

**NOTES ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES**

THIS book, in which St. Luke records the actions of the apostles, particularly of St. Peter and St. Paul, (whose companion in travel he was,) is as it were the center between the Gospel and the Epistles. It contains, after a very brief re-capitulation of the evangelical history, a continuation of the history of Christ, the event of his predictions, and a kind of supplement to what he had before spoken to his disciples, by the Holy Ghost now given unto them. It contains also the seeds, and first stamina of all those things, which are enlarged upon in the epistles. The Gospels treat of Christ the head. The Acts show that the same things befell his body; which is animated by his Spirit, persecuted by the world, defended and exalted by God. In this book is shown the Christian doctrine, and the method of applying it to Jews, heathens, and believers; that is, to those who are to be converted, and those who are converted: the hindrances of it in particular men, in several kinds of men, in different ranks and nations: the propagation of the Gospel, and that grand revolution among both Jews and heathens: the victory thereof, in spite of all opposition, from all the power, malice, and wisdom of the whole world, spreading from one chamber into temples, houses, streets, markets, fields, inns, prisons, camps, courts, chariots, ships, villages, cities, islands: to Jews, heathens, magistrates, generals, soldiers, eunuchs, captives, slaves, women, children, sailors: to Athens, and at length to Rome.

THE PARTS OF IT ARE SEVEN

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**THE ACTS**

## I

1. The former treatise - In that important season which reached from the resurrection of Christ to his ascension, the former treatise ends, and this begins: this describing the Acts of the Holy Ghost, (by the apostles,) as that does the acts of Jesus Christ. Of all things - In a summary manner: which Jesus began to do - until the day - That is, of all things which Jesus did from the beginning till that day.

2. After having given commandment - In the 3rd verse St. Luke expresses in general terms what Christ said to his apostles during those forty days. But in the 4th and following verses he declares what he said on the day of his ascension. He had brought his former account down to that day; and from that day begins the Acts of the Apostles.

3. Being seen by them forty days - That is, many times during that space. And speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God - Which was the sum of all his discourses with them before his passion also.

4. Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard from me - When he was with them a little before, as it is recorded, [Luke xxiv, 49](#).

5. Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost - And so are all true believers to the end of the world. But the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost also are here promised.

6. Dost thou at this time - At the time thou now speakest of? not many days hence? restore the kingdom to Israel? - They still seemed to dream of an outward, temporal kingdom, in which the Jews should have dominion over all nations. It seems they came in a body, having before concerted the design, to ask when this kingdom would come.

7. The times or the seasons - Times, in the language of the Scriptures, denote a longer; seasons, a shorter space. Which the Father hath put in his own power - To be revealed when and to whom it pleaseth him.

8. But ye shall receive power - and shall be witnesses to me - That is, ye shall be empowered to witness my Gospel, both by your preaching and suffering.

12. A Sabbath-day's journey - The Jews generally fix this to two thousand cubits, which is not a mile.

13. They went up into the upper room - The upper rooms, so frequently mentioned in Scripture, were chambers in the highest part of the house, set apart by the Jews for private prayer. These, on account of their being so retired and convenient, the apostles now used for all the offices of religion. [Matt. x, 2](#); [Mark iii, 14](#); [Luke vi, 13](#).

14. His brethren -- his near kinsmen, who for some time did not believe; it seems not till near his death.

15. The number of persons together - Who were together in the upper room. were a hundred and twenty - But he had undoubtedly many more in other places; of whom more than five hundred saw him at once after his resurrection, [1 Cor. xv, 6](#).

16. [Psalm xli, 9](#).

18. This man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity - That is, a field was purchased with the reward of his iniquity; though very possibly Judas might design the purchase. And falling down on his face - It seems the rope broke before, or as he died.

19. In their own tongue - This expression, That is, the field of blood, St. Luke seems to have added to the words of St. Peter, for the use of Theophilus and other readers who did not understand Hebrew.

20. His bishopric - That is, his apostleship. [Psalm lxix, 25](#).

21. All the time that the Lord Jesus was going in and out - That is, conversing familiarly: over us - as our Master. [Psalm cix, 8](#).

22. To be a witness with us of his resurrection - And of the circumstances which preceded and followed it.

23. And they appointed two - So far the faithful could go by consulting together, but no further. Therefore here commenced the proper use of the lot, whereby a matter of importance, which cannot be determined by any ordinary method, is committed to the Divine decision.

25. Fell - By his transgression - Some time before his death: to go to his own place - That which his crimes had deserved, and which he had chosen for himself, far from the other apostles, in the region of death.

## II

1. At the pentecost of Sinai, in the Old Testament, and the pentecost of Jerusalem, in the New, where the two grand manifestations of God, the legal and the evangelical; the one from the mountain, and the other from heaven; the terrible, and the merciful one. They were all with one accord in one place - So here was a conjunction of company, minds, and place; the whole hundred and twenty being present.

2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven - So will the Son of man come to judgment. And it filled all the house - That is, all that part of the temple where they were sitting.

3. And there appeared distinct tongues, as of fire - That is, small flames of fire. This is all which the phrase, tongues of fire, means in the language of the seventy. Yet it might intimate God's touching their tongues as it were (together with their hearts) with Divine fire: his giving them such words as were active and penetrating, even as flaming fire.

4. And they began to speak with other tongues - The miracle was not in the ears of the hearers, (as some have unaccountably supposed,) but in the mouth of the speakers. And this family praising God together, with the tongues of all the world, was an earnest that the whole world should in due time praise God in their various tongues. As the Spirit gave them utterance - Moses, the type of the law, was of a slow tongue; but the Gospel speaks with a fiery and flaming one.

5. And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews - Gathered from all parts by the peculiar providence of God.

6. The multitude came together, and were confounded - The motions of their minds were swift and various.

9. Judea - The dialect of which greatly differed from that of Galilee. Asia - The country strictly so called.

10. Roman sojourners - Born at Rome, but now living at Jerusalem. These seem to have come to Jerusalem after those who are above mentioned. All of them were partly Jews by birth, and partly proselytes.

11. Cretans - One island seems to be mentioned for all. The wonderful works of God - Probably those which related to the miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, together with the effusion of his Spirit, as a fulfilment of his promises, and the glorious dispensations of Gospel grace.

12. They were all amazed - All the devout men.

13. But others mocking - The world begins with mocking, thence proceeds to cavilling, chap. iv, 7; to threats, iv, 17; to imprisoning, chap. v, 18; blows, v, 40; to slaughter, chap. vii, 58. These mockers appear to have been some of the natives of Judea, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, (who understood only the dialect of the country,) by the apostle's immediately directing his discourse to them in the next verse. They are full of sweet wine - So the Greek

word properly signifies. There was no new wine so early in the year as pentecost. Thus natural men are wont to ascribe supernatural things to mere natural causes; and many times as impudently and unskilfully as in the present case.

14. Then Peter standing up - All the gestures, all the words of Peter, show the utmost sobriety; lifted up his voice - With cheerfulness and boldness; and said to them - This discourse has three parts; each of which, ver. 14, 22, 29, begins with the same appellation, men: only to the last part he prefixes with more familiarity the additional word brethren. Men of Judea - That is, ye that are born in Judea. St. Peter spoke in Hebrew, which they all understood.

15. It is but the third hour of the day - That is, nine in the morning. And on the solemn festivals the Jews rarely ate or drank any thing till noon.

16. But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet - But there is another and better way of accounting for this. [Joel ii, 28](#)

17. The times of the Messiah are frequently called the last days, the Gospel being the last dispensation of Divine grace. I will pour out of my Spirit - Not on the day of pentecost only, upon all flesh - On persons of every age, sex, and rank. And your young men shall see visions - In young men the outward sense, are most vigourous, and the bodily strength is entire, whereby they are best qualified to sustain the shock which usually attends the visions of God. In old men the internal senses are most vigourous, suited to divine dreams. Not that the old are wholly excluded from the former, nor the young from the latter.

18. And upon my servants - On those who are literally in a state of servitude.

19. And I will show prodigies in heaven above, and signs on earth beneath - Great Revelations of grace are usually attended with great judgments on those who reject it. In heaven - Treated of, ver. 20. On earth - Described in this verse. Such signs were those mentioned, ver. 22, before the passion of Christ; which are so mentioned as to include also those at the very time of the passion and resurrection, at the destruction of Jerusalem, and at the end of the world. Terrible indeed were those prodigies in particular which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem: such as the flaming sword hanging over the city, and the fiery comet pointing down upon it for a year; the light that shone upon the temple and the altar in the night, as if it had been noon-day; the opening of the great and heavy gate of the temple without hands; the voice heard from the most holy place, Let us depart hence; the admonition of Jesus the son of Ananus, crying for seven years together, Woe, woe, woe; the vision of contending armies in the air, and of entrenchments thrown up against a city there represented; the terrible thunders and lightnings, and dreadful earthquakes, which every one considered as portending some great evil: all which, through the singular providence of God, are particularly recorded by Josephus. Blood - War and slaughter. Fire - Burnings of houses and towns, involving all in clouds of smoke.

20. The moon shall be turned into blood - A bloody colour: before the day of the Lord - Eminently the last day; though not excluding any other day or season, wherein the Lord shall manifest his glory, in taking vengeance of his adversaries.

21. But - whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord - This expression implies the whole of religion, and particularly prayer uttered in faith; shall be saved - From all those plagues; from sin and hell.

23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God - The apostle here anticipates an objection, Why did God suffer such a person to be so treated? Did he not know what wicked men intended to do? And had he not power to prevent it? Yea. He knew all that those wicked men intended to do. And he had power to blast all their designs in a moment. But he did not exert that power, because he so loved the world! Because it was the determined counsel of his love, to redeem mankind from eternal death, by the death of his only-begotten Son.

24. Having loosed the pains of death - The word properly means, the pains of a woman in travail. As it was not possible that he should be held under it - Because the Scripture must needs be fulfilled.

25. [Psalm xvi, 8](#).

27. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades - The invisible world. But it does not appear, that ever our Lord went into hell. His soul, when it was separated from the body, did not go thither, but to paradise, [Luke xxiii, 43](#). The meaning is, Thou wilt not leave my soul in its separate state, nor suffer my body to be corrupted.

28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life - That is, Thou hast raised me from the dead. Thou wilt fill me with joy by thy countenance - When I ascend to thy right hand.

29. The patriarch - A more honourable title than king.

30. [Psalm lxxxix, 4](#), &c.

32. He foreseeing this, spake of the resurrection Of Christ - St. Peter argues thus: It is plain, David did not speak this of himself. Therefore he spake of Christ's rising. But how does that promise of a kingdom imply his resurrection? Because he did not receive it before he died, and because his kingdom was to endure forever, [2 Sam. vii, 13](#).

33. Being exalted by the right hand of God - By the right hand; that is, the mighty power of God. Our Lord was exalted at his ascension to God's right hand in heaven.

34. Sit thou on my right hand - In this and the following verse is an allusion to two ancient customs; one, to the highest honour that used to be paid to persons by placing them on the right hand, as Solomon did Bathsheba, when sitting on his throne, [1 Kings ii, 19](#); and the other, to the custom of conquerors, who used to tread on the necks of their vanquished enemies, as a token of their entire victory and triumph over them.

35. Until I make thine enemies thy footstool - This text is here quoted with the greatest address, as suggesting in the words of David, their great prophetic monarch, how certain their own ruin must be, if they went on to oppose Christ. [Psalm cx, 1](#).

36. Lord - Jesus, after his exaltation, is constantly meant by this word in the New Testament, unless sometimes where it occurs, in a text quoted from the Old Testament.

37. They said to the apostles, Brethren - They did not style them so before.

38. Repent - And hereby return to God: be baptized - Believing in the name of Jesus - And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost - See the three-one God clearly proved. See chap. xxvi, 20. The gift of the Holy Ghost does not mean in this place the power of speaking with tongues. For the promise of this was not given to all that were afar off, in distant ages and nations. But rather the constant fruits of faith, even righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Whomsoever the Lord our God shall call - (Whether they are Jews or Gentiles) by his word and by his Spirit: and who are not disobedient to the heavenly calling. But it is observable St. Peter did not yet understand the very words he spoke.

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort - In such an accepted time we should add line upon line, and not leave off, till the thing is done. Save yourselves from this perverse generation - Many of whom were probably mocking still.

41. And there were added - To the hundred and twenty.

42. And they continued steadfast - So their daily Church communion consisted in these four particulars:

1. Hearing the word;
2. Having all things common;
3. Receiving the Lord's Supper;
4. Prayer. Ye different sects, who all declare, Lo here is Christ, and Christ is there; Your stronger proofs divinely give, And show me where the Christians live!

43. And fear came upon every soul - Of those who did not join with them: whereby persecution was prevented, till it was needful for them.

45. And sold their possessions - Their lands and houses; and goods - Their movables. And parted them to all as any one had need - To say the Christians did this only till the destruction of Jerusalem, is not true; for many did it long after. Not that there was any positive command for so doing: it needed not; for love constrained them. It was a natural fruit of that love wherewith each member of the community loved every other as his own soul. And if the whole Christian Church had continued in this spirit, this usage must have continued through all ages. To affirm therefore that Christ did not design it should continue, is neither more nor less than to affirm, that Christ did not design this measure of love should continue. I see no proof of this.

46. Continuing daily - breaking the bread - in the Lord's Supper, as did many Churches for some ages. They partook of their food with gladness and singleness of heart - They carried the same happy and holy temper through all their common actions: eating and working with the same spirit wherewith they prayed and received the Lord's Supper.

47. The Lord added daily such as were saved - From their sins: from the guilt and power of them.

## III

1. The ninth hour - The Jews divided the time from sunrise to sunset into twelve hours; which were consequently of unequal length at different times of the year, as the days were longer or shorter. The third hour therefore was nine in the morning; the ninth, three in the afternoon; but not exactly. For the third hour was the middle space between sunrise and noon; which, if the sun rose at five, (the earliest hour of its rising in that climate,) was half an hour after eight: if at seven (the latest hour of its rising there) was half an hour after nine. The chief hours of prayer were the third and ninth; at which seasons the morning and evening sacrifices were offered, and incense (a kind of emblem representing prayer) burnt on the golden altar.

2. At the gate of the temple, called Beautiful - This gate was added by Herod the Great, between the court of the Gentiles and that of Israel. It was thirty cubits high, and fifteen broad, and made of Corinthian brass, more pompous in its workmanship and splendour than those that were covered with silver and gold.

6. Then said Peter, Silver and gold have I none - How unlike his supposed successor! Can the bishop of Rome either say or do the same?

12. Peter answered the people - Who were running together, and inquiring into the circumstances of the fact.

13. The God of our fathers - This was wisely introduced in the beginning of his discourse, that it might appear they taught no new religion, inconsistent with that of Moses, and were far from having the least design to divert their regards from the God of Israel. Hath glorified his Son - By this miracle, whom ye delivered up - When God had given him to you, and when ye ought to have received him as a most precious treasure, and to have preserved him with all your power.

14. Ye renounced the Holy One - Whom God had marked out as such; and the Just One - Even in the judgment of Pilate.

16. His name - Himself: his power and love. The faith which is by him - Of which he is the giver, as well as the object.

17. And now, brethren -- a word full of courtesy and compassion, I know - He speaks to their heart, that through ignorance ye did it - which lessened, though it could not take away, the guilt. As did also your rulers - The prejudice lying from the authority of the chief priests and elders, he here removes, but with great tenderness. He does not call them our, but your rulers. For as the Jewish dispensation ceased at the death of Christ, consequently so did the authority of its rulers.

18. But God - Who was not ignorant, permitted this which he had foretold, to bring good out of it.

19. Be converted - Be turned from sin and Satan unto God. See chap. xxvi, 20. But this term, so common in modern writings, very rarely occurs in Scripture: perhaps not once in

the sense we now use it, for an entire change from vice to holiness. That the times of refreshing - Wherein God largely bestows his refreshing grace, may come - To you also. To others they will assuredly come, whether ye repent or no.

20. And he may send - The apostles generally speak of our Lord's second coming, as being just at hand. Who was before appointed - Before the foundation of the world.

21. Till the times of the restitution of all things - The apostle here comprises at once the whole course of the times of the New Testament, between our Lord's ascension and his coming in glory. The most eminent of these are the apostolic age, and that of the spotless Church, which will consist of all the Jews and Gentiles united, after all persecutions and apostacies are at an end.

22. The Lord shall raise you up a prophet like unto me - And that in many particulars. Moses instituted the Jewish Church: Christ instituted the Christian. With the prophesying of Moses was soon joined the effect, the deliverance of Israel from Egypt: with the prophesying of Christ that grand effect, the deliverance of his people from sin and death. Those who could not hear the voice of God, yet desired to hear that of Moses. Much more do those who are wearied with the law, desire to hear the voice of Christ. Moses spake to the people all, and only those things, which God had commanded him: so did Christ. But though he was like Moses, yet he was infinitely superior to him, in person, as well as in office. [Deut. xviii, 15.](#)

23. Every soul who will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people - One cannot imagine a more masterly address than this, to warn the Jews of the dreadful consequence of their infidelity, in the very words of their favourite prophet, out of a pretended zeal for whom they rejected Christ.

24. These days - The days of the Messiah.

25. Ye are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant - That in, heirs of the prophecies. To you properly, as the first heirs, belong the prophecies and the covenant. [Gen. xii, 3.](#)

26. To bless you, by turning you from your iniquities - Which is the great Gospel blessing.

## IV

1. And as they were speaking to the people, the priests - came upon them - So wisely did God order, that they should first bear a full testimony to the truth in the temple, and then in the great council; to which they could have had no access, had they not been brought before it as criminals.

2. The priests being grieved - That the name of Jesus was preached to the people; especially they were offended at the doctrine of his resurrection; for as they had put him to death, his rising again proved him to be the Just One, and so brought his blood upon their heads. The priests were grieved, lest their office and temple services should decline, and Christianity take root, through the preaching of the apostles, and their power of working miracles: the captain of the temple - Being concerned to prevent all sedition and disorder, the Sadducees - Being displeased at the overturning of all their doctrines, particularly with regard to the resurrection.

4. The number of the men - Beside women and children, were about five thousand - So many did our Lord now feed at once with the bread from heaven!

5. Rulers, and elders, and scribes - Who were eminent for power, for wisdom, and for learning.

6. Annas, who had been the high priest, and Caiaphas, who was so then.

7. By what name - By what authority, have ye done this? - They seem to speak ambiguously on purpose.

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost - That moment. God moves his instruments, not when they please, but just when he sees it needful. Ye rulers - He gives them the honour due to their office.

10. Be it known to you all - Probably the herald of God proclaimed this with a loud voice. Whom God hath raised from the dead - They knew in their own consciences that it was so. And though they had hired the soldiers to tell a most senseless and incredible tale to the contrary, [Matt. xxviii, 12, 15](#), yet it is observable, they did not, so far as we can learn, dare to plead it before Peter and John.

11. [Psalm cxviii, 22](#).

12. There is no other name whereby we must be saved - The apostle uses a beautiful gradation, from the temporal deliverance which had been wrought for the poor cripple, by the power of Christ, to that of a much nobler and more important kind, which is wrought by Christ for impotent and sinful souls. He therein follows the admirable custom of his great Lord and Master, who continually took occasion from earthly to speak of spiritual things.

13. Illiterate and uneducated men - Even by such men (though not by such only) hath God in all ages caused his word to be preached before the world.

17. Yet that it spread no farther - For they look upon it as a mere gangrene. So do all the world upon genuine Christianity. Let us severely threaten them - Great men, ye do nothing. They have a greater than you to flee to.

18. They charged them not to speak - Privately; nor teach - Publicly.

19. Whether it be just to obey you rather than God, judge ye - Was it not by the same spirit, that Socrates, when they were condemning him to death, for teaching the people, said, "O ye Athenians, I embrace and love you; but I will obey God rather than you. And if you would spare my life on condition I should cease to teach my fellow citizens, I would die a thousand times rather than accept the proposal."

21. They all glorified God - So much wiser were the people than those who were over them.

24. The sense is, Lord, thou hast all power. And thy word is fulfilled. Men do rage against thee: but it is in vain.

25. [Psalm ii, 1.](#)

27. Whom thou hast anointed - To be king of Israel.

28. The sense is, but they could do no more than thou wast pleased to permit, according to thy determinate counsel, to save mankind by the sufferings of thy Son. And what was needful for this end, thou didst before determine to permit to be done.

30. Thou stretchest forth thy hand - Exertest thy power.

31. They were all filled - Afresh; and spake the word with boldness - So their petition was granted.

32. And the multitude of them that believed - Every individual person were of one heart and one soul - Their love, their hopes, their passions joined: and not so much as one - In so great a multitude: this was a necessary consequence of that union of heart; said that aught of the things which he had was his own - It is impossible any one should, while all were of one soul. So long as that truly Christian love continued, they could not but have all things common.

33. And great grace - A large measure of the inward power of the Holy Ghost, was upon them all - Directing all their thoughts, words, and actions.

34. For neither was there any one among them that wanted - We may observe, this is added as the proof that great grace was upon them all. And it was the immediate, necessary consequence of it: yea, and must be to the end of the world. In all ages and nations, the same cause, the same degree of grace, could not but in like circumstances produce the same effect. For whosoever were possessors of houses and lands sold them - Not that there was any particular command for this; but there was great grace and great love: of which this was the natural fruit.

35. And distribution was made - At first by the apostles themselves, afterward by them whom they appointed.

36. A son of consolation - Not only on account of his so largely assisting the poor with his fortune; but also of those peculiar gifts of the Spirit, whereby he was so well qualified both to comfort and to exhort.

37. Having an estate - Probably of considerable value. It is not unlikely that it was in Cyprus. Being a Levite, he had no portion, no distinct inheritance in Israel.

## V

1. But a certain man named Ananias - It is certain, not a believer, for all that believed were of one heart and of one soul: probably not baptized; but intending now to offer himself for baptism.

2. And bringing a certain part - As if it had been the whole: perhaps saying it was so.

3. To lie to the Holy Ghost - Who is in us. And to keep back - Here was the first instance of it. This was the first attempt to bring propriety of goods into the Christian Church.

4. While it remained, did it not remain thine? - It is true, whosoever among the Christians (not one excepted) had houses or lands, sold them, and laid the price at the feet of the apostles. But it was in his own choice to be a Christian or not: and consequently either to sell his land, or keep it. And when it was sold, was it not in thy power? - For it does not appear that he professed himself a Christian when he sold it. Why hast thou conceived this thing in thy heart? - So profanely to dissemble on so solemn an occasion? Thou hast not lied to men only, but to God also. Hence the Godhead of the Holy Ghost evidently appears: since lying to him, ver. 3, is lying to God.

5. And Ananias fell down and expired - And this severity was not only just, considering that complication of vain glory, covetousness, fraud, and impiety, which this action contained: but it was also wise and gracious, as it would effectually deter any others from following his example. It was likewise a convincing proof of the upright conduct of the apostles, in managing the sums with which they were intrusted; and in general of their Divine mission. For none can imagine that Peter would have had the assurance to pronounce, and much less the power to execute such a sentence, if he had been guilty himself of a fraud of the same kind; or had been belying the Holy Ghost in the whole of his pretensions to be under his immediate direction.

7. About the space of three hours - How precious a space! The woman had a longer time for repentance.

8. If ye sold the land for so much - Naming the sum.

10. The Church - This is the first time it is mentioned: and here is a native specimen of a New Testament Church; which is a company of men, called by the Gospel, grafted into Christ by baptism, animated by love, united by all kind of fellowship, and disciplined by the death of Ananias and Sapphira.

12. And they were all - All the believers.

13. None of the rest - No formalists or hypocrites, durst join themselves - In an outward show only, like Ananias and Sapphira.

14. But so much the more were true believers added, because unbelievers kept at a distance.

17. The high priest - and the sect of the Sadducees - A goodly company for the priest! He, and these deniers of any angel or resurrection, were filled with zeal - Angry, bitter, persecuting zeal.

20. The words of this - That is, these words of life: words which show the way to life everlasting.

23. We found the prison shut - The angel probably had shut the doors again.

24. They doubted what this should be - They were even at their wit's end. The world, in persecuting the children of God, entangle themselves in numberless difficulties.

28. Did not we strictly command you, not to teach? - See the poor cunning of the enemies of the Gospel. They make laws and interdicts at their pleasure, which those who obey God cannot but break; and then take occasion thereby to censure and punish the innocent, as guilty. Ye would bring the blood of this man upon us - An artful and invidious word. The apostles did not desire to accuse any man. They simply declared the naked truth.

29. Then Peter - In the name of all the apostles, said - He does not now give them the titles of honour, which he did before, chap. iv, 8; but enters directly upon the subject, and justifies what he had done. This is, as it were, a continuation of that discourse, but with an increase of severity.

30. Hath raised up Jesus - Of the seed of David, according to the promises made to our fathers.

31. Him hath God exalted - From the grave to heaven; to give repentance - Whereby Jesus is received as a Prince; and forgiveness of sins - Whereby he is received as a saviour. Hence some infer, that repentance and faith are as mere gifts as remission of sins. Not so: for man co-operates in the former, but not in the latter. God alone forgives sins.

32. And also the Holy Ghost - A much greater witness.

34. But a certain Pharisee - And as such believing the resurrection of the dead; a doctor, or teacher of the law - That is, a scribe, and indeed one of the highest rank; had in honour by all the people - Except the Sadducees; rising up in the council - So God can raise defenders of his servants, whensoever and wheresoever he pleases.

36. Before these days - He prudently mentions the facts first, and then makes the inference.

38. Let them alone - In a cause which is manifestly good, we should immediately join. In a cause, on the other hand, which is manifestly evil, we should immediately oppose. But in a sudden, new, doubtful occurrence, this advice is eminently useful. If this counsel or this work - He seems to correct himself, as if it were some sudden work, rather than a counsel or design. And so it was. For the apostles had no counsel, plan, or design of their own; but were mere instruments in the hand of God, working just as he led them from day to day.

41. Rejoicing - to suffer shame - This is a sure mark of the truth, joy in affliction, such is true, deep, pure.

## VI

1. There arose a murmuring - Here was the first breach made on those who were before of one heart and of one soul. Partiality crept in unawares on some; and murmuring on others. Ah Lord! how short a time did pure, genuine, undefiled Christianity remain in the world! O the depth! How unsearchable are thy counsels! marvelous are thy ways, O King of saints! The Hellenists were Jews born out of Palestine. They were so called, because they used the Greek as their other tongue. In this partiality of the Hebrews, and murmuring of the Hellenists, were the needs of a general persecution sown. Did God ever, in any age or country, withdraw his restraining providence, and let loose the world upon the Christians, till there was a cause among themselves? Is not an open, general persecution, always both penal and medicinal? A punishment of those that will not accept of milder reproofs, as well as a medicine to heal their sickness? And at the same time a means both of purifying and strengthening those whose heart is still right with God.

2. It is not right that we should leave the word of God and serve tables - In the first Church, the primary business of apostles, evangelists, and bishops, was to preach the word of God; the secondary, to take a kind of paternal care (the Church being then like a family,) for the food, especially of the poor, the strangers, and the widows. Afterward, the deacons of both sexes were constituted for this latter business. And whatever time they had to spare from this, they employed in works of spiritual mercy. But their proper office was, to take care of the poor. And when some of them afterward preached the Gospel, they did this not by virtue of their deaconship, but of another commission, that of evangelists, which they probably received, not before, but after they were appointed deacons. And it is not unlikely that others were chosen deacons, or stewards, in their room, when any of these commenced evangelists.

3. Of good report - That there may be no room to suspect them of partiality or injustice. Full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom - For it is not a light matter to dispense even the temporal goods of the Church. To do even this well, a large measure both of the gifts and grace of God is requisite. Whom we will set over this business - It would have been happy for the Church, had its ordinary ministers in every age taken the same care to act in concert with the people committed to their charge, which the apostles themselves, extraordinary as their office was, did on this and other occasions.

4. We will constantly attend to prayer, and to the ministry of the word - This is doubtless the proper business of a Christian bishop: to speak to God in prayer; to men in preaching his word, as an ambassador for Christ.

5. And they chose - It seems seven Hellenists, as their names show. And Nicholas a proselyte - To whom the proselytes would the more readily apply.

7. And the word of God grew - The hindrances being removed.

9. There arose certain of the synagogue which is called - It was one and the same synagogue which consisted of these several nations. Saul of Cilicia was doubtless a member of it; whence it is not at all improbable, that Gamaliel presided over it. Libertines - So they were styled, whose fathers were once slaves, and afterward made free. This was the ease of many Jews who had been taken captive by the Romans.

14. We have heard him say - So they might. But yet the consequence they drew would not follow.

15. As the face of an angel - Covered with supernatural lustre. They reckoned his preaching of Jesus to be the Christ was destroying Moses and the law; and God bears witness to him, with the same glory as he did to Moses, when he gave the law by him.

## VII

2. And he said - St. Stephen had been accused of blasphemy against Moses, and even against God; and of speaking against the temple and the law, threatening that Jesus would destroy the one, and change the other. In answer to this accusation, rehearsing as it were the articles of his historical creed, he speaks of God with high reverence, and a grateful sense of a long series of acts of goodness to the Israelites, and of Moses with great respect, on account of his important and honourable employments under God: of the temple with regard, as being built to the honour of God; yet not with such superstition as the Jews; putting them in mind, that no temple could comprehend God. And he was going on, no doubt, when he was interrupted by their clamour, to speak to the last point, the destruction of the temple, and the change of the law by Christ. Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken - The sum of his discourse is this: I acknowledge the glory of God revealed to the fathers, ver. 2; the calling of Moses, ver. 34, &c.; the dignity of the law, verses 8, 38, 44; the holiness of this place, verses 7, 45, 47. And indeed the law is more ancient than the temple; the promise more ancient than the law. For God showed himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their children freely, ver. 2, &c.; 9, &c.; 17, &c.; 32, 34, 35; and they showed faith and obedience to God, ver. 4, 20, &c., 23, particularly by their regard for the law, ver. 8, and the promised land, ver. 16. Meantime, God never confined his presence to this one place or to the observers of the law. For he hath been acceptably worshipped before the law was given, or the temple built, and out of this land, ver. 2, 9, 33, 44. And that our fathers and their posterity were not tied down to this land, their various sojournings, ver. 4, &c.; 14, 29, 44, and exile, ver. 43, show. But you and your fathers have always been evil, ver. 9; have withstood Moses, ver. 25, &c., 39, &c.; have despised the land, ver. 39, forsaken God, ver. 40, &c., superstitiously honoured the temple, ver. 48, resisted God and his Spirit, ver. 50, killed the prophets and the Messiah himself, ver. 51, and kept not the law for which ye contend, ver. 53. Therefore God is not bound to you; much less to you alone. And truly this solemn testimony of Stephen is most worthy of his character, as a man full of the Holy Ghost, and of faith and power: in which, though he does not advance so many regular propositions, contradictory to those of his adversaries, yet he closely and nervously answers them all. Nor can we doubt but he would, from these premises, have drawn inferences touching the destruction of the temple, the abrogation of the Mosaic law, the punishment of that rebellious people; and above all, touching Jesus of Nazareth, the true Messiah, had not his discourse been interrupted by the clamours of the multitude, stopping their ears, and rushing upon him. Men, brethren, and fathers - All who are here present, whether ye are my equals in years, or of more advanced age. The word which in this and in many other places is rendered men is a mere expletive. The God of glory - The glorious God, appeared to Abraham before he dwelt in Haran - Therefore Abraham knew God, long before he was in this land. [Gen. xii, 1](#).

3. Which I will show thee - Abraham knew not where he went.

4. After his father was dead - While Terah lived, Abraham lived partly with him, partly in Canaan: but after he died, altogether in Canaan.

5. No, not to set his foot on - For the field mentioned, ver. 16, he did not receive by a Divine donation, but bought it; even thereby showing that he was a stranger in the land.

6. [Gen. xv, 13](#).

7. They shall serve me - Not the Egyptians.

8. And so he begat Isaac - After the covenant was given, of which circumcision was the seal. [Gen. xvii, 10](#).

9. But God was with him - Though he was not in this land. [Gen. xxxvii, 28](#).

12. Sent our fathers first - Without Benjamin.

14. Seventy-five souls - So the seventy interpreters, (whom St. Stephen follows,) one son and a grandson of Manasseh, and three children of Ephraim, being added to the seventy persons mentioned [Gen. xlvi, 27](#).

16. And were carried over to Shechem - It seems that St. Stephen, rapidly running over so many circumstances of history, has not leisure (nor was it needful where they were so well known) to recite them all distinctly. Therefore he here contracts into one, two different sepulchres, places, and purchases, so as in the former history, to name the buyer, omitting the seller, in the latter, to name the seller, omitting the buyer. Abraham bought a burying place of the children of Heth, [Gen. xxiii](#). [Gen. xxiii, 1-20](#) There Jacob was buried. Jacob bought a field of the children of Hamor. There Joseph was buried. You see here, how St. Stephen contracts these two purchases into one. This concise manner of speaking, strange as it seems to us, was common among the Hebrews; particularly, when in a case notoriously known, the speaker mentioned but part of the story, and left the rest, which would have interrupted the current of his discourse, to be supplied in the mind of the hearer. And laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought - The first land which these strangers bought was for a sepulchre. They sought for a country in heaven. Perhaps the whole sentence might be rendered thus: So Jacob went down into Egypt and died, he and our fathers, and were carried over to Shechem, and laid by the sons (that is, decendants) of Hamor, the father of Shechem, in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money.

17. [Exod. i, 7](#).

18. Another king - Probably of another family.

19. Exposed - Cast out to perish by hunger or wild beasts.

20. In which time - A sad but a seasonable time. [Exod. ii, 2](#).

21. Pharaoh's daughter took him up - By which means, being designed for a kingdom, he had all those advantages of education, which he could not have had, if he had not been exposed.

22. In all the wisdom of the Egyptians - Which was then celebrated in all the world, and for many ages after. And mighty in words - Deep, solid, weighty, though not of a ready utterance.

23. It came into his heart - Probably by an impulse from God.

24. Seeing one wronged - Probably by one of the task masters.

25. They understood it not - Such was their stupidity and sloth; which made him afterward unwilling to go to them.

26. He showed himself - Of his own accord, unexpectedly.

27. Who appointed thee - "Under the presence of the want of a call by man, the instruments of God are often rejected."

30. The angel - The Son of God; as appears from his styling himself Jehovah. In a flame of fire - Signifying the majesty of God then present. [Exod. iii, 2](#).

33. Then said the Lord, Loose thy shoes - An ancient token of reverence; for the place is holy ground - The holiness of places depends on the peculiar presence of God there.

35. This Moses whom they refused - Namely, forty years before. Probably, not they, but their fathers did it, and God imputes it to them. So God frequently imputes the sins of the fathers to those of their children who are of the same spirit. Him did God send to be a deliverer - Which is much more than a judge; by the hand of - That is, by means of the angel - This angel who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai expressly called himself Jehovah, a name which cannot, without the highest presumption, be assumed by any created angel, since he whose name alone is Jehovah, is the Most High over all the earth, [Psalm lxxxiii, 18](#). [Psalm lxxxiii, 18](#). It was therefore the Son of God who delivered the law to Moses, under the character of Jehovah, and who is here spoken of as the angel of the covenant, in respect of his mediatorial office.

37. The Lord will raise you up a prophet - St. Stephen here shows that there is no opposition between Moses and Christ. [Deut. xviii, 15](#)

38. This is he - Moses. With the angel, and with our fathers - As a mediator between them. Who received the living oracles - Every period beginning with, And the Lord said unto Moses, is properly an oracle. But the oracles here intended are chiefly the ten commandments. These are termed living, because all the word of God, applied by his Spirit, is living and powerful, [Heb. iv, 12](#), enlightening the eyes, rejoicing the heart, converting the soul, raising the dead. [Exod. xix, 3](#).

40. Make us gods to go before us - Back into Egypt. [Exod. xxxii, 1](#).

41. And they made a calf - In imitation of Apis, the Egyptian god: and rejoiced in the works of their hands - In the God they had made.

42. God turned - From them in anger; and gave them up - Frequently from the time of the golden calf, to the time of Amos, and afterward. The host of heaven - The stars are called an army or host, because of their number, order, and powerful influence. In the book of the

prophets - Of the twelve prophets, which the Jews always wrote together in one book. Have ye offered - The passage of Amos referred to, chap. v, 25, &c., [Amos v, 25](#) consists of two parts; of which the former confirms ver. 41, of the sin of the people; the latter the beginning of ver. 42, concerning their punishment. Have ye offered to me - They had offered many sacrifices; but God did not accept them as offered to him, because they sacrificed to idols also; and did not sacrifice to him with an upright heart. [Amos v, 25](#).

43. Ye took up - Probably not long after the golden calf: but secretly; else Moses would have mentioned it. The shrine - A small, portable chapel, in which was the image of their god. Moloch was the planet Mars, which they worshipped under a human shape. Remphan, that is, Saturn, they represented by a star. And I will carry you beyond Babylon - That is, beyond Damascus (which is the word in Amos) and Babylon. This was fulfilled by the king of Assyria, [2 Kings xvii, 6](#).

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of the testimony - The testimony was properly the two tables of stone, on which the ten commandments were written. Hence the ark which contained them is frequently called the ark of the testimony; and the whole tabernacle in this place. The tabernacle of the testimony - according to the model which he had seen - When he was caught up in the visions of God on the mount.

45. Which our fathers having received - From their ancestors; brought into the possession of the Gentiles - Into the land which the Gentiles possessed before. So that God's favour is not a necessary consequence of inhabiting this land. All along St. Stephen intimates two things:

1. That God always loved good men in every land:
2. That he never loved bad men even in this. [Josh iii, 14](#).

46. Who petitioned to find a habitation for the God of Jacob - But he did not obtain his petition: for God remained without any temple till Solomon built him a house. Observe how wisely the word is chosen with respect to what follows.

48. Yet the Most High inhabiteth not temples made with hands - As Solomon declared at the very dedication of the temple, [1 Kings viii, 27](#). The Most High - Whom as such no building can contain. [Isaiah lxvi, 1](#).

49. What is the place of my rest? - Have I need to rest?

51. Ye stiff necked - Not bowing the neck to God's yoke; and uncircumcised in heart - So they showed themselves, ver. 54; [Act vii, 54](#) and ears - As they showed, ver. 57. [Act vii, 57](#) So far were they from receiving the word of God into their hearts, that they would not hear it even with their ears. Ye - And your fathers, always - As often as ever ye are called, resist the Holy Ghost - Testifying by the prophets of Jesus, and the whole truth. This is the sum of what he had shown at large.

53. Who have received the law by the administration of angels - God, when he gave the law on Mount Sinai, was attended with thousands of his angels, [Gal. iii, 19](#); [Psalm lxviii, 17](#).

55. But he looking steadfastly up to heaven, saw the glory of God - Doubtless he saw such a glorious representation, God miraculously operating on his imagination, as on Ezekiel's, when he sat in his house at Babylon, and saw Jerusalem, and seemed to himself transported thither, chap. viii, 1-4. And probably other martyrs, when called to suffer the last extremity, have had extraordinary assistance of some similar kind.

56. I see the Son of man standing - As if it were just ready to receive him. Otherwise he is said to sit at the right hand of God.

57. They rushed upon him - Before any sentence passed.

58. The witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man, whose name was Saul - O Saul, couldst thou have believed, if one had told thee, that thou thyself shouldst be stoned in the same cause? and shouldst triumph in committing thy soul likewise to that Jesus whom thou art now blaspheming? His dying prayer reached thee, as well as many others. And the martyr Stephen, and Saul the persecutor, (afterward his brother both in faith and martyrdom,) are now joined in everlasting friendship, and dwell together in the happy company of those who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

59. And they stoned Stephen, invoking and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit - This is the literal translation of the words, the name of God not being in the original. Nevertheless such a solemn prayer to Christ, in which a departing soul is thus committed into his hands, is such an act of worship, as no good man could have paid to a mere creature; Stephen here worshipping Christ in the very same manner in which Christ worshipped the Father on the cross.

## VIII

1. At that time there was great persecution against the Church - Their adversaries having tasted blood, were the more eager. And they were all dispersed - Not all the Church: if so, who would have remained for the apostles to teach, or Saul to persecute? But all the teachers except the apostles, who, though in the most danger, stayed with the flock.

2. Devout men - Who feared God more than persecution. And yet were they not of little faith? Else they would not have made so great lamentation.

3. Saul made havoc of the Church - Like some furious beast of prey. So the Greek word properly signifies. Men and women - Regarding neither age nor sex.

4. Therefore they that were dispersed went everywhere - These very words are reassumed, after as it were a long parenthesis, chap. xi, 19, and the thread of the story continued.

5. Stephen - Being taken away, Philip, his next colleague, (not the apostle,) rises in his place.

9. A certain man - using magic - So there was such a thing as witchcraft once! In Asia at least, if not in Europe or America.

12. But when they believed - What Philip preached, then they saw and felt the real power of God, and submitted thereto.

13. And Simon believed - That is, was convinced of the truth.

14. And the apostles hearing that Samaria - The inhabitants of that country, had received the word of God - By faith, sent Peter and John - He that sends must be either superior, or at least equal, to him that is sent. It follows that the college of the apostles was equal if not superior to Peter.

15. The Holy Ghost - In his miraculous gifts? Or his sanctifying graces? Probably in both.

18. Simon offered them money - And hence the procuring any ministerial function, or ecclesiastical benefice by money, is termed Simony.

21. Thou hast neither part - By purchase, nor lot - Given gratis, in this matter - This gift of God. For thy heart is not right before God - Probably St. Peter discerned this long before he had declared it; although it does not appear that God gave to any of the apostles a universal power of discerning the hearts of all they conversed with; any more than a universal power of healing all the sick they came near. This we are sure St. Paul had not; though he was not inferior to the chief of the apostles. Otherwise he would not have suffered the illness of Epaphroditus to have brought him so near to death, [Phil. ii, 25-27](#); nor have left so useful a fellow labourer as Trophimus sick at Miletus, [2 Tim. iv, 20](#).

22. Repent - if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee - Without all doubt if he had repented, he would have been forgiven. The doubt was, whether he would repent. Thou art in the gall of bitterness - In the highest degree of wickedness, which is bitterness, that is, misery to the soul; and in the bond of iniquity - Fast bound therewith.

26. The way which is desert - There were two ways from Jerusalem to Gaza, one desert, the other through a more populous country.

27. An eunuch - Chief officers were anciently called eunuchs, though not always literally such; because such used to be chief ministers in the eastern courts. Candace, queen of the Ethiopians - So all the queens of Ethiopia were called.

28. Sitting in his chariot, he read the Prophet Isaiah - God meeteth those that remember him in his ways. It is good to read, hear, seek information even in a journey. Why should we not redeem all our time?

30. And Philip running to him, said, Understandest thou what thou readest? - He did not begin about the weather, news, or the like. In speaking for God, we may frequently come to the point at once, without circumlocution.

31. He desired Philip to come up and sit with him - Such was his modesty, and thirst after instruction.

32. The portion of Scripture - By reading that very chapter, the fifty-third of Isaiah, many Jews, yea, and atheists, have been converted. Some of them history records. God knoweth them all. [Isaiah liii, 7](#)

33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away - That is, when he was a man, he had no justice shown him. To take away a person's judgment, is a proverbial phrase for oppressing him. And who shall declare, or count his generation - That is, who can number his seed, [Isaiah liii, 10](#); which he hath purchased by laying down his life?

36. And as they went on the way they came to a certain water - Thus, even the circumstances of the journey were under the direction of God. The kingdom of God suits itself to external circumstances, without any violence, as air yields to all bodies, and yet pervades all. What hindereth me to be baptized? - Probably he had been circumcised: otherwise Cornelius would not have been the first fruits of the Gentiles.

38. And they both went down - Out of the chariot. It does not follow that he was baptized by immersion. The text neither affirms nor intimates any thing concerning it.

39. The Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip - Carried him away with a miraculous swiftness, without any action or labour of his own. This had befallen several of the prophets.

40. But Philip was found at Azotus - Probably none saw him, from his leaving the eunuch, till he was there.

## IX

1. Acts xxii, 3, &c.; Acts xxvi, 9, &c.
2. Bound - By the connivance, if not authority, of the governor, under Aretas the king. See Acts ix, 14, 24.
3. And suddenly - When God suddenly and vehemently attacks a sinner, it is the highest act of mercy. So Saul, when his rage was come to the height, is taught not to breathe slaughter. And what was wanting in time to confirm him in his discipleship, is compensated by the inexpressible terror he sustained. By his also the suddenly constituted apostle was guarded against the grand snare into which novices are apt to fall.
4. He heard a voice - Severe, yet full of grace.
5. To kick against the goads - is a Syriac proverb, expressing an attempt that brings nothing but pain.
6. It shall be told thee - So God himself sends Saul to be taught by a man, as the angel does Cornelius, chap. x, 5. Admirable condescension! that the Lord deals with us by men, like ourselves.
7. The men - stood - Having risen before Saul; for they also fell to the ground, chap. xxvi, 14. It is probable they all journeyed on foot. Hearing the noise - But not an articulate voice. And seeing the light, but not Jesus himself, chap. xxvi, 13, &c.
9. And he was three days - An important season! So long he seems to have been in the pangs of the new birth. Without sight - By scales growing over his eyes, to intimate to him the blindness of the state he had been in, to impress him with a deeper sense of the almighty power of Christ, and to turn his thoughts inward, while he was less capable of conversing with outward objects. This was likewise a manifest token to others, of what had happened to him in his journey, and ought to have humbled and convinced those bigoted Jews, to whom he had been sent from the sanhedrim.
11. Behold he is praying - He was shown thus to Ananias.
12. A man called Ananias - His name also was revealed to Saul.
13. But he answered - How natural it is to reason against God.
14. All that call on thy name - That is, all Christians.
15. He is a chosen vessel to bear my name - That is, to testify of me. It is undeniable, that some men are unconditionally chosen or elected, to do some works for God
16. For I - Do thou as thou art commanded. I will take care of the rest; will show him - In fact, through the whole course of his ministry. How great things he must suffer - So far will he be now from persecuting others.
17. The Lord hath sent me - Ananias does not tell Saul all which Christ had said concerning him. It was not expedient that he should know yet to how great a dignity he was called.

24. They guarded the gates day and night - That is, the governor did, at their request, [2 Cor. xi, 32](#).

26. And coming to Jerusalem - Three years after, [Gal. i, 18](#). These three years St. Paul passes over, chap. xxii, 17, likewise.

27. To the apostles - Peter and James, [Gal. i, 18, 19](#). [Gal. i, 18](#),

19 And declared - He who has been an enemy to the truth ought not to be trusted till he gives proof that he is changed.

31. Then the Church - The whole body of Christian believers, had peace - Their bitterest persecutor being converted. And being built up - In holy, loving faith, continually increasing, and walking in - That is, speaking and acting only from this principle, the fear of God and the comfort of the Holy Ghost - An excellent mixture of inward and outward peace, tempered with filial fear.

35. Lydda was a large town, one day's journey from Jerusalem. It stood in the plain or valley of Sharon, which extended from Caesarea to Joppa, and was noted for its fruitfulness.

36. Tabitha, which is by interpretation Dorcas - She was probably a Hellenist Jew, known among the Hebrews by the Syriac name Tabitha, while the Greeks called her in their own language, Dorcas. They are both words of the same import, and signify a roe or fawn.

38. The disciples sent to him - Probably none of those at Joppa had the gift of miracles. Nor is it certain that they expected a miracle from him.

39. While she was with the in - That is, before she died.

40. Peter having put them all out - That he might have the better opportunity of wrestling with God in prayer, said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, sat up - Who can imagine the surprise of Dorcas, when called back to life? Or of her friends, when they saw her alive? For the sake of themselves, and of the poor, there was cause of rejoicing, and much more, for such a confirmation of the Gospel. Yet to herself it was matter of resignation, not joy, to be called back to these scenes of vanity: but doubtless, her remaining days were still more zealously spent in the service of her saviour and her God. Thus was a richer treasure laid up for her in heaven, and she afterward returned to a more exceeding weight of glory, than that from which so astonishing a providence had recalled her for a season.

## X

1. And there was a certain man - The first fruits of the Gentiles, in Cesarea - Where Philip had been before, chap. viii, 40; so that the doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus was not unknown there. Cesarea was the seat of the civil government, as Jerusalem was of the ecclesiastical. It is observable, that the Gospel made its way first through the metropolitan cities. So it first seized Jerusalem and Cesarea: afterward Philippi, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome itself. A centurion, or captain, of that called the Italian band - That is, troop or company.

2. Who gave much alms to the people - That is, to the Jews, many of whom were at that time extremely poor.

3. He saw in a vision - Not in a trance, like Peter: plainly, so as to leave one not accustomed to things of this kind no room to suspect any imposition.

4. Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God - Dare any man say, These were only splendid sins? Or that they were an abomination before God? And yet it is certain, in the Christian sense Cornelius was then an unbeliever. He had not then faith in Christ. So certain it is, that every one who seeks faith in Christ, should seek it in prayer, and doing good to all men: though in strictness what is not exactly according to the Divine rule must stand in need of Divine favour and indulgence.

8. A devout soldier - How many such attendants have our modern officers? A devout soldier would now be looked upon as little better than a deserter from his colours.

10. And he became very hungry - At the usual meal time. The symbols in visions and trances, it is easy to observe, are generally suited to the state of the natural faculties.

11. Tied at the corners - Not all in one knot, but each fastened as it were up to heaven.

14. But Peter said, In nowise, Lord - When God commands a strange or seemingly improper thing, the first objection frequently finds pardon. But it ought not to be repeated. This doubt and delay of St. Peter had several good effects. Hereby the will of God in this important point was made more evident and incontestable. And Peter also, having been so slow of belief himself, could the more easily bear the doubting of his brethren, chap. xi, 2, &c.

15. What God hath purified - Hath made and declared clean. Nothing but what is clean can come down from heaven. St. Peter well remembered this saying in the council at Jerusalem, chap. xv, 9.

16. This was done thrice - To make the deeper impression.

17. While Peter doubted in himself, behold the men - Frequently the things which befall us within and from without at the same time, are a key to each other. The things which thus concur and agree together, ought to be diligently attended to.

19. Behold three men seek thee, arise therefore and go down, and go with them, doubting nothing - How gradually was St. Peter prepared to receive this new admonition

of the Spirit! Thus God is went to lead on his children by degrees, always giving them light for the present hour.

24. Cornelius was waiting for them - Not engaging himself in any secular business during that solemn time, but being altogether intent on this one thing.

26. I myself also am a man - And not God, who alone ought to be worshipped, [Matt. iv, 10](#). Have all his pretended successors attended to this?

28. But God hath showed me - He speaks sparingly to them of his former doubt, and his late vision.

29. I ask for what intent ye have sent for me? - St. Peter knew this already. But he puts Cornelius on telling the story, both that the rest might be informed, and Cornelius himself more impressed by the narration: the repetition of which, even as we read it, gives a new dignity and spirit to Peter's succeeding discourse,

30. Four days ago I was fasting - The first of these days he had the vision; the second his messengers came to Joppa; on the third, St. Peter set out; and on the fourth, came to Cesarea.

31. Thy prayer is heard - Doubtless he had been praying for instruction, how to worship God in the most acceptable manner.

33. Now therefore we are all present before God - The language of every truly Christian congregation.

34. I perceive of a truth - More clearly than ever, from such a concurrence of circumstances. That God is not a respecter of persons - Is not partial in his love. The words mean, in a particular sense, that he does not confine his love to one nation; in a general, that he is loving to every man, and willeth all men should be saved.

35. But in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness - He that, first, reverences God, as great, wise, good, the cause, end, and governor of all things; and secondly, from this awful regard to him, not only avoids all known evil, but endeavours, according to the best light he has, to do all things well; is accepted of him - Through Christ, though he knows him not. The assertion is express, and admits of no exception. He is in the favour of God, whether enjoying his written word and ordinances or not. Nevertheless the addition of these is an unspeakable blessing to those who were before in some measure accepted. Otherwise God would never have sent an angel from heaven to direct Cornelius to St. Peter.

36. This is the word which God sent - When he sent his Son into the world, preaching - Proclaiming by him-peace between God and man, whether Jew or Gentile, by the God-man. He is Lord of both; yea, Lord of and over all.

37. Ye know the word which was published - You know the facts in general, the meaning of which I shall now more particularly explain and confirm to you. The baptism which John preached - To which he invited them by his preaching, in token of their repentance. This began in Galilee, which is near Cesarea.

38. How God anointed Jesus - Particularly at his baptism, thereby inaugurating him to his office: with the Holy Ghost and with power - It is worthy our remark, that frequently when the Holy Ghost is mentioned there is added a word particularly adapted to the present circumstance. So the deacons were to be full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, chap. vi, 3. Barnabas was full of the Holy Ghost and faith, chap. xi, 24. The disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost, chap. xiii, 52. And here, where his mighty works are mentioned, Christ himself is said to be anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. For God was with him - He speaks sparingly here of the majesty of Christ, as considering the state of his hearers.

41. Not now to all the people - As before his death; to us who did eat and drink with him - That is, conversed familiarly and continually with him, in the time of his ministry.

42. It is he who is ordained by God the Judge of the living and the dead - Of all men, whether they are alive at his coming, or had died before it. This was declaring to them, in the strongest terms, how entirely their happiness depended on a timely and humble subjection to him who was to be their final Judge.

43. To him give all the prophets witness - Speaking to heathens he does not quote any in particular; that every one who believeth in him - Whether he be Jew or Gentile; receiveth remission of sins - Though he had not before either feared God, or worked righteousness.

44. The Holy Ghost fell on all that were hearing the word - Thus were they consecrated to God, as the first fruits of the Gentiles. And thus did God give a clear and satisfactory evidence, that he had accepted them as well as the Jews.

45. The believers of the circumcision - The believing Jews.

47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost? - He does not say they have the baptism of the Spirit; therefore they do not need baptism with water. But just the contrary: if they have received the Spirit, then baptize them with water. How easily is this question decided, if we will take the word of God for our rule! Either men have received the Holy Ghost or not. If they have not, Repent, saith God, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. If they have, if they are already baptized with the Holy Ghost, then who can forbid water?

48. In the name of the Lord - Which implies the Father who anointed him, and the Spirit with which he was anointed to his office. But as the Gentiles had before believed in God the Father, and could not but now believe in the Holy Ghost, under whose powerful influence they were at this very time, there was the less need of taking notice, that they were baptized into the belief and profession of the sacred Three: though doubtless the apostle administered the ordinances in that very form which Christ himself had prescribed.

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 XI

4. Peter laid all things before them - So he did not take it ill to be questioned, nor desire to be treated as infallible. And he answers the more mildly because it related to a point which he had not readily believed himself.

5. Being in a trance - Which suspends the use of the outward senses.

14. Saved - With the full Christian salvation, in this world and the world to come.

17. To us, when we believed - The sense is, because we believed, not because we were circumcised, was the Holy Ghost given to us. What was I - A mere instrument in God's hand. They had inquired only concerning his eating with the Gentiles. He satisfies them likewise concerning his baptizing them, and shows that he had done right in going to Cornelius, not only by the command of God, but also by the event, the descent of the Holy Ghost. And who are we that we should withstand God? Particularly by laying down rules of Christian communion which exclude any whom he has admitted into the Church of the first born, from worshipping God together. O that all Church governors would consider how bold an usurpation this is on the authority of the supreme Lord of the Church! O that the sin of thus withstanding God may not be laid to the charge of those, who perhaps with a good intention, but in an over fondness for their own forms, have done it, and are continually doing it.

18. They glorified God - Being thoroughly satisfied. Repentance unto life - True repentance is a change from spiritual death to spiritual life, and leads to life everlasting.

19. They who had been dispersed - St. Luke here resumes the thread of his narration, in the very words wherewith he broke it off, chap. viii, 6. As far as Phenicia to the north, Cyprus to the west, and Antioch to the east.

20. Some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene - Who were more accustomed to converse with the Gentiles. Who coming into Antioch - Then the capital of Syria, and, next to Rome and Alexandria, the most considerable city of the empire. Spake to the Greeks - As the Greeks were the most celebrated of the Gentile nations near Judea, the Jews called all the Gentiles by that name. Here we have the first account of the preaching the Gospel to the idolatrous Gentiles. All those to whom it had been preached before, did at least worship one God, the God of Israel.

21. And the hand of the Lord - That is, the power of his Spirit.

26. And the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch - Here it was that they first received this standing appellation. They were before termed Nazarenes and Galileans.

28. Agabus rising up - In the congregation. All the world - The word frequently signifies all the Roman empire. And so it is doubtless to be taken here.

29. Then - Understanding the distress they would otherwise be in on that account, the disciples determined to send relief to the brethren in Judea - Who herein received a manifest proof of the reality of their conversion.

30. Sending it to the elders - Who gave it to the deacons, to be distributed by them, as every one had need.

## XII

1. About that time - So wisely did God mix rest and persecution in due time and measure succeeding each other. Herod - Agrippa; the latter was his Roman, the former his Syrian name. He was the grandson of Herod the Great, nephew to Herod Antipas, who beheaded John the Baptist; brother to Herodias, and father to that Agrippa before whom St. Paul afterward made his defense. Caligula made him king of the tetrarchy of his uncle Philip, to which he afterward added the territories of Antipas. Claudius made him also king of Judea, and added thereto the dominions of Lysanias.

2. James the brother of John - So one of the brothers went to God the first, the other the last of the apostles.

3. Then were the days of unleavened bread - At which the Jews came together from all parts.

4. Four quaternions - Sixteen men, who watched by turns day and night.

5. Continual prayer was made for him - Yet when their prayer was answered, they could scarce believe it, ver. 15. But why had they not prayed for St. James also? Because he was put to death as soon as apprehended.

6. Peter was sleeping - Easy and void of fear; between two soldiers - Sufficiently secured to human appearance.

7. His chains - With which his right arm was bound to one of the soldiers, and his left arm to the other.

8. Gird thyself - Probably he had put off his girdle, sandals, and upper garment, before he lay down to sleep.

10. The first and second ward - At each of which doubtless was a guard of soldiers. The gate opened of its own accord - Without either Peter or the angel touching it. And they went on through one street - That Peter might know which way to go. And the angel departed from him - Being himself sufficient for what remained to be done.

11. Now I know of a truth - That this is not a vision, ver. 9.

12. And having considered - What was best to be done. Many were gathered together - At midnight.

13. The gate - At some distance from the house; to hearken - If any knocked.

14. And knowing Peter's voice - Bidding her open the door.

15. They said, Thou art mad - As we say, Sure you are not in your senses to talk so. It is his angel - It was a common opinion among the Jews, that every man had his particular guardian angel, who frequently assumed both his shape and voice. But this is a point on which the Scriptures are silent.

17. Beckoning to them - Many of whom being amazed, were talking together. And he said, Show these things to James - The brother or kinsman of our Lord, and author of the epistle which bears his name. He appears to have been a person of considerable weight and

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importance, probably the chief overseer of that province, and of the Church in Jerusalem in particular. He went into another place - Where he might be better concealed till the storm was over.

19. Herod commanded them to be put to death - And thus the wicked suffered in the room of the righteous. And going down from Judea - With shame, for not having brought forth Peter, according to his promise.

20. Having gained Blastus - To their side, they sued for, and obtained peace - Reconciliation with Herod. And so the Christians of those parts were, by the providence of God, delivered from scarcity. Their country was nourished - Was provided with, corn, by the king's country - Thus Hiram also, king of Tyre, desired of Solomon food or corn for his household, [1 Kings v, 9](#).

21. And on a set day - Which was solemnized yearly, in honour of Claudius Caesar; Herod, arrayed in royal apparel - In a garment so wrought with silver, that the rays of the rising sun striking upon, and being reflected from it, dazzled the eyes of the beholders. The people shouted, It is the voice of a God - Such profane flattery they frequently paid to princes. But the commonness of a wicked custom rather increases than lessens the guilt of it.

23. And immediately - God does not delay to vindicate his injured honour; an angel of the Lord smote him - Of this other historians say nothing: so wide a difference there is between Divine and human history! An angel of the Lord brought out Peter; an angel smote Herod. Men did not see the instruments in either case. These were only known to the people of God. Because he gave not glory to God - He willingly received it to himself, and by this sacrilege filled up the measure of his iniquities. So then vengeance tarried not. And he was eaten by worms, or vermin - How changed! And on the fifth day expired in exquisite torture. Such was the event! The persecutor perished, and the Gospel grew and multiplied.

25. Saul returned - To Antioch; taking John, surnamed Mark - The son of Mary, (at whose house the disciples met, to pray for Peter,) who was sister to Barnabas.

## XIII

1. Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod - His foster brother, now freed from the temptations of a court.

2. Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them - This was not ordaining them. St. Paul was ordained long before, and that not of men, neither by man: it was only inducting him to the province for which our Lord had appointed him from the beginning, and which was now revealed to the prophets and teachers. In consequence of this they fasted, prayed, and laid their hands on them, a rite which was used not in ordination only, but in blessing, and on many other occasions.

3. Then having fasted - Again. Thus they did also, chap. xiv, 23.

5. In the synagogues - Using all opportunities that offered.

6. Paphos was on the western, Salamis on the eastern part of the island.

7. The proconsul - The Roman governor of Cyprus, a prudent man - And therefore not overruled by Elymas, but desirous to inquire farther.

9. Then Saul, who was also called Paul - It is not improbable, that coming now among the Romans, they would naturally adapt his name to their own language, and so called him Paul instead of Saul. Perhaps the family of the proconsul might be the first who addressed to or spoke of him by this name. And from this time, being the apostle of the Gentiles, he himself used the name which was more familiar to them.

10. O full of all guile - As a false prophet, and all mischief - As a magician. Thou son of the devil - A title well suited to a magician; and one who not only was himself unrighteous, but laboured to keep others from all goodness. Wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? - Even now thou hast heard the truth of the Gospel.

11. And immediately a mist - Or dimness within, and darkness without, fell upon him.

12. Being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord - Confirmed by such a miracle.

13. John withdrawing from them returned - Tired with the fatigue, or shrinking from danger.

14. Antioch in Pisidia - Different from the Antioch mentioned ver. 1.

15. And after the reading of the law and the prophets, the chief of the synagogue sent to them - The law was read over once every year, a portion of it every Sabbath: to which was added a lesson taken out of the prophets. After this was over, any one might speak to the people, on any subject he thought convenient. Yet it was a circumstance of decency which Paul and Barnabas would hardly omit, to acquaint the rulers with their desire of doing it: probably by some message before the service began.

16. Ye that fear God - Whether proselytes or heathens.

17. The God - By such a commemoration of God's favours to their fathers, at once their minds were conciliated to the speaker, they were convinced of their duty to God, and invited to believe his promise, and the accomplishment of it. The six verses 17-22, contain the whole

sum of the Old Testament. Of this people - Paul here chiefly addresses himself to those whom he styles, Ye that fear God: he speaks of Israel first; and ver. 26, speaks more directly to the Israelites themselves. Chose - And this exalted the people; not any merit or goodness of their own, [Ezek. xx, 5](#). Our fathers - Abraham and his posterity. [Isaiah i, 2](#).

18. [Deut. i, 31](#).

19. Seven nations - Enumerated [Deut. vii, 1](#); about four hundred and fifty years - That is, from the choice of the fathers to the dividing of the land; it was about four hundred and fifty years.

21. He gave them Saul forty years - Including the time wherein Samuel judged Israel.

22. Having removed him - Hence they might understand that the dispensations of God admit of various changes. I have found David, a man after my own heart - This expression is to be taken in a limited sense. David was such at that time, but not at all times. And he was so, in that respect, as he performed all God's will, in the particulars there mentioned: But he was not a man after God's own heart, in other respects, wherein he performed his own will. In the matter of Uriah, for instance, he was as far from being a man after God's own heart as Saul himself was. It is therefore a very gross, as well as dangerous mistake, to suppose this is the character of David in every part of his behaviour. We must beware of this, unless we would recommend adultery and murder as things after God's own heart.

[1 Sam. xvi, 12, 13](#).

24. John having first preached - He mentions this, as a thing already known to them. And so doubtless it was. For it gave so loud an alarm to the whole Jewish nation, as could not but be heard of in foreign countries, at least as remote as Pisidia.

25. His course - His work was quickly finished, and might therefore well be termed a course or race. [Luke iii, 16](#).

27. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers - He here anticipates a strong objection, "Why did not they at Jerusalem, and especially their rulers, believe?" They know not him, because they understood not those very prophets whom they read or heard continually. Their very condemning him, innocent as he was, proves that they understood not the prophecies concerning him.

29. They fulfilled all things that were written of him - So far could they go, but no farther.

31. He was seen many days by them who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem - This last journey both presupposes all the rest, and was the most important of all.

33. Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee - It is true, he was the Son of God from eternity. The meaning therefore is, I have this day declared thee to be my Son. As St. Paul elsewhere, declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, [Rom. i, 4](#). And it is with peculiar propriety and beauty that God is said to have begotten him, on the day when he raised him from the dead, as he seemed then to be born out of the earth anew. [Psalm ii, 7](#).

34. No more to return to corruption - That is, to die no more. I will give you the sure mercies of David - The blessings promised to David in Christ. These are sure, certain, firm, solid, to every true believer in him. And hence the resurrection of Christ necessarily follows; for without this, those blessings could not be given. [Isaiah lv, 3](#).

35. He saith - David in the name of the Messiah. [Psalm xvi, 10](#).

36. David, having served the will of God in his generation, fell asleep - So his service extended not itself beyond the bounds of the common age of man: but the service of the Messiah to all generations, as his kingdom to all ages. Served the will of God - Why art thou here thou who art yet in the world? Is it not that thou also mayest serve the will of God? Art thou serving it now? Doing all his will? And was added to his fathers - Not only in body. This expression refers to the soul also, and supposes the immortality of it.

39. Everyone that believeth is justified from all things - Has the actual forgiveness of all his sins, at the very time of his believing; from which ye could not be justified - Not only ye cannot now; but ye never could. For it afforded no expiation for presumptuous sins. By the law of Moses - The whole Mosaic institution! The division of the law into moral and ceremonial was not so common among the Jews, as it is among us. Nor does the apostle here consider it at all: but Moses and Christ are opposed to each other.

40. Beware - A weighty and seasonable admonition. No reproof is as yet added to it.

41. I work a work which ye will in nowise believe - This was originally spoken to those, who would not believe that God would ever deliver them from the power of the Chaldeans. But it is applicable to any who will not believe the promises, or the works of God. [Hab. i, 5](#).

42. When the Jews were going out - Probably many of them, not bearing to hear him, went out before he had done. The Sabbath between - So the Jews call to this day the Sabbath between the first day of the month Tisri (on which the civil year begins) and the tenth of the same month, which is the solemn day of expiation.

43. Who speaking to them - More familiarly, persuaded them to continue - For trials were at hand, in the grace of God - That is, to adhere to the Gospel or Christian faith.

46. Then Paul and Barnabas speaking boldly, said - Those who hinder others must be publicly reproved. It was necessary - Though ye are not worthy: he shows that he had not preached to them, from any confidence of their believing, but seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life - They indeed judged none but themselves worthy of it. Yet their rejecting of the Gospel was the same as saying, "We are unworthy of eternal life." Behold! - A thing now present! An astonishing revolution! We turn to the Gentiles - Not that they left off preaching to the Jews in other places. But they now determined to lose no more time at Antioch on their ungrateful countrymen, but to employ themselves wholly in doing what they could for the conversion of the Gentiles there.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded us - By sending us forth, and giving us an opportunity of fulfilling what he had foretold. I have set thee - The Father speaks to Christ. [Isaiah xlix, 6.](#)

48. As many as were ordained to eternal life - St. Luke does not say fore-ordained. He is not speaking of what was done from eternity, but of what was then done, through the preaching of the Gospel. He is describing that ordination, and that only, which was at the very time of hearing it. During this sermon those believed, says the apostle, to whom God then gave power to believe. It is as if he had said, "They believed, whose hearts the Lord opened;" as he expresses it in a clearly parallel place, speaking of the same kind of ordination, chap. xvi, 14, &c. It is observable, the original word is not once used in Scripture to express eternal predestination of any kind. The sum is, all those and those only, who were now ordained, now believed. Not that God rejected the rest: it was his will that they also should have been saved: but they thrust salvation from them. Nor were they who then believed constrained to believe. But grace was then first copiously offered them. And they did not thrust it away, so that a great multitude even of Gentiles were converted. In a word, the expression properly implies, a present operation of Divine grace working faith in the hearers.

## XIV

1. They so spake - Persecution having increased their strength.
9. He had faith to be healed - He felt the power of God in his soul; and thence knew it was sufficient to heal his body also.
11. The gods are come down - Which the heathens supposed they frequently did; Jupiter especially. But how amazingly does the prince of darkness blind the minds of them that believe not! The Jews would not own Christ's Godhead, though they saw him work numberless miracles. On the other hand, the heathens seeing mere men work one miracle, were for deifying them immediately.
13. The priest of Jupiter - Whose temple and image were just without the gate of the city, brought garlands - To put on the victims, and bulls - The usual offerings to Jupiter.
14. They sprang in among the people, crying out - As in a fire, or other sudden and great danger.
15. To turn from these vanities - From worshipping any but the true God. He does not deign to call them gods; unto the living God - Not like these dead idols; who made the heaven and the earth, the sea - Each of which they supposed to have its own gods.
16. Who in times past - He prevents their objection, "But if these things are so, we should have heard them from our fathers." Suffered - An awful judgment, all nations - The multitude of them that err does not turn error into truth, to walk in their own ways - The idolatries which they had chosen.
17. He left not himself without witness - For the heathens had always from God himself a testimony both of his existence and of his providence; in that he did good - Even by punishments he testifies of himself; but more peculiarly by benefits; giving rain - By which air, earth, and sea, are, as it were, all joined together; from heaven - The seat of God; to which St. Paul probably pointed while he spoke, filling the body with food, the soul with gladness.
19. Who persuaded the multitude - Moved with equal ease either to adore or murder him.
20. But as the disciples stood round - Probably after sunset. The enraged multitude would scarce have suffered it in the day time: he rose and went into the city - That he should be able to do this, just after he had been left for dead, was a miracle little less than a resurrection from the dead. Especially considering the manner wherein the Jewish malefactors were stoned. The witnesses first threw as large a stone as they could lift, with all possible violence upon his head, which alone was sufficient to dash the skull in pieces. All the people then joined, as long as any motion or token of life remained.
23. When they had ordained them presbyters in every Church - Out of those who were themselves but newly converted. So soon can God enable even a babe in Christ to build up others in the common faith: they commended them to the Lord - An expression implying faith in Christ, as well as love to the brethren.

25. Perga and Attalia were cities of Pamphylia.

26. Recommended to the grace - Or favour, of God, for the work which they had fulfilled  
- This shows the nature and design of that laying on of hands, which was mentioned chap.  
xiii, 3.

## XV

1. Coming down from Judea - Perhaps to supply what they thought Paul and Barnabas had omitted.

2. They (the brethren) determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others should go up to Jerusalem about this question - This is the journey to which St. Paul refers, [Gal. ii, 1, 2](#), when he says he went up by Revelation: which is very consistent with this; for the Church in sending them might be directed by a Revelation made either immediately to St. Paul, or to some other person, relating to so important an affair. Important indeed it was, that these Jewish impositions should be solemnly opposed in time; because multitudes of converts were still zealous for the law, and ready to contend for the observance of it. Indeed many of the Christians of Antioch would have acquiesced in the determination of Paul alone. But as many others might have prejudices against him, for his having been so much concerned for the Gentiles, it was highly expedient to take the concurrent judgment of all the apostles on this occasion.

4. They were received - That is solemnly welcomed.

5. But certain Pharisees - For even believers are apt to retain their former turn of mind, and prejudices derived therefrom. The law of Moses - The whole law, both moral and ritual.

7. After much debate - It does not appear that this was among the apostles themselves. But if it had, if they themselves had debated at first, yet might their final decision be from an unerring direction. For how really soever they were inspired, we need not suppose their inspiration was always so instantaneous and express, as to supersede any deliberation in their own minds, or any consultation with each other. Peter rose up - This is the last time he is mentioned in the Acts.

8. God bare them witness - That he had accepted them, by giving them the Holy Ghost.

9. Purifying - This word is repeated from chap. x, 15; their hearts - The heart is the proper seat of purity; by faith - Without concerning themselves with the Mosaic law.

10. Now therefore - Seeing these things are so: why tempt ye God? - Why do ye provoke him to anger, by putting so heavy a yoke on their neck?

11. The Lord Jesus - He does not here say our Lord; because in this solemn place he means the Lord of all, we - Jews, shall be saved even as they - Gentiles, namely, through the grace of the Lord Jesus, not by our observance of the ceremonial law.

12. Miracles and wonders - By which also what St. Peter had said was confirmed.

14. Simon hath declared - James, the apostle of the Hebrews, calls Peter by his Hebrew name. To take out of them a people for his name - That is to believe in him, to be called by his name.

15. To this agree - St. Peter had urged the plain fact, which St. James confirms by Scripture prophecy. The words of the prophets - One of whom is immediately cited.

16. After this - After the Jewish dispensation expires. I will build again the fallen tabernacle of David - By raising from his seed the Christ, who shall build on the ruins of his fallen tabernacle a spiritual and eternal kingdom. [Amos ix, 11](#).

17. The Gentiles on whom my name is called - That is, who are called by my name; who are my people.

18. Known unto God are all his works from eternity - Which the apostle infers from the prophecy itself, and the accomplishment of it. And this conversion of the Gentiles being known to him from eternity, we ought not to think a new or strange thing. It is observable, he does not speak of God's works in the natural world, (which had been nothing to his present purpose,) but of his dealing with the children of men. Now he could not know these, without knowing the characters and actions of particular persons, on a correspondence with which the wisdom and goodness of his providential dispensations is founded. For instance, he could not know how he would deal with heathen idolaters (whom he was now calling into his Church) without knowing there would be heathen idolaters: and yet this was a thing purely contingent, a thing as dependent on the freedom of the human mind, as any we can imagine. This text, therefore, among a thousand more, is an unanswerable proof, that God foreknows future contingencies, though there are difficulties relating hereto which men cannot solve.

20. To abstain from fornication - Which even the philosophers among the heathens did not account any fault. It was particularly frequent in the worship of their idols, on which account they are here named together. And from things strangled - That is, from whatever had been killed, without pouring out the blood. When God first permitted man to eat flesh, he commanded Noah, and in him all his posterity, whenever they killed any creature for food, to abstain from the blood thereof. It was to be poured upon the ground as water: doubtless in honour of that blood which was in due time poured out for the sin of the world.

21. Perhaps the connection is, To the Jews we need write nothing on these heads; for they hear the law continually.

22. With the whole Church - Which therefore had a part therein; to send chosen men - Who might put it beyond all dispute, that this was the judgment of the apostles and all the brethren.

23. Writing thus, and sending it by their hand - The whole conduct of this affair plainly shows that the Church in those days had no conception of St. Peter's primacy, or of his being the chief judge in controversies. For the decree is drawn up, not according to his, but the Apostle James's proposal and direction: and that in the name, not of St. Peter, but of all the apostles and elders, and of the whole Church. Nay, St. Peter's name is not mentioned at all, either in the order for sending to Jerusalem on the question, ver. 2, or in the address of the messengers concerning it, ver. 4, or in the letter which was written in answer.

24. Forasmuch as, &c. - The simplicity, weightiness, and conciseness of this letter are highly observable.

26. Men that have hazarded their lives - This is spoken of Paul and Barnabas.

27. Who will tell you the same things - Which we have written.

28. These necessary things - All of these were necessary for that time. But the first of them was not necessary long; and the direction concerning it was therefore repealed by the same Spirit, as we read in the former Epistle to the Corinthians.

29. Blood - The eating which was never permitted the children of God from the beginning of the world. Nothing can be clearer than this. For,

1. From Adam to Noah no man ate flesh at all; consequently no man then ate blood.
2. When God allowed Noah and his posterity to eat flesh, he absolutely forbade them to eat blood; and accordingly this, with the other six precepts of Noah, was delivered down from Noah to Moses.
3. God renewed this prohibition by Moses, which was not repealed from the time of Moses till Christ came.
4. Neither after his coming did any presume to repeal this decree of the Holy Ghost, till it seemed good to the bishop of Rome so to do, about the middle of the eighth century.
5. From that time those Churches which acknowledged his authority held the eating of blood to be an indifferent thing. But,
6. In all those Churches which never did acknowledge the bishop of Rome's authority, it never was allowed to eat blood; nor is it allowed at this day. This is the plain fact; let men reason as plausibly as they please on one side or the other. From which keeping yourselves ye will do well - That is, ye will find a blessing. This gentle manner of concluding was worthy the apostolical wisdom and goodness. But how soon did succeeding councils of inferior authority change it into the style of anathemas! Forms which have proved an occasion of consecrating some of the most devilish passions under the most sacred names; and like some ill-adjusted weapons of war, are most likely to hurt the hand from which they are thrown.

35. Paul and Barnabas abode in Antioch - And it was during this time that Peter came down from Jerusalem, and that St. Paul withstood him to the face, for separating himself from the Gentiles, [Gal. ii, 11](#), &c.

36. Let us go and visit the brethren in every city where we have preached - This was all that St. Paul designed at first; but it was not all that God designed by his journey, whose providence carried him much farther than he intended. And see how they do - How their

souls prosper: how they grow in faith, hope love: what else ought to be the grand and constant inquiry in every ecclesiastical visitation? Reader, how dost thou do?

37. Barnabas counselled to take John - His kinsman.

38. But Paul thought it not right - To trust him again, who had deserted them before: who had shrunk from the labour and danger of converting those they were now going to confirm.

39. And there was a sharp contention - Literally, a paroxysm, or fit of a fever. But nothing in the text implies that the sharpness was on both sides. It is far more probable that it was not; that St. Paul, who had the right on his side, as he undoubtedly had,) maintained it with love. And Barnabas taking Mark with him, sailed away to Cyprus - Forsaking the work in which he was engaged, he went away to his own country.

40. But Paul departed - Held on his intended course: being recommended by the brethren to the grace of God - We do not find that Barnabas stayed for this. O how mighty is the grace of God! which in the midst of the world, in the midst of sin, among so many snares of Satan, and in spite of the incredible weakness and depravity of nature, yet overcomes all opposition, sanctifies, sustains, and preserves us to the end! It appears not only that Paul and Barnabas were afterward thoroughly reconciled, [1 Cor. ix, 6](#); [Gal. ii, 9](#); but also that John was again admitted by St. Paul as a companion in his labours, [Colossians iv, 10](#); [Phil. i, 24](#); [2 Tim. iv, 11](#).

## XVI

3. He took and circumcised him because of the Jews - The unbelieving Jews, to whom he designed he should preach. For they would not have conversed with him at all, so long as he was uncircumcised.

6. And having gone through Phrygia - And spoken there what was sufficient, as well as in the region of Galatia, being forbid by the Spirit (probably by an inward dictate) to speak as yet in the proconsular Asia, the time for it not being come.

7. Coming to Mysia, and passing it by, as being a part of Asia, they attempted to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not - Forbidding them as before. Sometimes a strong impression, for which we are not able to give any account, is not altogether to be despised.

9. A vision appeared to Paul by night - It was not a dream, though it was by night. No other dream is mentioned in the New Testament than that of Joseph and of Pilate's wife. A man of Macedonia - Probably an angel clothed in the Macedonian habit, or using the language of the country, and representing the inhabitants of it. Help us - Against Satan, ignorance, and sin.

10. We sought to go into Macedonia - This is the first place in which St. Luke intimates his attendance on the apostle. And here he does it only in an oblique manner. Nor does he throughout the history once mention his own name, or any one thing which he did or said for the service of Christianity; though Paul speaks of him in the most honourable terms, [Colossians iv, 14](#); [2 Tim. iv, 11](#); and probably as the brother whose praise in the Gospel went through all the Churches, [2 Cor. viii, 18](#). The same remark may be made on the rest of the sacred historians, who every one of them show the like amiable modesty.

11. We ran with a straight course - Which increased their confidence that God had called them.

12. The first city - Neapolis was the first city they came to in that part of Macedonia which was nearest to Asia: in that part which was farthest from it, Philippi. The river Strymon ran between them. Philippi was a Roman colony.

13. We went out of the gate - The Jews usually held their religious assemblies (either by choice or constraint) at a distance from the heathens: by a river side - Which was also convenient for purifying themselves. Where prayer was wont to be made - Though it does not appear there was any house built there. We spake - At first in a familiar manner. Paul did not immediately begin to preach.

14. A worshipper of God - Probably acquainted with the prophetic writings whose heart the Lord opened - The Greek word properly refers to the opening of the eyes: and the heart has its eyes, [Eph. i, 18](#). These are closed by nature and to open them is the peculiar work of God.

15. She was baptized and her family - Who can believe that in so many families there was no infant? Or that the Jews, who were so long accustomed to circumcise their children,

would not now devote them to God by baptism? She entreated us - The souls of the faithful cleave to those by whom they were gained to God. She constrained us - By her importunity. They did not immediately comply, lest any should imagine they sought their own profit by coming into Macedonia.

17. These men are - A great truth: but St. Paul did not need, nor would accept, of such testimony.

19. The magistrates - The supreme magistrates of the city. In the next verse they are called by a title which often signifies pretors. These officers exercised both the military and civil authority.

20. Being Jews - A nation peculiarly despised by the Romans.

21. And teach customs which it is not lawful for us to receive - The world has received all the rules and doctrines of all the philosophers that ever were. But this is a property of Gospel truth: it has something in it peculiarly intolerable to the world.

23. They laid many stripes upon them - Either they did not immediately say they were Romans, or in the tumult it was not regarded. Charging the jailer - Perhaps rather to quiet the people than because they thought them criminal.

24. Secured their feet in the stocks - These were probably those large pieces of wood, in use among the Romans, which not only loaded the legs of the prisoner, but also kept them extended in a very painful manner.

25. Paul and Silas sung a hymn to God - Notwithstanding weariness, hunger stripes, and blood. And the prisoners heard - A song to which they were not accustomed.

28. But Paul cried - As they were all then in the dark, it is not easy to say, how Paul knew of the jailer's purpose; unless it were by some immediate notice from God, which is by no means incredible. With a loud voice - Through earnestness, and because he was at some distance. Do thyself no harm - Although the Christian faith opens the prospect into another life, yet it absolutely forbids and effectually prevents a man's discharging himself from this.

30. Sirs - He did not style them so the day before. What must I do to be saved? - From the guilt I feel and the vengeance I fear? Undoubtedly God then set his sins in array before him, and convinced him in the clearest and strongest manner that the wrath of God abode upon him.

31. Thou shalt be saved and thy household - If ye believe. They did so, and were saved.

33. He washed their stripes - It should not be forgot, that the apostles had not the power of working miraculous cures when they pleased, either on themselves, or their dearest friends. Nor was it expedient they should, since it would have frustrated many wise designs of God, which were answered by their sufferings.

34. He set a table before them and rejoiced - Faith makes a man joyful, prudent, liberal.

35. The pretors sent - Being probably terrified by the earthquake; saying, Let those men go - How different from the charge given a few hours before! And how great an ease of mind to the jailer!

37. They have beaten us publicly, being Roman - St. Paul does not always plead this privilege. But in a country where they were entire strangers, such treatment might have brought upon them a suspicion of having been guilty of some uncommon crime, and so have hindered the course of the Gospel.

40. When they had seen the brethren, they comforted them and departed - Though many circumstances now invited their stay, yet they wisely complied with the request of the magistrates, that they might not seem to express any degree of obstinacy or revenge, or give any suspicion of a design to stir up the people.

## XVII

1. And taking their journey through Amphipolis and Apollonia - St. Luke seems to have been left at Philippi; and to have continued in those parts, travelling from place to place among the Churches, till St. Paul returned thither. For here he leaves off speaking of himself as one of St. Paul's company; neither does he resume that style, till we find them together there, chap. xx, 5, 6. After this he constantly uses it to the end of the history. Amphipolis and Apollonia were cities of Macedonia.

2. And Paul, according to his custom - Of doing all things, as far as might be, in a regular manner, went in to them three Sabbath days - Not excluding the days between.

4. Of the principal women, not a few - Our free thinkers pique themselves upon observing, that women are more religious than men; and this, in compliment both to religion and good manners, they impute to the weakness of their understandings. And indeed as far as nature can go, in imitating religion by performing the outward acts of it, this picture of religion may make a fairer show in women than in men, both by reason of their more tender passions, and their modesty, which will make those actions appear to more advantage. But in the case of true religion, which always implies taking up the cross, especially in time of persecution, women lie naturally under a great disadvantage, as having less courage than men. So that their embracing the Gospel was a stronger evidence of the power of him whose strength is perfected in weakness, as a stronger assistance of the Holy Spirit was needful for them to overcome their natural fearfulness.

11. These were more ingenuous - Or generous. To be teachable in the things of God is true generosity of soul. The receiving the word with all readiness of mind, and the most accurate search into the truth, are well consistent.

12. Many of the - Of the Jews. And of the Grecian women - Who were followed by their husbands.

16. While Paul was waiting for the - Having no design, as it seems, to preach at Athens, but his zeal for God drew him into it unawares, without staying till his companions came.

18. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosopher - The Epicureans entirely denied a providence, and held the world to be the effect of mere chance; asserting sensual pleasure to be man's chief good, and that the soul and body died together. The Stoics held, that matter was eternal; that all things were governed by irresistible fate; that virtue was its own sufficient reward, and vice its own sufficient punishment. It is easy to see, how happily the apostle levels his discourse at some of the most important errors of each, while, without expressly attacking either, he gives a plain summary of his own religious principles. What would this babbler say? - Such is the language of natural reason, full of, and satisfied with itself. Yet even here St. Paul had some fruit; though nowhere less than at Athens. And no wonder, since this city was a seminary of philosophers, who have ever been the pest of true religion. He seemeth to be a proclaimer - This he returns upon them at the 23rd verse; of

strange gods - Such as are not known even at Athens. Because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection - A God and a goddess. And as stupid as this mistake was, it is the less to be wondered at, since the Athenians might as well count the resurrection a deity, as shame, famine, and many others.

19. The Areopagus, or hill of Mars, (dedicated to Mars, the heathen God of war,) was the place where the Athenians held their supreme court of judicature. But it does not appear he was carried thither as a criminal. The original number of its Judges was twelve; but afterward it increased to three hundred. These were generally men of the greatest families in Athens, and were famed for justice and integrity.

21. And the strangers sojourning there - And catching the distemper of them. Some new thing - The Greek word signifies some newer thing. New things quickly grew cheap, and they wanted those that were newer still.

22. Then Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus - An ample theatre; said - Giving them a lecture of natural divinity, with admirable wisdom, acuteness, fulness, and courtesy. They inquire after new things: Paul in his divinely philosophical discourse, begins with the first, and goes on to the last things, both which were new things to them. He points out the origin and the end of all things, concerning which they had so many disputes, and equally refutes both the Epicurean and Stoic. I perceive - With what clearness and freedom does he speak! Paul against Athens!

23. I found an altar - Some suppose this was set up by Socrates, to express in a covert way his devotion to the only true God, while he derided the plurality of the heathen gods, for which he was condemned to death: and others, that whoever erected this altar, did it in honour to the God of Israel, of whom there was no image, and whose name Jehovah was never made known to the idolatrous Gentiles. Him proclaim I unto you - Thus he fixes the wandering attention of these blind philosophers; proclaiming to them an unknown, and yet not a new God.

24. God who made the world - Thus is demonstrated even to reason, the one true, good God; absolutely different from the creatures, from every part of the visible creation.

25. Neither is he served as though he needed any thing - or person - The Greek word equally takes in both. To all - That live and breathe;-in him we live; and breathe - In him we move. By breathing life is continued. I breathe this moment: the next is not in my power: and all things - For in him we are. So exactly do the parts of this discourse answer each other.

26. He hath made of one blood the whole nation of men - By this expression the apostle showed them in the most unaffected manner, that though he was a Jew, he was not enslaved to any narrow views, but looked on all mankind as his brethren: having determined the times - That it is God who gave men the earth to inhabit, Paul proves from the order of

times and places, showing the highest wisdom of the Disposer, superior to all human counsels. And the bounds of their habitation - By mountains, seas, rivers, and the like.

27. If haply - The way is open; God is ready to be found. But he will lay no force upon man; they might feel after him - This is in the midst between seeking and finding. Feeling being the lowest and grossest of all our senses, is fitly applied to the low knowledge of God; though he be not far from every one of us - We need not go far to seek or find him. He is very near us; in us. It is only perverse reason which thinks he is afar off.

28. In him - Not in ourselves, we live, and move, and have our being - This denotes his necessary, intimate, and most efficacious presence. No words can better express the continual and necessary dependence of all created beings, in their existence and all their operations, on the first and almighty cause, which the truest philosophy as well as divinity teaches. As certain also of your own poets have said - Aratus, whose words these are, was an Athenian, who lived almost three hundred years before this time. They are likewise to be found, with the alteration of one letter only, in the hymn of Cleanthes to Jupiter or the supreme being, one of the purest and finest pieces of natural religion in the whole world of Pagan antiquity.

29. We ought not to think - A tender expression especially in the first per son plural. As if he had said, Can God himself be a less noble being than we who are his offspring? Nor does he only here deny, that these are like God, but that they have any analogy to him at all, so as to be capable of representing him.

30. The times of ignorance - What! does he object ignorance to the knowing Athenians? Yes, and they acknowledge it by this very altar. God overlooked - As one paraphrases, "The beams of his eye did in a manner shoot over it." He did not appear to take notice of them, by sending express messages to them as he did to the Jews. But now - This day, this hour, saith Paul, puts an end to the Divine forbearance, and brings either greater mercy or punishment. Now he commandeth all men everywhere to repent - There is a dignity and grandeur in this expression, becoming an ambassador from the King of heaven. And this universal demand of repentance declared universal guilt in the strongest manner, and admirably confronted the pride of the haughtiest Stoic of them all. At the same time it bore down the idle plea of fatality. For how could anyone repent of doing what he could not but have done?

31. He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world - How fitly does he speak this, in their supreme court of justice? By the man - So he speaks, suiting himself to the capacity of his hearers. Whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead - God raising Jesus demonstrated hereby, that he was to be the glorious Judge of all. We are by no means to imagine that this was all which the apostle intended to have said, but the indolence of some of his hearers and the petulancy of others cut him short.

32. Some mocked - Interrupting him thereby. They took offense at that which is the principal motive of faith, from the pride of reason. And having once stumbled at this, they rejected all the rest.

33. So Paul departed - Leaving his hearers divided in their judgment.

34. Among whom was even Dionysius the Areopagite - One of the Judges of that court: on whom some spurious writings have been fathered in later ages, by those who are fond of high sounding nonsense.

## XVIII

1. Paul departing from Athens - He did not stay there long. The philosophers there were too easy, too indolent, and too wise in their own eyes to receive the Gospel.

2. Claudius, the Roman emperor, had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome - All who were Jews by birth. Whether they were Jews or Christians by religion, the Roman were too stately to regard.

3. They were tent makers by trade - For it was a rule among the Jews (and why is it not among the Christians?) to bring up all their children to some trade, were they ever so rich or noble.

5. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia - Silas seems to have stayed a considerable time at Berea: but Timotheus had come to the apostle while he was at Athens, and been sent by him to comfort and confirm the Church at Thessalonica, [1 Thess. iii, 1-5](#). But now at length both Silas and Timotheus came to the apostle at Corinth. Paul was pressed in spirit - The more probably from what Silas and Timotheus related. Every Christian ought diligently to observe any such pressure in his own spirit, and if it agree with Scripture, to follow it: if he does not he will feel great heaviness.

6. He shook his raiment - To signify he would from that time refrain from them: and to intimate, that God would soon shake them off as unworthy to be numbered among his people. I am pure - None can say this but he that has born a full testimony against sin. From henceforth I will go to the Gentiles - But not to them altogether. He did not break off all intercourse with the Jews even at Corinth. Only he preached no more in their synagogue.

7. He went into the house of one named Justus - A Gentile, and preached there, though probably he still lodged with Aquila.

8. And many hearing - The conversation of Crispus, and the preaching of Paul.

10. I am with thee: therefore fear not all the learning, politeness, grandeur, or power of the inhabitants of this city. Speak and hold not thy peace - For thy labour shall not be in vain. For I have much people in this city - So he prophetically calls them that afterward believed.

11. He continued there a year and six months - A long time! But how few souls are now gained in a longer time than this? Who is in the fault? Generally both teachers and hearers.

12. When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia - Of which Corinth was the chief city. This Gallio, the brother of the famous Seneca, is much commended both by him and by other writers, for the sweetness and generosity of his temper, and easiness of his behaviour. Yet one thing he lacked! But he knew it not and had no concern about it.

15. But if it be - He speaks with the utmost coolness and contempt, a question of names - The names of the heathen gods were fables and shadows. But the question concerning the name of Jesus is of more importance than all things else under heaven. Yet there is this

singularity (among a thousand others) in the Christian religion, that human reason, curious as it is in all other things, abhors to inquire into it.

17. Then they all took Sosthenes - The successor of Crispus, and probably Paul's chief accuser, and beat him - It seems because he had occasioned them so much trouble to no purpose, before the judgment seat - One can hardly think in the sight of Gallio, though at no great distance from him. And it seems to have had a happy effect. For Sosthenes himself was afterward a Christian, [1 Cor. i, 1](#).

18. Paul continued many days - After the year and six months, to confirm the brethren. Aquila having shaved his head - As was the custom in a vow, chap. xxi, 24; [Num. vi, 18](#). At Cenchrea - A seaport town, at a small distance from Corinth.

21. I must by all means keep the feast at Jerusalem - This was not from any apprehension that he was obliged in conscience to keep the Jewish feasts; but to take the opportunity of meeting a great number of his countrymen to whom he might preach Christ, or whom he might farther instruct, or free from the prejudices they had imbibed against him. But I will return to you - So he did, chap. xix, 1.

22. And landing at Cesarea, he went up - Immediately to Jerusalem; and saluted the Church - Eminently so called, being the mother Church of Christian believers: and having kept the feast there, he went down from thence to Antioch.

23. He went over the country of Galatia and Phrygia - It is supposed, spending about four years therein, including the time he stayed at Ephesus.

24. An eloquent man, mighty in the Scriptures - Of the Old Testament. Every talent may be of use in the kingdom of God, if joined with the knowledge of the Scriptures and fervour of spirit.

25. This man had been instructed - Though not perfectly, in the way of the Lord - In the doctrine of Christ. Knowing only the baptism of John - Only what John taught those whom he baptized, namely, to repent and believe in a Messiah shortly to appear.

26. He spake - Privately; and taught publicly. Probably he returned to live at Alexandria, soon after he had been baptized by John; and so had no opportunity of being fully acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, as delivered by Christ and his apostles. And explained to him the way of God more perfectly - He who knows Christ, is able to instruct even those that are mighty in the Scriptures.

27. Who greatly helped through grace - It is through grace only that any gift of any one is profitable to another. Them that had believed - Apollos did not plant, but water. This was the peculiar gift which he had received. And he was better able to convince the Jews, than to convert the heathens.

## XIX

1. Having passed through - Galatia and Phrygia, which were termed the upper parts of Asia Minor. Certain disciples - Who had been formerly baptized by John the Baptist, and since imperfectly instructed in Christianity.

2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost? - The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, as well as his sanctifying graces? We have not so much as heard - Whether there be any such gifts.

3. Into what were ye baptized - Into what dispensation? To the sealing of what doctrine? Into John's baptism - We were baptized by John and believe what he taught.

4. John baptized - That is, the whole baptism and preaching of John pointed at Christ. After this John is mentioned no more in the New Testament. Here he gives way to Christ altogether.

5. And hearing this, they were baptized - By some other. Paul only laid his hands upon them. They were baptized - They were baptized twice; but not with the same baptism. John did not administer that baptism which Christ afterward commanded, that is, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

9. The way - The Christian way of worshipping God. He departed - Leaving them their synagogue to themselves. Discoursing daily - Not on the Sabbath only, in the school of one Tyrannus - Which we do not find was any otherwise consecrated, than by preaching the Gospel there.

10. All who desired it among the inhabitants of the proconsular Asia, now heard the word: St. Paul had been forbidden to preach it in Asia before, chap. xvi, 6. But now the time was come.

11. Special miracles - Wrought in a very uncommon manner.

12. Evil spirits - Who also occasioned many of those diseases, which yet might appear to be purely natural.

13. Exorcists - Several of the Jews about this time pretended to a power of casting out devils, particularly by certain arts or charms, supposed to be derived from Solomon. Undertook to name - Vain undertaking! Satan laughs at all those who attempt to expel him either out of the bodies or the souls of men but by Divine faith. All the light of reason is nothing to the craft or strength of that subtle spirit. His craft cannot be known but by the Spirit of God nor can his strength be conquered but by the power of faith.

17. And the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified - So that even the malice of the devil wrought for the furtherance of the Gospel.

18. Many came confessing - Of their own accord, and openly declaring their deeds - The efficacy of God's word, penetrating the inmost recesses of their soul, wrought that free and open confession to which perhaps even torments would not have compelled them.

19. Curious arts - Magical arts, to which that soft appellation was given by those who practiced them. Ephesus was peculiarly famous for these. And as these practices were of so

much reputation there, it is no wonder the books which taught them should bear a great price. Bringing their books together - As it were by common consent, burnt them - Which was far better than selling them, even though the money had been given to the poor. Fifty thousand pieces of silver - If these pieces of silver be taken for Jewish shekels, the sum will amount to six thousand two hundred and fifty pounds.

20. So powerfully did the word of God grow - In extent, and prevail - In power and efficacy.

21. After these things were ended - Paul sought not to rest, but pressed on, as if he had yet done nothing. He is already possessed of Ephesus and Asia. He purposes for Macedonia and Achaia. He has his eye upon Jerusalem, then upon Rome; afterward on Spain, [Rom. xv, 28](#). No Caesar, no Alexander the Great, no other hero, comes up to the magnanimity of this little Benjamite. Faith and love to God and man had enlarged his heart, even as the sand of the sea.

24. Silver shrines - Silver models of that famous temple, which were bought not only by the citizens, but by strangers from all parts. The artificers - The other silversmiths.

25. The workmen - Employed by him and them.

26. Saying, that they are not gods which are made with hands - This manifestly shows, that the contrary opinion did then generally prevail, namely, that there was a real Divinity in their sacred images. Though some of the later heathens spoke of them just as the Romanists do now.

27. There is danger, not only that this our craft [trade] should come into disgrace, but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised - No wonder a discourse should make so deep an impression, which was edged both by interest and superstition. The great goddess was one of the standing titles of Diana. Her majesty destroyed - Miserable majesty, which was capable of being thus destroyed! Whom all Asia and the world - That is, the Roman empire, worshippeth - Although under a great variety of titles and characters. But the multitude of those that err does not turn error into truth.

29. They rushed with one accord - Demetrius and his company, into the theatre - Where criminals were wont to be thrown to the wild beasts, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus - When they could not find Paul. Probably they hoped to oblige them to fight with the wild beasts, as some think St. Paul had done before.

30. When Paul would have gone in to the people - Being above all fear, to plead the cause of his companions, and prove they are not gods which are made with hands.

31. The principal officers of Asia - The Asian priests, who presided over the public games, which they were then celebrating in honour of Diana.

32. The greater part did not know for what they were come together - Which is commonly the case in such an assembly.

33. And they thrust forward - Namely, the artificers and workmen, Alexander - Probably some well-known Christian whom they saw in the crowd: the Jews pushing him on - To expose him to the more danger. And Alexander waving with his hand - In token of desiring silence, would have made a defense - For himself and his brethren.

34. But when they knew that he was a Jew - And consequently an enemy to their worship of images; they prevented him, by crying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

35. The register - Probably the chief governor of the public games. The image which fell down from Jupiter - They believed that very image of Diana, which stood in her temple, fell down from Jupiter in heaven. Perhaps he designed to insinuate, as if falling down from Jupiter, it was not made with hands, and so was not that sort of idols which Paul had said were no gods.

37. Nor blasphemers of your goddess - They simply declared the one God, and the vanity of idols in general.

38. There are proconsuls - One in every province. There was one at Ephesus.

39. In a lawful assembly - In such a regular assembly as has authority to judge of religious and political affairs.

40. This concourse - He wisely calls it by an inoffensive name.

## XX

1. After the tumult was ceased - So Demetrius gained nothing. Paul remained there till all was quiet.
2. He came into Greece - That part of it which lay between Macedonia and Achaia.
3. An ambush being laid for him - In his way to the ship.
4. To Asia - There some of them left him. But Trophimus went with him to Jerusalem, chap. xxi, 29. Aristarchus, even to Rome, xxvii, 2.
6. We set sail - St. Luke was now with St. Paul again, as we learn from his manner of expressing himself.
7. To break bread - That is, to celebrate the Lord's Supper; continued his discourse - Through uncommon fervour of spirit.
8. There were many lamps in the room where they were assembled - To prevent any possible scandal.
9. In the window - Doubtless kept open, to prevent heat, both from the lamps and the number of people.
10. Paul fell on him - It is observable, our Lord never used this gesture. But Elijah and Elisha did as well as Paul. His life is in him - He is alive again.
11. So departed - Without taking any rest at all.
12. And they brought the young man alive - But alas! How many of those who have allowed themselves to sleep under sermons, or as it were to dream awake, have slept the sleep of eternal death, and fallen to rise no more!
13. Being himself to go on foot - That he might enjoy the company of his Christian brethren a little longer, although he had passed the night without sleep, and though Assos was of difficult and dangerous access by land.
14. Mitylene - Was a city and part of the isle of Lesbos, about seven miles distant from the Asiatic coast.
16. For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus - Which lay on the other side of the bay. He hastened to be at Jerusalem on the day of pentecost - Because then was the greatest concourse of people.
17. Sending to Ephesus, he called the elders of the Church - These are called bishops in the 28th verse, (rendered overseers in our translation.) Perhaps elders and bishops were then the same; or no otherwise different than are the rector of a parish and his curates.
18. Ye know - Happy is he who can thus appeal to the conscience of his hearers.
19. Serving - See the picture of a faithful servant! The Lord - Whose the church is, with all humility, and with tears, and trials - These are the concomitants of it. The service itself is described more particularly in the following verse. This humility he recommends to the Ephesians themselves, [Eph. iv, 2](#). His tears are mentioned again, verse 31, as also [2 Cor. ii, 4](#); [Phil. iii, 18](#). These passages laid together supply us with the genuine character of St. Paul.

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Holy tears, from those who seldom weep on account of natural occurrences, are no mean specimen of the efficacy and proof of the truth of Christianity. Yet joy is well consistent therewith, ver. 24. The same person may be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.

20. I have preached - Publicly; and taught - From house to house. Else he had not been pure from their blood. For even an apostle could not discharge his duty by public preaching only. How much less can an ordinary pastor!

21. Repentance toward God - The very first motion of the soul toward God is a kind of repentance.

22. Bound by the Spirit - Strongly impelled by him.

23. Save that - Only this I know in general; the Holy Ghost witnesseth - By other persons. Such was God's good pleasure to reveal these things to him, not immediately, but by the ministry of others.

24. Nor do I count my life precious - It adds great force to this and all the other passages of Scripture, in which the apostles express their contempt of the world, that they were not uttered by persons like Seneca and Antoninus, who talked elegantly of despising the world in the full affluence of all its enjoyments; but by men who daily underwent the greatest calamities, and exposed their lives in proof of their assertions.

25. Ye shall see my face no more - He wisely inserts this, that what follows might make the deeper impression.

27. For I have not shunned - Otherwise if any had perished, their blood would have been on his head.

28. Take heed therefore - I now devolve my care upon you; first to yourselves; then to the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers - For no man, or number of men upon earth, can constitute an overseer, bishop, or any other Christian minister. To do this is the peculiar work of the Holy Ghost: to feed the Church of God - That is, the believing, loving, holy children of God; which he hath purchased - How precious is it then in his sight! with his own blood - For it is the blood of the only begotten Son of God, [1 John i, 7](#).

29. Grievous wolves - From without, namely, false apostles. They had, not yet broke in on the Church at Ephesus.

30. Yea, from among yourselves men will arise - Such were the Nicolaitans, of whom Christ complains, [Rev. ii, 6](#); to draw away disciples - From the purity of the Gospel and the unity of the body.

31. I ceased not to warn every one night and day - This was watching indeed! Who copies after this example?

32. The word of his grace - It is the grand channel of it, to believers as well as unbelievers. Who is able to build you up - To confirm and increase your faith, love, holiness. God can thus build us up, without any instrument. But he does build us up by them. O beware of dreaming that you have less need of human teachers after you know Christ than before!

And to give you an inheritance - Of eternal glory, among them that are sanctified - And so made meet for it. A large number of these Paul doubtless knew, and remembered before God.

33. I have coveted - Here the apostle begins the other branch of his farewell discourse, like old Samuel, [1 Sam. xii, 3](#), taking his leave of the children of Israel.

34. These hands - Callous, as you see, with labour. Who is he that envies such a bishop or archbishop as this?

35. I have showed you - Bishops, by my example, all things - And this among the rest; that thus labouring - So far as the labours of your office allow you time; ye ought to help the weak - Those who are disabled by sickness, or any bodily infirmity, from maintaining themselves by their own labour. And to remember - Effectually, so as to follow it; the word which he himself said - Without doubt his disciples remembered many of his words which are not recorded. It is happier to give - To imitate God, and have him, as it were, indebted to us.

37. They all wept - Of old, men, yea, the best and bravest of men, were easily melted into tears; a thousand instances of which might be produced from profane as well as sacred writers. But now, notwithstanding the effeminacy which almost universally prevails, we leave those tears to women and children.

38. Sorrowing most for that word which he spake, that they should see his face no more - What sorrow will be in the great day, when God shall speak that word to all who are found on the left hand, that they shall see his face no more!

## XXI

1. And when we were torn away from the in - Not without doing violence both to ourselves and them.

3. We landed at Tyre - That there should be Christians there was foretold, [Psalm lxxxvii](#), 4. What we read in that Psalm of the Philistines and Ethiopians also may be compared with chap. viii, 40; xxvii, 4.

4. And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days - In order to spend a Sabbath with them. Who told Paul by the Spirit - That afflictions awaited him at Jerusalem. This was properly what they said by the Spirit. They themselves advised him not to go up. The disciples seemed to understand their prophetic impulse to be an intimation from the Spirit, that Paul, if he were so minded, might avoid the danger, by not going to Jerusalem.

7. Having finished our voyage - From Macedonia, chap. xx, 6, we came to Ptolemais - A celebrated city on the sea coast, anciently called Accos. It is now, like many other once noble cities, only a heap of ruins.

8. We came to Cesarea - So called from a stately temple which Herod the Great dedicated there to Augustus Caesar. It was the place where the Roman governor of Judea generally resided and kept his court. The evangelist, who was one of the seven deacons - An evangelist is a preacher of the Gospel to those who had never heard it, as Philip had done to the Samaritans, to the Ethiopian eunuch, and to all the towns from Azotus to Cesarea, chap. viii, 5, 26, 40. It is not unlikely he spent the following years preaching in Tyre and Sidon, and the other heathen cities in the neighbourhood of Galilee, his house being at Cesarea, a convenient situation for that purpose. We abode with him - We lodged at his house during our stay at Cesarea.

10. A certain prophet came - The nearer the event was, the more expressed were the predictions which prepared Paul for it.

11. Binding his own feet and hands - In the manner that malefactors were wont to be bound when apprehended. So shall the Jews bind the man whose girdle this is - St. Paul's bonds were first particularly foretold at Cesarea, to which he afterward came in bonds, chap. xxiii, 33.

12. Both we, (his fellow travelers,) and they of the place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem - St. Paul knew that this prediction had the force of a command. They did not know this.

13. Breaking my heart - For the apostles themselves were not void of human affections. I am ready not only to be bound, but to die - And to him that is ready for it, the burden is light.

14. And when he would not be persuaded - This was not obstinacy, but true Christian resolution. We should never be persuaded, either to do evil, or to omit doing any good

which is in our power; saying, the will of the Lord be done - Which they were satisfied Paul knew.

15. We took up our carriages - Our baggage; which probably went by sea before. What they took with them now in particular was the alms they were carrying to Jerusalem, chap. xxiv, 17.

16. The disciples brought us to one Mnason, a Cyprian, an old disciple - He was a native of Cyprus, but an inhabitant of Jerusalem, and probably one of the first converts there.

18. Paul went in with us - That it might appear we are all of one mind, to James - Commonly called the Lord's brother; the only apostle then presiding over the Churches in Judea.

20. They are all zealous for the law - For the whole Mosaic dispensation. How astonishing is this! Did none of the apostles, beside St. Paul, know that this dispensation was now abolished? And if they did both know and testify this, how came their hearers not to believe them?

21. They have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest the Jews - not to circumcise their children, nor to walk after the customs - Of the Mosaic law. And so undoubtedly he did. And so he wrote to all the Churches in Galatia, among whom were many Jews. Yea, and James himself had long before assented to Peter, affirming before all the apostles and all the brethren, chap. xv, 10, That this very law was a yoke which (said he) neither our fathers nor we were able to bear - Amazing! that they did not know this! Or, that if they did, they did not openly testify it at all hazards, to every Jewish convert in Jerusalem!

22. What is it therefore - What is to be done? The multitude must needs come together - They will certainly gather together in a tumultuous manner, unless they be some way pacified.

23. Therefore - To obviate their prejudice against thee: do this that we say to thee - Doubtless they meant this advice well: but could Paul follow it in godly sincerity? Was not the yielding so far to the judgment of others too great a deference to be paid to any mere men?

24. And all will know - that thou thyself walkest orderly, keeping the law - Ought he not, without any reverence to man, where the truth of God was so deeply concerned, to have answered plainly, I do not keep the Mosaic law; neither need any of you. Yea, Peter doth not keep the law. And God himself expressly commanded him not to keep it; ordering him to go in to men uncircumcised, and to eat with them, chap. xi, 3, which the law utterly forbids.

26. Then Paul took the men - Yielding his own judgment to their advice, which seemed to flow not out of spiritual but carnal wisdom; seeming to be what he really was not: making as if he believed the law still in force. Declaring - Giving notice to the priests in waiting, that

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he designed to accomplish the days of purification, till all the sacrifice should be offered, as the Mosaic law required, [Num. vi, 13](#).

27. And when the seven days were about to be accomplished - When after giving notice to the priests, they were entering upon the accomplishment of those days. It was toward the beginning of them that Paul was seized. The Jews that were from Asia - Some of those Jews who came from Asia to the feast.

28. Against the people - The Jewish nation; and the law - Of Moses; and this place - The temple. Yea, and hath even brought Greeks into the temple - They might come into the outer court. But they imagined Paul had brought then into the inner temple, and had thereby polluted it.

30. And immediately the gates were shut - Both to prevent any further violation of the temple; and to prevent Paul's taking sanctuary at the horns of the altar.

31. And as they went about to kill him - It was a rule among the Jews, that any uncircumcised person who came into the inner temple, might be stoned without farther process. And they seemed to think Paul, who brought such in thither, deserved no better treatment. Word came to the tribune - A cohort or detachment of soldiers, belonging to the Roman legion, which lodged in the adjacent castle of Antonia, were stationed on feast days near the temple, to prevent disorders. It is evident, Lysias himself was not present, when the tumult began. Probably he was the oldest Roman tribune (or colonel) then at Jerusalem. And as such he was the commanding officer of the legion quartered at the castle.

33. Then the tribune - Having made his way through the multitude, came near and took him - And how many great ends of providence were answered by this imprisonment? This was not only a means of preserving his life, (after he had suffered severely for worldly prudence,) but gave him an opportunity of preaching the Gospel safely, in spite of all tumult, chap. xxii, 22, yea, and that in those places to which otherwise he could have had no access, verse 40. And commanded him to be bound with two chains - Taking it for granted he was some notorious offender. And thus the prophecy of Agabus was fulfilled, though by the hands of a Roman.

35. When he came upon the stairs - The castle of Antonia was situate on a rock fifty cubits high, at that corner of the outward temple, where the western and northern porticos joined, to each of which there were stairs descending from it.

37. As Paul was about to be brought into the castle - The wisdom of God taught to make use of that very time and place.

38. Art not thou that Egyptian - Who came into Judea when Felix had been some years governor there! Calling himself a prophet, he drew much people after him; and having brought them through the wilderness, led them to Mount Olivet, promising that the walls of the city should fall down before them. But Felix marching out of Jerusalem against him,

his followers quickly dispersed, many of whom were taken or slain; but he himself made his escape.

40. In the Hebrew tongue - That dialect of it, which was then commonly spoken at Jerusalem.

## XXII

1. Hear ye now my defense - Which they could not hear before for the tumult.

3. I am verily - This defense answers all that is objected, chap. xxi, 28. As there, so here also mention is made of the person of Paul, ver. 3, of the people and the law, ver. 3, 5, 12; of the temple, ver. 17; of teaching all men, ver. 15-17, 21; and of the truth of his doctrine, ver. 6. But he speaks closely and nervously, in few words, because the time was short. But brought up at the feet of Gamaliel - The scholars usually sat on low seats, or upon mats on the floor, at the feet of their masters, whose seats were raised to a considerable height. Accurately instructed - The learned education which Paul had received was once no doubt the matter of his boasting and confidence. Unsanctified learning made his bonds strong, and furnished him with numerous arguments against the Gospel. Yet when the grace of God had changed his heart, and turned his accomplishments into another channel, he was the fitter instrument to serve God's wise and merciful purposes, in the defense and propagation of Christianity.

4. And persecuted this way - With the same zeal that you do now. Binding both men and women - How much better was his condition, now he was bound himself.

5. The high priest is my witness - Is able to testify. The brethren -- Jews: so this title was not peculiar to the Christians.

6. About noon - All was done in the face of the sun. A great light shone - By whatever method God reveals himself to us, we shall have everlasting cause to recollect it with pleasure. Especially when he has gone in any remarkable manner out of his common way for this gracious purpose. If so, we should often dwell on the particular circumstances, and be ready, on every proper occasion, to recount those wonders of power and love, for the encouragement and instruction of others.

9. They did not hear the voice - Distinctly; but only a confused noise.

12. A devout man according to the law - A truly religious person, and though a believer in Christ, yet a strict observer of the law of Moses.

16. Be baptized, and wash away thy sins - Baptism administered to real penitents, is both a means and seal of pardon. Nor did God ordinarily in the primitive Church bestow this on any, unless through this means.

17. When I was returned to Jerusalem - From Damascus, and was praying in the temple - Whereby he shows that he still paid the temple its due honour, as the house of prayer. I was in a trance - Perhaps he might continue standing all the while, so that any who were near him would hardly discern it.

18. And I saw him - Jesus, saying to me, Depart quickly out of Jerusalem - Because of the snares laid for thee: and in order to preach where they will hear.

19. And I said - It is not easy for a servant of Christ, who is himself deeply impressed with Divine truths, to imagine to what a degree men are capable of hardening their hearts

against thee. He is often ready to think with Paul, It is impossible for any to resist such evidence. But experience makes him wiser and shows that wilful unbelief is proof against all truth and reason.

20. When the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by - A real convert still retains the remembrance of his former sins. He confesses them and is humbled for them, all the days of his life.

22. And they heard him to this word - Till he began to speak of his mission to the Gentiles, and this too in such a manner as implied that the Jews were in danger of being cast off.

23. They rent their garments - In token of indignation and horror at this pretended blasphemy, and cast dust into the air - Through vehemence of rage, which they knew not how to vent.

25. And as they - The soldiers ordered by the tribune, were binding him with thongs - A freeman of Rome might be bound with a chain and beaten with a staff: but he might not be bound with thongs, neither scourged, or beaten with rods: Paul said to the centurion - The captain, who stood by to see the orders of the tribune executed.

26. Consider what thou art about to do; for this man is a Roman - Yea, there was a stronger reason to consider. For this man was a servant of God.

28. But I was free born - Not barely as being born at Tarsus; for this was not Roman colony. But probably either his father, or some of his ancestors, had been made free of Rome, for some military service. We learn hence, that we are under no obligation as Christians to give up our civil privileges (which we are to receive and prize as the gift of God) to every insolent invader. In a thousand circumstances, gratitude to God, and duty to men, will oblige us to insist upon them; and engage us to strive to transmit them improved, rather than impaired to posterity.

## XXIII

1. And Paul earnestly beholding the council - Professing a clear conscience by his very countenance; and likewise waiting to see whether any of them was minded to ask him any question, said, I have lived in all good conscience before God till this day - He speaks chiefly of the time since he became a Christian. For none questioned him concerning what he had been before. And yet even in his unconverted state, although he was in an error, yet he had acted from conscience, before God - Whatever men may think or say of me.

3. Then said Paul - Being carried away by a sudden and prophetic impulse. God is about to smite thee, thou whited wall - Fair without; full of dirt and rubbish within. And he might well be so termed, not only as he committed this outrage, while gravely sitting on the tribunal of justice but also as, at the same time that he stood high in the esteem of the citizens, he cruelly defrauded the priests of their legal subsistence, so that some of them even perished for want. And God did remarkably smite him; for about five years after this, his house being reduced to ashes, in a tumult begun by his own son, he was besieged in the royal palace; where having hid himself in an old aqueduct, he was dragged out and miserably slain.

5. I was not aware, brethren, that it was the high priest - He seems to mean, I did not advert to it, in the prophetic transport of my mind: but he does not add, that his not adverting to it proceeded from the power of the Spirit coming upon him; as knowing they were not able to bear it. This answer admirably shows the situation of mind he was then in, partly with regard to the bystanders, whom he thus softens, adding also the title of brethren, and justifying their reproof by the prohibition of Moses; partly with regard to himself, who, after that singular transport subsided, was again under the direction of the general command. [Exod. xxii, 28.](#)

6. I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: for the hope of the resurrection of the dead am I called in question - So he was in effect; although not formally, or explicitly.

8. The Pharisees confess both - Both the resurrection, and the existence of angels and separate spirits.

9. And the scribes of the Pharisees' side arising - Every sect contains both learned and unlearned. The former used to be the mouth of the party. If a spirit - St. Paul in his speech from the stairs had affirmed, that Jesus, whom they knew to have been dead, was alive, and that he had spoken to him from heaven, and again in a vision. So they add nothing, only they construe it in their own way, putting an angel or spirit for Jesus.

11. And the night following, the Lord Jesus - What Paul had before purposed in spirit, chap. xix, 21, God now in due time confirms. Another declaration to the same effect is made by an angel of God, chap. xxvii, 23. And from the 23rd chapter the sum of this book turns on the testimony of Paul to the Romans. How would the defenders of St. Peter's supremacy triumph, could they find out half as much ascribed to him! Be of good courage, Paul - As he laboured under singular distresses and persecutions, so he was favoured with extraordinary

assurances of the Divine assistance. Thou must testify - Particular promises are usually given when all things appear desperate. At Rome also - Danger is nothing in the eyes of God: all hindrances farther his work. A promise of what is afar off, implies all that necessarily lies between. Paul shall testify at Rome: therefore he shall come to Rome; therefore he shall escape the Jews, the sea, the viper.

12. Some of the Jews bound themselves - Such execrable vows were not uncommon among the Jews. And if they were prevented from accomplishing what they had vowed, it was an easy matter to obtain absolution from their rabbis.

15. Now therefore ye - Which they never scrupled at all, as not doubting but they were doing God service.

17. And Paul - Though he had an express promise of it from Christ, was not to neglect any proper means of safety.

19. And the tribune taking him by the hand - In a mild, condescending way. Lysias seems to have conducted this whole affair with great integrity, humanity, and prudence.

24. Provide beasts - If a change should be necessary, to set Paul on - So we read of his riding once; but not by choice.

27. Having learned that he was a Roman - True; but not before he rescued him. Here he uses art.

31. The soldiers brought him by night to Antipatris - But not the same night they set out. For Antipatris was about thirty-eight of our miles northwest of Jerusalem. Herod the Great rebuilt it, and gave it this name in honour of his father Antipater: Cesarea was near seventy miles from Jerusalem, and about thirty from Antipatris.

35. In Herod's palace - This was a palace and a court built by Herod the Great. Probably some tower belonging to it might be used for a kind of state prison.

## XXIV

1. Ananias - Who would spare no trouble on the occasion, with several of the elders, members of the sanhedrim.

2. Tertullus began - A speech how different from St. Paul's; which is true, modest, solid, and without paint. Felix was a man of the most infamous character, and a plague to all the provinces over which he presided.

4. But that I may not trouble thee any further - By trespassing either on thy patience or modesty. The eloquence of Tertullus was as bad as his cause: a lame introduction, a lame transition, and a lame conclusion. Did not God confound the orator's language?

10. Knowing - for several years thou hast been a judge over this nation - And so not unacquainted with our religious rites and customs, and consequently more capable of understanding and deciding a cause of this nature. There was no flattery in this. It was a plain fact. He governed Judea six or seven years. I answer for myself - As it may be observed, his answer exactly corresponds with the three articles of Tertullus's charge: sedition, heresy, and profanation of the temple. As to the first, he suggests, that he had not been long enough at Jerusalem to form a party and attempt an insurrection: (for it was about twelve days since he came up thither; five of which he had been at Cesarea, ver. 1; one or two were spent in his journey thither, and most of the rest he had been confined at Jerusalem.) And he challenges them, in fact, to produce any evidence of such practices, ver. 11-13. As to the second, he confesses himself to be a Christian; but maintains this to be a religion perfectly agreeable to the law and the prophets, and therefore deserving a fair reception, ver. 14, 16. And as for profaning the temple, he observes that he behaved there in a most peaceful and regular manner, so that his innocence had been manifest even before the sanhedrim, where the authors of the tumult did not dare to appear against him.

14. After the way which they call heresy - This appellation St. Paul corrects. Not that it was then an odious word; but it was not honourable enough. A party or sect (so that word signifies) is formed by men. This way was prescribed by God. The apostle had now said what was sufficient for his defense; but having a fair occasion, he makes an ingenuous confession of his faith in this verse, his hope in the next, his love in the 17th. verse. So worship I the God of my fathers - This was a very proper plea before a Roman magistrate; as it proved that he was under the protection of the Roman laws, since the Jews were so: whereas had he introduced the worship of new gods he would have forfeited that protection. Believing all things which are written - Concerning the Messiah.

15. Both of the just and of the unjust - In a public court this was peculiarly proper to be observed.

16. For this cause - With a view to this, I also exercise myself - As well as they.

19. Who ought to have been present before thee - But the world never commit greater blunders, even against its own laws, than when it is persecuting the children of God.

21. Unless they think me blamable for this one word - Which nevertheless was the real truth. chap. xxiii, 6.

22. After I have been more accurately informed - Which he afterward was; and he doubtless (as well as Festus and Agrippa) transmitted a full account of these things to Rome.

23. He commanded the centurion to let him have liberty - To be only a prisoner at large. Hereby the Gospel was spread more and more; not to the satisfaction of the Jews. But they could not hinder it.

24. And after Paul had been kept some days in this gentle confinement at Cesarea, Felix, who had been absent for a short time, coming thither again, with Drusilla, his wife - The daughter of Herod Agrippa, one of the finest women of that age. Felix persuaded her to forsake her husband, Azizus, king of Emessa, and to be married to himself, though a heathen. She was afterward, with a son she had by Felix, consumed in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius. Concerning the faith in Christ - That is, the doctrine of Christ.

25. And as he reasoned of justice, temperance, and judgment to come - This was the only effectual way of preaching Christ to an unjust, lewd judge. Felix being terrified - How happily might this conviction have ended, had he been careful to pursue the views which were then opening upon his mind! But, like thousands, he deferred the consideration of these things to a more convenient season. A season which, alas! never came. For though he heard again, he was terrified no more. In the meantime we do not find Drusilla, though a Jewess, was thus alarmed. She had been used to hear of a future judgment: perhaps too she trusted to the being a daughter of Abraham, or to the expiation of the law, and so was proof against the convictions which seized on her husband, though a heathen. Let this teach us to guard against all such false dependencies as tend to elude those convictions that might otherwise be produced in us by the faithful preaching of the word of God. Let us stop our ears against those messengers of Satan, who appear as angels of light; who would teach us to reconcile the hope of salvation with a corrupt heart or an unholy life. Go thy way for this time - O how will every damned soul one day lament his having neglected such a time as this!

26. He hoped also - An evil hope: so when he heard his eye was not single. No marvel then that he profited nothing by all St. Paul's discourses: that money would be given - By the Christians for the liberty of so able a minister. And waiting for this, unhappy Felix fell short of the treasure of the Gospel.

27. But after two years - After St. Paul had been two years a prisoner, Felix desiring to gratify the Jews, left Paul bound - Thus men of the world, to gratify one another, stretch forth their hands to the things of God! Yet the wisdom of Felix did not profit him, did not satisfy the Jews at all. Their accusations followed him to Rome, and had utterly ruined him, but for the interest which his brother Pallas had with Nero.

## XXV

2. Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews appeared against Paul - In so long a time their rage was not cooled. So much louder a call had Paul to the Gentiles.

4. But Festus answered - So Festus's care to preserve the imperial privileges was the means of preserving Paul's life. By what invisible springs does God govern the world! With what silence, and yet with what wisdom and energy!

5. Let those of you who are able - Who are best able to undertake the journey, and to manage the cause. If there be any wickedness in him - So he does not pass sentence before he hears the cause.

6. Not more than ten days - A short space for a new governor to stay at such a city as Jerusalem. He could not with any convenience have heard and decided the cause of Paul within that time.

7. Bringing many accusations - When many accusations are heaped together, frequently not one of them is true.

8. While he answered - To a general charge a general answer was sufficient.

9. Art thou willing to go up to Jerusalem - Festus could have ordered this without asking Paul. But God secretly overruled the whole, that he might have an occasion of appealing to Rome.

10. I am standing at Caesar's judgment seat - For all the courts of the Roman governors were held in the name of the emperor, and by commission from him. No man can give me up - He expresses it modestly: the meaning is, Thou canst not. I appeal to Caesar - Which any Roman citizen might do before sentence was passed.

12. The council - It was customary for a considerable number of persons of distinction to attend the Roman governors. These constituted a kind of council, with whom they frequently advised.

13. Agrippa - The son of Herod Agrippa, chap. xii, 1; and Bernice - His sister, with whom he lived in a scandalous familiarity. This was the person whom Titus Vespasian so passionately loved, that he would have made her empress, had not the clamours of the Roman prevented it.

15. Desiring judgment against him - As upon a previous conviction, which they falsely pretended.

16. It is not the custom of the Roman - How excellent a rule, to condemn no one unheard! A rule, which as it is common to all nations, (courts of inquisition only excepted,) so it ought to direct our proceedings in all affairs, not only in public, but private life.

18. Such things as I supposed - From their passion and vehemence.

19. But had certain questions - How coldly does he mention the things of the last importance! And about one Jesus - Thus does Festus speak of Him, to whom every knee shall bow! Whom Paul affirmed to be alive - And was this a doubtful question? But why, O Festus,

didst thou doubt concerning it? Only because thou didst not search into the evidence of it. Otherwise that evidence might have opened to thee, till it had grown up into full conviction; and thy illustrious prisoner have led thee into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

23. With the tribunes and principal men of the city - The chief officers, both military and civil.

## XXVI

And Paul stretching forth his hand - Chained as it was: a decent expression of his own earnestness, and proper to engage the attention of his hearers; answered for himself - Not only refuting the accusations of the Jews, but enlarging upon the faith of the Gospel.

2. King Agrippa - There is a peculiar force in thus addressing a person by name. Agrippa felt this.

3. Who art accurately acquainted - Which Festus was not; with the customs - In practical matters; and questions - In speculative. This word Festus had used in the absence of Paul, chap. xxv, 19, who, by the Divine leading, repeats and explains it. Agrippa had had peculiar advantages for an accurate knowledge of the Jewish customs and questions, from his education under his father Herod, and his long abode at Jerusalem. Nothing can be imagined more suitable or more graceful, than this whole discourse of Paul before Agrippa; in which the seriousness of the Christian, the boldness of the apostle, and the politeness of the gentleman and the scholar, appear in a most beautiful contrast, or rather a most happy union.

4. From my youth, which was from the beginning - That is, which was from the beginning of my youth.

5. If they would testify - But they would not, for they well knew what weight his former life must add to his present testimony.

6. And now - This and the two following verses are in a kind of ver. 6, 7, 8 parenthesis, and show that what the Pharisees rightly taught concerning the resurrection, Paul likewise asserted at this day. The ninth verse is connected with the fifth. For Pharisaism ver. 9, 5 impelled him to persecute. I stand in judgment for the hope of the promise - Of the resurrection. So it was in effect. For unless Christ had risen, there could have been no resurrection of the dead. And it was chiefly for testifying the resurrection of Christ, that the Jews still persecuted him.

7. Our twelve tribes - For a great part of the ten tribes also had at various times returned from the east to their own country, [James i, 1](#); [1 Pet. i, 1](#). Worshipping continually night and day - That is, this is what they aim at in all their public and private worship.

8. Is it judged by you an incredible thing - It was by Festus, chap. xxv, 19, to whom Paul answers as if he had heard him discourse.

9. I thought - When I was a Pharisee: that I ought to do many things - Which he now enumerates.

10. I shut up many of the saints - Men not only innocent, but good, just, holy. I gave my vote against them - That is, I joined with those who condemned them. Perhaps the chief priests did also give him power to vote on these occasions.

11. I compelled them - That is, some of them; to blaspheme - This is the most dreadful of all! Repent, ye enemies of the Gospel. If Spira, who was compelled, suffered so terribly, what will become of those who compel, like Saul, but do not repent like him.

12. [Acts ix, 2.](#)

13. O King - Most seasonably, in the height of the narration, does he thus fix the king's attention. Above the brightness of the sun - And no marvel. For what is the brightness of this created sun, to the Sun of righteousness, the brightness of the Father's glory?

14. In the Hebrew tongue - St. Paul was not now speaking in Hebrew: when he was, chap. xxiii, 7, he did not add, In the Hebrew tongue. Christ used this tongue both on earth and from heaven.

17. Delivering thee from the people - The Jews and the Gentiles, to whom, both Jews and Gentiles, I now send thee - Paul gives them to know, that the liberty he enjoys even in bonds, was promised to him, as well as his preaching to the Gentiles. I, denotes the authority of the sender. Now, the time whence his mission was dated. For his apostleship, as well as his conversion, commenced at this moment.

18. To open - He opens them, who sends Paul; and he does it by Paul who is sent; their eyes - Both of the Jews and Gentiles: that they may turn - Through the power of the Almighty, from the spiritual darkness wherein they were involved, to the light of Divine knowledge and holiness, and from the power of Satan, who now holds them in sin, guilt, and misery, to the love and happy service of God: that they may receive through faith - (He seems to place the same blessings in a fuller light,) pardon, holiness, and glory.

19. From that time - Having received power to obey, I was not disobedient - I did obey, I used that power, [Gal. i, 16.](#) So that even this grace whereby St. Paul was influenced was not irresistible.

20. I declared - From that hour to this, both to Jew and Gentile, that they should repent - This repentance, we may observe, is previous both to inward and outward holiness.

21. For these things - The apostle now applies all that he had said.

22. Having obtained help from God - When all other help failed, God sent the Roman from the castle, and so fulfilled the promise he had made, ver. 17.

24. Festus said, Paul, thou art beside thyself - To talk of men's rising from the dead! And of a Jew's enlightening not only his own nation, but tho polite and learned Greeks and Romans! Nay, Festus, it is thou that art beside thyself. That strikest quite wide of the mark. And no wonder: he saw that nature did not act in Paul; but the grace that acted in him he did not see. And therefore he took all this ardour which animated the apostle for a mere start of learned phrensy.

25. I am not mad, most excellent Festus - The style properly belonging to a Roman propretor. How inexpressibly beautiful is this reply! How strong! yet how decent and respectful! Mad men seldom call men by their names, and titles of honour. Thus also St. Paul refutes the charge. But utter the words of truth (confirmed in the next verse) and sobriety - The very reverse of madness. And both these remain, even when the men of God act with the utmost vehemence.

26. For the king knoweth of these things - St. Paul having refuted Festus, pursues his purpose, returning naturally, and as it were, step by step, from Festus to Agrippa. To whom I speak with freedom - This freedom was probably one circumstance which Festus accounted madness.

27. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? - He that believes these, believes Paul, yea, and Christ. The apostle now comes close to his heart. What did Agrippa feel when he heard this? I know that thou believest! - Here Paul lays so fast hold on the king that he can scarce make any resistance.

28. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian! - See here, Festus altogether a heathen, Paul altogether a Christian, Agrippa halting between both. Poor Agrippa! But almost persuaded! So near the mark, and yet fall short! Another step, and thou art within the vail. Reader, stop not with Agrippa; but go on with Paul.

29. I would to God - Agrippa had spoke of being a Christian, as a thing wholly in his own power. Paul gently corrects this mistake; intimating, it is the gift and the work of God; that all that hear me - It was modesty in St. Paul, not to apply directly to them all; yet he looks upon them and observes them; were such as I am - Christians indeed; full of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He speaks from a full sense of his own happiness, and an overflowing love to all.

30. And as he said this, the king rose up - An unspeakably precious moment to Agrippa. Whether he duly improved it or no, we shall see in that day.

31. This man doth nothing worthy of death, or of bonds - They speak of his whole life, not of one action only. And could ye learn nothing more than this from that discourse? A favourable judgment of such a preacher, is not all that God requires.

## XXVII

1. As soon as it was determined to sail - As being a shorter and less expensive passage to Rome.
2. Adramyttium - was a sea port of Mysia. Aristarchus and Luke went with Paul by choice, not being ashamed of his bonds.
3. Julius treating Paul courteously - Perhaps he had heard him make his defense.
4. We sailed under Cyprus - Leaving it on the left hand.
7. Cnidus - was a cape and city of Caria.
8. The Fair Havens still retain the name. But the city of Lasea is now utterly lost, together with many more of the hundred cities for which Crete was once so renowned.
9. The fast, or day of atonement, was kept on the tenth of Tisri, that is, the 25th of September. This was to them an ill time of sailing; not only because winter was approaching, but also because of the sudden storms, which are still common in the Mediterranean at that time of the year. Paul exhorted them - Not to leave Crete. Even in external things, faith exerts itself with the greatest presence of mind, and readiness of advice.
10. Saying to them - To the centurion and other officers.
11. The centurion regarded the master - And indeed it is a general rule, believe an artificer in his own art. Yet when there is the greatest need, a real Christian will often advise even better than him.
12. Which is a haven - Having a double opening, one to the southwest, the other to the northwest.
14. There arose against it - The south wind; a tempestuous wind, called in those parts Euroclydon. This was a kind of hurricane, not carrying them any one way, but tossing them backward and forward. These furious winds are now called levanters, and blow in all directions from the northeast to the southeast.
16. We were hardly able to get masters of the boat - To prevent its being staved.
18. They lightened the ship - Casting the heavy goods into the sea.
19. We cast out the tackling of the ship - Cutting away even those masts that were not absolutely necessary.
20. Neither sun nor stars appeared for many days - Which they could the less spare, before the compass was found out.
21. This loss - Which is before your eyes.
23. The God whose I am, and whom I serve - How short a compendium of religion! Yet how full! Comprehending both faith, hope, and love.
24. God hath given - Paul had prayed for them. And God gave him their lives; perhaps their souls also. And the centurion, subserving the providence of God, gave to Paul the lives of the prisoners. How wonderfully does his providence reign in the most contingent things! And rather will many bad men be preserved with a few good, (so it frequently happens.)

than one good man perish with many bad. So it was in this ship: so it is in the world. Thee - At such a time as this, there was not the same danger, which might otherwise have been, of St. Paul's seeming to speak out of vanity, what he really spoke out of necessity. All the souls - Not only all the prisoners, as Julius afterward did, ver. 43; ask for souls, they shall be given thee: yea, more than thou hopest for, that sail with thee - So that Paul, in the sight of God, was the master and pilot of the ship.

27. The fourteenth night - Since they left Crete, ver. 18, 19. In the Adriatic sea - So the ancients called all that part of the Mediterranean, which lay south of Italy.

30. The sailors were attempting to flee out of the ship - Supposing the boat would go more safely over the shallows.

31. Unless these mariners abide in the ship - Without them ye know not how to manage her, ye cannot be saved - He does not say we. That they would not have regarded. The soldiers were not careful for the lives of the prisoners: nor was Paul careful for his own. We may learn hence, to use the most proper means for security and success, even while we depend on Divine Providence, and wait for the accomplishment of God's own promise. He never designed any promise should encourage rational creatures to act in an irrational manner; or to remain inactive, when he has given them natural capacities of doing something, at least, for their own benefit. To expect the accomplishment of any promise, without exerting these, is at best vain and dangerous presumption, if all pretense of relying upon it be not profane hypocrisy.

33. Ye continue fasting, having taken nothing - No regular meal, through a deep sense of their extreme danger. Let us not wonder then, if men who have a deep sense of their extreme danger of everlasting death, for a time forget even to eat their bread, or to attend to their worldly affairs. Much less let us censure that as madness, which may be the beginning of true wisdom.

34. This is for your preservation - That ye may be the better able to swim to shore.

36. Then they were all encouraged - By his example, as well as words.

38. Casting out the wheat - So firmly did they now depend on what St. Paul had said.

39. They did not know the land - Which they saw near them: having a level shore.

40. Loosing the rudder bands - Their ships had frequently two rudders, one on each side. were fastened while they let the ship drive; but were now loosened, when they had need of them to steer her into the creek.

41. A place where two seas met - Probably by reason of a sand bank running parallel with the shore.

42. The counsel - Cruel, unjust, ungrateful.

44. They all escaped safe to land - And some of them doubtless received the apostle as a teacher sent from God. These would find their deliverance from the fury of the sea, but

an earnest of an infinitely greater deliverance, and are long ere this lodged with him in a more peaceful harbour than Malta, or than the earth could afford.

**XXVIII**

1. Melita or Malta, is about twelve miles broad, twenty long, and sixty distant from Sicily to the south. It yields abundance of honey, (whence its name was taken,) with much cotton, and is very fruitful, though it has only three feet depth of earth above the solid rock. The Emperor Charles the Fifth gave it, in 1530, to the knights of Rhodes, driven out of Rhodes by the Turks. They are a thousand in number, of whom five hundred always reside on the island.

2. And the barbarians - So the Roman and Greeks termed all nations but their own. But surely the generosity shown by these uncultivated inhabitants of Malta, was far more valuable than all the varnish which the politest education could give, where it taught not humanity and compassion.

4. And when the barbarians saw - they said - Seeing also his chains, Doubtless this man is a murderer - Such rarely go unpunished even in this life; whom vengeance hath not suffered to live - They look upon him as a dead man already. It is with pleasure that we trace among these barbarians the force of conscience, and the belief of a particular providence: which some people of more learning have stupidly thought it philosophy to despise. But they erred in imagining, that calamities must always be interpreted as judgments. Let us guard against this, lest, like them, we condemn not only the innocent, but the excellent of the earth.

5. Having shaken off the venomous animal, he suffered no harm - The words of an eminent modern historian are, "No venomous kind of serpent now breeds in Malta, neither hurts if it be brought thither from another place. Children are seen there handling and playing even with scorpions; I have seen one eating them." If this be so, it seems to be fixed by the wisdom of God, as an eternal memorial of what he once wrought there.

6. They changed their minds, and said he was a God - Such is the stability of human reason! A little before he was a murderer; and presently he is a God: (just as the people of Lystra; one hour sacrificing, and the next stoning;) nay, but there is a medium. He is neither a murderer nor a God, but a man of God. But natural men never run into greater mistakes, than in judging of the children of God.

7. The chief man of the island - In wealth if not in power also. Three days - The first three days of our stay on the island.

11. Whose sign was - It was the custom of the ancients to have images on the head of their ships, from which they took their names. Castor and Pollux - Two heathen gods who were thought favourable to mariners.

15. The brethren -- that is, the Christians, came out thence to meet us - It is remarkable that there is no certain account by whom Christianity was planted at Rome. Probably some inhabitants of that city were at Jerusalem on the day of pentecost, chap. ii, 10; and being then converted themselves, carried the Gospel thither at their return. Appii-Forum was a

town fifty-one miles from Rome; the Three Taverns about thirty. He took courage - He saw Christ was at Rome also, and now forgot all the troubles of his journey.

16. With the soldier - To whom he was chained, as the Roman custom was.

17. And after three days - Given to rest and prayer, Paul called the chief of the Jews together - He always sought the Jews first; but being now bound, he could not so conveniently go round to them. Though I have done nothing - Seeing him chained, they might have suspected he had. Therefore he first obviates this suspicion.

19. When the Jews opposed it - He speaks tenderly of them, not mentioning their repeated attempts to murder him. Not that I had any thing to accuse my nation of - Not that I had any design to accuse others, but merely to defend myself.

20. The hope of Israel - What Israel hopes for, namely, the Messiah and the resurrection.

21. We have neither received letters concerning thee - There must have been a peculiar providence in this, nor has any of the brethren -- the Jews, related - Professedly, in a set discourse, or spoke - Occasionally, in conversation, any evil of thee - How must the bridle then have been in their mouth!

22. This sect we know is everywhere spoken against - This is no proof at all of a bad cause, but a very probable mark of a good one.

23. To whom he expounded, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus - These were his two grand topics,

1. That the kingdom of the Messiah was of a spiritual, not temporal nature:
2. That Jesus of Nazareth was the very person foretold, as the Lord of that kingdom. On this head he had as much need to persuade as to convince, their will making as strong a resistance as their understanding.

24. And some believed the things that were spoken - With the heart, as well as understanding.

25. Well spake the Holy Ghost to your fathers - Which is equally applicable to you.

26. Hearing ye shall hear - That is, ye shall most surely hear, and shall not understand - The words manifestly denote a judicial blindness, consequent upon a wilful and obstinate resistance of the truth. First they would not, afterward they could not, believe. [Isaiah vi, 9](#), &c.; [Matt. xiii, 14](#); [John xii, 40](#).

28. The salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles - Namely, from this time. Before this no apostle had been at Rome. St. Paul was the first.

30. And Paul continued two whole years - After which this book was written, long before St. Paul's death, and was undoubtedly published with his approbation by St. Luke, who continued with him to the last, [2 Tim. iv, 11](#). And received all that came to him - Whether they were Jews or Gentiles. These two years completed twenty-five years after our saviour's passion. Such progress had the Gospel made by that time, in the parts of the world which

lay west of Jerusalem, by the ministry of St. Paul among the Gentiles. How far eastward the other apostles had carried it in the same time, history does not inform us.

31. No man forbidding him - Such was the victory of the word of God. While Paul was preaching at Rome, the Gospel shone with its highest lustre. Here therefore the Acts of the Apostles end; and end with great advantage. Otherwise St. Luke could easily have continued his narrative to the apostle's death.