God, means deliverance and peace, not to be obtained by laborious obedience to the moral or ceremonial Law. Faith is whole-hearted surrender to the Divine Object. It is not a mere act of intelligence, nor yielding of the affections, nor decision of the will; but the giving up one's self to Christ. It is this which brings the full blessing of Divine peace upon the heart, and nothing short of this can do so.

V. FINAL WARNING. How shall men escape if they reject so great salvation? Refuse love, and wrath only can be expected. Similarly does Stephen's speech end with a sharp note of warning. Our heart is stirred by contrasted motives. We move between two poles of emotion. To be drawn by love is to be repelled by fear. The one motive or the other may have the greater weight with different minds, or with the same mind in different moods. Let us thankfully recognize that, whether the gospel touches the chord of love or of fear, it aims at our salvation. "Save, Lord, by love or fear!"—J.

Vers. 42—52.—Jewish jealousy. The result of the preaching of Paul at Antioch was the conversion of many Jews and Gentile proselytes to the Christian faith. To these the exhortation, appropriate to all new converts, was given: "Abide in the grace of God."

I. THE GATHERING OF THE MULTITUDE. There is always some reason for the gathering of the crowd. Its fancy is easily excited. It is attracted by the wonderful and the novel. Here it was no mere sensationalism; it was the desire to hear the Word of God which drew them together. At its heart the multitude loves truth. Well it may; for it craves salvation from misery, and knows that this is to be found in truth alone. Often is the multitude deceived in thought, and mistakes sound for sense; but not for long.

II. THE RISE OF JEWISH ENVY. The causes of which are not difficult to explain. The new-comer has laid hold upon the people and gained their ear. It is at last the multitude to whom the teacher and the ruler must appeal, and from whom he must derive his influence. Popularity invites jealousy and attracts hate from the unsuccessful. Rare indeed is the magnanimity shown by John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease." To be willing that monopoly of privileges should pass away and that all should equally share the light and the love of God, is the spirit of the gospel, which opposes Jewish exclusiveness and jealousy.

III. THE DESTINATION OF THE GOSPEL. 1. *First to the Jews.* Not for their own merits' sake, but because of the promises of God, who cannot deny himself, and, despite our unfaithfulness, remains faithful. But the blessings of the gospel are freely offered to free men. They may, therefore, be rejected. In the freedom of choice lies boundless possibility of good and boundless responsibility for evil. 2. *Those who reject it are self cast away.* "Ye cast away yourselves, and do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life." It is never that God thinks us unworthy of the best, but that we do not rise to seek it. Self-neglecting, as the great poet teaches, is a viler sin than self-love. We prefer our prejudices to the truth, our passions and pleasures to God's will, the material to the spiritual and ideal good; and thus turn against ourselves in acts that are suicidal. Men shut themselves out of heaven while they shut themselves in with narrowness and contempt of truth. 3. *Opportunity passes to those who are ready for it.* The Gentiles, in their sorrow and depression, needed comfort, and greeted the good news of the love of God. The kingdom of God and the mission of the Messiah were for all who needed its blessings. The gospel is a light and a saving power in mankind. Those who are satisfied with their own state, outward or inward, will turn away from it; they cannot relish a message which implies the inward misery of those to whom it is addressed. But the sad and the sick hail it with joy, and find in it the power of God unto salvation. And the Word of God spreads over the whole land. 4. *The influence of women in the diffusion of Christianity.* Women can powerfully help or hinder the course of any movement in the world, especially any

religious movement. Here certain feelings in their minds are appealed to, antagonistic to the gospel. It would be easy to misrepresent it. These proselyte women might say that they had learned to be religious without the gospel, and what could it do more for them? Or it might be represented that it subverted sound piety, whereas it really fulfils every noble ideal learned elsewhere. Among the proselytes to Judaism we see elsewhere that it received a warm welcome. The lesson from such incidents is the practical one—that we should test any new teaching for ourselves, not accept reports at second hand. The seeming new is often not true; the new and the true are ever the fulfilment of the old.—J.

Vers. 4—12.—*The gospel in Cyprus.* Break in the narrative, the second portion, referring to the missionary labours of St. Paul, reminding us that the chief purpose of the book is to describe the *growth* of the Church, not directly its constitution or doctrines or discipline. Notice—

I. THE TENTATIVE CHARACTER of this first missionary journey, which embraced Cyprus, Pamphylis, Pisidia, Lycaonia, and so back through Attalia to Antioch. The Church at Antioch kept in view, and the report of the work brought back to it. This showed that the double aspect of the work was remembered—its bearing on the world and its bearing on the Church itself. All aggressive efforts should be thus held closely to the vital centre of fellowship. Paul and his companions did not aim at preaching themselves, but Christ. So diffusion is strength, not weakness.

II. The faithful observance of the Lord's rule, TO THE JEW FIRST. Thus the mission of God's ancient people still recognized. The unity of truth. The continuity of grace. "Salvation is of the Jews."

III. THE SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF CYPRUS A TYPE OF THAT OF THE WORLD. Corrupt synagogues, side by side with heathen ignorance and superstition. *Bar-jesus*, or *Elymas*, between the Gentiles and Christ; false prophecy hiding the true. So in Europe during the Middle Ages. The infidelity which broke out in the French Revolution the natural product of a monstrous travesty of Christianity. Yet there is hope in "the men of understanding" to whom the gospel can appeal.

IV. MIRACULOUS MANIFESTATION brought in to break the spell of falsehood. Paul's first miracle. He wrought it when under the special influence of the Holy Ghost. No vindictive feeling in the apostle, but a simple obedience to the voice of the Spirit. The miracle was one of mercy, both as regards Sergius Paulus and the heathen population generally. Nothing would more open the way of the gospel. People that were accustomed to magic could be easily impressed by such a sign, especially as it fell on the sorcerer. May it not be that some such influences are to be watched against in modern society? Those in high station often listen to spiritualists, thinking to aid their own weakness by such means. Yet the wonders of the gospel far greater than all the deceits of false prophets. We may safely employ the feeling of astonishment, if only we sanctify it by the preaching of the Word.—R.

Vers. 13—15.—*A rapid journey by sea and land.* Paphos to Perga. Perga through Pisidia to *Antiochia*, the northern extremity of the province.

I. JOHN MARK separated and returned to Jerusalem. Probably a failure of spiritual courage. Yet notice the change which afterwards occurred. He is, according to many, the evangelist; perhaps Jewish in feeling, and hence attaching himself more to Peter. Sign of the Jewish prejudice still at work, and the difficulties in store for the Church.

II. The PROVIDENTIAL PREPARATION of Paul for his entire devotion to the Gentiles. 1. There was no self-assertion in it. He simply followed the leading of events. We should watch the guidance of God in our work. 2. The attitude of the Jews of Antioch showed that the Word was brought to them in a respectful and reverent manner. 3. Glimpse into the synagogue life shows what an opportunity the Jews had among the heathen. The Law and the prophets still read. On that foundation the gospel was placed. The Law was the schoolmaster to bring the nations to Christ, but the schooling was corrupt.—R.

Vers. 16—43.—*Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch.* I. THE MAIN PURPOSE

of it—to prove the Messiahship of Jesus, and therefore to proclaim the gate of life open. History of Divine grace pointing to day of salvation. The course of thought in Paul's own mind, which led him to faith.

II. The MAIN STRENGTH of the argument—the facts of the Saviour's death and resurrection. Paul could speak with special emphasis, though prudently avoided bringing in at this point his own conversion.

III. The SPIRITUAL APPEAL twofold. 1. You need this salvation; for the Law of Moses will not justify you. 2. How can you escape if you neglect it? resist not the Holy Ghost.

IV. The MARKED EFFECT of sincerity and earnestness. 1. *Inquiry*. It is much to break through stolid indifference. 2. *Devout attention* led to faith. Many followed them; that is, declared themselves convinced. Fruit gathered even among the Jews.—R.

Ver. 22.—*The character of David*. “And when he had removed him,” etc. Divine testimony to the character as one of the most wonderful.

I. All grew out of CONSECRATED GROUND. No evolution explains such a man. The grace of God from a child. Converse with nature in his shepherd life (see Wordsworth's ‘Excursion’). Forgetfulness of self. Patience. Courage and fortitude. But all led up to Divine anointing.

II. Fashioned by PROVIDENTIAL DEALINGS. Sufferings in the school of affliction. His discipline in conflict with Saul.

III. A MINGLED CHARACTER. Great faults beside great virtues. Tempted by luxury. Yet illustrating in his recovery that same grace which had raised him to the height. Goodness and severity of God. Our David is perfect.—R.

Ver. 38.—*The proclamation*. “Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren,” etc. The change in the world since Paul was at Antioch; yet the proclamation as necessary as ever. The nearer we come to apostolic simplicity, the greater our success. Nothing but the gospel can accomplish the work, and that because it changes the heart through the forgiveness of sins.

I. The FREEDOM of the proclamation. Forgiveness, not purchased or wrought out, but simply announced.

II. The invitation to FAITH. Through this Man, whose Name can be published, whose authority we testify. Religion is not a self-constructed edifice of spiritual feelings to which the Name of Christ is attached to give it a Christian sanction; it is the fruit of faith, and faith is surrender to the authority of Christ.

III. Knowledge the root of RESPONSIBILITY. “Be it known unto you;” therefore, as made known, take heed that you incur not the guilt of its rejection. A very small amount of knowledge enough to point to the “Man Christ Jesus.” But if the light be darkness, by neglect, perversity, prejudice, pride, how great that darkness!—R.

Vers. 44—52.—*Jewish opposition overruled to the world's good*. I. THE TEST OF SINCERITY applied to the professedly zealous. The city stirred by those who “followed not with them.” The true zeal is that which is actuated by the true charity, which “rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in truth.”

II. The best success is that which is obtained by simply FOLLOWING DIVINE DIRECTION. “It was necessary” to encounter the prejudice of the Jews, but the work of the world's evangelization was promoted by the causes which seemed to thwart it.

III. THOSE THAT EXALT THEMSELVES ARE ARASED. To thrust opportunity away is to judge ourselves unworthy of eternal life. The facts will be condemnation, without human accusation.

IV. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE GOSPEL is its original charter of right to possession of all nations. The light was created before the sun, and the grace of God preceded the call of the Jews. The patriarchal religion testifies to the breadth of the message.

V. PERSECUTION is the last resort of defeated opponents of truth. When arguments fail, try abuse. The old priestly spirit at work, “urging on devout women.”

VI. MOVEMENT is the law of life. If Antioch shuts its gates, Iconium opens a

new sphere. The messengers must think first of the work—last of themselves. *Ohne Hast, ohne Rast.*—R.

Ver. 52.—*Spiritual joy.* “And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.” At the conclusion of a narrative descriptive of varied experiences both of the messengers and of the Church.

I. THE JOY OF TRUE DISCIPLES IN THE MIDST OF TROUBLES. 1. *Joy of personal faith*, which is promoted by discipline. If all went smoothly with us we should lose strength by the ease and self-indulgence which we should be apt to cherish. 2. *Joy in the spread of the Gospel.* The world opposes, false religion opposes, but the truth makes way.

II. THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST IN THE CHURCH, independent of human guidance, Paul and Barnabas expelled, but the disciples taught and led by the Spirit. We must not glory in men. The great resource of the Church is fellowship. Even the spread of truth largely independent of particular agencies. The Word speaks for itself. The Spirit works often without apparent use of human instrumentality.

III. THE UPLIFTED HEART AND THE UPLIFTED TESTIMONY. *Joy and the Holy Ghost.* We should show the world that religious joy is above all other. Victories, if given, should be recounted. We should often meet together to tell of Divine wonders. The bold and joyful spirit especially needful, as the present day is full of growing unbelief and indifference.—R.

Vers. 1—5.—*An ordination service.* This chapter is very interesting, as finding for us the real starting-point of Saul's grand missionary labours; as recording the change of his name to Paul (ver. 9); as altering the order hitherto observed in mentioning it, from “Barnabas and Saul” to “Paul and Barnabas” (vers. 2, 8; comp. with vers. 13, 43); and lastly, as forming the commencement of a long sketch of history almost exclusively occupied with his acts and career alone. For reasons which doubtless came of the Holy Spirit, of his purpose, his motions, and his sanctifying guidance, Paul now takes the foreground and henceforth is kept in it. His early character and career had been marked, his “call” had been marked, his waiting and trial since had been marked, and now marked for ever on the page of Scripture and upon the genius of Christ's Church was the stamp of his work and devotion. The preamble alike of the chapter and of this long sketch of history is filled in with the very brief recital of the ordination of Barnabas and Saul to missionary labour. Let us observe what is distinctly recorded as the condition of things at this juncture, and what thereupon the course of things.

I. THE CHURCH APPEARS AS THE UNIT ECCLESIASTICAL. This is worth observing, if only for the honour thereby done the Church. But yet more for the suggestions that arise from it, as indicating that it is the point of departure condescendingly recognized by Heaven itself, by Christ and the Spirit—of duty, of work, of character, of privilege to men. Wherever the Church, it is the living centre, where dwells the Spirit, around which warmest and most intelligent affection, devotion, and enthusiasm should gather, even beyond those owned to by David and the most pious of the Jews toward Jerusalem and Zion (Ps. cxxxvii. 4—6). No metropolitan centre of officialism, it purports to be and is ordained to be a living fountain head. This is the “rest of the Lord” (Ps. cxxxii. 8, 14). This is where his people find rest. This the spot from which the heralds of everlasting truth set out, and of which they say again and again, “All my springs are in thee” (Ps. lxxxvii. 7).

II. EMPHATIC MENTION IS MADE OF FIVE MEN IN THE CHURCH. They are prophets and teachers. 1. Though every Christian man should be a spring of good to others and a true minister in the Church, the New Testament, far from dishonouring the idea of orders among those who compose it, here evidently enough countenances it. 2. The *personnel* of these five excites interest. Barnabas, who stands first, we know, and Saul, who stands last. Lucius is an African, and is mentioned again (Rom. xvi. 21). The epithet attached to Symeon marks something interesting, though we cannot say certainly what. While a volume of interest underlies what is added to the name of Manaen: It is a signal case, indeed, of “one being taken and the other left.” 3. The holy engagements of these five men is emphasized. They are warming the fire; they are

keeping warm the Church; they are prevailing in prayer with God; they are subduing the body and keeping it under subjection. How often might five men save and bless a Church, and call down richest blessing on it!

III. EMPHATIC HONOUR IS SET ON THESE FIVE MEN. 1. The Spirit "speaketh expressly" to them, in the midst of their prayer and fastings and devotion (ch. x. 3, 4, 10, 19, 30). It is possible that this occasion may have found the Church gathered together also, but it cannot be affirmed that it was so. Any way, there were more than "two or three gathered together in the Name" of Christ. 2. The Spirit speaks another "call" to them. The forces of the Church are growing. Two of the five are "called" to go far away to the Gentiles. The other three are "called" to "separate" the two designated for "the work." "Doubting nothing" and "without gainsaying," they do this. Still does the Spirit keep the choosing and the designating, and should be honoured and glorified for doing so. And still does the Spirit delegate the outer and visible carrying out of his will to the ministers of the Church. Note: (1) What a happy "separating" this compared with the many of which the Church, and, alas! the world, has heard, through all the succeeding centuries! (2) The *method* of "separating" Barnabas and Saul. It is (a) after fasting; (b) by prayer; and (c) with the accompanying sign of laying on of hands. (3) The probable object and advantages of this service. If there seem any ceremony about it, it is not vain ceremony. It is full of meaning, and may be full of use and advantage. (a) An object, high, holy, not *self-serving*, is very distinctly placed before those thus ordained. (b) They are reminded that the eyes of witnesses are upon them. (c) They are reminded that he who calls them to be "separated" will hear *their* call to him when perils abound, when flesh is weary, when the heart is sore and weary, when enemies press in, and when all things seem against them. (d) They are taught that in this "one thing" they now do, their Master and their Judge, the one Being to whom they are responsible, is above, the great invisible but ever sympathizing One. How blessed and how useful have the memories of self-consecration often been in the subsequent periods of life! The heart has dwelt with them and been refreshed and enriched by them. And what added impression, stimulus, and sustained energy have often come to us in the memory of those, if only of earth, who once heard our vows and witnessed our consecration! But these have most possessed the heart and ruled it and governed it entirely, when to the rest has been added the unswerving conviction that the Spirit called, and that it was his call and nothing less than his, that we once heard and never could forget.—B.

Vers. 11, 12.—*Obstruction of the truth summarily visited: the blighter blighted.* We can imagine something of the earnestness of Barnabas and Saul as they set out on their new mission, feeling that they had "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ" in their charge. Others felt this too, or, if they did not feel it, *feared* it. And one, in his iniquitous attempt to neutralize the force of it, courts his own discomfiture and strengthens the cause he had designed to undermine. Notice—

I. THE GUILT HERE PUNISHED. It has been already in trenchant language denounced (vers. 9, 13), but deed is to follow word. The guilt had certain aggravations. 1. It is the guilt of a man averse himself to light and conviction. 2. It is the guilt of a man who was thus averse chiefly because he saw true light, would stop his dark ways and probably put an end "to his gains." 3. It is the guilt of a man who had loved it long, and long habituated himself to a career of deception of others and taking Heaven's Name in vain. 4. It is the guilt of one who, misled himself, sets himself to mislead others. 5. It is the guilt of one who would mislead another in matter of deepest, dearest, tenderest moment to him. 6. It is the guilt of one who will do this in those sensitive, critical moments when decision trembles in the balance, and his fellow-man is *looking* to the light and inclining to it. 7. It is the guilt of a man who will lay himself out to crush with tenfold vigour the events of the conversion of one whose good character, position, and influence would count for much if he should turn to the light. So correspondingly great would be the forfeiture and destruction of good, the responsibility of which would lie at the door of the tempter.

II. THE PUNISHMENT ITSELF. 1. Elymas has pretended, probably for a long, long time, to work signs and wonders among a deluded people. He shall now in punishment, incurred by the filling up of the full measure of his iniquities, learn what a real sign

and wonder and miracle are, in his own painful experience. How much had he taken out of others in money and in credulity! He shall be reminded of the past. 2. He tried to keep another in the dark and amid the groping and the wandering. He himself shall know the grievousness of darkness and the humiliation of groping and the bitter dissatisfaction of the wanderer. 3. He tried to take away from another the help of a good strong hand divinely proffered him. He shall know what it is to have to beg the leading of even a human hand himself. 4. Yet hope and "room for repentance" are not pronounced for ever closed for Elymas. And the punishment awarded him is less than the injury he had sought to inflict—less by far.

III. THE LEADING EFFECTS OF THE PUNISHMENT. 1. It removes the transgressor off the ground. 2. It effectually confounds his endeavours, and turns him into an impressive witness to that truth which he had resisted for himself and tried to take the comfort of from another. 3. It produces strong faith and admiring astonishment and grateful acceptance of "the truth as it is in Jesus," on the part of the deputy threatened in his highest interests. 4. It leaves a long warning, in the stricken blindness of Elymas, though it was but temporary, of the verdict that Christ passes on the heinousness of that sin which consists in attempting to blight the opening religious growth and knowledge of any. 5. In the temporary character of the blindness of Elymas, provision was secured for a certain resuscitation of the whole matter, in his own memory and in that of many others, whensoever he might regain vision. 6. An evident proof is given how God both rules and overrules, can convert and does convert, all the efforts of his opponents against him "to the furtherance of the gospel." For this was literally the issue of the conduct of one whom not the bitterness of a prejudiced tongue, but the sober truth of an inspired apostle, describes as "full of all subtilty and mischief, a child of the devil, an enemy of all righteousness, and an unceasing perverter of the right ways of the Lord."—B.

Vers. 14—41.—*Another faithful sermon to the Jew.* It is pleasant to observe the traces, in every possible place, of the grace still held out to the Jew. It vindicates with emphasis "the long-suffering" of God, and the continuing force of the dying prayer of him whom those Jews "slew and hanged on a tree." And, though in a less degree, it is pleasant to observe how messengers and apostles, when they reach a new town, pay their first visit to the synagogue. This very thing the Apostle of the *Gentiles* now does. It has been the order of the two companions since they set out from the former Antioch (vers. 4, 5), but now arrived at "Antioch in Pisidia," and Paul distinctly taking the lead, the same course is observed. "Paul and his company" (ver. 13) "went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down." They are strangers, and "after the reading of the Law and the prophets," they are invited by the rulers of the synagogue to speak. Sergius Paulus (ver. 7) sent for them when they were at Paphos, and "desired to hear the Word of God." And now again they spoke from all the better vantage-ground, in that they were invited to speak. The occasion proved a memorable one. And its memorableness turned on Paul's "word of exhortation" to a Jewish audience. Notice—

I. THE ONE DETERMINED OBJECT OF THIS "WORD OF EXHORTATION." (Vers. 38, 39.) It is to fix sole, undivided attention on the "Man" (ver. 38) Jesus, as the *Obtainer of forgiveness* of sins for men, though not himself necessarily the actual Forgiver, and as the *Justifier* of all men who believe in him, from the demands of responsibilities of which they would fain be free. This is the key-note of Paul's preaching, and we hear it distinctly sounded on this the first great occasion of his authoritative pronouncements. It marks the standpoint of his practical theology. And it is the burden of his apostolic mission. Nothing lies nearer his own heart, nothing is spoken more plainly on his lip, whether he converses with himself, a sinner, or would appeal to others, sinners. It is the core of the truth; it is the bone and marrow of the gospel itself. Therefore: 1. Paul preaches the "Man Christ Jesus." 2. Paul preaches him as the only One who obtains forgiveness (let him obtain it as he may) for the burdened sinner. 3. Paul preaches him as the living, all-efficient Justifier of men before God. 4. Paul preaches him as the "real" (John xv. 1), after all the typical and figurative (ver. 39)

II. THE STRAIGHT, DIRECT ROAD ALONG WHICH PAUL TRAVELS TO HIS ONE DETER-

MINED OBJECT. There is no touch of "the Socratic argument" here. Paul takes, it is true, a little while to reach his grand point. But he goes by no covert approach towards it. He paves the way, and may be said to smooth the way, but it is all in full daylight. The brief yet effective historical survey which Paul takes of Israel may be compared, for object and matter and manner, with those of Peter (ch. ii.) and (though in less degree) of Stephen (ch. vii.). Without invidiousness it may be said, however, that Paul's brevity, pointedness, trenchancy in this address, could not be surpassed. He introduces *Christ*, from the moment of God's election of Abraham to "the raising up Jesus again" from a death and grave which had set not one stigma of corruption on him. And in a moment or two he has confronted his whole audience in that Antioch synagogue with two portraits like life and life-size—the one the portrait of their "own nation and people, the Jews," and the other the portrait of the crucified, "dead, and buried," but risen One. This introductory survey of Paul owns to the greatest fidelity to fact and fidelity to the conscience of those who listened. The evidences of promise sacred to every memory, of genealogy that in point of fact had been as indisputed as it was indisputable, of prophet of old, of that greatest "prophet born of women" (Luke vii. 28)—John the Baptist, of modern time, and of "sacred psalm," are all marshalled. And at present the effect seemed likely to be *irresistible*. The "men of Israel, and they that feared God" from happy association with them, and "the Gentiles," or some chance representatives of them, seem to be, not indeed chained to the spot (ver. 42), not entranced, not bewitched, but deeply impressed and thoughtful without being embittered.

III. THE FAITHFUL WARNING AND POWERFUL REMONSTRANCE THAT CLOSED "THE WORD OF EXHORTATION." The word of trumpet-warning is Paul's own. He clenches it, albeit, with quotation from "the Scriptures," which should add the force that comes of sacred reverence's claim. "Repent!" cried John the Baptist. "Beware!" cries Paul, "lest you fail to repent;" as so many had failed to do since John the Baptist's cry. They heard the quotation, and often as they had heard it before and knew it so well, or it would have lost much of its significance and aptness on the lip of Paul, they had never thought of it in *this* light, they had never dreamt it could have foretold of them or be any description of them. Yet what a wonderful picture it had been of a nation, for at all events some three years, and of their sons and daughters some thirteen years more already! What a true picture of that "highly favoured" nation! They had beheld and despised; they had wondered and had—perished, yes, already too many of them—perished. And that from no convulsion of nature, or collapse of heaven, or irremediable pestilence, or sword of conquering foe, but because, though they were given to behold things that kings and prophets and righteous men of their ancestors for centuries had desired in vain, they "despised" what they beheld. So must perish all who will "in so wise believe a work which" Heaven itself works in the very midst of them, and which is "declared" to them with the voice of power, of love, of patient importunity, but is "despised and rejected."—B.

Ver. 36.—Present service, promised sleep. This allusion to the known devotion of David during his life, and to his "rest from his labours" in the "sleep" that hid him awhile from life, has been introduced in connection with Paul's vindication of the resurrection of "the Man" Jesus—that cardinal fact of Christianity and conspicuous topstone of the multifiform Christian edifice. This, foretold in the shape of a shadowy typical promise made to David, to lie like seed long buried, had of late sprung up and shown surprising blossom, and indeed had already borne glorious fruit, even in *him* who "rose from the dead" and "became the firstfruits of them that slept in him." The allusion in itself meanwhile is grateful and instructive. And when the sun goes down brightly and purely then does this lesser light sparkle. It covers five practical suggestions.

I. THE PLAIN DUTY OF THE SERVANT OF CHRIST—THIS, TO "SERVE." This is a great word, a greater thing—to *serve*. Long time it was not so considered, till Jesus rose on the world, and, with ever-illustrious career of self-sacrifice, was among us as "he that served," and said it as well, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant." He who bare our sins, who carried our sorrows, who suffered our stripes, who murmured not beneath our infirmities, who staunched so many a bleeding

wound of humanity, nor refused to stoop to wash and to wipe its hot and dusty feet,—he grafted this heavenly shoot on the wild, selfish, unpromising stock of human nature. And it is the memory of him, his obedience and his service and his devotion, that again and again reproduces the like, the vital motive of the humblest service and gladdest obedience of each true inmate of his Church. If any man would know the real secret of real position in the Church of Christ, let him learn: 1. To serve. 2. To serve Christ. 3. To serve him faithfully and closely and continually. *This* man will find his way to serve his fellow-men and “generation” without fail—the poor, the humble, the untaught, the sinful, and those who already with himself wait on one Lord.

II. THE RULE ACCORDING TO WHICH OUR SERVING MUST BE ORDERED—“BY THE WILL OF GOD.” If we do really serve our generation, there can be no doubt that we are in the path of duty, and accordingly in harmony with “the will of God.” At the same time, it is too possible to spend a large amount of time, of energy, of property, thinking you do God service, when you are doing no such thing. The safer way is to *begin* by seeing to it that the work is according to the will of God. This should be the very first thing in work, greater or less (1 Cor. x. 31). So sang the quaint George Herbert, whose earthly song merged so well in the heavenly song, these two centuries ago—

“Teach me, my God and King,
In all things thee to see,
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for thee.

“All may of thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean
But with this tincture—for thy sake,
Will not grow bright and clean.

“A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
Makes *that* and the action fine.

“This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.”

It is most important to remember that very much in our serving depends on: 1. Our *purpose* to serve God's will. For God whose power to overrule is so often and so strikingly seen all-coextensive with his power to rule, often employs men to further his purposes, and to serve their generation, who never consecrated a single intelligent purpose or energy consciously to him. Far from such unconscious, ungrateful, even unwilling doers of his work should we be. The generation of such is indeed served, in one sense, according to God's will; but it is no thanks to them. 2. Our care to *do the thing* best approved as God's will. Right purpose and good intention have too often been the cover of a certain *non*-performance of the things that would be most true to the will of God. The will of God is to be consulted, not merely in the spring of our work, but carefully, humbly, all the way down *the accomplishment* of the purpose his grace may have originated in the heart.

III. THE HUMILITY WITH WHICH WE SHOULD SERVE. We are to serve “our own generation.” A faithful memory of this will save: 1. Waste aspirations. Pride is often at the root of great desires, personal feeling the motive of great schemes, lack of humility the direct cause of idle disappointment. 2. Seeking the unattainable distant, instead of that which we may most certainly touch because it is close by us. The *present* time, the *present* place, the *present* task are the time, the sphere, the toil for the servant of Christ. Between dreams of the past and visions of the future, the priceless opportunity of practical duty has too often irrevocably slipped past. 3. Sighing for more strength, or more knowledge, or more wealth, instead of using at once our *available* strength, and improving soberly our given talents, one, two, or ten. There are many who wait for a showy opportunity of serving Christ and his Church, with

ears shut to one of the sweetest utterances that even he spoke, respecting the "cup of cold water;" and with eyes closed to the widow woman of the mite by the treasury, to whom the Lord did not close his eyes, and to whom he even called the attention of others. 4. An actual *lessening* of moral strength and diminishment of that enlarged opportunity which is the invariable sequel of faithfulness "in few things." The time is neither very slow in its coming nor at all doubtful when the shoulders of those who have been faithful in few things and in very little things bend beneath the weight of most honourable burdens of responsibilities. Not a few of those who once did on the humblest scale the work of their generation, and neither hargained for nor dreamt of posthumous fame, stand now in niches or aisles of the Church, and "dead, yet speak" with a voice to edify and to thrill generations to come. Of one such instance we know to a certainty, that of the woman who most spontaneously and at her own individual expense thought to serve her generation by richly anointing the body of her Lord so loved to the burying, and received the promise, now for two thousand years fulfilled, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, there also shall this, that this woman hath done, be spoken of for a memorial of her."

IV. THE AMPLE ROOM TO SERVE—A GENERATION. Just now to serve only one's generation seemed little. But is it so? A generation. For what does the word stand? 1. For what an important length of time! 2. For what a multitude and variety of people! 3. For what a weight of solemn, thrilling interests in human affairs! 4. For what a trial of individual consistency and education of individual character! Only the infinite mind can read that volume through—the volume of one generation. Yes; there is no great distance to lend enchantment to the view, and no so picturesque vista, and no vague, flattering, indefinite scope; yet how full, how ample is the definite scope! "Blessed are those servants," who through a generation length, or from youth even to old age, are found in this sense, "expecting their Lord."

V. THE COMFORTING DESIGNATION GIVEN TO THE END OF SUCH A LIFE-SERVICE. "David fell on sleep." It is sweet language indeed. But how often we lose the sweetness of it! The servant of Christ need not call that *death* which bounds the days of earth and shuts the bodily eye to the light of an earthly sun. *It is but night.* Night, grateful night, bounds the day of life, speedily merging in that grandest morning, the morning of the resurrection. *It is but sleep.* Sleep in Jesus, equally deep, soft, restful, closes the eyes of his wearied servant, surely renews his youth, and soon wakes into life everlasting and the light that is in God's presence. Let us learn the name Jesus himself gave to death, and learn it to love it. Now we work, we watch, we pray—soon we shall sleep on and take our rest. And our awakening from it will be ineffable light and knowledge and love.—B.

Vers. 46, 47.—*Unexpected interpretations.* "Ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life." The gentle, pitying character of the immense preponderance of the language of Jesus to men speaks and has ever spoken his condescending acquaintance with human nature, and his sympathetic acquaintance with those of the springs of human action that lie deep in feeling. His spirit in these respects was not altogether unworthily caught by his apostles, and notably by the one time disciple, now apostle, John. There came times and occasions, however, both in the converse of the Master himself with sinful men, and of his servants with their fellow-men, when words of kindness to the ear would be the very signal of unkindness to the soul and untruthfulness to its highest interests. And the plain and "bold" language of Paul and Barnabas now, needing no extenuation at our hands, and little enough of explanation, offers a forcible and most striking suggestion, how often, through all the coverings of gracious and forbearing language, the polished shaft of naked truth must be threatening to pierce, let the crash be what it may. The statement to which Paul now committed himself may be regarded as saying very significantly that—

I. MEN NEVER MORE EFFECTUALLY PRONOUNCE JUDGMENT ON THEMSELVES THAN WHEN THEY ARE PRONOUNCING JUDGMENT ON CHRIST. This is true in two leading cases. 1. If men are pronouncing judgment unfavourable to Christ—as, for instance, in supposed answer to such a question as his own, "What think ye of Christ?"—they are pronouncing nothing less than decisive condemnation of themselves. 2. If they are humbly and in the genuine spirit of trying to feel their way, giving out from time

to time some testimony of their growing and growingly grateful *appreciation* of Christ and of his truth, they then are proving their own growth in likeness to him. They are unconsciously giving the measure of how far the "day dawns" with them, and how high the "day-star arises in their hearts," or even how far they have got on that path which is like "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

II. MEN'S PUTTING FROM THEM THE WORD OF GOD AS NOW GIVEN IN CHRIST IS DOING NOTHING LESS THAN PUTTING FROM THEM THE PROSPECT OF EVERLASTING LIFE. 1. The dogmatic tone of the apostle is to be noted. This is *not* the personal prerogative of Paul or of any one else; it is the claimed, asserted, demanded right of Christianity. Christianity gives its account of it, and a good and competent account. If this be not so, Christianity must go. But if it be so, *he* must go who will not have its reign over him. 2. Momentous and awful as is the issue to which Paul leaves now the refusing Jews, he lays the whole responsibility of it upon them. *They* were "filled with envy," they "spoke against the things which were spoken by Paul," they "contradicted and blasphemed," they "put from" them the "Word of God;" and Paul rules that theirs is the undivided folly of forfeiting "everlasting life," as though they seriously "judged themselves unworthy of it."

III. THE SIMPLEST FACTS OF SOME SORTS OF HUMAN CONDUCT, WHEN TRANSLATED INTO WORDS, SOUND LIKE THE PUREST, MOST UNDISGUISED SATIRE. Nothing could be further from the pride and presumption of a Jew, of the type of those who were now before Paul, than to think himself "unworthy of everlasting life," or indeed of any other thing whatsoever, either great or good, which could be had. Yet nothing could be truer than that his conduct amounted to that, ran a terrible risk of ending in it, and, unrepented, unaltered, could in fact end in nothing else. For it may be stated thus—that (1) the message of Christ, (2) the credentials of *every* kind of Christ, and (3) the deep, incontestable, universal needs of the heart and life of man, are such that, whether a man be Jew or Gentile, so only he be made fairly acquainted with Jesus and "the Word of God" in him, he is "inexcusable" if he "put these away from" him. Nothing, it might be supposed, could *rationaly* (though then not *rightly*) explain the conduct except it were the profoundest humility of a publican of the publicans. But *this*, we know, would forget the *prayer* of the publican, though it might commemorate his deepest humiliation of self-reproach and sense of "unworthiness." Yet is this too sadly often found the case with men in matters of religion. Without humility, they pursue a line of conduct which only the extreme of self-reproach could rationally and temporarily account for. Other reason, indeed, in very truth there may be, must be—unutterable folly, blindest infatuation, amazing recklessness, and uncalculating force of passion and envy, and withal guilt's own chosen particular type of hardness; *these* or their like must at the last be found answerable. But when they are summoned for their last answer, this will be the *irony* of their situation, that, furthest removed of all from pure and modest and self-upbraiding humility, they *counterfeited* it, and, in the name of that counterfeit, "would not come to Jesus that they might have life" everlasting. An inspired apostle gave this unexpected interpretation of the state of things in the instance before us; how many more such, alas! will "the day reveal"?—B.

Vers. 42—52.—*The clash of two worlds in Christ.* It may certainly be said that the Jews had long been a world by themselves. In one fashion this had been the ordaining of Heaven itself, though they had wrested the true idea of things to a false. And in matter of fact, the whole of the rest of the earth had been another world. It was but too true now that places were to change, and, while the lofty fell, the lowly were exalted. The climax was scarcely reached as yet chronologically, but the passage of the history before us may most justly be looked at as setting forth very strikingly the climax in its nature. Notice—

I. THE OPENING SIGNS. The place is the synagogue, the place of the Jew. The service is on the sabbath, the service and the sabbath both of the Jew. The congregation is in the first place almost exclusively the congregation of the Jew and of those who had now some time been allied to him as proselytes. These had heard read the Law and the prophets, and had, in addition, heard thereupon exposition and exhortation,

the freshest in style, from two of their own race. The service is over, and they leave, when (1) in some form or another, by deputation or by the importunate acclamation of many together, the Gentiles beg that next sabbath they may be given to hear the same Word preached. It seems that their application was at all events not refused. But (2) Paul and Barnabas turn not their back upon those who had been listening to them, nor give them any sign of the cold shoulder, but the contrary. They speak to them, and beg them to value and "to continue in the grace of God."

II. THE GREAT DISCLOSURE. The next sabbath day has come round. There is still a standing synagogue; there are still "Law and prophets and blest psalm;" there are still an ample number of Jews and of proselytes to make a congregation, and a good one. But the synagogue has come to look like an antiquated, useless, and quite disproportionate building. It is not equal to the needs of the day, nor anything like it. 1. "Almost the whole city is come together to hear the Word of God." 2. The second part of the great disclosure is that the Jews cannot take it with any equanimity even, that they are to be thus swamped by the outsiders. "Envy" rules them. 3. The third act in the disclosure is that they will try to resist the tide of a greater force than the ocean. They "speak against" what last sabbath they did not speak against. They commit themselves to speak against the word spoken by Paul, and they add contradiction and blasphemy. 4. And the fourth act in the disclosure is that Paul and Barnabas both close with them, no longer in argument—argument is waste when "contradiction and blasphemy" are begun—but in an authoritative and bold declaration of their own mission. The very hour has come to say that the privileges, long neglected and now refused, shall not waste nor be "drawn up again into heaven," but shall be fully, freely, publicly offered to all the world; "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (ver. 47).

III. THE DAY'S ISSUE. It is threefold. 1. The strangers and outsiders are filled with gladness and gratitude. They do not refuse to take the "leavings" of haughty and exclusive Jews. - Nor do they think them, call them, or find them "crumbs from the Master's table." No; they see their day, their opportunity, their feast, and, hungry, sit down to it as a banquet indeed. They are "glad;" they glorify the Word of the Lord; they "believe;" they are "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." For they felt that that "day salvation had come to their house." 2. The disconcerted Jew, most disconcerted of all because he inwardly knew he had forfeited, of his own surrender, his chiefest blessing and distinction, will not let things lie. He will raise the "respectable," the "orthodox," part of the city, and even women of the devout and honourable, and chief men of the city, who "cared for none of these things" probably in their heart. And all these join to persecute the two men, Paul and Barnabas. And they expel them. 3. These two servants of Christ hear the echoes of a voice which perhaps they had not heard itself (Luke x. 11). And they hear the call of duty (Matt. x. 23) elsewhere, and do not forget that the time is precious, that daylight will soon have gone, and that it is theirs to "work while it is day."—B.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Human separation to Divine missions.* The point to which attention may be directed is that the living Lord, presiding in his Church, selects the persons to do his work, but requires the Church to make outward and formal recognition of his selection. Christ calls to work. The Church separates to work. This subject may be introduced by illustrations of the ways in which God was pleased to communicate his will under the older dispensations, as e.g. by the vision and message of angels, by the mission of prophets, by inward impulses. We may recognize a steady advance towards the more spiritual ways in which God communicates his will to the New Testament Church; sometimes directly inspiring the individual member; at other times revealing his will to some that, through them, it might be communicated to all. The indwelling Spirit is now the medium of Divine revelation to men. So indwelling, he becomes the constant inspiration of thought, feeling, judgment, and action. The Holy Ghost, conceived as the abiding Divine presence in the Church, said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It has been suggested that the will of the Holy Ghost was known "through the lips of the prophets, speaking as by a sudden burst of simultaneous inspiration."

I. THE DIVINE ALLOTMENT OF WORK AND WORKERS. 1. God has a work for each one

of his creatures to do. This truth is illustrated in the infinite variety of things which God has made on the earth. Each minutest creature has his place, his work, and his fitness for doing it. As we ascend in the scale of being, the work becomes more complex; and it is difficult for us to realize that the same thing can be true of man, who is endowed with self-will and is free to choose his own way. Yet we do hold that, in the Divine omniscience and government, a work is appointed for every man, and that, for the doing of that precise work, each man is brought into being at a particular time and endowed with particular abilities. A perfect order on earth could be attained if each individual fitted precisely into the place and work to which he has been divinely assigned. 2. But God not only has a variety of forms of work, he has a perfect knowledge of the men who can best do it. Sometimes the Divine sovereignty is spoken of in a way that cannot honour God. It is assumed that he acts upon a bare exercise of will, and without the necessity for consideration. But the case of our text rather shows that the Divine selections are always made upon due estimate of the fitness of the individuals. Barnabas and Saul were evidently just the men to undertake this new mission to the Gentiles. It follows from this view of the Divine calls to work that it can never be a true *humility* that refuses a Divine call; Moses and Jeremiah were both in the wrong when they hesitated and shrank back from a duty which God laid upon them. We may be quite sure that we can do whatsoever God requires us to do. 3. And it may further be shown that God has the full right to call forth any one of his servants to serve him in any way that he may please. Moses came from the deserts, Gideon from the winepress, David from the sheepfolds, Elisha from his ploughing, and John from his fishing, if the "Lord hath need of him."

II. THE HUMAN RECOGNITION OF THE DIVINE ALLOTMENT. It may be said—Is not the Divine allotment of workers and their work sufficient? and why should more than this be necessary? In reply, it may be pointed out that God deals with us as communities, and recognizes our mutual relations, and our influence one upon another. For the sake of the blessing which one man's call may be to many, he requires that it shall be publicly and openly recognized. In this way his claims, his presence, and his abiding relations to all work and workers may be freshly impressed upon the Church. Ordination and dedication services are fruitful in blessing to the Churches. It may be well to point out: 1. The value of forms, services, and devout ceremonials. 2. The most profitable and helpful forms such services may take, noting and explaining that, in the ordination of Barnabas and Saul, there was union in fasting and in prayer, with the solemn "laying on of hands." 3. The purposes that may be served by such public dedications—(1) increased feeling of responsibility on the part of the persons dedicated; (2) assured interest of the congregation in their work; (3) impulse to others to devote themselves to Christian work.—R. T.

Vers. 2, 4.—*The presidency of the Holy Ghost.* "The Holy Ghost said;" "Being sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Seriously erroneous views of the presidency of the Holy Ghost in the Christian Church or Churches make it necessary that the true and scriptural teaching on the subject should be explained. It is assumed, by some sections, that this presidency secures the absolute truth of whatever may be said at such a meeting, and the infallibility of every decision to which such a meeting may be led. But the Holy Spirit is not present to secure results, only to guide deliberations. God is present with man in no such sense as involves the mastery of man's free thought and will, and changing him into a mere created thing. The distinction is an essential one, though it may be difficult to grasp. We may illustrate from the relations between the branch and the vine. The life in the branch is the life of the vine; but the branch is free to take its own shapings under various external influences. At the same time, it is still true that the vine-life controls and overrules the very shapings of the branch, in its own secret ways. Presidency, inspiration, guidance, and control we may have in the abiding and indwelling Holy Ghost; but infallibility for the individual, the community, or the Church, it is no part of his work to ensure. Considering what may be learned concerning the presidency of the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures, we notice—

I. THE FIGURE AS SEEN IN THE OLD PROPHETS. Divine communications were made, in the earlier days of the world, to individuals upon due occasion, and oracular responses were made by the high priest, through Urim and Thummim. But in the times of the

prophets we meet with a most important advance in the Divine relations. More or less constantly God dwells with and abides in those prophets, and their relation to the Divine was the foreshadowing and preparation for the abiding relations of the Holy Ghost with the believer and the Church. The "Word of the Lord" came to the prophets, but, besides this, there was an openness and sensitiveness to Divine leadings which could be thus expressed: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." Other points will come out upon a study of the nature of prophetic inspiration, and especially this one, as bearing on the point now before us, that the Holy Ghost used the individuality of the prophet, and became only the life and force behind it, and so prepared for the Christian times when, in this way, all the Lord's people are prophets. The progression of Divine truth is well illustrated in the history of the relations of the Spirit of God with men.

II. THE FACT AS REPRESENTED IN THE THEOCRACY. The very essence of the idea of the theocracy was the invisible presence and rule of God with men. God was with them—always with them. Yet they never saw him. Somehow he was *in* them. He knew all their concerns. He was appropriately affected by all their doings. He could be "grieved," "quenched," "resisted," and even "driven away." Present with them, he inspired and guided all the national life; he toned and sanctified all the family and social life. The sublimest sentiment of Mosaism was that of the indwelling presence of Jehovah. Then, when the fulness of times came, the Jehovah-figure could pass aside, with its kingliness and mystery, giving place to the Father (holy Father, righteous Father); and the sense of God's near presence and close though invisible relations could be realized in the conception of the abiding, indwelling Holy Ghost, who leads us into all truth and righteousness.

III. THE FEELING AS REALIZED IN A MOVING AND GUIDING OF OUR JUDGMENT, WILL, AND RESOLVE. In seeking to avoid the merely sentimental, we must take heed that we miss or undervalue no truth. And Christian experience abundantly confirms the position that there is a most real sense in which open hearts feel the inward moving of the Holy Ghost, and may rely on the Divine inward guidance of judgment and will. The Church, too, may plead that her experience confirms the testimony of the individual Christian. This subject should be so treated as to deal with men's practical difficulty—How can we *know* we have Divine guidance in our business and family affairs now? If God's Spirit dwells in us, we now have the actual inspiration and direction of our judgment, will, purpose, and decision.—R. T.

Ver. 7.—*Seekers after God.* This passage introduces to us a Roman official, speaks of him in generally good terms as a "prudent man," but lets us know something of his secret feelings and his unrest of heart, by adding that he "desired to hear the Word of God." The way in which heathen religions prepared the way for the gospel is often pointed out, but we have not yet adequately apprehended the fact that a Divine work of preparation was carried on in many heathen souls; such instances as this of Sergius Paulus being properly treated as prominent examples of a general fact. It is to the yearning of the heathen heart for the true God and the eternal life that St. Paul makes his appeals; and in later missionary work remarkable instances have been met with of soul-seeking for God, before the missionaries brought the gospel light. We ought, indeed, to expect to find men everywhere seeking after God, seeing that "he hath made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the earth," and has never "left himself without a witness;" but a conception of the exclusiveness of the revelation in Christ has so occupied Christian thought that the noble conception of Christ's revelation as the ultimate issue and completion of all other revelations, is only now gaining acceptance. Men have so strongly felt the antagonistic sides of the heathen religions that they have failed to ask whether earnest souls within utterly corrupt systems may not be

"Infants crying in the night;
Infants crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry."

Dean Plumtre gives an interesting inscription—the date of which is, however, uncertain, and may be of the second or third century after Christ—found at Galgoi, in Cyprus, which shows a yearning after something higher than the polytheism of Greece.

It reads thus: "Thou, the one God, the greatest, the most glorious Name, help us all, we beseech thee." The unrest and anxious inquiring of Sergius Paulus are further indicated in the fact that he had come into the power of Elymas the sorcerer, who evidently persuaded him that he could settle all his doubts. The subject introduced by this incident may be considered under the following divisions:—

I. THE NATURAL DISPOSITION OF MAN TO SEEK FOR GOD. Remember St. Augustine's words, "Man is made for God, and can find no rest till he finds rest in him." Seeking God is necessary to the dependent creature, who must lean, and must find some one on whom he may perfectly lean. "A belief in some personal power, the arbiter of man's destiny, above and beyond himself, is a primary necessity of the human mind. Mankind can never dispense with this belief, however superfluous in certain cases and for a time it may seem to be to the individual" (Canon Farrar). Much has been made of the fact that some tribes of men have been found which had no name for God, and indeed no knowledge of him or concern to hear about him; but it may fairly be urged, from the utterly degraded condition of these tribes, that men have never lost their care for God until they have virtually lost their manhood. Degraded to be like the beasts, they cease to have uplooking eyes and yearning hearts. Humanity is knit in brotherhood by its great united cry for its Father.

II. THE THINGS THAT MAY TEMPORARILY SATISFY THE SEEKING. These take one of three forms; either: 1. The absorption of a man in purely material and selfish interests, which may overlay and crush down the soul's great needs; just as now the world and its business and pleasure so often silence the soul's cry in the Christian. 2. The teachings of a philosophy which attempts to put "thoughts" and "ideas" in the place of a living being. 3. So-called false religions, which give unworthy views of God, but, by ceremonial, seek to satisfy the religious instinct. Such religions offer, what man appears to need, a doctrine about God, and a cult or worship of him. It may be shown that, in subtle forms, men are enticed from their seekings, even in these Christian days, by one or other of these evil influences.

III. THE UNREST WHICH SOONER OR LATER RETURNS. For man can only find permanent rest in that which is true. The false has no "staying power." It may seem to fit at one time, but life advances, new needs arise, new thoughts stir within, and the false theory will no longer serve,—the man finds himself looking out again, as anxiously as in the early days, and with the feeling that life is passing and the time for the quest is brief, for the truth and God wherein are final rest. Sooner or later a man wakes up from his sleep of delusion, feels the darkness all about him, and puts out his hand, feeling after God, if haply he may find him. The unrest that surely comes to men within the world's care and pleasure, within sceptical philosophies, and within merely ceremonial religions, is our constant plea for the preaching of the gospel and the revelation to men of God, in Christ manifest.

IV. THE RESPONSE WHICH GOD SURELY MAKES WHEN A WHOLE SOUL IS TURNED TO HIM. He waiteth to be gracious, stands at the door ready for the opening, really wants every man to be saved, in the mystery of his great Fatherhood has a real need of souls, desires their love, finds his own joy in their trust, and so is sure to respond when men turn and seek him. And finding God, and coming into personal relations with him, is the end of man's quest. *Against* God, and everything in life is hard and dark and wrong. *Apart from* God, and all life and relations lie bathed in the lurid glow of stormy passion and self-will. *With* God, and earth, life, duty, and fellowship catch the soft, sweet sunlight, and everything takes on its beauty and perfection. If we have God we have all; and we have all in God, in the God whom St. Paul preached, of whose glory Jesus the Man is the express and blessed image.—R. T.

Vers. 24, 25.—*John Baptist's relations with Christ.* These verses are part of an address which should have peculiar interest for us, seeing it is the first recorded speech of St. Paul the missionary, and gives us intimation of the points which were prominently before his mind as the theme of his ministry. It is singular to find St. Paul from this time more prominent than the elder man, Barnabas. It may be an example of the commonly observed fact that, sooner or later, the man of power and adaptation comes to the front place. St. Paul's power as a speaker is shown in this address. He was not a rhetorician, and was only in the higher sense eloquent. He was too intense to

be careful of mere form, and his speech was always liable to sudden breaks and halts, through the rapidity with which new thoughts were suggested and side issues forced into consideration. His power lay in the intensity of his convictions, which gave a dogmatic and convincing force to the expression of his views; and in his strong sympathy with his audience, which made him quick to adapt himself to them, and so to press home his thought. In this address we may notice: 1. His characteristic attitude, standing up and beckoning with the hand (ch. xvii. 22; xxi. 40; xxiii. 1; xxvi. 1). 2. His conciliatory introductions: he always strives first to be sure of a common platform with his audience. 3. His skill in dealing with the early histories; which served his purposes in two ways—(1) by securing the attention of his Jewish audiences, which are to this day always pleased with reviews of the national history; and (2) by bringing out the preparatory character of the earlier dispensation, and fitting his gospel message to it as a completion. 4. His firm handling of the facts connected with the mission of Jesus of Nazareth: his innocence; his death as a victim of ecclesiastical enmity; his resurrection. 5. His simple offer of pardon and life in the name of the glorified, living Saviour. It is not conceivable that the gospel, in its very essence, can be more succinctly expressed than it has been by the Apostle Paul, in his missionary speeches (see especially here vers. 26, 32, 38, 39). 6. His force of passionate pleading and application of the truth to individuals, as shown in vers. 40, 41. It is to be noted that St. Paul always makes his appeal to both the intelligence and the heart, and the verses now before us for consideration show how he offered proofs of his statements which were well within the comprehension of his audience. A sentiment prevailed generally among the Jewish race concerning John the Baptist. St. Paul takes advantage of it, and shows how John gave his indirect and direct witness to the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. It may be true that John's testimony to Jesus was of more value to a Jewish than to a Christian audience, but we question whether sufficient has ever yet been made of it as one of our best evidences to the truth of Christianity. Three things require careful study and efficient illustration.

I. JOHN'S PROPHET-CHARACTER. In fixing attention on John the Baptizer, men have lost sight of his more important relations as John the Prophet. "All men counted John as a prophet," the last of the line of men whom God was pleased to raise up, for a time, as the expounders to men of his will—the voices that spoke to men his message. It was the very essence of the prophet that he had a message from God to deliver, and a right to arrest men and compel them to listen to it. John's message was his mission, and his baptizing rite was but an accident or mode of expressing and sealing his message. We should ask—What did John say to men in the Name of God? not, What rite did John perform?

II. JOHN'S PREPARATORY WORK. This St. Paul dwells on. John never assumed that he had a message complete in itself, or that what he demanded was all, or even the greatest thing, men needed. He was a herald, but his heralding assumed the close approach of the King. He was a mender of ways, but only to get ready for the royal progress. He demanded repentance, but only that men might be ready to receive the forgiveness and life which the King was coming to bestow. To stop with John is on the face of it absurd. There is no going on from John save to Christ.

III. JOHN'S DIRECT TESTIMONY. There should have been no need for this. And yet it forms a most valuable link, especially to Jews. John witnessed plainly that he had prepared the way for Jesus of Nazareth, that *he* was the Lamb of God to take away sins, and that God had given to him visible and audible testimony that Jesus was the expected Messiah and Saviour. Accept John as prophet, we must accept Jesus as Messiah.—R. T.

Ver. 36.—*Serving one's generation.* Literally, "ministered to his own generation." The place of this text in St. Paul's address should be noticed. In it he reaches the height of his argument. The passage is an endeavour to show that ~~the~~ Testament prophecy could not be exhausted in the persons whom its first reference might seem to concern. It was not even true if its applications were thus limited. Its references were to Messiah; they all met in Jesus of Nazareth, and therefore he must be acknowledged as Messiah. He presented to his audience one crucial test. David says in one psalm, "Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Now, could that

possibly be limited in its application to David himself? Our text is the overwhelming answer: "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." The words could only be true of Messiah. They were true of Jesus of Nazareth. The seal of his Messiahship was his resurrection. We fix attention now on the description given of David as a man who "served his own generation." Dean Plumptre says, "There is, perhaps, a suggested contrast between the limits within which the work of service to mankind done by any mere man, however great and powerful, is necessarily confined, and the wide, far-reaching, endless ministry to the whole human family which belongs to the Son of man." If God is pleased to spare a man so long as to reach the fulness of old age, that man really lives through nearly *three* generations; and yet it is only upon one of them that even he can exert an active influence. The first generation moulds him, with its various educational forces. The second generation he may distinctly impress with his own individuality; of it he may become one of the potent forces. On the third he can only exert a passive influence; he is, for the most part, out of sympathy with it, and he presently finds that he had better step aside, and let the current of life and thought pass on. No matter how long we may live, no one of us can influence more than just our one generation of thirty years or more. Some men serve their generation by being *before it*, and giving expression in it to the thoughts and truths and sentiments which properly belong to the age that is yet to be. Such men do a great work by anticipating the coming time and preventing the transitions and changes from becoming too abrupt. Such men must accept the peril of being misunderstood, and called hard names until they die, and the new generation recognizes in them its heroes, forerunners, and apostles. Some men belong precisely to their own generation: they are exactly adapted to it; they never get beyond it; they are born into its thought and feeling; they live in it, work for it, worthily express it, and pass away with it; usually leaving no name only the good fruitage and the silent seeding of their good works. These are the thousands of the unknown ones, but they are the "salt of the earth." And some men seem to be always in the past generation. Their thoughts and feelings all belong to times past and gone. A queer, old-fashioned life they live amongst us, and their very talk sounds strange. And yet these links we need, lest, in the pride of our present attainments, we should try to break the bonds of the holy and the good that have gone on before us. No generation dares forget the past out of which it has come. But no generation can afford to keep only a downward and a backward look; it must lift up its head, peer away yonder, and hail the "good time coming." We may all serve our generation in three ways.

I. WE MAY WITNESS FOR GOD IN IT. Every generation wants men and women who really believe in God, and make it plain to everybody that they do believe in him. In one form or in another, the belief in the living God is put in peril in each succeeding generation. Sometimes the unbelief is intellectual, and sometimes it is practical; but every generation produces its "fools" and its "wicked," who secretly or openly say, "There is no God." Then we may minister to our generation by a clear and constant witness to the living God; not as by our word only, but by the impression we make on men that we are actually living under the "great Taskmaster's eye;" by the signs we show that all our life is spent in his fear; and by the tone of all our thought, relationship, and duty, which plainly indicates the abiding sense of his presence. Thus David served his generation, bringing the sense of God to men whenever he came into relations with them; and it is the honour of Mohammed that he laid this down as the very foundation of Islamism, "There is no God but God."

II. WE MAY SERVE OUR OWN GENERATION BY BEING OUR BEST POSSIBLE IN IT. For every generation needs, in all its spheres, such models and examples as may be to it a constant inspiration. And exactly what we all may do, wherever our lot is cast, is this—keep the moral standard up, and raise the moral standard higher. And this can only be done by lives, by examples, by personal character. What *we are* may be the leavening force of our generation in our sphere. But it would seem that, in this respect, David wholly failed. We cannot say that he served his generation by being the best possible in it. And yet, maybe, if we rightly knew his age, we might come to feel that he did. Even taking into account his grievous fall, the main current of his life was, to his people, a high and inspiring example; a stream of influence that made for righteous-

ness. And certainly we may find the perfect example of the "best" in David's greater Son.

III. WE MAY MINISTER TO OUR GENERATION BY MANFULLY RESISTING THE EVILS THAT MAY AFFLICT IT. For every generation has its conflicts, and wants its holy warriors, its brave soldiers, as well as its noble leaders. Evil is active in every age. The enemy of God and righteousness "goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." It is true that we best oppose to evil the solid, steadfast, quiet persistence of godly character; but we are not fully faithful to our God or our generation if we let any phase of social, political, or moral evil grow up in our midst unchallenged and unresisted. And in this our Lord has left us his holy example. There is a sublime force in his fearless denunciations of Pharisaic conceit and Sadducean laxity. He always called things by their right names, and sought, with wholesome reproofs and warnings, to purify a corrupt generation. And the man who faithfully serves his generation may be sure of this—his influence will never fade out, will never die. And God will show one day how he helped on his kingdom of righteousness and peace.—R. T.

Ver. 38.—*Forgiveness of sins*: To illustrate how the gospel message has ever borne on this "forgiveness of sins," compare for the teaching of John the Baptist, Mark i. 4; Luke ii. 3: of our Lord himself, Matt. ix. 2, 6; Luke vii. 47; xxiv. 47: of St. Peter, ch. ii. 38; v. 31; x. 43. See another instance of St. Paul's teaching on the subject (ch. xxvi. 18). Taken with its context, the passage is a striking one, as showing how deeply St. Paul was, from the first, impressed by the fact that the Mosaic Law was inefficient as a guide to true righteousness; and by the fact that forgiveness, as an act of grace, and not bestowed on any form of human merit, was the very essence of the gospel announcement to men. This subject is, however, so familiar, that there seems little need for more than the suggestion of an order in which thought may hopefully be guided.

I. DISTINGUISH SINS FROM CEREMONIAL OFFENCES. Observe the distinction so carefully made in Heb. ix. 9, 13, 14, 23; and note: 1. Ceremonial offences are limited by human regulations; sins are indicated by Divine Law. 2. Ceremonial offences concern only such persons as come under the ceremonial rules; sins attach to all mankind, because related to God's moral law for all his creatures. 3. Treatment of ceremonial offences may illustrate, but can only illustrate, Divine methods of dealing with sin. 4. Sins, and not ceremonial offences, are dealt with by the Heaven-sent Saviour. The heinousness, hatefulness, and evil influences of men's sins may be shown, and the greatness of a redemptive scheme that can meet all the mischief caused by sin, should be explained.

II. FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS MAN'S SUPREME WANT. Not man's only want, but the real root of all his wants, because other right relations can only follow on his right relations with God. Sin is, in essence, self-will, and finds expression in rebellious actions; therefore the way of the removal of sin must be repentance, which is the humbling of the self-will, and forgiveness, which removes the expressions and consequences of the self-will. It may be that man's sin was at first pressed home upon men by the apostles in its greatest manifestation—the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God; but this supreme act of iniquity did but reveal the utter baseness, badness, and corruption of the human heart and life. On this point see the teachings of St. Paul in Rom. iii. 9—19.

III. SUCH FORGIVENESS IS ADMINISTERED BY THE RISEN CHRIST. Prospectively, he had power on earth to forgive sins, but in that he did but declare his right, and illustrate the power he now has to "give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." Direct from the living Saviour to the sinner's own soul must now come the message of Divine forgiveness. On the basis of his finished and accepted sacrifice, to our Lord Jesus Christ is now entrusted the power to grant absolution and remission of sins to all who "truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel." And the declaration to men of a full and free forgiveness, actually now ministered to them by the living Saviour, as the beginning of his proposed work of delivering them from all sin's power and thralldom, is the very point of the message which we must bear to men. Not men's frailties only, nor men's mistakes, nor men's intellectual errors, nor men's hereditary tendencies, nor men's faults in the eye of "class" or "society;" but distinctly *men's sins*, men's

wilfulnesses, and wickednesses, and defiances of God, and breakings of law, and crucifying of God's Son,—*these*, the infinite love has found out how to reach; and it speaks from the lips of the "once dead, but now risen, living, and glorified Christ," free, full forgiveness of all, even the blotting out for ever of scarlet and crimson stains.—R. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XIV.

Ver. 1.—*Entered for went both, A.V.; Jews for the Jews, A.V.; and for and also, A.V.; Greeks for the Greeks, A.V.* Observe how in every case Greeks are found attending the synagogue. So spake, etc. This illustrates the statement in Rom. x. 17, that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

Ver. 2.—*The Jews that were disobedient for the unbelieving Jews, A.V. and T.R.; stirred up the souls of the Gentiles, and made them, etc., for stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds, etc., A.V.* The Jews that were disobedient. The R.T. (ἀπειθήσαντες) may equally and even better be rendered, *the Jews that were unbelieving* (comp. John iii. 36, where πιστεύων and ἀπειθῶν are opposed to each other, and Rom. xi. 30—32, where the idea of belief is far more appropriate than that of obedience). Stirred up the souls, etc. St. Paul speaks with much warmth of the constant opposition of the Jews, "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved" (1 Thess. ii. 14—16).

Ver. 3.—*They tarried there for abode they, A.V.; bare witness for gave testimony, A.V.; granting for and granted, A.V.* For the phrase long time (ικανὸν χρόνον), comp. ch. xxvii. 9, "much time," and "many days" (ἡμέραι ἱκαναί), ch. ix. 23. So also Luke viii. 27, "long time," or "for a long time" (ἐκ χρόνον ἱκανῶν). Speaking boldly (παρρησιαζόμενοι) in the Lord (ἐπὶ τῷ Κυρίῳ); i.e. having the Lord for their support. It was the special prayer of the Church that God would "grant to his servants that they might speak the Word with all boldness (μετὰ παρρησίας πόσης)," and in answer to that prayer they were enabled to speak "the Word of God with boldness" (ch. iv. 29, 31; comp. ch. ix. 29; xviii. 26; xix. 8; 1 Thess. ii. 2, etc.). It was no small evidence of the power of the Holy Ghost that the apostles were able to speak with such uncompromising fidelity in the face of such bitter opposition. Signs and wonders, etc. See Mark xvi. 17—20; comp. too ch. iv. 30, which also indicates that we ought, perhaps, to understand here τῷ Κυρίῳ of God the Father rather than of "his holy Servant Jesus."

Ver. 4.—*Was divided (ἐσχίσθη); hence*

σχίσμα, a schism (see John vii. 43; ix. 16; x. 19; 1 Cor. i. 10).

Ver. 5.—*Made an onset for an assault made, A.V.; of the Jews for also of the Jews, A.V.; to treat them shamefully for to use them despitefully, A.V., as 1 Thess. ii. 2.* As regards ὀργή, neither the A.V. assault nor the R.V. onset expresses it exactly. Ὀργή means the strong bent of the mind, as in Jas. iii. 4, where it expresses the strong will of the steersman directing the ship against the force of the winds. Here it means that both Jews with their rulers, and Gentiles, under the influence of violent passion, had determined and agreed to assault Paul and Barnabas. To treat them shamefully. "ἄβρις and ὑβρίσω denote "violence," as Matt. xxii. 6; Luke xviii. 32; 2 Cor. xii. 10. It is sometimes used of corporal punishment, even legally inflicted, as Prov. xix. 18 (LXX.).

Vers. 6, 7.—*Became aware for were ware, A.V. (συνιδόντες), see ch. xii. 12; the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe, for Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, A.V.; the region for unto the region, A.V.; round about for that lieth round about, A.V.* They preached; were preaching—not once or twice, but continuously. Lystra and Derbe were cities of southern Lycaonia, obscure and remote from civilization, situated north of Mount Taurus, in a cold arid country somewhere between Ak Ghieul on the north, and the volcanic region of Karadagh on the south. They seem to have been included at this time in the dominions of Antiochus, king of Commagene (Lewin). Lystra is thought to be now represented by Bin-bir Kilisete (the thousand and one churches) (Lewin and Renan), though this is doubtful; and Derbe distant about twenty miles from Lystra, and the capital of that part of Lycaonia called laurica, is thought to be the modern Dioli (Hamilton, Renan, etc.); others, however, place it nearer the White Lake, Ak Ghieul, where the ruins of an ancient town are found.

Ver. 8.—*At Lystra there sat, etc., for there sat . . . at Lystra, A.V.; a cripple for being a cripple, A.V. and T.R.*

Ver. 9.—*Speaking for speak, A.V.; fastening his eyes upon for steadfastly beholding, A.V. (see above, ch. i. 10; iii. 4, etc.); seeing for perceiving, A.V.; made whole for healed, A.V. Heard The force of the imperfect ἤκου.*

world, perhaps, be better given by "listened" to Paul speaking. There is great resemblance between this miracle of healing, and that of the lame man laid at the gate of the temple, who was healed by Peter (ch. iii. 2-10), and, not unnaturally, considerable identity of expression in the narratives. Both men were lame from their birth; the apostles fastened their eyes upon both; both, when healed, leaped and walked; and in both cases the miracle had a great effect upon the multitudes who beheld it. Zeller (vol. ii. p. 6), with characteristic recklessness, infers that "this narrative was . . . merely in imitation of the early miraculous story of Peter;" and so relegates both it and the subsequent narrative to the regions of fable.

Ver. 10.—*Leaped up for leaped, A.V.*

Ver. 11.—*Multitudes for people, A.V.; voice for voices, A.V.* In the speech of Lycaonia. It is not known what the language of Lycaonia was, whether Cappadocian, or Celtic, or Lycian; but we learn incidentally from Stephanus Byzantinus, that there was a Lycaonian language, for he tells us that *Debia* (as some write the name *Derbe*) was the Lycaonian for *ἄρκευθος*, a juniper tree or berry. No other Lycaonian word is known (see "Jablonskii Disquis. de Ling. Lycaon," in Stephan., 'Thesaur.'). The Lycaonians doubtless understood Greek as the language of intercommunication all over Roman Asia, but among themselves would speak their native dialect. The belief that the gods were come down in the likeness of men, and that these gods were Jupiter and Hermes, or Mercury, was most natural to Lycaonians, who were conversant with, and doubtless believed, the Phrygian legend of Philemon and Baucis, who entertained hospitably Jupiter and Hermes, when no one else would take them in, and whose cottage was by the gods turned into a temple (when all the neighbourhood was drowned by a flood), of which they were made priest and priestess during life, and simultaneously metamorphosed into an oak and lime tree when their life ended (Ovid, 'Metamorph.,' viii. 611, etc.). Ovid places the scene of the legend at Tyana, the site of which has been ascertained by Hamilton to be near Ereklî, in Cappadocia, close to the borders of Lycaonia. The moral drawn in the legend itself seems to have been that which influenced the people of Lycaonia in their conduct towards the two strangers: "Cura pii dis sunt, et qui coluere coluntur," which may be Englished, "Them that honour me I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30).

Ver. 12.—*Mercury for Mercurius, A.V.* For the Latin Jupiter and Mercury the Greek original has Zeus and Hermes. Jupiter is Jovis Pater, where Jovis or Diovisor Dies (in Diespiter) is the Latin form of Zeus

gen. *Διός*. Mercury is Hermes in his speckled character as the god of markets and trade. But the Lycaonians here thought of him in his principal character of herald and messenger of the gods, and hence the god of eloquence and speech.

Ver. 13.—*And for then, A.V.; whose temple was before the city for which was before their city, A.V. and T.R.; the multitudes for the people; A.V., as in ver. 12.* The priest of Jupiter. The words, *ὁ δὲ ἱερεὺς τοῦ Διὸς τοῦ ὕψους, κ.τ.λ.*, may be construed in two ways—either as in the A.V., or the priest of the temple of Jupiter, etc., understanding, by a common ellipsis, *ἱερεῖον, or, ναοῦ*, after *Διός*, as in the Latin phrase, "Ubi ad Dianam veneris;" "When you come to the temple of Diana," etc. But it is not a Greek phrase to speak of Jupiter being before the city, meaning the temple of Jupiter. Therefore the proper way of translating is to take the full phrase as being *ὁ ἱερεὺς τοῦ Διὸς ναοῦ* or *ἱεροῦ*, the article *τοῦ* belonging to *ναοῦ*, and *Διός* being, as in so many instances, without the article (see Matt., 'Gr. Gr.,' 281). The gates; viz. of the city. The temple was just outside the gates; the lame man, it is likely, sat inside near the gates through which men were passing in and out. Paul and Barnabas would address the people in the square or open space inside the gates. Seeing a stir at the gates, and hearing that it was the priest of Jupiter coming with oxen and garlands to sacrifice to them, they immediately ran forward to prevent it. The ox was the proper sacrifice for Jupiter.

Ver. 14.—*But . . . heard of it for which . . . heard of, A.V.; garments for clothes, A.V.; sprang forth for ran in, A.V.; multitudes for people, A.V., as before.* The conduct of Barnabas and Paul, in abhorring the honours offered to them, has been well contrasted with the profane vanity of Herod in accepting Divine honours (ch. xii. 23).

Ver. 15.—*Bring you good tidings for preach unto you, A.V.; vain things for vanities, A.V.; who for which, A.V.; the heaven and the earth for heaven and earth, A.V.; that in them is for things that are therein, A.V.* For the declaration, We also are men of like passions with you, compare Peter's saying to Cornelius (ch. x. 26), "Stand up; I myself also am a man." St. Paul finely contrasts the utter vanity, i.e. the impotence, lifelessness, uselessness, and unprofitableness of the idols, with the power of the living God, who by his word created heaven and earth and sea, and filled them all with beauty, shape, and life.

Ver. 16.—*The generations gone by for times past, A.V.; the nations for nations, A.V.*

Ver. 17.—*And yet for nevertheless, A.V.; you from heaven rains for we rain from heaven, A.V. and T.R.; your for our, A.V. and T.R.* Observe how the apostle adapts

his preaching to his hearers. How different this address to the heathen Lycaonians from those to Jews and proselytes! Here he leads them from nature to God; there from prophecy to Jesus.

Ver. 18.—*The multitudes for the people, A.V.; from doing for that they had not done, A.V.*

Ver. 19.—*But there came Jews thither for and there came thither certain Jews, A.V.; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned for who persuaded the people, and having stoned, A.V.; and dragged for drew, A.V.; that he was dead for he had been dead, A.V.* But there came Jews, etc. Observe the persistent enmity of the unbelieving Jews. The same fickleness of the multitude which led those who had cried, "Hosanna!" to turn round and say, "Crucify him!" here led those who would have worshipped Paul as a god, now to stone him as a blasphemer. This is, doubtless, the instance to which St. Paul alludes when he says "Once was I stoned," (2 Cor. xi. 25).

Ver. 20.—*But for howbeit, A.V.; entered for came, A.V.; on the morrow for the next day, A.V.; went forth for departed, A.V.* It is pleasing to observe the fidelity of the converts, who, in the face of violence and death, clave to the apostle, even when they thought he was dead. It does not appear how Barnabas escaped.

Ver. 21.—*Made many disciples for taught many, A.V.; returned for returned again, A.V.; to Antioch for Antioch, A.V.* Made many disciples (*μαθητευσάυτες ἰκανοὺς*); comp. Matt. xxviii. 19. What admirable constancy thus to run fresh risks to life and limb in order to win souls to Christ!

Ver. 22.—*Exhorting for and exhorting, A.V.; through many tribulations we must for we must through much tribulation, A.V.* St. Paul spoke from his own experience: "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft," etc. (2 Cor. xi. 23—27; see too 2 Tim. iii. 10—12). It is very touching to see the tender care of the apostles for the young converts, lest they should fall away in time of persecution (see ch. xv. 36; 1 Thess. iii. 1, 5, 8; 1 Pet. v. 8—10).

Ver. 23.—*Appointed for them for ordained them, A.V. (χειροτονήσαντες); had believed for believed, A.V.* The original meaning of *χειροτονέω* is "to stretch out the hand," and the substantive *χειροτονία* is used in the LXX. of Isa. lviii. 9 for "the putting forth of the finger" of the A.V. But the common meaning of the verb is "to vote by stretching out the hand" and hence "to elect" by a show of hands (2 Cor. viii. 19), or simply "to appoint," without any reference to voting. In the choice of an apostle the election was by lot (ch. i. 26), in the appointment of

deacons the choice was by the people, how indicated we are not told (ch. vi. 5); the question here, on which commentators disagree, is whether the use of the word *χειροτονέω* indicates voting by the people, selection by the apostles, or simple creation or appointment. As *χειροτονήσαντες* is predicated of Paul and Barnabas, it cannot possibly refer to voting by the people, who are included in the *αδελφῶν* as those on whose behalf the *χειροτονία* was made. It seems simplest and most in accordance with the classical use of the word and its use in ch. x. 41 (*προχειροτονημένοις*), to take it in the sense of *creation* or *appointment* (see Steph., 'Thesaur.'). There is no reference to the laying on of hands. Elders (see ch. xi. 30, note; xx. 17; and especially Titus i. 5, 7, where we see that *πρεσβύτερος* was synonymous with *ἐπίσκοπος*). From *πρεσβύτερος* is formed *prester*, *priest*, in French *prestre*, *prêtre*. Comp. ch. xiii. 3, for fasting and prayer as accompaniments of ordination. Hence in the Church ordinations are preceded by the Ember days. They commended them to the Lord (comp. ch. xx. 32). In ver. 26 the word used is *παράδομένοι*.

Vers. 24, 25.—*They passed through for after they had passed throughout, A.V.; and for they, A.V.; spoken for preached, A.V.; to for into, A.V.* Paul and Barnabas had come from Cyprus to Perga (see ch. xiii. 13, note). Thence to Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. They now returned from Derbe by Lystra, Iconium, Antioch, Perga. But, instead of taking ship at Perga, after preaching the Word there they went down to Attalia, now *Adalia* or *Satalia*, the chief seaport of Pamphylia, some miles west of the mouth of the Cestrus, probably hearing that a ship was about to sail thence to Antioch. It does not appear that they made any converts or even preached at Attalia.

Ver. 26.—*They sailed for sailed, A.V.; committed for recommended, A.V.; had fulfilled for fulfilled, A.V.*

Ver. 27.—*All things for all, A.V.; how that for how, A.V.; a door for the door, A.V.* A door. The door is preferable, because "the faith" limits the door to one kind of opening. In Col. iv. 3 the case is a little different both in the A.V. and the R.V., though in the latter "the door of the Word" would be a truer rendering. Observe how the leading idea of the narrative is the conversion of the Gentiles. (See Introduction to the Acts.)

Ver. 28.—*They tarried for there they abode, A.V.; no little for long, A.V.* Bishop Pearson reckons it a little more than a year, Lewin, "about a year;" Renau, "several months." No accurate statement can be gathered from St. Luke's indefinite expression. With this chapter closes the account

of St. Paul's *first* missionary tour. Conybeare and Howson (pp. 177, 213) assign to it a duration of about nine months, from early spring, March, to November, when the sea would be closed; bringing him to Perga in May, and thence for the next five or six months into the mountains of Pisidia, where it was the custom for the inhabitants of the lowlands to congregate during the hot months. Others, however, as Lewin (pp. 156, 157), think the circuit must have

occupied "about two years;" Wieseler (p. 221), "more than one year;" but Renan assigns to it "five years" ("Saint Paul," p. 55). "Conjectural estimates vary between two and eight years" ("Speaker's Commentary"). Lewin's estimate is, perhaps, the most probable. Whatever the exact period may have been, it was a time fruitful in consequences to the immortal interests of mankind.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—28.—*The Word and the miracle.* In the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth, whether by our Lord himself in the days of his flesh, or by the apostles after his ascension, two great instruments were in constant and simultaneous use—the preaching of the Word of God and the working of miracles. In the Gospels it is difficult to say which was the most prominent feature of our Lord's life—his preaching the Word or his mighty works of power. He himself places them side by side in his description of his own course: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, . . . the dead are raised up," and "the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Luke vii. 22). Many reasons may be assigned for this. The miracle gave authority to the Word before the Word had time to assert its own authority in the conscience and reason of the hearer. The miracle awakened attention by its irresistible surprise. The miracle was a witness to confirm the doubtful and the wavering. Then again the miracle, having matter for its seat, testified to the sovereignty over all nature—the body, the sea, the air, the fruits of the earth, the grave—of him whose word was preached. Again, being that evil had set its two feet, one upon the body, the other upon the soul of men, producing in the one pain, sickness, infirmity, and death, and in the other sin, sorrow, and guilt, the double action of the miracle, healing, restoring, raising, the body, and of the Word, justifying, purifying, and sanctifying the soul, exhibited the true nature of the kingdom of God as the destruction of evil and the establishment of eternal joy and life. So that the miracle, besides its other functions, was a necessary complement of the Word in holding up a true picture of that kingdom of God which Jesus Christ was sent to found and to establish for ever. But now, having seen the common work of the Word and the miracle, let us note certain important differences in their respective functions. The miracle does not sanctify. It does not renew the inner man after the image of God. It does not prick the conscience, or soften the hard heart, or give wisdom, or produce love. It surprises, it alarms, it evidences, it displays power and goodness, it corroborates the Word, but it is not in itself a spiritual power. Hence of the number who saw Christ's miracles, how very few became his disciples! Of the ten lepers that were cleansed only one gave glory to God. Nearly ten thousand ate of the loaves and fishes; how many ate of that bread which came down from heaven? The whole Sanhedrim knew of the lame man who was healed at the beautiful gate of the temple, but they were only the more eager to silence the voices of those who spake of Jesus and the Resurrection. The priests of Jupiter and the whole populace of Lystra were ready to worship Barnabas and Paul because of the healing of the cripple, but they were as ready immediately afterwards to stone them and cast them out of their city. But the Word of God is a creative, quickening power in the soul. Its entrance gives light; its action gives life; its fruit is love; it does sanctify; and it saves. At Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra, and at Derbe, the Word preached by Paul brought faith, and life, and joy, and salvation, both to Jews and Greeks. By the Word which they heard and believed they were brought to God, begotten unto life, quickened with Christ, made heirs of the Resurrection and of the kingdom of God. Everything that can enrich, and beautify, and comfort, and exalt a human being, is wrought by the Word of God received unto the heart. Let us, then, prize the Word of God; let us love it; let us cherish it in our bosoms; let us yield

ourselves to its teaching, its action, its power; let us hide it in our secret soul; let us never be content till it has brought forth fruit a hundredfold in our lives to the glory of God the Father.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—Apostolic (ministerial) experience. I. **THE PRIVILEGE OF PREACHING.** The apostles at Iconium “so spake” (ver. 1), *i.e.* with such force, persuasiveness, fidelity, that “a great multitude believed” (ver. 1); “they abode speaking boldly in the Lord” (ver. 3), *i.e.* they urged the truth with fearless vigour, their confidence being grounded on God’s presence and support; “there they preached the gospel” (ver. 7). There is no vocation which any man can engage in which gives such scope for the exercise of his highest powers as that of the Christian minister or missionary. To preach the gospel of the grace of God as it should and may be proclaimed, is to do that in which the fullest intellectual energy, the utmost spirituality, the largest beneficence, the greatest strength of will, all the supreme faculties of redeemed and elevated manhood, should be lavishly poured forth.

II. **THE DISCHARGE OF SUBSIDIARY DUTIES.** It was an apostolic function to work miraculous cures: “signs and wonders were done by their hands” (ver. 3). This does not fall to our share, but it is always the missionary’s and frequently the minister’s office—as an auxiliary to his more spiritual work—to try to heal bodily complaints; and always is it his concern to devise and encourage those institutions and habits which tend to health, harmony, comfort, domestic peace.

III. **THE JOY OF REAPING SPIRITUAL RESULTS.** How deeply gratified must have been the hearts of the apostles as they saw that “multitude” of Jews and Greeks “acknowledging the truth and power of the gospel which they were preaching (ver. 1)! All the harvest is not to be reaped here; much of it “after many days;” much of it by other hands (John iv. 38). But God does give increase for our own eyes to see and our own hands to reap. And of all the joys with which he fills our human hearts there are few, if any, comparable to that of seeing the pleasure of the Lord prosper in our hand (Isa. liii. 10).

IV. **THE PAIN OF WITNESSING OPPOSITION.** It must have been with a keen pang that Paul and Barnabas witnessed the evil machinations of those “unbelieving Jews” (ver. 2), hindering, as they must have done, the good work which was proceeding. Too often the Christian teacher has to look on at such scenes and grieve at the sad mischief which is being wrought. At such times he can only cast himself on God, fleeing to the Rock of his refuge, remembering that it is the work of the Infinite and Almighty One in which he is engaged.

V. **THE DUTY OF PERSISTENCY.** It is not by a slight obstacle that the Christian workman is to be daunted. He is to act like Nehemiah, whom neither the menaces nor the stratagems of his enemies could move. He is to act as Paul and Barnabas did, who “long time abode, speaking boldly in the Lord” (ver. 3). He is to show himself a faithful servant of his fearless Master, ready to encounter the contempt, or the ridicule, or the slander, or the turbulence of the evil-minded, so long as there is any good to be accomplished by his steadfastness. But it is not to be forgotten that there is—

VI. **THE POSSIBLE NECESSITY FOR RETIREMENT.** (Vers. 5, 6.) When the time comes that it is quite clear that persistency would only involve the one side in the guilt of murder and the other in the complete arrest of usefulness, then must the Lord’s counsel be taken (Matt. x. 23). The hour comes when continuance in peril is not faithfulness, but foolhardiness; not commendable martyr-zeal, but censurable indiscretion. We must use our intelligence to discriminate between the two; but for retirement when persistency is useless and even mischievous, we have the example of our Lord himself (Matt. xii. 15), and of his apostles here.—C.

Vers. 7—20.—The insufficient and the efficacious. We ask such questions as these—What is it that will convince the minds and convert the souls of men? What avails to establish the kingdom of Christ in any town or neighbourhood? What will secure the practical acceptance of Divine truth? The answer is that some things are strong but insufficient; one thing only is efficacious.

I. THE INSUFFICIENT. 1. *The hand of God in nature* does not suffice. "The living God which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein," has "not left himself without witness" anywhere; everywhere he has "done good, and sent rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (vers. 15—17), pouring out, with the lavish hand of Divine beneficence, beauty and plenty, love and joy, peaceful memories and inspiring hopes, on to the path and into the heart of man. But what nations of the earth has this great gift of his hand saved from the most shameful and pernicious idolatry? How many thousands of hearts are there to-day that are not drawn by this to filial gratitude and holy service? 2. *The miraculous* does not avail (vers. 8—13, 18). The healing of the man who had been lame from his birth, so far from producing a favourable effect and leading to a general acceptance of the Divine message, led to an outburst of idolatrous zeal. The people immediately deified the human agents and set about to worship them. If we turn back to the pages in which the miraculous appears—to the times of Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha; or if we consider the treatment of our Divine Master himself, whose beneficent power reached so many human homes; or if we go on to the gifts (miraculous) enjoyed by the Corinthian Church, if indeed they can be truly said to have enjoyed them;—whithersoever we look, we see that the effect of the visibly supernatural was far less potent for good than we, in its absence, should have imagined it would be. Those who wait for the marked and unmistakable interposition of God before they take the one right step into the kingdom of Christ, before they "lay hold on eternal life," are most seriously imperilling their own souls (see Luke xvi. 31). 3. *The exhibition of holy zeal* is not sufficient (vers. 14—17). Though Paul and Barnabas energetically disclaimed any title to be treated as gods, and resolutely refused the proffered honours, and though they were labouring without remuneration, and giving every possible proof of their disinterested love, yet they did not succeed in winning the strong esteem of the Lycaonians; these men proved fickle and faithless. Very soon indeed the hands that were diligently employed in paying sacrifice to the apostles were busy in hurling stones at them. Enthusiasm and even holiest heroism will not of itself prevail against the prejudice and passion of unrighteousness.

II. THE EFFICACIOUS. We know that there were disciples gained at Lystra, for they stood round and sheltered Paul when he was murderously assailed (ver. 20). We also know that these disciples were gained by the preaching of the gospel (ver. 7). We are not told here, but we are abundantly assured elsewhere, that the preaching of the truth was made effectual by the agency of the Holy Spirit of God. So that we may say that (1) Divine truth was the weapon, (2) the Holy Ghost the agent, (3) human faith (see ver. 9, illustration) the condition, of the successful work of the apostles at Lystra, as these will be of all efficacious ministry everywhere now.—C.

Vers. 21—23.—The Christian leader and the novitiate. Driven from Lystra by the turbulence of the people, Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe, and there they "preached the gospel;" they seem to have been unmolested, and consequently they "taught many people" (ver. 21). Having travelled so far eastward towards Antioch, it became a question whether they should go on or return. Thus we come, as they came, to consider—

I. THE FUNCTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LEADER in relation to the Christian novice. We gather from the action of the apostles on this occasion that it is the teacher's duty: 1. To be earnestly concerned for his young disciples, and to go out of his way to serve them. It would certainly have been the more desirable course, "after the flesh," to go through the Cilician Gates, and so home to Antioch, rather than return and face the enraged populace from whom they had been obliged to flee. But a deep sense of what was due to those whom they had induced to forsake their old faith and enter on a new and trying course constrained them to forego the inviting and to pursue the perilous path. To encourage those who are beginning to live the Divine life and who will probably find themselves beset with unexpected and serious difficulties, we should hold ourselves ready to go far out of our way and to run some serious risks. 2. To impart additional instruction. The apostles not only repeated what they had said before, but they added sound Christian doctrine; especially they taught that we must expect to bear the burdens before we enter into the glory of our Lord; that it is

through much tribulation we enter the kingdom (ver. 22). Christian truth is large and deep. It has its portion for the idolater, another for the novice, another for the matured. The true Christian leader is he who varies his instruction in accordance with the spiritual condition of his disciples. 3. To exert a powerful personal influence. The apostles "confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith" (ver. 22); *i.e.* they brought to bear on their minds and hearts all the moral influence which they could exert by the weight of their love and their urgent solicitation; they appealed to them by every consideration which would touch their souls to remain steadfast in the faith, loyal to the Lord their Saviour. 4. To make permanent provision for Christian culture (ver. 23). 5. To make them the object of earnest prayer (ver. 23).

II. THE PART OF THE DISCIPLE. This is: 1. To recognize the earnestness of his spiritual guide, and to give him his best attention. We have no truer friend, none to whom we owe more, not one who has a greater claim on our reverent regard, than the teacher who has led us to God. 2. To expect a fair share of struggle and endurance. There is no kingdom, and certainly not the kingdom of God, to be entered without trying and even painful experiences. The Christian disciple must lay his account with this fact: he is to understand that whoever will follow Christ must take up his cross to do so (Matt. xvi. 24); that there will be ridicule to be endured, opposition to be overcome, disappointments to be surmounted, inward evils to be subdued, many things that will demand a holy and elevated fortitude. 3. To submit to those who are appointed to exercise authority—the "elders in every Church;" and to avail himself of those means of grace and growth which they may institute. 4. To keep in view the consummation of Christian hope, the blessed kingdom of God. When trials thicken and duties multiply, when the new and better life is shadowed with dark clouds, when the way is long and toilsome, then the disciple is to look on and up, beyond the plains and hills of earth to the heavenly Zion, beyond the sufferings of the present to the glory which is to be revealed.—C.

Vers. 24—28.—The work of God. This first famous missionary tour had some features quite peculiar to itself and is, in some respects, inimitable by us. But in other aspects it may be regarded as a typical work of God.

I. IT WAS BEGUN IN GOD. It was (1) prompted by his Spirit (ch. xiii. 2, 4); (2) entered upon after seeking Divine guidance (ver. 26). Paul and Barnabas went forth, the conscious workmen of God himself. They felt that what would be done through their instrumentality would be done "by God with them." All was, as all should ever be, "begun in him."

II. IN HIS STRENGTH IT WAS CARRIED ON AND COMPLETED. *In his strength.* The entire account, from beginning to end, conveys the idea that the apostles sought and found their strength in a Divine source; indeed, nothing less would have sustained them under the difficulties and sufferings of their mission. *It was carried on and completed.* It was a work "which they fulfilled" (1) spite of Mark's discouraging defection (ch. xiii. 13); (2) notwithstanding the physical difficulties of travelling and the active animosity of the Jews; (3) though every personal consideration would have led them to conclude it earlier (ver. 21). Undeterred by any checks, untempted by any inducements, they went quite through their work—God's work—and did not cease to toil and to endure until everything was done they could do, not only to introduce but to establish the Christian faith in the heart of the heathen land they visited. Well is it for the Christian workman when it can be said of him that he "fulfilled" or finished his work. Sometimes (1) weariness, or (2) timidity, or (3) dissatisfaction, or (4) dissension overtakes the labourer even in the field of holy love, and he lays down his weapon and forsakes his work. Not his is the crown and the "Well done!" at the hand and the lips of the Lord.

III. IT WAS CROWNED BY A RECITAL TO THOSE WHOM THEY REPRESENTED. Paul and Barnabas were undoubtedly sent of God; but they also went as members of the Church at Antioch. That Church regarded them as its representatives, followed them with its sympathies, sustained them by its prayers, and received them back with its warmest welcome. And to that Church, gathered together for the purpose, they recounted "all that God had done with them"—a most suitable crown to a noble work.

With eager, sympathetic, rejoicing spirits the assembly must have received the narrative. How grateful must have been the psalms, how fervent the prayers, how heartfelt the congratulations, that followed! A work is not crowned until its story has been told to those who had a real and living part in its initiation and its procedure.

IV. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY INVIGORATING REST (ver. 28)—the rest of (1) happy human fellowship and (2) appreciated service.—C.

Ver. 27.—“*The door of faith.*” When may it be said that God has “opened the door of faith” through which men may enter? This is true, as described in the text when—

I. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FIRST PRESENTED TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP IN SOME FORM OF ERROR. It was opened, through the hand of Paul, to the Gentiles, and multitudes entered in thereat. This may be said when—

II. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS TAUGHT TO CHILDREN. Then it is gradually widened as their intelligence opens; it is not long before it is sufficiently open for the soul to pass through and hold intimate and living converse with the Divine Friend.

III. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FIRST PRESENTED TO THE MIND IN AN APPRECIABLE FORM. Always essentially and fundamentally the same, the truth may be represented in such form as to be wholly inappreciable by some minds; but, on the other hand, it may be unfolded in such wise as exactly to meet the needs and satisfy the cravings of the soul. Then there is an opening through which the satisfied intellect can pass, and where the soul may lead and be sustained. Or when—

IV. THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS FIRST URGED ON THE CONSCIENCE WITH DIVINE POWER. When all material considerations sink into insignificance and the soul feels, profoundly, that the living truth of God as revealed in Jesus Christ is the one supreme and sovereign thing, then the door is opened wide, through which the soul should pass without delay, for on the inner side of it is (1) rectitude, (2) peace, (3) usefulness, (4) eternal life.—C.

Vers. 1—7.—*The gospel at Iconium.* There was a series of acts and events such as seem typical of the progress of the gospel elsewhere.

I. FAITHFUL AND SUCCESSFUL PREACHING OF THE WORD. Many, Jews and Greeks, believed. This is the one test of true preaching. Is the truth “commended to the conscience”? Are great moral laws brought out distinctly, so that the heart of the people leaps up, in truth set free? He who preaches out of his heart alone reaches to the heart. The arguments that have convinced ourselves are the arguments that can alone be expected to convince others.

II. OPPOSITION AROUSED. Jewish prejudice still stands in the path of the gospel. But the gospel acquires force as it goes, and actually roots itself the more firmly in men’s minds from the very fact that it is able to surmount opposition.

III. CONCURRENT DIVINE TESTIMONY. God gives his servants power to work and to effect good. Deeds of good done to the suffering body or mind are silent words; just as true words are spiritual deeds. We do not look for miracles, but we ought to look for “signs” that God is with us in the word we speak and the work we do for others.

IV. DIVIDED RESULTS. A split takes place in the multitude: some siding with the Jews, some with the apostles. It is by opposition of opinions and feelings that the world is carried on. It does not follow, because division takes place, on the entrance of a new light, that it will be permanent. God’s method seems to be to lead men through divisions to deeper unity; by experience of the futility of partial opinions to the deeper insight which reconciles and satisfies. These divisions were prophetic of what has ever to be in the history of the Church. Ever has there been division marked at every era of new light and progress. He is in the right who follows the light within; all who seek to follow the living Saviour, and such alone, enjoy under every name that is supposed to divide, “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”—J.

Vers. 8—20.—*Healing of the lame man at Lystra.* The event is chiefly remarkable for the effect it produced upon the minds of the people of the country and the illustration of the apostolic temper and spirit thereby called forth.

I. THE SUFFERER AND HIS FAITH. 1. His complaint was congenital, and, according to ordinary ways of thinking, incurable. This brings all the more his faith into relief. It is the very power and property of faith to conquer what seems to reason unconquerable. It is impossible to show that any diseases are in themselves incurable; they may baffle human skill, but not the healing energy of God. 2. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The sufferer seizes on the truth that God is a Saviour, and that in him is to be found full, present, immediate salvation from passing ills. Faith realizes the unseen as if it were the seen. 3. Faith recognized by the minister of God. Paul sees that the lame man has faith to be healed. There is sympathy between souls in God. The minister of God's mercy, of Christ's saving energy, is directed to his object, and the object is directed to him. If God has entrusted us with a good to dispense, it will not be long before we find the soul who needs it. So Paul bids the sufferer arise; the word of authority is echoed by the consciousness of new power in the sufferer's breast: he rises, he walks, he bounds with joy. It is a representation of what ever will take place and does take place when true words are spoken to the souls of men. Oh, let us believe in the energies of the soul, by which we may lay hold on Divine power in our own weakness, both that we may receive good and impart it to others!

II. THE EFFECT ON THE MULTITUDE. 1. They thought that they were receiving a visit from the gods. The air of the ancient world was full of such stories. Doubtless the story of Zeus visiting Philemon and Baucis was well known to them. These so-called "myths" contain a deep meaning; they are prophecies of the human heart, of that intercourse between God and man which the gospel declares to be the fact of facts in religion. 2. They were mistaken in the *mode* of the truth. Paul was not Zeus, nor was Barnabas Hermes. But they were not mistaken as to the substance of the truth. They were mistaken in offering worship to men like themselves, but not mistaken in the heart-instinct by which they recognized behind the healing power put forth the energy of God. The understanding may be in error when the heart speaks true. When this is the case, instruction, missionary effort, has always hopeful ground to work upon. The error and unbelief of the heart alone is invincible and fatal.

III. THE CONDUCT OF THE APOSTLES. 1. Their horror and indignation. They rend their garments, and rush into the crowd with exclamations of astonishment and anger. We must be capable of a holy anger if we are capable of a holy love. Worship belongs to the Divine alone. What would the apostles say now to the worship of their bones or other relics, real or pretended? 2. Their clear protest. "We too are men of like passions." Suffering, sorrowing humanity is no object of such honours. To accept them is to dishonour the Divine majesty, and to do injustice at the same time to ordinary humanity. The true teacher will never magnify himself, and will ask for nothing more than serious attention to his arguments and teachings. If the teacher shows that he considers himself on a level with ordinary humanity, the unconverted and self-humiliated will look up with hope of their own deliverance from misery; and the awakened are warned not to confound the imperfections of the teacher with the substance of his message. The treasure is in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 3. True views of God set forth. (1) He is the living God; and all in the world not derived from him and resting on him is of no value. All worship directed to finite objects misses its supreme mark, and is a vanity, a "nothing." The idol itself is "nothing in the world." "All love is lost save upon God alone." (2) He is the Creator. This is a thought brought into emphasis in the preaching and teaching of St. Paul, as in his Epistle to the Romans and his discourse on Mars' Hill. Having made all things, he contains all things in himself. Man is his creature; and if man offers even his whole self upon the altar to God, God but receives his own. (3) He respects the freedom of man. The nations were suffered to walk in their own ways and to work out their own course of life. And in their aberrations they justified the truth and ways of God. Our freedom is our solemn heritage for weal or for woe. No explanation can be found for the dark facts of human sin, except that which goes back to the freedom of the soul to decide between good and evil. (4) The unflinching goodness of God. The seasons fail not; food and enjoyment are provided out of the abundance of the earth. In every happy and healthy mood of mind the heart breaks into song, and thanks God for the boon of existence. In every sunny scene, every glimpse of

pure and healthy happiness and domestic joy, there is the reflection of the "joy of God to see a happy world." "God is wisdom, God is love;"—this is the refrain of the heart true to itself; nor can the occasional discords of bodily pain or mental perplexity mar the sweetness of the music or obscure the clearness of the evidence.—J.

Vers. 21—28.—*Return to Antioch: a picture of apostolic activity.* The scene quickly changed at Lystra. The multitude, wrought upon by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, rise up against Paul, and stone their late hero and god. Fickle world, which now brings garlands and now stones! "Every generation stones by-and-by its own gods, but every time has its own method of stoning." The boldest antagonists of the kingdom of darkness arouse most foes; Paul is stoned, not Barnabas. Perhaps his own act comes back upon him in stoning Stephen; certainly it must be present to his mind. God makes of our own past evil acts whips to scourge us or stones to pelt us. But Paul rises from the ground. "Rejoice not, O mine enemy, for though I fall I shall rise again." The story is told of Numidicus at Carthage, in the time of Cyprian, that, half burned and stoned, he lay as dead. His daughters came to bury him, whereupon he arose and went into the city. The next day, following the marching orders, "When they persecute you in one city, flee into another," Paul goes forth with Barnabas to Derbe. Now comes a rapid sketch of busy labour.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHRISTIAN PREACHER. 1. He is not to be cast down by disappointment nor defeated by opposition. Faith, tried by fire, proves its enduring quality. The more the apostle suffers, the more glowing becomes his love. He returns, as if by irresistible attraction, to the scene of defeat. It is just those souls which resist us that we must mark out for conquest; they will be well worth perseverance to gain. 2. He is ever seeking for new worlds to conquer for the kingdom of Christ. Ever planting and propagating the Word in virgin ground, the motto of the missionary is, "To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new." 3. His cares and duties are manifold. This is suggestively brought out by the different words employed. He "evangelizes;" i.e. he announces the good news of the kingdom; he proclaims, or preaches, in the proper sense, Christ. Next, he "instructs" (*μαθητεύει*) the converts, so that they become *disciples*, i.e. men *taught* and ever *learning* more of Christian truth. He also "strengthens," or "confirms," Christian believers, by calling to mind and applying the old truths. He "exhorts," bringing the force of personal love and suasion to bear on the will, "speaking from the heart to the heart." To keep men in the faith is no less an anxiety than to bring them into it. 4. He is the comforter. He sheds a light upon man's troubles, by showing that it is through them the path lies to the kingdom of God.

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to that land where sorrow is unknown."

Christianity glorifies suffering; apart from it, we sink amidst them into a cheerless pessimism or a blind resignation. 5. He has to take part in the government and guidance of communities. The appointment of officers over the different Churches is here mentioned. Christianity is a social as well as an individual life, and social life must have its organization. If we carefully study this short passage (vers. 21—23), we find in it a compendium of the Christian minister's duties. Truly—

"Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands."

II. THE BLESSINGS ATTENDANT ON THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL. 1. Reflex blessings on the mind and heart of the preacher; assurance through suffering and trial and experience of Divine help. Even if a man sees but little present fruit of his labour, he has reason to thank God for the effect upon his own spirit and character of a work so holy on the souls of others. *Discimus docendo*—We learn by teaching; and he that watereth is watered himself. 2. To those who receive the message. Instead of the wild irregularity of passion and fancy, Christian order and sobriety takes possession of the soul. Idle fables are driven out by the Divine Word. 3. To the supporters and messengers of missionary work. Joyous was the welcome, great the thanksgiving at Antioch when the missionaries came back. And so ever; refreshment of faith,

broadening of sympathies, quickening of intelligence, ever follows upon the receipt of good news from the fields of Christian work, and opening of new doors to the free passage of the Word.—J.

Vers. 1—7.—Faithful service: Iconium. I. The **MAGNANIMITY** of the preachers; though badly used by the Jews of Antioch, they still return good for evil.

II. The **FIRST SUCCESS OF THE WORD**, when there was no decided attempt to thwart it, a powerful testimony to its adaptation both to Jews and Gentiles.

III. The **TENACITY AND ENDURANCE** of the representatives of truth must be set over against the fickleness of their hearers and the obstinacy and envy of evil-minded men. The Lord bears witness to us when we speak boldly in his Name.

IV. There is a **LIMIT TO ZEAL**. It must not unnecessarily sacrifice life. Fly to other places when the testimony is persistently rejected. "Cast not pearls before swine." The true wisdom is seen exemplified in this instance. The preachers remained at their post until their lives were actually in danger, and God said clearly, "Go."—R.

Vers. 8—18.—The light shining in darkness: Lystra. The heathenish state of the population. So much the brighter seemed the light. The effect of the miracle on the cripple. A warning against making a superstitious use of men's credulity—as the Romish Church has done.

I. A **REAL TRIAL OF THE APOSTLES** 1. Of their *faithfulness to the truth*. Had they been willing, as the Church afterwards was, to mingle heathenism with Christianity, they might have accomplished more in captivating the minds of the people. 2. Of their *humility and self-sacrificing zeal*. They put aside men's worship that they might be free to serve God. What an example to their successors! 3. Of their *inspired wisdom and discretion*. They knew how to restrain an excited people whose homage might easily be turned into fury. They made the occasion an opportunity for preaching a gospel of love and purity.

II. AN **EXAMPLE OF THE WORLD'S WANT OF THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS**. 1. Gaping after wonders. Led by priests; worshipping men of like passions with themselves. Ignorant of the true character of God. Ungrateful in the midst of his abundant mercies. Unobservant of the witness which he bears to himself in nature and in the course of providence. 2. The glad tidings brought into the midst of such a world. At first not understood; but the preachers must follow the example of the apostles, and, beginning at the testimony which surrounds men in their own life, lead them to the higher truth of revelation. Missionaries should study the field in which they labour.—R.

Vers. 19—28.—Dangers and successes. The unstable multitude open to rapid changes of feeling. "Hosanna!" to day; "Crucify him!" to-morrow. Paul's miraculous escape a great help to the faith of disciples. Possibly his suffering a reason for speedy return to Antioch.

I. THE **EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY A PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE**. 1. The necessity of *patience*. 2. The importance of making the work thorough and *confirming the weak*. 3. The relation of aggressive work to *orderly Church life*. Both in the new Churches elders appointed, and at Antioch all rehearsed.

II. The preciousness of **RIISING FAITH REQUIRES A JEALOUS WATCHFULNESS**, even at the risk of personal suffering. It was dangerous for Paul and Barnabas to visit the same places again, but "the souls of the disciples" were more in their eyes than their own comfort or even safety. 1. True confirmation is a recognition of present grace. 2. The experience of the more advanced should help the new converts and the young. The Church has much neglected this duty. 3. Trouble must always attend faith. The blessings which we care not to fight for we shall soon lose. 4. The appointment of superintending elders is apostolic. They were doubtless from among the new Churches themselves, but chosen with discretion and in dependence on the blessing of God. All done with prayer and self-denial. The presence of the Lord the one true sanction.

III. THE **REHEARSAL OF SPIRITUAL SUCCESSSES** a great encouragement to God's people. 1. In the *gathered Church*, not merely in private; for the Church is the true centre from which all proceeds and to which all is brought. 2. The true missionary work

is that which the Church maintains in its united capacity. Individual and isolated efforts are not so likely to be blessed. 3. The special importance of the mission of Paul and Barnabas in showing the open door of faith to the Gentiles. Such a fact could not have wielded the same influence had it not been rehearsed thus solemnly to the assembled brethren. Antioch was now the pledged source of light to the Gentile world.—R.

Ver. 22.—Spiritual confirmation. “Confirming the souls of the disciples.” Connect with the narrative, showing that spiritual aggressiveness at Antioch was the sign of a deep and true spiritual life. The haste and superficiality of the teaching from place to place. Confirmation not a ceremony, but a process.

I. CONFIRMATION OF FAITH. Continue in the faith—both objective and subjective; not a creed alone, if that was given at all, but the real root of spiritual life. Faith was discipleship.

II. CONFIRMATION IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH. “Ordained [or, ‘appointed’] them elders in every church.” A settled ministry; an orderly maintenance of worship. Preparation for work in the neighbourhood.

III. CONFIRMATION OF HOPE. The kingdom in view. Work towards the future. Tribulation prepares for higher life.—R.

Vers. 1—7.—The calm force of the gospel amid many distractions of men. This portion of the history names Paul and Barnabas to us for the first time as *apostles* (ver. 4). It is noticeable also as substituting the expression, “preaching the gospel,” for speaking “the Word of God” (ver. 7). But it is remarkable much more as giving us such a distinct impression of the way in which the new truth, “the gospel,” bore itself amid many a variety of opposition and unexpected combinations of foes. Let notice some of the groupings amid which the gospel made its way, either with the help or against their hindrance.

I. A LARGE NUMBER OF JEWS AND GREEKS BELIEVING FORM THE FIRST GROUP. As the gospel is still persistently first preached to the Jew and from the pulpit that the synagogue constituted, so it seems that generally some of the Jews (and of course not unfrequently Greeks with them) believed. Now, however, it is a great multitude of these. Probably the early and trenchant conquests of the gospel again availed to waken all the bitterest and more active hostility in the new scene, whatever it might be, of labour. The first group shows Jew against Jew therefore.

II. THE JEWS WHO DID NOT BELIEVE CONDESCEND TO ALLY TO THEMSELVES THE GENTILES, AND THIS IS THE SECOND GROUP. Jew and Gentile seldom worked together for good—at least not in any way directly or indirectly connected with religious matters. But now not only do they combine forces for evil, but it is at the instance of the Jew. “The same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together” (Luke xxiii. 12). Very true it is any way that enmity against Christ and the gospel of his truth and love will need all the combined force possible, and will need to try every possible variety of combination, not *then* to succeed, but to prove to itself how vain its opposition and anger are.

III. THE WHOLE CITY ITSELF CONSTITUTES THE MATERIAL OF THE NEXT GROUPING. And this grouping is one that shows a whole city: 1. Not divided into its ordinary numerous civil, political, or ecclesiastical divisions. It owns to a very simple classification indeed. It is rent in just twain. 2. And the separating line, traversing all other considerations, is determined simply by men’s attitude with regard to these two men, lately arrived at Iconium after expulsion from Antioch. The question has come to be—Who “hold” with these two men, or who do *not* hold with them?—for “holding with the Jews” is merely the converse of this. Whatever may be true of these two men and of their word, evident it was in those days and in that city that they were forces that had to be reckoned with. And go where the gospel will, *this* at least has always been found.

IV. THE NEXT GROUP EXHIBITS A MULTITUDE OF GENTILES, JEWS, AND THEIR RULERS. They are not, indeed, openly and compactly and homogeneously massed together, but they are ready to sink all differences for twenty-four hours, and are preparing to do so, that in untrained multitude they may try the effect of brute force. These were meditating an assault upon the two unarmed defenceless preachers. They were

organizing themselves, truly after very rough sort, for this purpose. And if the purpose be ever done, when it is done there will soon be an end of *their* harmony.

V. THE LAST GROUP CONSISTS OF THE TWO APOSTLES AND A THIRD WITH THEM, THOUGH INVISIBLE. These, passing from the midst of an angry people, went their way to preach the same gospel, serve the same Master, trust the same Saviour, but to do these things elsewhere. They "flee," not for fear, not from cowardice, not from love of their own life, but from love of the life of their gospel and their mission, and in obedience to the plain command of the great Captain (Luke x. 23). How strong that gospel was! How strong their heart was! And these gave strength both to limb to go elsewhere and to voice to speak and preach elsewhere. Often must those apostles and their converts too of the Jews have thought of the old words of impassioned prophetic expostulation: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." For they are "broken as with a rod of iron;" they are dashed "in pieces like a potter's vessel." But Jesus and his gospel survive, and reign with a reign further and wider; they strew blessings their whole way along, and wake ten thousand voices of praise.—B.

Vers. 8—18.—*Three instances of faith.* The contents of these verses are very diversified and very full. Yet a certain unity attaches to them, and from this point of view they will be now regarded. Paul and Barnabas have now reached a people who are almost exclusively Gentiles, and Gentiles of the Gentiles. The miracle with which this paragraph opens may be supposed to find its place here by the mind of the Spirit, less for its own particulars, interesting and instructive as they are, than for the sequel, which shows the effect of miracle upon heathen, and the way in which the apostles dealt with that effect. We may regard the passage as exemplifying three various faiths, various because they were different in their degree, and different in yet more essential respect, in their intelligence.

I. THE FAITH OF THE CRIPPLE. It is to be assumed that he was not a Jew, but a heathen. He hears Paul, presumably therein for the first time hearing pure truth, whether Paul is speaking of the things of revealed religion or of natural religion. The incident may have helped Paul to his subsequent language: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). Paul speaks. The lame man listens. He listens more and yet more keenly. "The seed of the Word" is falling "into good ground." Paul's eye falls on him. Afterwards it is riveted by him. The interested, eager, imploring eye of the lame man is met by the divinely enlightened, divinely discerning, and divinely *giving* eye of Paul. Paul is led, as the consequence, to see that he has "faith to be healed." The question of a miracle lies with the omnipotence of God, but the question of *when* that omnipotence shall be exercised may lie (beyond what we think, and beyond what we can at present track) with the individual man. For this is in the deepest sense the mystery of human life and human accountability; nor can we even say where the line runs that distinguishes between the agency of God's Spirit, in the greatest miracles of all, the conversion of the heart, and the freedom of man's will. The language we have here may mean either (1) distinctly that Paul saw that the lame man had the faith upon which the omnipotent Word would take effect, not by bare right of its omnipotence alone, but also by the more hidden harmony and sympathy of a sensitive, a quickened, a trusting, and an obedient heart; or (2) that Paul saw that the lame man *had* already received the divinest gift of all *the Word of God*, and that he was therefore a fitter vessel to be "chosen" both to receive himself the lesser grace, and also to set forth to others the abundant grace of God. Meantime the less enlightened the nature and the less informed the actual mind of the lame man, the more are we conducted to some discrimination of faith's purest essence—its *trustiness*, its *self-surrender*, its *clinging* confessed dependence.

II. THE FAITH OF THE PEOPLE WHO BEHELD. 1. Their faith was of those who did believe, and did not either shut their eyes, or quibble, or blaspheme. 2. Their faith was of those who attributed the work of a miracle to powers distinctly higher. They were *not* of those who once said of Jesus himself, "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils." Nor were they of those who set it down to sorcery and *witchcraft*. What highest they knew *de facto*, to that they gave or desired to give

glory. 3. But their faith was of those who, believing, believed "ignorantly," believed absolutely wrongly, and believed far more wrongly (now by Scripture's most emphatic assertion) than could be justified in any way. 4. Their faith exhibited that leading mark of the lowest kind of faith which must link on the wonder done to the *nearest* manifest doer. It gets to a god, but it is its own god peculiarly. It gets to a god, but not to the Spirit and the Invisible, much less to the one invisible Spirit; nay, its way of getting to a god is by bringing its gods to itself "in the likeness of men." It has not reached to the conception of the great power, the great goodness, the great Being before all, who "giveth to all life and breath and all things," and, among those all things, knowledge of his own will, and power to execute it, betimes in the fulness of its majesty. 5. But when all has been justly said to the disparagement of the faith of these heathen men of Lystra, it may be put to their credit, that, even in nature's darkness, they did *not* believe in a faith barren of works; in which respect, at least, they may often be taken as rising up in judgment against the children of the light and of the day.

III. THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES. 1. It was in the first place without doubt the *pure* faith that was wrought in them by the Holy Spirit. It was by this that Paul recognized the opportunity, and discerned in the cripple the real thing that was also in himself, and taught him to speak that word "with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet." 2. The "faith that dwelt in" the apostle was one that made the ignorance of the really Divine, now illustrated before their very eyes, and now taking advantage of their very persons, so harrowingly painful. Their impetuous rushing among the people, and rending of their clothes, and mingled expostulation and instruction addressed to the people, all prove the intensely exercised state of their own mind, almost to agony of anguish. And the anguish was the reflection of just this—an enlightened, a pure, a high faith. Many dark outer deeds had Barnabas and Paul too often seen, from which, nevertheless, their inmost soul took less wound than from this, when the enthusiastic heathen of Lystra would fain have sacrificed to them. 3. The faith of the apostles was that which struck horror into them at the very thought, if haply they should "rob God" of his own or seem to share his undivided honour. May they not be considered in this light as holding out an example to all their spiritual successors, to fear, as much as they would fear anything, lest they should be found at any time to "sacrifice unto their net, and to burn incense unto their drag" (Hab. i. 16), or lest they should accept the offerings of flattery to themselves which should be only offerings of praise to Christ. What a wonderful guide for the noblest life earth can know comes of the enlarged, developed, mature faith of an experienced Christian!—B.

VERS. 19, 20.—"Once was I stoned" (2 Cor. xi. 25). The brevity of the record of the incident of these verses may, perhaps, point to the modesty of Paul. Probably the historian of the Acts of the Apostles was not at this time with Paul and Barnabas at Lystra. Paul is his informant, therefore, of what now befell him. The event was treasured, as well it might be, among the great perils and sufferings, but also among the great deliverances of Paul's career. The event, as so briefly detailed, nevertheless teaches—

I. THE PERSISTENT OPPOSITION OF THE GREAT ENEMY. They of Iconium and Antioch are, after all, his agents, and, incited by him, pursue Paul and Barnabas here.

II. THE EARLY FORGETFULNESS OF GOOD AND THE DEEP-SEATED INGRATITUDE OF HUMAN NATURE. Those who were thus persuaded to stone Paul were of the very people who had offered, as it were the day before, to sacrifice to him as God. It is a repetition of the "Hosanna!" of yesterday being turned into the "Crucify, crucify!" of to-day.

III. THE HEIGHT OF HUMAN AND OF CHRISTIAN FAITHFULNESS MAY VERY POSSIBLY FOR A TIME INTENSIFY OR PRODUCE DANGER. Perhaps the people of Lystra would never have been "persuaded" to stone Paul, if Paul and Barnabas had not yesterday so faithfully sought to persuade them that they were but men like themselves. And probably the emissaries of Iconium and Antioch would not have dared to face the wild enthusiasm of Lystra, with their evil insinuation and malign attempts.

IV. GOD DOES NOT FORGET TO BE FAITHFUL TO THOSE WHO ARE FAITHFUL TO HIM.

And Paul, who had wrought through the mighty power of God, miracles for the deliverance of others, is the subject of a miracle himself now. And it is the Divine favour, as no human minister of it served the occasion. Paul has been stoned, drawn out of the city; foe and friend take him for dead—nay, perhaps he was so; if not, there was but a little “step indeed between him and death.” Yet he rises up, uncalled by human voice, unhelped by human hand, and comes into the city.

V. **THE UNQUENCHED COURAGE OF PAUL.** He does *not now* “flee to another city.” He comes into *that* city. He could well trust the God who had delivered him and would deliver him “in deaths oft.” And he was well prepared to echo the words of the psalmist, “This God is my God for ever and ever, and he will be my Guide ever unto death.”

VI. **THAT AGAIN AND AGAIN THE ENEMY OF CHRIST MAKES A HUMILIATING FAILURE OF IT.** The enemy’s work is exposed and is *undone*. Christ triumphs with fresh manifestation. And his truth and glory are spread.—B.

Vers. 21—28.—*The return home.* The furthest limit of the mission of Paul and Barnabas is not reached till their visit is paid to Derbe. After the recovery by miracle of Paul from his stoning, the next day he advances with Barnabas to Derbe. And after some time spent there and much work done, of which no details are given, the two apostles set their face homeward. And it is evident that the Spirit still leads them. For—

I. **WITH THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROUND, THEIR COURAGE FAILS THEM NOT.** The apostles return by the route and the towns and cities by which they had come. It is wonderful, and indeed it is often of the merciful consideration of Heaven, how brave men may be toward unforeseen dangers and difficulties. How often, however, does courage vanish after a taste of real work and real difficulty! Not so now. The apostles will face again, if necessary, all which they had before encountered.

II. **THEIR MINISTRY IS STILL RICH IN FRUITFULNESS.** The object of the apostles follows closely in the tracks of the very well-ascertained needs of new converts. They would: 1. Confirm them. 2. Exhort them to steadfastness and endurance “even unto the end.” 3. They would tarry to instruct them in aspects among the deepest of the Divine life—that men “must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.” There were “musts” in the life, the journeys, the sufferings, the death of the great Captain of our salvation himself. And “musts” there must be in the life and work and discipline of his followers. 4. They would also begin to organize Church life in place after place, and “ordain elders” in the new Churches. 5. They show an example of their faith in prayer and fasting and “commend[ing]” individuals and Churches to the Lord, of their faith and of their life. All these activities of thought, speech, affection, and deed were tokens and were the trustworthy tokens of men who were still led by the Spirit, and who were still following that lead.

III. **THEY BRING THEIR MISSION TO ITS CLOSE, AND THEMSELVES HOME TO THEIR STARTING-POINT, IN SO EXEMPLARY A MANNER.** 1. They honour the Church of God’s appointment, by calling it together on their return to receive their report. Next to being the servants of Christ, we are the servants of the Church, and ought to hold ourselves so far forth answerable to it. 2. They do not carelessly forget or only slightly remember how by the prayers and fasting of that very Church, they also, months and years before, had been commended to the grace of God. 3. They give, in some instructive, impressive, and reassuring detail, a rehearsal of (1) “all that God had done with them,” and (2) how indisputably God “had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.” 4. There awhile, in the holy fellowship of that Church, they rest from their harder labours. They recruit their souls in the healthy air and the genial comfort of that society, after years of fierce conflict and almost perpetual anxiousness and keen persecution. Happy servants, happy Church, “in the midst of whom God” is present, shedding light, peace, joy, upon all!—B.

Ver. 2.—*Hinderers of Christian work.* The apostle elsewhere expresses in a sentence what was the common experience of his missionary life. He says (1 Cor. xvi. 9), “A great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.” And we must still accept the fact that, if we will do any special work, or manifest in

work any energy or individuality, we shall soon have persons opposing, misrepresenting, and hindering us. Here, in the very outset of St. Paul's missionary career, the influence of the "unbelieving Jews" is indicated, and this fanatical Jewish party persistently followed up the apostle wherever he went, trying to destroy his work and create prejudice against him. It may be said—What great things St. Paul would have accomplished if he had not been checked by these hinderers! But a deeper view of the influence permanently exerted on the Church by St. Paul's life and writings would rather lead us to say—What sublime things St. Paul did accomplish in spite of the hinderers, and even out of the very impulse excited by their opposition; for in this, too, God made "the wrath of man to praise him"! More and more clearly is it now seen that a man's moral nobility is gained, not by silent, unresisted growths, but by the steady, persistent, often imperilling, conflict with adverse influences and open foes. And that which is true in the individual life is true of the composite Church life. We may thank God that he has overruled, for the Church's permanent good, the hinderers, the opposers, the persecutors. We may consider (1) the sources whence hindrances come, getting illustrations from the older times, and making applications to our own; (2) the influences which hindrances may have upon the mind and feeling of the workers; and (3) the influences which they have upon the growth and progress of Christ's Church.

I. THE SOURCES WHENCE COME THE HINDRANCES TO CHRISTIAN WORK. They have always come both from *without* and from *within* the Church; but our thought is now chiefly confined to hindrances coming from without. Hinderers are generally: 1. Persons of antagonistic disposition, who always take "the other side," are quick to imagine some evil in everything attempted, see no good in anything with which they are unassociated, and have a sort of natural horror of things that are new. 2. Or persons who have strong religious prejudices, which they feel the fresh thing tends to undermine, and for which they consequently fight as if they were the truth of God. 3. Or persons who cling to doctrinal forms or to ceremonial rites, and fail to see that God may send forth floods of new life, too mighty to be kept within their prescribed river-banks, and so they vainly try to hold back God's floods. 4. Or persons who have no faith in the future, and cannot trust God to oversee and overrule the future, even as he does the present and has done the past. 5. Or persons whose temporal condition may be injuriously affected by the new enterprise; as illustrated by the shrine-makers of Ephesus. The phases which these hindrances take in modern life need to be carefully observed and thought out.

II. THE INFLUENCES WHICH HINDRANCES MAY HAVE UPON THE MIND AND FEELING OF THE WORKERS. Those influences, of course, differ according to the disposition of the workers. We may divide them into these classes. 1. Hindrances will dishearten and depress some. It is characteristic of some that they are sunshine workers, and give up easily when the least cloud-shadow passes across. These are usually weakly in body and nervously sensitive, and they need encouraging and the frequent kindly word. 2. Hindrances will keep up in some a "dogged persistency." This expression is not the most graceful one, but no other so well expresses their condition of feeling. Like Nehemiah, they simply keep on, let other men talk, send messages, or do what they will; and if they say anything to the hinderers, it is only this, "We are doing a great work, therefore we cannot come down." 3. And hindrances arouse some to new and nobler activity. The spirit of the soldier is in them, and the very presence of a foe, and the very difficulties of an enterprise, touch and awaken the noblest within them. Direct application to present-day Church-workers should be made, and the duty of resisting the undue influence of hinderers pressed home.

III. THE INFLUENCES EXERTED BY HINDRANCES ON THE GROWTH AND PROGRESS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH. Apply to: 1. Internal growth in spirituality, in development of doctrine, in practical application of principle to details of life. 2. External progress. Hinderers give publicity to the Christian Church, calling the attention of many who would otherwise not hear of it. Hinderers waken the natural sympathy of men for a resisted and persecuted thing. 3. Hinderers increase the evangelizing and aggressive fervour of the Church, and so, by means of the hinderers, Christ's kingdom steadily advances. Illustrate by the persecutions of the early Church, the history of English Protestantism, and the tale of Christian life in Madagascar. The Church

may have "many adversaries," but she learns how to make their very enmity her inspiration.—R. T.

Ver. 15.—*No gods, only God.* The subject may be introduced by such a sketch of the incidents as will bring prominently forward these points. 1. The apostles wrought a miraculous healing. 2. Their act was seriously misconceived. 3. Pagan sentiments overwhelmed the Christian teaching. 4. The apostles most deeply felt the insult which the proposed sacrifice offered to the Divine honour and sole claim. Remember that the first and supreme truth to a Jew is the *unity and spirituality* of God, and observe that this should be as firmly and jealously conserved by the Christian as by the Jew. One of the most marked features of the pious man in all ages is supreme jealousy of God's sole honour. In describing the miracle out of which the incidents grew, the necessity for a moral preparation before we can receive Divine intervention and deliverance may be pointed out. Men may be *set* so as to receive, or so as to be indifferent to, God's saving grace. Our Lord pleads thus, "Ye *will* not come unto me." "The evident eagerness of this cripple marked him out to the quick insight of the apostle as one on whom a work of power could be wrought. It is evident on the face of the narrative that it was not every cripple or every sufferer that Paul would have attempted to heal; it was only such as, so to speak, met half-way the exertion of spiritual power by their own ardent faith." Fixing attention on the serious error of the excited populace, and the earnest efforts of the apostles to correct it, we notice—

I. THE NATURAL ARGUMENT FROM MIRACLES. We mean the first impulsive idea of them likely to spring up in men's minds. Things that are evidently beyond human power must be wrought by Divine power, and persons by whom the wondrous work is wrought must be Divine persons. Such reasoning was strengthened by the legends and superstitions of heathenism, and it may be shown that there lingered in the particular district of Lycaonia, traditions of incarnations of the deity (see instances in the exegetical portion of this Commentary). But the first and natural argument from miracles cannot be sustained when knowledge is advanced and critical thinking gains power. That they are wrought by Divine power and signs of Divine presence is not the *only* possible explanation of them. Men properly test their so-called miraculous character, and then they test the agency by which they are wrought. Therefore God never bears upon men with the force of miracles alone, and we are led to consider.

II. THE RELATION OF MIRACLES TO TEACHING. This close and necessary connection the heathen could not see, and to this day many Christians do not see. A miracle is nothing standing by itself; it may be most valuable as related to, and the exposition or illustration of, some truth. Renan says rightly that the ancient heathen had no conception of a miracle as the *evidence of a doctrine*. And Archbishop Trench points out that our Lord's miracles are never called merely *wonders*, "because the *ethical* meaning of the miracle would be wholly lost were blank astonishment or gaping wonder *all* which they aroused. They are also '*signs*' and pledges of something more than and beyond themselves." It may be urged that miracles are never wrought save for the sake of the truth. Even when they are at first sight attestations of a person, they confirm our faith in him only for the sake of the truth which he brings, and they only fulfil their mission when they produce in us receptivity to the truth taught. This is fully illustrated in the incidents connected with our text. The people stayed with what the miracle seemed to say concerning the persons Barnabas and Saul. The apostles earnestly urged that the miracle was but designed to open their hearts to the truth. Much of the difficulty felt concerning the miraculous, would be removed if we dwelt more fully on its moral use, as producing a receptivity for the truth.

III. THE TEACHING OF THIS MIRACLE CAME OUT MORE CLEARLY THROUGH THE MISTAKE MADE CONCERNING IT. It had been designed to aid in securing attention to the apostles' message as sent from God. It came to be a means of correcting men's fundamental error on the being of God. Ordinarily the truth received may be left to push out cherished error. Monotheism, conceived from the Christian standpoint, will of itself destroy all polytheistic conceptions. But sometimes fundamental doctrinal errors need to be resolutely dealt with. The apostles dare not dishonour their Master by permitting a vital error to be cherished. So, at the utmost personal peril, they

declare that there are no gods; there is only God; and that they themselves are only men, his servants, who are permitted to put forth gracious power, as a persuasion to men to receive his blessed message of pardon and life.—R. T.

Ver. 16.—*God's ways with the nations.* Attention is called to the sentence, "Who, in times past," or in bygone generations, "suffered all nations," or all the heathen, "to walk in their own ways." On this sentence Olshausen writes, "In the first place, Paul contrasts the present time, as the time of the Messiah, with former times, in which the heathen world, with no such light as the Jewish nation possessed, lived on in their own ways. In this thought is to be found the apology for the design of the people of Lystra, so blasphemous considered in itself. But again, this situation of the Gentile world was not sufficient to free them altogether from guilt, for Nature herself, with all the wonderful arrangements which she exhibits, furnished the means of rising to the idea of the true God, who summoned the whole fabric into being."

I. GOD HAD "WAYS WITH THE NATIONS." A common sentiment has long prevailed that God altogether left the heathen nations alone, doing nothing for their intellectual or their moral life, and only preserving their physical being by his providence. It is a sentiment which can only be cherished so long as men do not think, and so long as they limit the teachings of the Divine Word by their prejudices. "The God of the whole earth must be called," and "all souls are his." If they are his, he must be concerned in their well-being in every respect, and can never have stood aloof from their mental, moral, and spiritual needs. It pleased God to grant a special revelation for the Jews for the whole world's sake; but this does not assume that he gave no revelations at all to others. In comparison, God's ways with the nations may be called a "leaving them to their own devices;" but he watched over them while thus carrying out self-devised plans, and overruled even this to become a kind of preparation for that gospel revelation which could be made to the whole world. Each nation worked out a great experiment; we cannot always be sure what each experiment was, but we can see it precisely in some cases. It may have been—Can man's final good come through his imagination, or through his intellect, or through his artistic taste, or through his governmental faculties, or through his activities and energies? Put generally, we may say that God's ways with the nations were to let them be free to find out for themselves whether in man's own nature there was any power by which he could free himself from sin and secure the perfection of his being. Such an experiment or series of experiments had to be made in the interests of the whole race, and only when the failure of all such experiments was well proved could the revelation of salvation for men by a *Divine intervention* be made. Man must find out that he cannot save himself before he will be willing to look up and say, "Lord, help me!" The following passage from F. W. Robertson expresses the same view of God's ways with the nations in another and a suggestive form:—"Recollect that the Bible contains only a record of the Divine dealings with a single nation; his proceedings with the minds of other peoples are not recorded. That large other world—no less God's world than Israel was, though in their bigotry the Jews thought Jehovah was their own exclusive property—scarcely is, scarcely could be, named on the page of Scripture except in its external relation to Israel. But at times, figures as it were cross the rim of Judaism, when brought in contact with it, and passing for a moment as dim shadows, do yet tell us hints of a communication and a revelation going on unsuspected. We are told, for example, of Job; no Jew, but an Arabian emir, who beneath the tents of Uz contrived to solve the question to his heart which still perplexes us through life—the coexistence of evil with Divine benevolence; one who wrestled with God as Jacob did, and strove to know the shrouded Name, and hoped to find that it was love. We find Naaman the Syrian, and Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian, under the providential and loving discipline of God. Rahab the Gentile is saved by faith. The Syro-phenician woman by her sick daughter's bedside, amidst the ravings of insanity, recognizes, without human assistance, the sublime and consoling truth of a universal Father's love in the midst of apparent partiality. The 'Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' had not left them in darkness." How this may be applied to God's ways with heathen nations now requires to be thought out. The universal revelation in Christ Jesus yet requires to be universally made known.

II. GOD'S WAYS WITH THE NATIONS WILL BE ULTIMATELY VINDICATED. To their view and to our view there is much that seems to need vindicating. For instance, (1) is there not much sign of favouritism in the Divine ways? (2) do not multitudes of men morally perish while God withholds from them his revelation? (3) however the experiment may serve the great interest of the race, it brings the ruin of the individual; and (4) the darkness into which man sinks when left alone is so awful that even the gospel light seems powerless to dispel it. In such ways we find utterance for our questionings and doubts. And yet already God's ways are being justified. 1. We are getting fuller and worthier conceptions of the Divine Being himself, which bring a most restful assurance that what he does for all his creatures is more than *right*, is *lovingly right*. 2. Philosophy is helping us to a truer knowledge of the individual man, and of the purpose of race and climatic diversities of man, and enabling us to conceive how God may deal with humanity as a whole, and with each part in the interests of the whole. 3. The Christian revelation declares that the mystery of earth will be unfolded by-and-by, and will even pass out of our thought as we contemplate the exceeding glory of its perfected redemption. 4. Christian missions are spreading the one saving revelation of God amongst the nations in a way that assures of the coming fulfilment of our largest hopes. Till the day of vindication fully dawns, we must strive to understand better God's ways, and above all to make full present response to God's grace in Christ Jesus as revealed *unto us*.—R. T.

Ver. 17.—*The witness of harvest-times.* For the point as presented to a very different audience, see Rom. i. 19, 20; ch. xvii. 28. It has been remarked that the Greek words here used by the apostle are "so distinctly rhythmical that they suggest the thought that St. Paul quotes from some hymn of praise which he had heard in a harvest or vintage festival, and which, as with the altar to the Unknown God at Athens, he claims as due to him whom men ignorantly worshipped." A sentence from Neander may give the key-note to the sermon. He says, "The whole creation, as a revelation of God, especially of his almightiness and goodness, is designed to arouse the spirit of man to a perception of the inward revelation of God." Introduce the subject by a picture of the scene connected with it. An occasion was made for declaring the relations of nature with religion. Fix thought on the one nature-scene of harvest, and apply St. Paul's teaching; first showing how fully in harmony with his views this representation was, and what support Holy Scripture gives to it.

I. GOD MAY SPEAK TO HIS CREATURES BY THE VOICE OF NATURE, AND HE DOES THIS SPEAK TO THEM ALL. 1. God must use some agency in revealing his mind to his creatures. 2. The agency he uses must be in relation to our bodily senses. 3. It need not be fashioned into precise words, because man's heart can be reached through the eye, the ear, the taste, as well as by verbal statements. Illustrate the impressions of beautiful landscape, music of the waters, thunderstorms, etc. Any of the things that man can feel God can use to convey his mind and message to him. The voices of God in nature are translated for us by our poets, who are—if they fit into their true mission—ministers of God's will to men, or rather, ministers revealing God himself to men. See how the psalmist recognizes the universal witness of this nature-voice: "Their sound is gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world;" and apply especially to the harvest-time of earth, which knits the millions of earth together in the joyful recognition of God's loving care and providing mercies.

II. WHAT OF THIS NATURE-WITNESS TO GOD MAY ALL MEN RECEIVE? 1. The truth of the Divine unity; for it is plain to all that nature is a design—some one person's design. Its perfect harmonies suggest this. And increasing knowledge corrects the notion of two agents, which men have been tempted to accept, when impressed with the seemingly injurious forces working in nature. Science, in making more plain the perfect harmony of all nature-forces, is giving her testimony to the unity of God. And then comes on us this consideration: if there be but one God, our supreme concern is to be in right relations with him. 2. The truth that he is infinite in power; for nature shows us that he is infinite in resources. 3. The truth that he is infinitely good; for nature shows him to us fitting all things together to secure the general well-being. Nature suggests the attractiveness and beauty of God.

III. WHAT MORE THAN THIS CAN NATURE WITNESS OF GOD TO THE CHRISTIAN?

The Christian man comes back upon nature with the illuminations of that higher and fuller revelation which has for a time absorbed him—from the vision of God, manifest in Christ Jesus, which was so glorious as for a while to occupy his thought and feeling wholly. But coming back with these new thoughts of God, he finds Nature has new voices and new messages, and her provisions tell him: 1. Of God's care. 2. Of God's long-suffering and mercy; for he knows now that man has no deserts upon which he might claim, and positive ill deserts which might reasonably lead to the removal of his common every-day mercies. 3. Of God's great love to man's soul, which seems shown by its overflow in God's gracious provision in nature for all the wants of his body. 4. Of God's faithfulness to all his promises, which are assured in his yearly fulfilment of that earliest promise that "seed-time and harvest . . . shall not cease." Press, in conclusion, how St. Paul urges that the proper influence of nature is a constant and mighty persuasion to turn from all our vanities to the loving and hearty service of the one living God, and to accept of the full salvation which he has provided in the person of his Son Jesus Christ.—R. T.

Ver. 22.—*Through tribulation to the kingdom.* The force of a man's preaching must, to a great extent, come out of his personal experiences, and new experiences will give his preaching new force. This is illustrated in the associations of our text. The apostle was in measure fitted, by all he had borne and suffered, for exhorting the disciples and comforting and confirming the Churches; but he had just passed through a new and almost overwhelming experience. Excited by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, the people at Lystra had violently stoned Paul, and, thinking they had killed him, had dragged his body outside their city gates. "Paul, liable at all times to the swoons which accompany nervous organizations, had been stunned, but not killed; and while the disciples stood in an agonized group around what they thought to be his corpse, he recovered his consciousness, and raised himself from the ground." But he must have been terribly bruised and suffering, and it would seem that he never fully recovered the effects of this scene. This new experience had put a new tone of tenderness upon his ministrations; and, when visiting again the Churches, he could add this new assurance, "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." His thought has been familiarized to the Christian mind by the verse—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to that land where sorrow is unknown."

I. TRIBULATION AS PART OF OUR HUMAN LOT. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." It is often said that a world of sinners must be, and indeed had better be, a world of sufferers. Troubles take a variety of forms, but they come into every individual life and into every form of associated life. They are necessary results of: 1. The disorder which man's sin has produced in God's world. 2. The lost self-control which sin has occasioned to each man. 3. The wilfulness which persists in adjusting human relations to man's idea and pleasure, rather than according to God's order. 4. The hereditary evils left from the past of men's iniquity.

II. TRIBULATION AS TAKEN UP INTO THE DIVINE MINISTRY. This is at once sealed and explained by the word "tribulation," as the Christian synonym for earthly troubles. The Latin origin of the word, as taken from *tribulum*, the threshing-roller, should be explained. The sorrows of life may seem but as the crushing of a great roller; they are but the separating of the chaff from the wheat, and the gracious means by which the sufferer is sanctified. The Christian system proposes no less a thing than the full recovery of a man from sin and his full confirmation in holiness, and it uses a variety of agencies for the perfecting of its work; but it should ever be a wonder and a joy to us that it should propose to take over the whole burden of human sorrow and trouble, and use even it for effecting its blessed design. So, though no affliction can, even to the Christian, seem other than grievous, not joyous, yet we may be sure that God's hand—God's good hand—is upon it all, and that "afterward it will yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, if only we are duly exercised thereby." And at last it even comes to be the glory of the Christian that he is under God's *tribulum*; and the glory of the Christians by-and-by that "they have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

III. TRIBULATION AS RELATED TO THE KINGDOM WE HOPE TO ENTER. Whether we conceive the kingdom as entered now or as to be entered when we pass from earthly spheres, the one essential feature of it is *holiness*, full deliverance from sin. That kingdom "nothing entereth that defileth or that maketh a lie." As a matter of actual experience, it may be urged and illustrated that the "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light" can only be wrought out of trouble. Trials, testings, discoveries of secret sins, even the humiliations of affliction, bear directly on the fitness for the kingdom. When we feel what heaven is, we find out what a great work is to be done to meeten us for it.—R. T.

Ver. 26.—*Prayer as a recommendation to the grace of God.* The Syrian Antioch is here referred to as the place "from whence the two great missionaries had been recommended to the grace of God," and from ch. xiii. 3 we learn in what this recommendation to the grace of God consisted: "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." We fix attention, then, on the point that we know what were the prayers of these Antiochene disciples. They were intercessory prayers, and they lovingly commended the Christian labourers to the grace of God. When prayer, for any reason, cannot be precise and definite request for particular things, it can still be offered, and take this every-way satisfactory form, a commendation of those for whom we pray to the grace of God. We may show how (1) such a kind of prayer may satisfy our love and our longing for the good of others; and (2) how it may secure for them even better blessings than any precise requests, based only on our thought of their well-being. What can we do so well for our friends as bring down over them the hallowing shadow of the Father-God?

I. SUCH PRAYER MAY SATISFY OUR LOVE AND LONGING FOR THE GOOD OF OTHERS. For, after all, just the one thing we want for them is to have God for *their* portion. No requests for temporal blessings can adequately express our hearts' desires. Ask what we may, we feel that we have not asked enough or asked the best things. So we get no rest in prayer for others until we learn simply to commend them to the grace of God. The same may be shown by pointing out that our knowledge of our friends' needs is never adequate, and we may make serious error by asking unsuitably. There can be no mistake if we ask for them God's grace.

II. SUCH PRAYER SECURES THE BEST BLESSINGS FOR OUR FRIENDS. For in having God they have all. To be within the grace and keeping and supply of God is to have the best blessings, in fittest adaptation. Illustration should be taken from the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul. They were prospered and preserved because they were within the grace of God.—R. T.

Ver. 27.—"*The door of faith.*" The narrative of the returned missionaries, as given to the assembled Church at Antioch, took two forms—in part it was a personal narrative of what they had done and suffered; and in part it was a report of the acceptance which the gospel message had received in the countries they had visited. And in this part of their account, one thing appeared to them to be of peculiar interest—God had manifestly "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles." The expression is a sufficiently striking one to be made the subject of earnest meditation. Two ways of explaining it may be suggested. 1. God had given them large and free access to the Gentiles for the preaching of the faith in Christ. 2. God had manifestly made *faith*, not circumcision, the ground of admission to his kingdom; and so the Gentiles could be saved. Gospel privileges were offered to every one that believed. For St. Paul's use of this figure of the "door" variously applied, see 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12; Col. iv. 3; and comp. Rev. iii. 8. The figure is a suggestive one. The special favour of God had been enjoyed by the Jews, and in a manner limited to them. They had been, as it were, shut up with God in his house; none else might come in, for the door was shut. But now, in the greatness of God's mercy to men, he had opened the door, made a new and most gracious condition of admission, and invited "whosoever would" to enter in. The grace of this was too surprising to the Jewish mind, and it was a long time ere it could receive the truth. Such testimonies as Barnabas and Paul brought from Gentile lands did much to establish the free right of all believing men to enter the one Father's house, through his graciously opened door.

I. THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES FOUND FREE ACCESS TO THE GENTILES. They had gone forth fully understanding that the door was open to preach the gospel to the *Jews*. They knew that, wherever they went, they could enter the synagogues, expound the Scriptures, and preach Christ; but events that happened brought home to them the conviction that Jewish privileges were no longer exclusive, and that God had "granted unto the Gentiles also repentance unto life." Recall the incidents which brought to the missionaries this conviction. They found Divine providence leading them to speak to Gentile audiences. They found that Divine grace had been before them, creating in the Gentile mind a preparedness for and a susceptibility to the gospel message. And they found that the condition of entrance into the new gospel standing and gospel privileges was one which the Gentiles could meet, since *faith* is common to human nature, and in no sense special to any one race. It would even seem that the missionaries felt their work among the Gentiles to be more hopeful than that among the Jews. And it led them to cherish serious thoughts about the vast work to be done among the Gentile nations, now God had so evidently opened the door to them all. Illustrate from the way in which the Church of Christ has been led on to preach the gospel to one nation after another, by the opening of providential doors; especially illustrating from China, and more recently Central Africa. The inspiration of Christian missions is this fact, "God has opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

II. THE CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES HAD LEARNED TO DECLARE THAT FAITH, AND FAITH ALONE, WAS THE GROUND OF ADMISSION INTO GOD'S KINGDOM. They addressed an audience that was still largely under Jewish mental bonds. Even the early disciples seem for a long time to have cherished the idea that Christianity was only a reformation of Judaism. The very apostles could not readily accept the truth of salvation *by faith alone*. They thought that at least the Jewish requirement of circumcision must be made. But Barnabas and Paul rendered their testimony to the fact of their finding the "faith-condition" quite sufficient. They had required no other of their Gentile converts, and God had sealed them by the gift of his Spirit, and they had manifested every sign of the true Christian life. Faith is the only *door* into the kingdom, but there is no entrance save by this door. Still the gospel message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—R. T.

HOMILETICAL INDEX

TO

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

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