

Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown
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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Commentary by DAVID BROWN

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is to the Gospels what the fruit is to the tree that bears it. In the Gospels we see the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying: in the Acts we see it bringing forth much fruit (Joh 12:24). There we see Christ purchasing the Church with His own blood: here we see the Church, so purchased, rising into actual existence; first among the Jews of Palestine, and next among the surrounding Gentiles, until it gains a footing in the great capital of the ancient world--sweeping majestically from Jerusalem to Rome. Nor is this book of less value as an Introduction to the Epistles which follow it, than as a Sequel to the Gospels which precede it. For without this history the Epistles of the New Testament--presupposing, as they do, the historical circumstances of the parties addressed, and deriving from these so much of their freshness, point, and force--would in no respect be what they now are, and would in a number of places be scarcely intelligible.

The genuineness, authenticity, and canonical authority of this book were never called in question within the ancient Church. It stands immediately after the Gospels, in the catalogues of the *Homologoumena*, or universally acknowledged books of the New Testament (see *Introduction* to our larger *Commentary*, Vol. V, pp. iv, v). It was rejected, indeed, by certain heretical sects in the second and third centuries--by the Ebionites, the Severians (see EUSEBIUS, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4.29), the Marcionites, and the Manicheans: but the totally uncritical character of their objections (see *Introduction* above referred to, pp. xiii, xiv) not only deprives them of all weight, but indirectly shows on what solid grounds the Christian Church had all along proceeded in recognizing this book.

In our day, however, its authenticity has, like that of all the leading books of the New Testament, been made the subject of keen and protracted controversy. DE WETTE, while admitting Luke to be the author of the entire work, pronounces the earlier portion of it to have been drawn up from unreliable sources (*New-Testament Introduction*, 2a, 2C). But the Tubingen school, with BAUR at their head, have gone much farther. As their fantastic theory of the post-Joannean date of the Gospels could not pretend even to a hearing so long as the authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles remained unshaken, they contend that the earlier portion of this work can be shown to be unworthy of credit, while the latter portion is in flat contradiction to the Epistle to the Galatians--which this school regard as unassailable--and bears internal evidence of being a designed distortion of facts for the purpose of setting up the catholic form which Paul gave to Christianity in opposition to the narrow Judaic but original form of it which Peter

preached, and which after the death of the apostles was held exclusively by the sect of the Ebionites. It is painful to think that anyone should have spent so many years, and, aided by learned and acute disciples in different parts of the argument, should have expended so much learning, research, and ingenuity in attempting to build up a hypothesis regarding the origination of the leading books of the New Testament which outrages all the principles of sober criticism and legitimate evidence. As a school, this party at length broke up: its head, after living to find himself the sole defender of the theory as a whole, left this earthly scene complaining of desertion. While some of his associates have abandoned such heartless studies altogether for the more congenial pursuits of philosophy, others have modified their attacks on the historical truth of the New Testament records, retreating into positions into which it is not worth while to follow them, while others still have been gradually approximating to sound principles. The one compensation for all this mischief is the rich additions to the apologetical and critical literature of the books of the New Testament, and the earliest history of the Christian Church, which it has drawn from the pens of THIERSCH, EBRARD, and many others. Any allusions which it may be necessary for us to make to the assertions of this school will be made in connection with the passages to which they relate--in Acts, First Corinthians, and Galatians.

The manifest connection between this book and the third Gospel--of which it professes to be simply the continuation by the same author--and the striking similarity which marks the style of both productions, leave no room to doubt that the early Church was right in ascribing it with one consent to Luke. The difficulty which some fastidious critics have made about the sources of the earlier portion of the history has no solid ground. That the historian himself was an eye-witness of the earliest scenes--as HUG concludes from the circumstantiality of the narrative--is altogether improbable: but there were hundreds of eye-witnesses of some of the scenes, and enough of all the rest, to give to the historian, partly by oral, partly by written testimony, all the details which he has embodied so graphically in his history; and it will appear, we trust, from the commentary, that De Wette's complaints of confusion, contradiction, and error in this portion are without foundation. The same critic, and one or two others, would ascribe to Timothy those later portions of the book in which the historian speaks in the first person plural--"we"; supposing him to have taken notes of all that passed under his own eye, which Luke embodied in his history just as they stood. It is impossible here to refute this gratuitous hypothesis in detail; but the reader will find it done by EBRARD (*The Gospel History*, sect. 110, Clark's translation; sect. 127 of the original work, *Wissenschaftliche Kritik der Evangelische Geschichte*, 1850), and by DAVIDSON (*Introduction to New Testament*, Vol. II, pp. 9-21).

The undesigned coincidences between this History and the Apostolic Epistles have been brought out and handled, as an argument for the truth of the facts thus attested, with unrivalled felicity by PALEY in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, to which Mr. BIRKS has made a number of ingenious additions in his *Horæ Apostolicæ*. Exception has been taken to some of these by JOWETT (*St. Paul's Epistles*, Vol. I, pp. 108 ff.), not without a measure of reason in certain cases--for our day, at least--though even he admits that in this line of evidence the work of PALEY, taken as a whole, is unassailable.

Much has been written about the object of this history. Certainly "the Acts of the Apostles" are but very partially recorded. But for this title the historian is not responsible. Between the two extremes--of supposing that the work has no plan at all, and that it is constructed on an elaborate and complex plan, we shall probably be as near the truth as is necessary if we take the design to be to record the diffusion of Christianity and the rise of the Christian Church, first among the Jews of Palestine, the seat of the ancient Faith, and next among the surrounding Gentiles, with

Antioch for its headquarters, until, finally, it is seen waving over imperial Rome, foretoking its universal triumph. In this view of it, there is no difficulty in accounting for the almost exclusive place which it gives to the labors of Peter in the first instance, and the all but entire disappearance from the history both of him and of the rest of the Twelve after the great apostle of the Gentiles came upon the stage--like the lesser lights on the rise of the great luminary.

CHAPTER 1

Ac 1:1-11. INTRODUCTION--LAST DAYS OF OUR LORD UPON EARTH--HIS ASCENSION.

1, 2. former treatise--Luke's Gospel.

Theophilus--(See on [Lu 1:3](#)).

began to do and teach--a very important statement, dividing the work of Christ into two great branches: the one embracing His work *on earth*, the other His subsequent work *from heaven*; the one in His own Person, the other by His Spirit; the one the "beginning," the other the continuance of the same work; the one complete when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the other to continue till His second appearing; the one recorded in "The Gospels," the *beginnings* only of the other related in this book of "The Acts." "Hence the grand history of what Jesus did and taught does not conclude with His departure to the Father; but Luke now begins it in a higher strain; for all the subsequent labors of the apostles are just an exhibition of *the ministry of the glorified Redeemer Himself* because they were acting under His authority, and He was the principle that operated in them all" [OLSHAUSEN].

2. after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments, &c.--referring to the charge recorded in Mt 28:18-20; Mr 16:15-18; Lu 24:44-49. It is worthy of notice that nowhere else are such communications of the risen Redeemer said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost." In general, this might have been said of all He uttered and all He did in His official character; for it was for this very end that God "gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (Joh 3:34). But after His resurrection, as if to signify the new relation in which He now stood to the Church, He signaled His first meeting with the assembled disciples by *breathing* on them (immediately after dispensing to them His *peace*) and saying, "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*" (Joh 20:22) thus anticipating the donation of the Spirit from His hands (see on [Joh 20:21, 22](#)); and on the same principle His parting charges are here said to have been given "through the Holy Ghost," as if to mark that He was now all redolent with the Spirit; that what had been husbanded, during His suffering work, for His own necessary uses, had now been set free, was already overflowing from Himself to His disciples, and needed but His ascension and glorification to flow all forth. (See on [Joh 7:39](#).)

3-5. showed himself alive--As the author is about to tell us that "*the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*" was the great burden of apostolic preaching, so the subject is here filly introduced by an allusion to the primary evidence on which that great fact rests, the repeated and undeniable manifestations of Himself in the body to the assembled disciples, who, instead of being predisposed to believe it, had to be overpowered by the resistless evidence of their own senses, and were slow of yielding even to this (Mr 16:14).

after his passion--or, suffering. This primary sense of the word "passion" has fallen into disuse; but it is nobly consecrated in the phraseology of the Church to express the Redeemer's final endurance.

seen of them forty days--This important specification of time occurs here only.

speaking of--rather "speaking."

the things pertaining to the kingdom of God--till now only in germ, but soon to take visible form; the earliest and the latest burden of His teaching on earth.

4. should not depart from Jerusalem--because the Spirit was to glorify the existing economy, by descending on the disciples at its metropolitan seat, and at the next of its great festivals after the ascension of the Church's Head; in order that "out of Zion might go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa 2:3; and compare Lu 24:49).

5. ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence--*ten* days hence, as appears from Le 23:15, 16; but it was expressed thus indefinitely to exercise their faith.

6-8. wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?--Doubtless their carnal views of Messiah's kingdom had by this time been modified, though how far it is impossible to say. But, as they plainly looked for *some* restoration of the kingdom to Israel, so they are neither rebuked nor contradicted on this point.

7. It is not for you to know the times, &c.--implying not only that this was *not* the time, but that the question was irrelevant to their present business and future work.

8. receive power--See Lu 24:49.

and ye shall be witnesses unto me . . . in Jerusalem . . . in all Judea . . . and unto the uttermost part of the earth--*This order of apostolic preaching and success supplies the proper key to the plan of the Acts*, which relates first the progress of the Gospel "in Jerusalem, and all Judea and Samaria" (the first through ninth chapters), and then "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (the tenth through twenty-eighth chapters).

9-11. while they beheld, he was taken up--See on [Lu 24:50-53](#). Lest it should be thought He had disappeared when they were looking in some other direction, and so was only *concluded* to have gone up to heaven, it is here expressly said that "*while they were looking* He was taken up, and a cloud received Him *out of their sight*." So Elijah, "If thou *see me* when I am taken from thee" (2Ki 2:10); "And Elisha *saw* it" (Ac 1:12). (See on [Lu 9:32](#).)

10. while they looked steadfastly toward heaven--following Him with their eager eyes, in rapt amazement. Not, however, as a mere fact is this recorded, but as a part of that resistless evidence of their senses on which their whole subsequent testimony was to be borne.

two men in white apparel--angels in human form, as in Lu 24:4.

11. Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven, &c.--"as if your now glorified Head were gone from you never to return: He is coming again; not another, but 'this same Jesus'; and 'as ye have seen Him go, in the like manner shall He come'--as *personally*, as *visibly*, as *gloriously*; and let the joyful expectation of this coming swallow up the sorrow of that departure."

Ac 1:12-26. RETURN OF THE ELEVEN TO JERUSALEM--PROCEEDINGS IN THE UPPER ROOM TILL PENTECOST.

12-14. a sabbath day's journey--about two thousand cubits.

13. went up into an upper room--perhaps the same "large upper room" where with their Lord they had celebrated the last Passover and the first Supper (Lu 22:12).

where abode--not lodged, but had for their place of rendezvous.

Peter, &c.--(See on [Mt 10:2-4](#)).

14. continued with one accord--knit by a bond stronger than death.

in prayer and supplication--for the promised baptism, the need of which in their orphan state would be increasingly felt.

and Mary the mother of Jesus--distinguished from the other "women," but "so as to exclude the idea of her having any pre-eminence over the disciples. We find her with the rest in prayer to her glorified Son" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. *This is the last mention of her in the New Testament.* The fable of the *Assumption of the Virgin* has no foundation even in tradition [ALFORD].

with his brethren--(See on [Joh 7:3](#)).

15-26. in those days--of expectant prayer, and probably towards the close of them, when the nature of their future work began more clearly to dawn upon them, and the Holy Ghost, already "breathed" on the Eleven (Joh 20:22), was stirring in Peter, who was to be the leading spirit of the infant community (Mt 16:19).

the number . . . about an hundred and twenty--Many, therefore, of the "five hundred brethren" who saw their risen Lord "at once" (1Co 15:6), must have remained in Galilee.

18. falling headlong, &c.--This information supplements, but by no means contradicts, what is said in Mt 27:5.

20. his bishopric--or "charge." The words are a combination of Ps 69:25 and Ps 109:8; in which the apostle discerns a greater than David, and a worse than Ahithophel and his fellow conspirators against David.

21. all the time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us--in the close intimacies of a three years' public life.

22. Beginning from the baptism of John--by whom our Lord was not only Himself baptized, but first officially announced and introduced to his own disciples.

unto that same day when he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection--How clearly is the primary office of the apostles here expressed: (1) to testify, from personal observation, to the one great fact of "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"; (2) to show how this glorified His whole previous life, of which they were constant observers, and established His divine claims.

23. they appointed--"put up" in nomination; meaning not the Eleven but the whole company, of whom Peter was the spokesman.

two--The choice would lie between a very few.

24. prayed and said, Thou, Lord, &c.--"The word 'Lord,' placed absolutely, denotes in the New Testament almost universally THE SON; and the words, 'Show whom Thou hast chosen,' are decisive. The apostles are just Christ's messengers: It is He that sends them, and of Him they bear witness. Here, therefore, we have the first example of a prayer offered to the exalted Redeemer; furnishing indirectly the strongest proof of His divinity" [OLSHAUSEN].

which knowest the hearts of all men--See Joh 2:24, 25; 21:15-17; Re 2:23.

25. that he might go to his own place--A euphemistic or softened expression of the awful future of the traitor, implying not only destined habitation but congenial element.

26. was numbered--"voted in" by general suffrage.

with the eleven apostles--completing the broken Twelve.

CHAPTER 2

Ac 2:1-13. DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT--THE DISCIPLES SPEAK WITH TONGUES--AMAZEMENT OF THE MULTITUDE.

1-4. when the day of Pentecost was fully come--The fiftieth from the morrow after the first Passover sabbath (Le 23:15, 16).

with one accord--the solemnity of the day, perhaps, unconsciously raising their expectations.

2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, &c.--"The whole description is so picturesque and striking that it could only come from an eye-witness" [OLSHAUSEN]. The suddenness, strength, and diffusiveness of the sound strike with deepest awe the whole company, and thus complete their preparation for the heavenly gift. Wind was a familiar emblem of the Spirit (Eze 37:9; Joh 3:8; 20:22). But this was not a rush of actual wind. It was only a sound "*as of*" it.

3. cloven tongues, like as of fire, &c.--"disparted tongues," that is, tongue-shaped, flame-like appearances, rising from a common center or root, and resting upon each of that large company:--beautiful visible symbol of the burning energy of the Spirit now descending in all His plenitude upon the Church, and about to pour itself through every tongue, and over every tribe of men under heaven!

4. they . . . began to speak with . . . tongues, &c.--real, living languages, as is plain from what follows. The thing uttered, probably the same by all, was "the wonderful works of God," perhaps in the inspired words of the Old Testament evangelical hymns; though it is next to certain that the speakers themselves understood nothing of what they uttered (see on [1Co 14:1-25](#)).

5-11. there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation--not, it would seem, permanently settled there (see Ac 2:9), though the language seems to imply more than a temporary visit to keep this one feast.

9-11. Parthians, &c.--Beginning with the farthest east, the Parthians, the enumeration proceeds farther and farther westward till it comes to Judea; next come the western countries,

from Cappadocia to Pamphylia; then the southern, from Egypt to Cyrene; finally, apart from all geographical consideration, Cretes and Arabians are placed together. This enumeration is evidently designed to convey an impression of universality [BAUMGARTEN].

Ac 2:14-36. PETER FOR THE FIRST TIME, PUBLICLY PREACHES CHRIST.

14-21. Peter, standing up with the eleven--in advance, perhaps, of the rest.

15. these are not drunken--meaning, not the Eleven, but the body of the disciples.
but the third hour--nine A.M. (see Ec 10:16; Isa 5:11; 1Th 5:17).

17. in the last days--meaning, the days of the Messiah (Isa 2:2); as closing all preparatory arrangements, and constituting the final dispensation of God's kingdom on earth.

pour out of my Spirit--in contrast with the mere drops of all preceding time.

upon all flesh--hitherto confined to the seed of Abraham.

sons . . . daughters . . . young men . . . old men . . . servants . . . handmaidens--without distinction of sex, age, or rank.

see visions . . . dream dreams--This is a mere accommodation to the ways in which the Spirit operated under the ancient economy, when the prediction was delivered; for in the New Testament, visions and dreams are rather the exception than the rule.

19. I will show wonders, &c.--referring to the signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem (see on [Lu 21:25-28](#)).

21. whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved--This points to the permanent establishment of the economy of salvation, which followed on the breaking up of the Jewish state.

22-28. a man approved of God--rather, "authenticated," "proved," or "demonstrated to be from God."

by miracles . . . which God did by him--This is not a low view of our Lord's miracles, as has been alleged, nor inconsistent with Joh 2:11, but is in strict accordance with His progress from humiliation to glory, and with His own words in Joh 5:19. This view of Christ is here dwelt on to exhibit to the Jews the whole course of Jesus of Nazareth as the ordinance and doing of *the God of Israel* [ALFORD].

23. determinate counsel and foreknowledge--God's fixed plan and perfect foresight of all the steps involved in it.

ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain--How strikingly is the criminality of Christ's murderers here presented in harmony with the eternal purpose to surrender Him into their hands!

24. was not possible he should be holden of it--Glorious saying! It was indeed impossible that "the Living One" should remain "among the dead" (Lu 24:5); but here, the impossibility seems to refer to the prophetic assurance that He should not see corruption.

27. wilt not leave my soul in hell--in its disembodied state (see on [Lu 16:23](#)).

neither . . . suffer thine Holy One to see corruption--in the grave.

28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life--that is, resurrection-life.

thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance--that is, in glory; as is plain from the whole connection and the actual words of the sixteenth Psalm.

29-36. David . . . is . . . dead and buried, &c.--Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, sees in this sixteenth Psalm, one Holy Man, whose life of high devotedness and lofty spirituality is crowned with the assurance, that though He taste of death, He shall rise again without seeing corruption, and be admitted to the bliss of God's immediate presence. Now as this was palpably untrue of David, it could be meant only of One other, even of Him whom David was taught to expect as the final Occupant of the throne of Israel. (Those, therefore, and they are many, who take David himself to be the subject of this Psalm, and the words quoted to refer to Christ only *in a more eminent* sense, nullify the whole argument of the apostle). The Psalm is then affirmed to have had its only proper fulfilment in JESUS, of whose resurrection and ascension they were witnesses, while the glorious effusion of the Spirit by the hand of the ascended One, setting an infallible seal upon all, was even then witnessed by the thousands who stood listening to Him. A further illustration of Messiah's ascension and session at God's right hand is drawn from Ps 110:1, in which David cannot be thought to speak of himself, seeing he is still in his grave.

36. Therefore--that is, to sum up all.

let all the house of Israel--for in this first discourse the appeal is formally made to the whole house of Israel, as the then existing Kingdom of God.

know assuredly--by indisputable facts, fulfilled predictions, and the seal of the Holy Ghost set upon all.

that God hath made--for Peter's object was to show them that, instead of interfering with the arrangements of the God of Israel, these events were His own high movements.

this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified--"The sting is at the close" [BENGEL]. To prove to them merely that Jesus was the Messiah might have left them all unchanged in heart. But to convince them that He whom they had crucified had been by the right hand of God exalted, and constituted the "LORD" whom David in spirit adored, to whom every knee shall bow, and the CHRIST of God, was to bring them to "look on Him whom they had pierced and mourn for Him."

37-40. pricked in their hearts--the begun fulfilment of Zec 12:10, whose full accomplishment is reserved for the day when "all Israel shall be saved" (see on [Ro 11:26](#)).

what shall we do?--This is that beautiful spirit of genuine compunction and childlike docility, which, discovering its whole past career to have been one frightful mistake, seeks only to be set right for the future, be the change involved and the sacrifices required what they may. So Saul of Tarsus (Ac 9:6).

38. Repent--The word denotes *change of mind*, and here includes the reception of the Gospel as the proper issue of that revolution of mind which they were then undergoing.

baptized . . . for the remission of sins--as the visible seal of that remission.

39. For the promise--of the Holy Ghost, through the risen Saviour, as the grand blessing of the new covenant.

all afar off--the Gentiles, as in Eph 2:17), but "to the Jew first."

40. with many other words did he testify and exhort--Thus we have here but a summary of Peter's discourse; though from the next words it would seem that only the more practical parts, the home appeals, are omitted.

Save yourselves from this untoward generation--as if Peter already foresaw the hopeless impotence of the nation at large, and would have his hearers hasten in for themselves and secure their own salvation.

Ac 2:41-47. BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

41-47. they that gladly received his word were baptized--"It is difficult to say how three thousand could be baptized in one day, according to the old practice of a complete submersion; and the more as in Jerusalem there was no water at hand except Kidron and a few pools. The difficulty can only be removed by supposing that they already employed sprinkling, or baptized in houses in large vessels. Formal submersion in rivers, or larger quantities of water, probably took place only where the locality conveniently allowed it" [OLSHAUSEN].

the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls--fitting inauguration of the new kingdom, as an economy of the Spirit!

42. continued steadfastly in--"attended constantly upon."

the apostles' doctrine--"teaching"; giving themselves up to the instructions which, in their raw state, would be indispensable to the consolidation of the immense multitude suddenly admitted to visible discipleship.

fellowship--in its largest sense.

breaking of bread--not certainly in the Lord's Supper alone, but rather in frugal repasts taken together, with which the Lord's Supper was probably conjoined until abuses and persecution led to the discontinuance of the common meal.

prayers--probably, stated seasons of it.

43. fear came upon every soul--A deep awe rested upon the whole community.

44. all that believed were together, and had all things common--(See on [Ac 4:34-37](#)).

46. daily . . . in the temple--observing the hours of Jewish worship.

and breaking bread from house to house--rather, "at home" (*Margin*), that is, in *private*, as contrasted with their *temple*-worship, but in some stated place or places of meeting.

eat their meat with gladness--"exultation."

and singleness of heart.

47. Praising God--"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, *for God now accepteth thy works*" (Ec 9:7, also see on [Ac 8:39](#)).

having favour with all the people--commending themselves by their lovely demeanor to the admiration of all who observed them.

And the Lord--that is, JESUS, as the glorified Head and Ruler of the Church.

added--kept adding; that is, to the visible community of believers, though the words "to the Church" are wanting in the most ancient manuscripts.

such as should be saved--rather, "the saved," or "those who were being saved." "The young Church had but few peculiarities in its outward form, or even in its doctrine: the single

discriminating principle of its few members was that they all recognized the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This confession would have been a thing of no importance, if it had only presented itself as a naked declaration, and would never in such a case have been able to form a community that would spread itself over the whole Roman empire. It acquired its value only through the power of the Holy Ghost, passing from the apostles as they preached to the hearers; for He brought the confession from the very hearts of men (1Co 12:3), and like a burning flame made their souls glow with love. By the power of this Spirit, therefore, we behold the first Christians not only in a state of active fellowship, but also internally changed: the narrow views of the natural man are broken through; they have their possessions in common, and they regard themselves as one family" [OLSHAUSEN].

CHAPTER 3

Ac 3:1-26. PETER HEALS A LAME MAN AT THE TEMPLE GATE--HS ADDRESS TO THE WONDERING MULTITUDE.

1-11. Peter and John--already associated by their Master, first with James (Mr 1:29; 5:37; 9:2), then by themselves (Lu 22:8; and see Joh 13:23, 24). Now we find them constantly together, but John (yet young) only as a silent actor.

went up--were going up, were on their way.

2. a certain man lame from his mother's womb--and now "above forty years old" (Ac 4:22).

was carried--was wont to be carried.

4, 5. Peter fastening his eyes on him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed--that, through the eye, faith might be aided in its birth.

6. Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee--What a lofty superiority breathes in these words!

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk--These words, uttered with supernatural power, doubtless begat in this poor man the faith that sent healing virtue through his diseased members.

7. And he took . . . and lifted him up--precisely what his Lord had done to his own mother-in-law (Mr 1:31).

his feet--"soles."

and ankle bones, &c.--the technical language of a physician (Col 4:14).

8. leaping up, stood . . . walked . . . entered the temple walking, leaping, and praising God--Every word here is emphatic, expressing the perfection of the cure, as Ac 3:7 its immediateness.

9. all the people saw him, &c.--as they assembled at the hour of public prayer, in the temple courts; so that the miracle had the utmost publicity.

10. they knew that it was he which sat for alms, &c.--(Compare Joh 9:8).

11. the lame man . . . held, &c.--This is human nature.

all the people ran together unto them in the porch, &c.--How vividly do these graphic details bring the whole scene before us! Thus was Peter again furnished with a vast audience, whose wonder at the spectacle of the healed beggar clinging to his benefactors prepared them to listen with reverence to his words.

12-16. why marvel at this?--For miracles are marvels only in relation to the limited powers of man.

as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk--Neither the might nor the merit of the cure are due to us, mere agents of Him whom we preach.

13. The God of Abraham, &c.--(See on [Ac 2:22](#); [Ac 2:36](#)).

hath glorified his Son Jesus--rather, "his Servant Jesus," as the same word is rendered in Mt 12:18, but in that high sense in which Isaiah applies it always to Messiah (Isa 42:1; 49:6; 52:13; 53:11). When "Son" is intended a different word is used.

whom ye delivered up, &c.--With what heroic courage does Peter here charge his auditors with the heaviest of all conceivable crimes, and with what terrific strength of language are these charges clothed!

15. killed the Prince of life--Glorious paradox, but how piercing to the conscience of the auditors.

16. his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, &c.--With what skill does the apostle use the miracle both to glorify his ascended Lord and bring the guilt of His blood more resistlessly home to his audience!

17-21. And now, brethren--Our preacher, like his Master, "will not break the bruised reed." His heaviest charges are prompted by love, which now hastens to assuage the wounds it was necessary to inflict.

I wot--"know."

through ignorance ye did it--(See *marginal references*, Lu 23:34; Ac 13:27; 26:9).

18. that Christ--The best manuscripts read, "that His Christ."

should suffer--The doctrine of a SUFFERING MESSIAH was totally at variance with the current views of the Jewish Church, and hard to digest even by the Twelve, up to the day of their Lord's resurrection. Our preacher himself revolted at it, and protested against it, when first nakedly announced, for which he received a terrible rebuke. Here he affirms it to be the fundamental truth of ancient prophecy realized unwittingly by the Jews themselves, yet by a glorious divine ordination. How great a change had the Pentecostal illumination wrought upon his views!

19. when the times of refreshing shall come--rather, "in order that the times of refreshing may come"; that long period of repose, prosperity and joy, which all the prophets hold forth to the distracted Church and this miserable world, as eventually to come, and which is here, as in all the prophets, made to turn upon the national conversion of Israel.

20. he shall send Jesus Christ--The true reading is, "He shall send your predestinated (or

foreordained) Messiah, Jesus."

21. until the times--embracing the whole period between the ascension and the second advent of Christ.

restitution of all things--comprehending, probably, the rectification of all the disorders of the fall.

22-26. a prophet . . . like unto me--particularly *in intimacy of communication with God* (Nu 12:6-8), *and as the mediatorial Head of a new order of things* (Heb 3:2-6). Peter takes it for granted that, in the light of all he had just said, it would be seen at once that One only had any claim to be that Prophet.

him shall ye hear in all things, &c.--This part of the prediction is emphatically added, in order to shut up the audience to the obedience of faith, on pain of being finally "cut off" from the congregation of the righteous (Ps 1:1).

24. foretold of these days--of Messiah; all pointing to "the time of reformation" (Heb 9:10), though with more or less distinctness.

25. Ye are the children . . . of the covenant--and so the natural heirs of its promises. **in thy seed, &c.**--(See on [Ga 3:8](#), &c.).

26. God, having raised up--not from the dead, but having provided, prepared, and given. **his Son Jesus**--"His Servant Jesus" (see on [Ac 3:13](#)).

sent him to bless you--literally, "sent Him blessing you," as if laden with blessing.

in turning away every one of you from his iniquities--that is, "Hitherto we have all been looking too much for a Messiah who should shed outward blessings upon the nation generally, and through it upon the world. But we have learned other things, and now announce to you that the great blessing with which Messiah has come laden is the turning away of every one of you from his iniquities." With what divine skill does the apostle, founding on resistless facts, here drive home to the conscience of his auditors their guilt in crucifying the Lord of Glory; then soothe their awakened minds by assurances of forgiveness on turning to the Lord, and a glorious future as soon as this shall come to pass, to terminate with the Personal Return of Christ from the heavens whither He has ascended; ending all with warnings, from their own Scriptures, to submit to Him if they would not perish, and calls to receive from Him the blessings of salvation.

CHAPTER 4

Ac 4:1-13. PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM.

1-12. the captain--of the Levitical guard.

of the temple--annoyed at the disturbance created around it.

and the Sadducees--who "say that there is no resurrection" (Ac 23:8), irritated at the apostles "preaching through (rather, 'in') Jesus the resurrection from the dead"; for the resurrection of Christ, if a fact, effectually overthrew the Sadducean doctrine.

4. the number of the men--or males, exclusive of women; though the word sometimes includes both.

about five thousand--and this in Jerusalem, where the means of detecting the imposture or crushing the fanaticism, if such it had been, were within everyone's reach, and where there was every inducement to sift it to the bottom.

5. their rulers, &c.--This was a regular meeting of the Sanhedrim (see on [Mt 2:4](#)).

6. Annas . . . and Caiaphas--(See on [Lu 3:2](#)).

John and Alexander--of whom nothing is known.

7. By what power or . . . name have ye done this--thus admitting the reality of the miracle, which afterwards they confess themselves unable to deny (Ac 4:16).

8. Then, filled with the Holy Ghost, said--(See Mr 13:11; Lu 21:15).

10. Be it known unto you . . . and to all the people of Israel--as if emitting a formal judicial testimony to the entire nation through its rulers now convened.

by the name of Jesus, &c.--(See on [Ac 3:13](#), &c.).

even by him doth this man stand before you whole--for from Ac 4:14 it appears that the healed man was at that moment before their eyes.

11. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, &c.--This application of Ps 118:22, already made by our Lord Himself before some of the same "builders" (Mt 21:42), is here repeated with peculiar propriety after the deed of rejection had been consummated, and the rejected One had, by His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, become "the head of the corner."

12. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved--How sublimely does the apostle, in these closing words, shut up these rulers of Israel to Jesus for salvation, and in what universal and emphatic terms does he hold up his Lord as the one Hope of men!

13-17. perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men--that is, uninstructed in the learning of the Jewish schools, and of the common sort; men in private life, untrained to teaching.

took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus--recognized them as having been in His company; remembering possibly, that they had seen them with Him [MEYER, BLOOMFIELD, ALFORD]; but, more probably, perceiving in their whole bearing what identified them with Jesus: that is, "We thought we had got rid of Him; but lo! He reappears in these men, and all that troubled us in the Nazarene Himself has yet to be put down in these His disciples." What a testimony to these primitive witnesses! Would that the same could be said of their successors!

16. a notable miracle . . . done by them is manifest to all . . . in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it--And why should ye wish to deny it, O ye rulers, but that ye hate the light, and will not come to the light lest your deeds should be reproved?

17. But that it spread no further . . . let us straitly--strictly.

threaten . . . that they speak henceforth to no man in this name--Impotent device! Little knew they the fire that was burning in the bones of those heroic disciples.

18-22. Whether it be right . . . to hearken to you more than . . . God, judge ye.

20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard--There is here a wonderful union of sober, respectful appeal to the better reason of their judges, and calm, deep determination to abide the consequences of a constrained testimony, which betokens a power above their own resting upon them, according to promise.

21. finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people--not at a loss for a pretext, but at a loss how to do it so as not to rouse the opposition of the people.

Ac 4:23-37. PETER AND JOHN DISMISSED FROM THE SANHEDRIM, REPORT THE PROCEEDINGS TO THE ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES--THEY ENGAGE IN PRAYER--THE ASTONISHING ANSWER AND RESULTS.

23-30. being let go, they went to their own company--Observe the two opposite classes, representing the two interests which were about to come into deadly conflict.

24. they lifted up their voice--the assembled disciples, on hearing Peter's report.
with one accord--the breasts of all present echoing every word of this sublime prayer.
Lord--(See on [Lu 2:29](#)). Applied to God, the term expresses absolute authority.
God which hath made heaven and earth--against whom, therefore, all creatures are powerless.

25. by the mouth of . . . David--to whom the Jews ascribed the second Psalm, though anonymous; and internal evidence confirms it. David's spirit sees with astonishment "the heathen, the people, the kings and princes of the earth," in deadly combination against the sway of Jehovah and *His Anointed* (his Messiah, or Christ), and asks "why" it is. This fierce confederacy our praying disciples see in full operation, in the "gathering together of Herod and Pilate, the Gentiles (the Roman authority), and the people of Israel, against God's holy Child ('Servant') Jesus." (See on [Ac 3:13](#)). The best ancient copies read, after "were gathered together," "*in this city*," which probably answers to "upon my holy hill of Zion," in the Ps 2:6.

28. thy hand and thy counsel determined . . . to be done--that is, "Thy counsel" determined to be done by "Thy hand."

29. now, Lord, behold their threatenings--Recognizing in the threatenings of the Sanhedrim a declaration of war by the combined powers of the world against their infant cause, they seek not enthusiastically to hide from themselves its critical position, but calmly ask the Lord of heaven and earth to "look upon their threatenings."

that with all boldness they may speak thy word--Rising above self, they ask only fearless courage to testify for their Master, and divine attestation to their testimony by miracles of healing, &c., in His name.

31-37. place was shaken--glorious token of the commotion which the Gospel was to make

(Ac 17:6; compare Ac 16:26), and the overthrow of all opposing powers in which this was to issue.

they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake, &c.--The Spirit rested upon the entire community, first, in the very way they had asked, so that they "spake the word with boldness" (Ac 4:29, 31); next, in melting down all selfishness, and absorbing even the feeling of individuality in an intense and glowing realization of Christian unity. The community of goods was but an outward expression of this, and natural in such circumstances.

33. with great power--effect on men's minds.

great grace was upon them all--The grace of God copiously rested on the whole community.

35. laid . . . at the apostles' feet--sitting, it may be, above the rest. But the expression may be merely derived from that practice, and here meant figuratively.

36. Joses, &c.--This is specified merely as an eminent example of that spirit of generous sacrifice which pervaded all.

son of consolation--no doubt so surnamed from the character of his ministry.

a Levite--who, though as a tribe having no inheritance, might and did acquire property as individuals (De 18:8).

Cyprus--a well-known island in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER 5

Ac 5:1-11. ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

"The first trace of a shade upon the bright form of the young Church. Probably among the new Christians a kind of holy rivalry had sprung up, every one eager to place his means at the disposal of the apostles" [OLSHAUSEN]. Thus might the new-born zeal of some outrun their abiding principle, while others might be tempted to seek credit for a liberality which was not in their character.

2. kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it--The coolness with which they planned the deception aggravated the guilt of this couple.

brought a certain part--pretending it to be the whole proceeds of the sale.

3-6. why hath Satan filled--"why . . . fill"--"why hast thou suffered him to fill"

thine heart--so criminally entertaining his suggestion? Compare Ac 5:4, "why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?" And see Joh 13:2, 27.

to lie to the Holy Ghost--to men under His supernatural illumination.

4. While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?--from which we see how purely voluntary were all these sacrifices for the support of the infant community.

not lied to men but God--to men so entirely the instruments of the directing Spirit that the lie was rather told to Him: language clearly implying both the distinct *personality* and the proper *divinity* of the Holy Ghost.

5. Ananias . . . gave up the ghost . . . great fear came on all that heard these things--on those without the Christian circle; who, instead of disparaging the followers of the Lord Jesus, as they might otherwise have done on the discovery of such hypocrisy, were awed at the manifest presence of Divinity among them, and the mysterious power of throwing off such corrupt matter which rested upon the young Church.

6. the young men--some of the younger and more active members of the church, not as office-bearers, nor coming forward now for the first time, but who probably had already volunteered their services in making subordinate arrangements. In every thriving Christian community such volunteers may be expected, and will be found eminently useful.

7-11. Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much--naming the sum.

9. How is it that ye have agreed together--(See on [Ac 5:2](#)).

to tempt the Spirit--*try* whether they could escape detection by that omniscient Spirit of whose supernatural presence with the apostles they had had such full evidence.

feet of them that buried thy husband are at the door--How awfully graphic!

10. buried her by her husband--The later Jews buried before sunset of the day of death.

11. And great fear came upon all the church, &c.--This effect on the Christian community itself was the chief design of so startling a judgment; which had its counterpart, as the sin itself had, in *Achan* (Jos 7:1-26), while the *time*--at the commencement of a new career--was similar.

Ac 5:12-26. THE PROGRESS OF THE NEW CAUSE LEADS TO THE ARREST OF THE APOSTLES--THEY ARE MIRACULOUSLY DELIVERED FROM PRISON, RESUME THEIR TEACHING, BUT ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE CONDUCTED BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM.

12. Solomon's Porch--(See on [Joh 10:23](#)).

13-16. of the rest durst no man join himself, &c.--Of the unconverted none ventured, after what had taken place, to profess discipleship; but yet their number continually increased.

15. into the streets--"in every street."

on beds and couches--The words denote the softer couches of the rich and the meaner cribs of the poor [BENGEL].

shadow of Peter . . . might overshadow some of them--Compare Ac 19:12; Lu 8:46. So Elisha. Now the predicted greatness of Peter (Mt 16:18), as the directing spirit of the early Church, was at its height.

17-23. sect of the Sadducees--See on [Ac 4:1](#) for the reason why this is specified.

19. by night--the same night.

20. all the words of this life--beautiful expression for that Life in the Risen One which was the burden of their preaching!

21. entered into the temple, &c.--How self-possessed! the indwelling Spirit raising them above fear.

called . . . all the senate, &c.--an unusually general convention, though hastily summoned.

23. the prison . . . shut . . . keepers . . . before the doors, but . . . no man within--the reverse of the miracle in Ac 16:26; a similar contrast to that of the nets at the miraculous draughts of fishes (Lu 5:6; Joh 21:11).

24-26. they doubted--"were in perplexity."

26. without violence, for they feared, &c.--hardened ecclesiastics, all unawed by the miraculous tokens of God's presence with the apostles, and the fear of the mob only before their eyes!

Ac 5:27-42. SECOND APPEARANCE AND TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM--ITS RAGE CALMED BY GAMALIEL--BEING DISMISSED, THEY DEPART REJOICING, AND CONTINUE THEIR PREACHING.

27, 28. ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine--noble testimony to the success of their preaching, and (for the reason mentioned on Ac 4:4) to the truth of their testimony, from reluctant lips!

28. intend to bring this man's blood upon us--They avoid naming Him whom Peter gloried in holding up [BENGEL]. In speaking thus, they seem to betray a disagreeable recollection of their own recent imprecation, "His blood be upon us," &c. (Mt 27:25), and of the traitor's words as he threw down the money, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt 27:4).

29, 30. Then Peter, &c.--(See on [Ac 2:22](#), and [Ac 3:13](#), &c.).

31. Prince and a Saviour--the first word expressing that *Royalty* which all Israel looked for in Messiah, the second the *Saving* character of it which they had utterly lost sight of. Each of these features in our Lord's work enters into the other, and both make one glorious whole (compare Ac 3:15; Heb 2:10).

to give--dispensing as a "Prince."

repentance and remission of sins--as a "Saviour"; "repentance" embracing all that change which issues in the faith which secures "forgiveness" (compare Ac 2:38; 20:21). How gloriously is Christ here exhibited; not, as in other places, as the *Medium*, but as the *Dispenser* of all spiritual blessings!

32, 33. we are his witnesses . . . and the Holy Ghost--They as competent human witnesses to facts, and the Holy Ghost as attesting them by undeniable miracles.

33. cut to the heart and took--"were taking."

counsel to slay them--How different this feeling and the effect of it from that "pricking of the heart" which drew from the first converts on the day of Pentecost the cry, "Men and

brethren, what shall we do?" (Ac 2:37). The words used in the two places are strikingly different.

34. Then stood up . . . Gamaliel--in all probability one of that name celebrated in the Jewish writings for his wisdom, the son of Simeon (possibly the same who took the infant Saviour in his arms, Lu 2:25-35), and grandson of HILLEL, another celebrated rabbi. He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem [LIGHTFOOT].

35-39. Theudas--not the same with a deceiver of that name whom JOSEPHUS mentions as heading an insurrection some twelve years after this [*Antiquities*, 20.5.1], but some other of whom he makes no mention. Such insurrections were frequent.

37. Judas of Galilee--(See on [Lu 2:2](#), and Lu 13:1-3) [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 13.1.1].

38. if . . . of men, it will come to naught--This neutral policy was true wisdom, in the then temper of the council. But individual neutrality is hostility to Christ, as He Himself teaches (Lu 11:23).

40-42. beaten them--for disobeying their orders (compare Lu 23:16).

41. departed . . . rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name--"thought worthy by God to be dishonored by man" (Mt 5:12; 1Pe 4:14, 16) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. *This was their first taste of persecution*, and it felt sweet for His sake whose disciples they were.

42. in every house--in private. (See on [Ac 2:46](#)).

ceased not to preach Jesus Christ--that is, Jesus (to be the) Christ.

CHAPTER 6

Ac 6:1-7. FIRST ELECTION OF DEACONS.

1. the Grecians--the Greek-speaking Jews, mostly born in the provinces.

the Hebrews--those Jews born in Palestine who used their native tongue, and were wont to look down on the "Grecians" as an inferior class.

were neglected--"overlooked" by those whom the apostles employed, and who were probably of the Hebrew class, as being the most numerous. The complaint was in all likelihood well founded, though we cannot suspect the distributors of intentional partiality. "It was really just an emulation of love, each party wishing to have their own poor taken care of in the best manner" [OLSHAUSEN].

the daily ministration--the daily distribution of alms or of food, probably the latter.

2-4. the multitude--the general body of the disciples.

It is not reason--The word expresses dislike; that is "We cannot submit."

to leave the word of God--to have our time and attention withdrawn from preaching; which, it thus appears, they regarded as their primary duty.

to serve tables--oversee the distribution of provisions.

3. look ye out among you--that is, ye, "the multitude," from among yourselves.

seven men of honest report--good reputation (Ac 10:22; 1Ti 3:7).

full of the Holy Ghost--not full of miraculous gifts, which would have been no qualification for the duties required, but *spiritually gifted* (although on two of them miraculous power did rest).

and wisdom--discretion, aptitude for practical business.

whom we may appoint--for while the *election* was vested in the Christian people, the *appointment* lay with the apostles, as spiritual rulers.

4. we will give ourselves to prayer--public prayer, as along with preaching their great work.

5. Stephen, &c.--As this and the following names are all *Greek*, it is likely they were all of the "Grecian" class, which would effectually restore mutual confidence.

6. when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them--the one proclaiming that all official gifts flowed from the Church's glorified Head, the other symbolizing the communication of these to the chosen office-bearers through the recognized channels.

7. word of God increased . . . disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly--prosperity crowning the beautiful spirit which reigned in this mother community.

a great company of the priests were obedient, &c.--This was the crowning triumph of the Gospel, whose *peaceful* prosperity was now at its greatest height. After Stephen's teaching and trial made it clear that sacerdotal interests could not stand with the Gospel, such priestly accessions became rare indeed. Note (1) how easily misunderstandings may arise among the most loving and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus: but (2) How quickly and effectually such misunderstandings may be healed, where honest intentions, love, and wisdom reign: (3) What a beautiful model for imitation is furnished by the class here complained of, who, though themselves the majority, chose the new office-bearers from amongst the complaining minority! (4) How superior to the lust of power do the apostles here show themselves to be, in not only divesting themselves of the immediate superintendence of temporal affairs in the Christian community, but giving the choice of those who were to be entrusted with it to the disciples at large! (5) How little of formal organization did the apostles give to the Church at first, and when an emergency arose which demanded something more, how entirely was the remedy suggested by the reason of the thing! (6) Though the new office-bearers are not expressly called *Deacons* here, it is universally admitted that this was the first institution of that order in the Church; the success of the expedient securing its permanency, and the qualifications for "the office of a Deacon" being laid down in one of the apostolical Epistles immediately after those of "a Bishop" (1Ti 3:8-13).

Ac 6:8-15. STEPHEN ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM.

8. And Stephen, &c.--The foregoing narrative seems to be only an introduction to what follows.

full of faith--rather, "of grace," as the best manuscripts read.

9, 10. synagogue of the Libertines--Jewish freedmen; manumitted Roman captives, or the children of such, expelled from Rome (as appears from JOSEPHUS and TACITUS), and now residing at Jerusalem.

Cyrenians--Jews of Cyrene, in Libya, on the coast of Africa.

them of Cilicia--amongst whom may have been Saul of Tarsus (Ac 7:58; 21:39).

and of Asia--(See on [Ac 16:6](#)).

10. not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake--What he said, and the power with which he spake it, were alike resistless.

11-14. blasphemous words against Moses--doubtless referring to the impending disappearance of the whole Mosaic system.

and against God--This must refer to the supreme dignity and authority which he claimed for Christ, as the head of that new economy which was so speedily to supersede the old (compare Ac 7:56, 59, 60).

15. as . . . the face of an angel--a play of supernatural radiance attesting to all who beheld his countenance the divine calm of the spirit within.

CHAPTER 7

Ac 7:1-60. DEFENSE AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

In this long defense Stephen takes a much wider range, and goes less directly into the point raised by his accusers, than we should have expected. His object seems to have been to show (1) that so far from disparaging, he deeply revered, and was intimately conversant with, the whole history of the ancient economy; and (2) that in resisting the erection of the Gospel kingdom they were but treading in their fathers' footsteps, the whole history of their nation being little else than one continued misapprehension of God's high designs towards fallen man and rebellion against them.

2-5. The God of glory--A magnificent appellation, fitted at the very outset to rivet the devout attention of his audience; denoting not that visible glory which attended many of the divine manifestations, but the glory of those manifestations themselves, of which this was regarded by every Jew as the fundamental one. It is the glory of absolutely free grace.

appeared unto our father Abraham before he dwelt in Charran, and said, &c.--Though this first call is not expressly recorded in Genesis, it is clearly implied in Ge 15:7 and Ne 9:7; and the Jewish writers speak the same language.

4. when his father was dead, he removed into this land--Though Abraham was in Canaan before Terah's death, his settlement in it as the land of promise is here said to be after it, as being in no way dependent on the family movement, but a transaction purely between Jehovah and Abraham himself.

6-8. four hundred years--using round numbers, as in Ge 15:13, 16 (see on [Ga 3:17](#)).

7. after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place--Here the promise to Abraham (Ge 15:16), and that to Moses (Ex 3:12), are combined; Stephen's object being merely to give a rapid summary of the leading facts.

8. the covenant of circumcision--that is, the covenant of which circumcision was the token. **and so**--that is, according to the terms of this covenant, on which Paul reasons (Ga 3:1-26). **the twelve patriarchs**--so called as the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

9-16. the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt, but God was with him--Here Stephen gives his first example of *Israel's opposition to God's purposes, in spite of which and by means of which those purposes were accomplished.*

14. threescore and fifteen souls--according to the *Septuagint* version of Ge 46:27, which Stephen follows, including the five children and grandchildren of Joseph's two sons.

17. But when--rather, "as."

the time of the promise--that is, for its fulfilment.

the people grew and multiplied in Egypt--For more than two hundred years they amounted to no more than seventy-five souls; how prodigious, then, must have been their multiplication during the latter two centuries, when six hundred thousand men, fit for war, besides women and children, left Egypt!

20-22. In which time--of deepest depression.

Moses was born--the destined deliverer.

exceeding fair--literally, "fair to God" (*Margin*), or, perhaps, divinely "fair" (see on [Heb 11:23](#)).

22. mighty in words--Though defective in utterance (Ex 4:10); his recorded speeches fully bear out what is here said.

and deeds--referring probably to unrecorded circumstances in his early life. If we are to believe JOSEPHUS, his ability was acknowledged ere he left Egypt.

23-27. In Ac 7:23, 30, 36, the life of Moses is represented as embracing three periods, of forty years each; the Jewish writers say the same; and though this is not expressly stated in the Old Testament, his age at death, one hundred twenty years (De 34:7), agrees with it.

it came into his heart to visit his brethren--his heart yearning with love to them as God's chosen people, and heaving with the consciousness of a divine vocation to set them free.

24. avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian--going farther in the heat of his indignation than he probably intended.

25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood, &c.--and perhaps imagined this a suitable occasion for rousing and rallying them under him as their leader; thus anticipating his work, and so running unseemly.

but they understood not--Reckoning on a spirit in them congenial with his own, he had the mortification to find it far otherwise. This furnishes to Stephen another example of *Israel's slowness to apprehend and fall in with the divine purposes of love.*

26. next day he showed himself unto them as they strove--Here, not an Israelite and an Egyptian, but two parties in Israel itself, are in collision with each other; Moses, grieved at the spectacle, interposes as a mediator; but his interference, as unauthorized, is resented by the party

in the wrong, *whom Stephen identifies with the mass of the nation* (Ac 7:35), just as Messiah's own interposition had been spurned.

28, 29. Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?--Moses had thought the deed unseen (Ex 2:12), but it now appeared he was mistaken.

29. Then fled Moses, &c.--for "when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses" (Ex 2:15).

30-34. an angel of the Lord--rather, "the Angel of the Covenant," who immediately calls Himself JEHOVAH (Compare Ac 7:38).

35-41. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge, &c.--Here, again, *"the stone which the builders refused is made the head of the corner"* (Ps 118:22).

37. This is that Moses which said . . . A prophet . . . him shall ye hear--This is quoted to remind his Moses-worshipping audience of the grand testimony of their faithful lawgiver, that *he himself was not the last and proper object of the Church's faith, but only a humble precursor and small model of Him to whom their absolute submission was due.*

38. in the church--the collective body of God's chosen people; hence used to denote the whole body of the faithful under the Gospel, or particular sections of them.

This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel . . . and with our fathers--alike near to the Angel of the Covenant, from whom he received all the institutions of the ancient economy, and to the people, to whom he faithfully reported the living oracles and among whom he set up the prescribed institutions. *By this high testimony to Moses, Stephen rebuts the main charge for which he was on trial.*

39. To whom our fathers would not obey, &c.--Here he shows that *the deepest dishonor done to Moses came from the nation that now professed the greatest jealousy for his honor.*

in their hearts turned back . . . into Egypt--"In this Stephen would have his hearers read the downward career on which they were themselves entering."

42-50. gave them up--judicially.

as . . . written in the book of the prophets--the twelve minor prophets, reckoned as one: the passage is from Am 5:25.

have ye offered to me . . . sacrifices?--The answer is, Yes, but as if ye did it not; for "neither did ye offer to Me only, nor always, nor with a perfect and willing heart" [BENGEL].

43. Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Molech, &c.--Two kinds of idolatry are charged upon the Israelites: that of the golden calf and that of the heavenly bodies; Molech and Remphan being deities, representing apparently the divine powers ascribed to nature, under different aspects.

carry you beyond Babylon--the well-known region of the captivity of Judah; while "Damascus" is used by the prophet (Am 5:27), whither the ten tribes were carried.

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness--which aggravated the

guilt of that idolatry in which they indulged, with the tokens of the divine presence constantly in the midst of them.

45. which . . . our fathers that came after--rather, "having received it by succession" (*Margin*), that is, the custody of the tabernacle from their ancestors.

brought in with Jesus--or Joshua.

into the possession--rather, "at the taking possession of [the territory of] the Gentiles."

unto the days of David--for till then Jerusalem continued in the hands of the Jebusites. But Stephen's object in mentioning David is to hasten from the tabernacle which he set up, to the temple which his son built, in Jerusalem; and this only to show, from their own Scripture (Isa 66:1, 2), that *even that temple*, magnificent though it was, *was not the proper resting-place of Jehovah upon earth*; as his audience and the nations had all along been prone to imagine. (What that resting-place was, even "*the contrite heart, that trembleth at God's word*," he leaves to be gathered from the prophet referred to).

51-53. Ye stiffnecked . . . ye do always resist the Holy Ghost, &c.--It has been thought that symptoms of impatience and irritation in the audience induced Stephen to cut short his historical sketch. But as little farther light could have been thrown upon Israel's obstinacy from subsequent periods of the national history on the testimony of their own Scriptures, we should view this as the *summing up*, the brief import of the whole Israelitish history--*grossness of heart, spiritual deafness, continuous resistance of the Holy Ghost, down to the very council before whom Stephen was pleading*.

52. Which of, &c.--*Deadly hostility to the messengers of God*, whose high office it was to tell of "the Righteous One," that well-known prophetic title of Messiah (Isa 53:11; Jer 23:6, &c.), and this *consummated by the betrayal and murder of Messiah Himself*, on the part of those now sitting in judgment on the speaker, are the still darker features of the national character depicted in these withering words.

53. Who have received the law by the disposition--"at the appointment" or "ordination," that is, by the ministry.

of angels, and have not kept it--This closing word is designed to shut up those idolizers of the law under the guilt of high disobedience to it, aggravated by the august manner in which they had received it.

54-56. When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, &c.--If they could have *answered* him, how different would have been their temper of mind!

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God--You who can transfer to canvas such scenes as these, in which the rage of hell grins horribly from men, as they sit condemned by a frail prisoner of their own, and see heaven beaming from his countenance and opening full upon his view--I envy you, for I find no words to paint what, in the majesty of the divine text, is here so simply told. "But how could Stephen, in the council-chamber, see heaven at all? I suppose this question never occurred but to critics of narrow soul, one of whom [MEYER] conjectures that he saw it through the window! and another, of better mould, that the scene lay in one of the courts of the temple" [ALFORD]. As the sight was witnessed by Stephen alone, the opened heavens are to be viewed as revealed to his bright beaming spirit.

and Jesus standing on the right hand of God--Why "*standing*," and not *sitting*, the posture in which the glorified Saviour is elsewhere represented? Clearly, to express the eager interest with which He watched from the skies the scene in that council chamber, and the full tide of His Spirit which He was at that moment engaged in pouring into the heart of His heroic witness, till it beamed in radiance from his very countenance.

56. I see . . . the Son of man standing, &c.--This is the only time that our Lord is by human lips called THE SON OF MAN after His ascension (Re 1:13; 14:14 are not instances). And why here? Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, speaking now not of himself at all (Ac 7:55), but entirely by the Spirit, is led to repeat the very words in which Jesus Himself, *before this same council*, had foretold His glorification (Mt 26:64), assuring them that that exaltation of the SON OF MAN which they should hereafter witness to their dismay, was already begun and actual [ALFORD].

57, 58. Then they cried out . . . and ran upon him with one accord--To men of their mould and in their temper, Stephen's last seraphic words could but bring matters to extremities, though that only revealed the diabolical spirit which they breathed.

58. cast him out of the city--according to Le 24:14; Nu 15:35; 1Ki 21:13; and see Heb 13:12.

and stoned--"proceeded to stone" him. The actual stoning is recorded in Ac 7:59.

and the witnesses--whose hands were to be first upon the criminal (De 17:7).

laid down their clothes--their loose outer garments, to have them taken charge of.

at a young man's feet whose name was Saul--How thrilling is this our first introduction to one to whom Christianity--whether as developed in the New Testament or as established in the world--owes more perhaps than to all the other apostles together! Here he is, having perhaps already a seat in the Sanhedrim, some thirty years of age, in the thick of this tumultuous murder of a distinguished witness for Christ, not only "consenting unto his death" (Ac 8:1), but doing his own part of the dark deed.

59, 60. calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, &c.--An unhappy supplement of our translators is the word "God" here; as if, while addressing the Son, he was really calling upon the Father. The sense is perfectly clear without any supplement at all--"calling upon [invoking] and saying, Lord Jesus"; Christ being the Person directly invoked and addressed by name (compare Ac 9:14). Even GROTIUS, DE WETTE, MEYER, &c., admit this, adding several other examples of direct prayer to Christ; and PLINY, in his well-known letter to the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 110 or 111), says it was part of the regular Christian service to sing, in alternate strains, a hymn to Christ as God.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit--In presenting to Jesus the identical prayer which He Himself had on the cross offered to His Father, Stephen renders to his glorified Lord absolute divine worship, in the most sublime form, and at the most solemn moment of his life. In this commitment of his spirit to Jesus, Paul afterwards followed his footsteps with a calm, exultant confidence that with Him it was safe for eternity (2Ti 1:12).

60. cried with a loud voice--with something of the gathered energy of his dying Lord (see on [Joh 19:16-30](#)).

Lord--that is, JESUS, beyond doubt, whom he had just before addressed as Lord.

lay not this sin to their charge--Comparing this with nearly the same prayer of his dying Lord, it will be seen how very richly this martyr of Jesus had drunk into his Master's spirit, in its divinest form.

he fell asleep--never said of the death of Christ. (See on [1Th 4:14](#)). How bright the record of this first martyrdom for Christ, amidst all the darkness of its perpetrators; and how many have been cheered by it to like faithfulness even unto death!

CHAPTER 8

Ac 8:1-4. PERSECUTION CONTINUED, IN WHICH SAUL TAKES A PROMINENT PART--HOW OVERRULED FOR GOOD.

1. Saul was consenting unto his death--The word expresses hearty approval.

they were all scattered abroad--all the leading Christians, particularly the preachers, agreeably to their Lord's injunctions (Mt 10:23), though many doubtless remained, and others (as appears by Ac 9:26-30) soon returned.

except the apostles--who remained, not certainly as being less exposed to danger, but, at whatever risk, to watch over the infant cause where it was most needful to cherish it.

2. and devout men--pious Jews, probably, impressed with admiration for Stephen and secretly inclined to Christianity, but not yet openly declared.

3. Saul . . . entering into every house--like as inquisitor [BENGEL].

haling men and women, &c.--See his own affecting confessions afterwards (Ac 22:4; 26:9, 10; 1Co 15:9; Ga 1:13; Php 3:6; 1Ti 1:13).

4. they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching--Though solemnly enjoined to do this (Lu 24:47; Ac 1:8), they would probably have lingered at Jerusalem, but for this besom of persecution which swept them out. How often has the rage of Christ's enemies thus "turned out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel" (see Php 1:12, 13).

Ac 8:5-25. SUCCESS OF PHILIP'S PREACHING IN SAMARIA--CASE OF SIMON MAGUS.

5. Then Philip--not the apostle of that name, as was by some of the Fathers supposed; for besides that the apostles remained at Jerusalem, they would in that case have had no occasion to send a deputation of their own number to lay their hands on the baptized disciples [GROTIUS]. It was the deacon of that name, who comes next after Stephen in the catalogue of the seven, probably as being the next most prominent. The persecution may have been directed especially against Stephen's colleagues [MEYER].

the city of Samaria--or "a city of Samaria"; but the former seems more likely. "It furnished the bridge between Jerusalem and the world" [BAUMGARTEN].

6-8. the people with one accord gave heed to . . . Philip--the way being prepared perhaps by the fruits of our Lord's sojourn, as He Himself seems to intimate (see on [Joh 4:31-38](#)). But "we may mark the providence of God in sending a Grecian, or a Hellenistic Jew, to a people who from national antipathy would have been unlikely to attend to a *native* of Judea" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

8. great joy in that city--over the change wrought on it by the Gospel, as well as the cures which attested its divine character.

9-13. used sorcery--magical arts.

some great one . . . the great power of God--a sort of incarnation of divinity.

10. To whom all gave heed . . . because of long time he had bewitched them--This, coupled with the rapidity with which they deserted him and attached themselves to Philip, shows the ripeness of Samaria for some religious change.

12. were baptized, both men and women--the detection of Simon's frauds helping to extend and deepen the effects of Philip's preaching.

13. Then Simon himself believed also--Left without followers, he thinks it best to join the man who had fairly outstripped him, not without a touch of real conviction.

and . . . was baptized--What a light does this throw on what is called *Baptismal Regeneration!*

he continued with Philip--"was in constant attendance upon" him.

14-17. the apostles . . . sent Peter and John--showing that they regarded Peter as no more than their own equal.

15, 16. prayed . . . they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus)--As the baptism of adults presupposed "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Tit 3:5-7; 1Co 12:13), of which the profession of faith had to be taken for evidence, this communication of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostles' hands was clearly a *superadded* thing; and as it was only *occasional*, so it was invariably *attended with miraculous manifestations* (see Ac 10:44, where it followed Peter's preaching; and Ac 19:1-7, where, as here, it followed the laying on of hands). In the present case an important object was served by it--"the sudden appearance of a body of baptized disciples in Samaria, by the agency of one who was not an apostle, requiring the presence and power of apostles to perform their special part as the divinely appointed founders of the Church" [ALFORD]. Beautiful, too, was the spectacle exhibited of Jew and Samaritan, one in Christ.

18-24. offered them money--Hence the term *simony*, to denote trafficking in sacred things, but chiefly the purchase of ecclesiastical offices.

19. that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost--*Spiritual ambition* here shows itself the key to this wretched man's character.

20. Thy money perish with thee--that is, "Accursed be thou and thy money with thee." It is the language of mingled horror and indignation, not unlike our Lord's rebuke of Peter himself (Mt 16:23).

21. Thou hast neither part nor lot . . . thy heart is not fight, &c.--This is the fidelity of a minister of Christ to one deceiving himself in a very awful manner.

22. Repent . . . pray . . . if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven--this expression of doubt being designed to impress upon him the greatness of his sin, and the need of

alarm on his part.

23. in the gall of bitterness and . . . bond of iniquity--expressing both the awfulness of his condition and the captivity to it in which he was held.

24. Pray ye to the Lord for me--Peter had urged him to pray for himself: he asks those wonder-working men to do it for him; having no confidence in the prayer of faith, but thinking that those men possessed some peculiar interest with heaven.

that none of these things dome upon me--not that the thought of his wicked heart might be forgiven him, but only that the evils threatened might be averted from him. While this throws great light on Peter's view of his melancholy case, it shows that Christianity, as something divine, still retained its hold of him. (Tradition represents him as turning out a great heresiarch, mingling Oriental or Grecian philosophy with some elements of Christianity.)

25. and they--Peter and John.

when they had . . . preached--in the city where Philip's labors had been so richly blessed.

returned . . . and preached . . . in many villages of the Samaritans--embracing the opportunity of their journey back to Jerusalem to fulfil their Lord's commission to the whole region of Samaria (Ac 1:8).

Ac 8:26-40. THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

"With this narrative of the progress of the Gospel among the Samaritans is connected another which points to the diffusion of the doctrine of the Cross among the remotest nations. The simplicity of the chamberlain of Meroe forms a remarkable contrast with the craft of the magician just described" [OLSHAUSEN].

26-28. the angel of the Lord--rather, "an angel."

go . . . south, the way that goeth down from Jerusalem to Gaza--There was such a road, across Mount Hebron, which Philip might take without going to Jerusalem (as VON RAUMER'S'S *Palæstina* shows).

which is desert--that is, *the way*; not Gaza itself, which was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines. To go from a city, where his hands had been full of work, so far away on a desert road, could not but be staggering to the faith of Philip, especially as he was kept in ignorance of the object of the journey. But like Paul, he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"; and like Abram, "he went out not knowing whither he went" (Ac 26:19; Heb 11:8).

27. a man of Ethiopia--Upper Egypt, Meroe.

an eunuch of great authority--Eunuchs were generally employed for confidential offices in the East, and to some extent are still.

Candace--the family name of the queens of Upper Egypt, like Pharaoh, Cæsar, &c. (as appears from classic authors).

had come to Jerusalem to worship--that is, to keep the recent feast of Pentecost, as a Gentile proselyte to the Jewish faith. (See Isa 56:3-8, and Joh 12:20).

28. Was returning--Having come so far, he not only stayed out the days of the festival, but prolonged his stay till now. It says much for his fidelity and value to his royal mistress that he

had such liberty. But the faith in Jehovah and love of His worship and word, with which he was imbued, sufficiently explain this.

and sitting in his chariot, read Esaias--Not contented with the statutory services in which he had joined, he beguiles the tedium of the journey homeward by reading the Scriptures. But this is not all; for as Philip "heard him read the prophet Esaias," he must have been reading aloud and not (as is customary still in the East) so as merely to be audible, but in a louder voice than he would naturally have used if intent on his own benefit only: evidently therefore he was *reading to his charioteer*.

29-31. the Spirit said--by an unmistakable voice within, as in Ac 10:19; 16:6, 7.

go near and join this chariot--This would reveal to Philip the hitherto unknown object of his journey, and encourage him to expect something.

30. Understandest thou what thou readest?--To one so engaged this would be deemed no rude question, while the eager appearance of the speaker, and the question itself, would indicate a readiness to supply any want of insight that might be felt.

31. How can I, except some man guide me?--Beautiful expression at once of humility and docility; the invitation to Philip which immediately followed, to "come up and sit with him," being but the natural expression of this.

32, 33. The place . . . was this, He was led as a sheep, &c.--One cannot but wonder that this, of all predictions of Messiah's sufferings in the Old Testament the most striking, should have been that which the eunuch was reading before Philip joined him. He could hardly miss to have heard at Jerusalem of the sufferings and death of Jesus, and of the existence of a continually increasing party who acknowledged Him to be the Messiah. But his question to Philip, whether the prophet in this passage meant himself or some other man, clearly shows that he had not the least idea of any connection between this prediction and those facts.

34-38. And the eunuch answered, I pray thee, &c.--The respect with which he here addresses Philip was prompted by his reverence for one whom he perceived to be his superior in divine things; his own worldly position sinking before this.

35. Then Philip opened his mouth--(See on [Mt 5:2](#)).

began at the same scripture--founding on it as his text.

preached unto him Jesus--showing Him to be the glorious Burden of this wonderful prediction, and interpreting it in the light of the facts of His history.

36. See, here is water--more simply, "Behold water!" as if already his mind filled with light and his soul set free, he was eagerly looking out for the first water in which he might seal his reception of the truth and be enrolled among the visible disciples of the Lord Jesus.

what doth hinder me to be baptized?--Philip had probably told him that this was the ordained sign and seal of discipleship, but the eunuch's question was likely the first proposal of its application in this case. (Ac 8:37 is wanting in the principal manuscripts and most venerable versions of the New Testament. It seems to have been added from the formularies for baptism which came into current use).

38. they went down both into the water, and he baptized him, &c.--probably laving the

water upon him, though the precise mode is neither certain nor of any consequence.

39, 40. the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip--To deny [as MEYER, OLSHAUSEN, BLOOMFIELD] the miraculous nature of Philip's disappearance, is vain. It stands out on the face of the words, as just a repetition of what we read of the ancient prophets, in 1Ki 18:12; 2Ki 2:16. And the same word (as BENGEL remarks) is employed to express a similar idea in 2Co 12:2, 4; 1Th 4:17.

the eunuch saw him no more--nor, perhaps, for very joy, cared to see him [BENGEL].

and he went on his way rejoicing--He had found Christ, and the key to the Scriptures; his soul was set free, and his discipleship sealed; he had lost his teacher, but gained what was infinitely better: He felt himself a new man, and "his joy was full." Tradition says he was the first preacher of the Gospel in Ethiopia; and how, indeed, could he choose but "tell what the Lord had done for his soul?" Yet there is no certainty as to any historical connection between his labors and the introduction of Christianity into that country.

40. Philip was found--that is, "found himself," "made his appearance": an expression confirming the miraculous manner of his transportation.

at Azotus--the ancient Ashdod.

preached in all the cities--along the coast, proceeding northward.

till he came to Cæsarea--fifty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, on the Mediterranean, just south of Mount Carmel; and so named by Herod, who rebuilt it, in honor of Cæsar Augustus. Henceforth we lose sight of zealous and honored Philip, as by and by we shall lose sight even of Peter. As the chariot of the Gospel rolls on, other agents are raised up, each suited to his work. But "he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." (See on [Joh 4:31-38](#)).

CHAPTER 9

Ac 9:1-25. CONVERSION OF SAUL, AND BEGINNINGS OF HIS MINISTRY.

1. Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, &c.--The emphatic "yet" is intended to note the remarkable fact, that up to this moment his blind persecuting rage against the disciples of the Lord burned as fiercely as ever. (In the teeth of this, NEANDER and OLSHAUSEN picture him deeply impressed with Stephen's joyful faith, remembering passages of the Old Testament confirmatory of the Messiahship of Jesus, and experiencing such a violent struggle as would inwardly prepare the way for the designs of God towards him. Is not dislike, if not unconscious disbelief, of *sudden conversion* at the bottom of this?) The word "slaughter" here points to cruelties not yet recorded, but the particulars of which are supplied by himself nearly thirty years afterwards: "And I persecuted this way *unto the death*" (Ac 22:4); "and when they were *put to death*, I gave my voice [vote] against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to [did my utmost to make them] blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange [foreign] cities" (Ac 26:10, 11). All this was *before* his present journey.

2. desired . . . letters--of authorization.

to Damascus--the capital of Syria and the great highway between eastern and western Asia, about one hundred thirty miles northeast of Jerusalem; the most ancient city perhaps in the world, and lying in the center of a verdant and inexhaustible paradise. It abounded (as appears from JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.20,2) with Jews, and with Gentile proselytes to the Jewish

faith. Thither the Gospel had penetrated; and Saul, flushed with past successes, undertakes to crush it out.

that if he found any of this way, whether men or women--Thrice are *women* specified as objects of his cruelty, as an aggravated feature of it (Ac 8:3; 22:4; and here).

3. he came near Damascus--so Ac 22:6. Tradition points to a bridge near the city as the spot referred to. Events which are the turning points in one's history so imprint themselves upon the memory that circumstances the most trifling in themselves acquire by connection with them something of their importance, and are recalled with inexpressible interest.

suddenly--At what time of day, it is not said; for artless simplicity reigns here. But he himself emphatically states, in one of his narratives, that it was "*about noon*" (Ac 22:6), and in the other, "*at midday*" (Ac 26:13), when there could be no deception.

there shined round about him a light from heaven--"a great light (he himself says) above the brightness of the sun," then shining in its full strength.

4-6. he fell to the earth--and his companions with him (Ac 26:14), who "saw the light" (Ac 22:9).

and heard a voice saying unto him--"in the Hebrew tongue" (Ac 26:14).

Saul, Saul--a reduplication full of tenderness [DE WETTE]. Though his name was soon changed into "Paul," we find him, in both his own narratives of the scene, after the lapse of so many years, retaining the original form, as not daring to alter, in the smallest detail, the overpowering words addressed to him.

why persecutest thou me?--No language can express the affecting character of this question, addressed from the right hand of the Majesty on high to an infuriated, persecuting mortal. (See Mt 25:45, and that whole judgment scene).

5. Who art thou, Lord?--"Jesus knew Saul ere Saul knew Jesus" [BENGEL]. The term "Lord" here is an indefinite term of respect for some unknown but august speaker. That Saul saw as well as *heard* this glorious Speaker, is expressly said by Ananias (Ac 9:17; 22:14), by Barnabas (Ac 9:27), and by himself (Ac 26:16); and in claiming apostleship, he explicitly states that he had "*seen* the Lord" (1Co 9:1; 15:8), which can refer only to this scene.

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest--The "I" and "thou" here are touchingly emphatic in the original; while the term "JESUS" is purposely chosen, to convey to him the thrilling information that the hated name which he sought to hunt down--"*the Nazarene*," as it is in Ac 22:8 --was now speaking to him from the skies, "crowned with glory and honor" (see Ac 26:9).

It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks--The metaphor of an ox, only driving the goad deeper by kicking against it, is a classic one, and here forcibly expresses, not only the vanity of all his measures for crushing the Gospel, but the deeper wound which every such effort inflicted upon himself.

6. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said--(The most ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament lack all these words *here* [including the last clause of Ac 9:5]; but they occur in Ac 26:14 and Ac 22:10, from which they appear to have been inserted here). The question, "What shall I do, Lord?" or, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" indicates a state of mind singularly interesting (see on [Ac 2:37](#)). Its elements seem to be these: (1) Resistless conviction that "Jesus whom he persecuted," now speaking to him, was "Christ the Lord." (See on [Ga 1:15, 16](#)). (2) As a consequence of this, that not only all his religious views, but his whole religious character, had been an entire mistake; that he was up to that moment fundamentally and wholly wrong. (3) That though his whole

future was now a blank, he had absolute confidence in Him who had so tenderly arrested him in his blind career, and was ready both to take in all His teaching and to carry out all His directions. (For more, see on [Ac 9:9](#)).

Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee, &c.--See on [Ac 8:26-28](#).

7. the men . . . stood speechless--This may mean merely that they remained so; but if the *standing* posture be intended, we have only to suppose that though at first they "all fell to the earth" (Ac 26:14), they arose of their own accord while Saul yet lay prostrate.

hearing a--rather "the"

voice--Paul himself says, "they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me" (Ac 22:9). But just as "the people that stood by *heard*" the voice that saluted our Lord with recorded words of consolation and assurance, and yet *heard not* the articulate words, but thought "it thundered" or that some "angel spake to Him" (Joh 12:28, 29) --so these men heard the *voice* that spake to Saul, but heard not the *articulate words*. Apparent discrepancies like these, in the different narratives of the same scene in one and the same book of Acts, furnish the strongest confirmation both of the facts themselves and of the book which records them.

8. Saul arose . . . and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man--after beholding the Lord, since he "could not see for the glory of that light" (Ac 22:11), he had involuntarily closed his eyes to protect them from the glare; and on opening them again he found his vision gone. "It is not said, however, that he was *blind*, for it was no punishment" [BENGEL].

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink--that is, according to the *Hebrew* mode of computation: he took no food during the remainder of that day, the entire day following, and so much of the subsequent day as elapsed before the visit of Ananias. Such a period of entire abstinence from food, in that state of mental absorption and revolution into which he had been so suddenly thrown, is in perfect harmony with known laws and numerous facts. But what three days those must have been! "Only one other space of three days' duration can be mentioned of equal importance in the history of the world" [HOWSON]. Since Jesus had been revealed not only to his *eyes* but to his *soul* (see on [Ga 1:15, 16](#)), the double conviction must have immediately flashed upon him, that his whole reading of the Old Testament hitherto had been wrong, and that the system of legal righteousness in which he had, up to that moment, rested and prided himself was false and fatal. What materials these for spiritual exercise during those three days of total darkness, fasting, and solitude! On the one hand, what self-condemnation, what anguish, what death of legal hope, what difficulty in believing that in such a case there could be hope at all; on the other hand, what heartbreaking admiration of the grace that had "pulled him out of the fire," what resistless conviction that there must be a purpose of love in it, and what tender expectation of being yet honored, as a chosen vessel, to declare what the Lord had done for his soul, and to spread abroad the savor of that Name which he had so wickedly, though ignorantly, sought to destroy--must have struggled in his breast during those memorable days! Is it too much to say that all that profound insight into the Old Testament, that comprehensive grasp of the principles of the divine economy, that penetrating spirituality, that vivid apprehension of man's lost state, and those glowing views of the perfection and glory of the divine remedy, that beautiful ideal of the loftiness and the lowliness of the Christian character, that large philanthropy and burning zeal to spend and be spent through all his future life for Christ, which distinguish the writings of this chiefest of the apostles and greatest of men, were all quickened into life during those three successive days?

10-16. a certain disciple . . . named Ananias--See on [Ac 22:12](#).

to him said the Lord--that is, Jesus. (See Ac 9:13, 14, 17).

11. go into the street . . . called Straight--There is still a street of this name in Damascus, about half a mile in length, running from east to west through the city [MAUNDRELL].

and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus--There is something touching in the minuteness of these directions. Tarsus was the capital of the province of Cilicia, lying along the northeast coast of the Mediterranean. It was situated on the river Cydnus, was a "large and populous city" (says XENOPHON, and see Ac 21:39), and under the Romans had the privilege of self-government.

behold, he prayeth--"breathing out" no longer "threatenings and slaughter," but struggling desires after light and life in the Persecuted One. Beautiful note of encouragement as to the frame in which Ananias would find the persecutor.

12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, &c.--Thus, as in the case of Cornelius and Peter afterwards, there was a mutual preparation of each for each. But we have no account of the vision which Saul had of Ananias coming unto him and putting his hands upon him for the restoration of his sight, save this interesting allusion to it in the vision which Ananias himself had.

13. Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, &c.--"The objections of Ananias, and the removal of them by the Lord, display in a very touching manner the childlike relation of the believing soul to its Redeemer. The Saviour speaks with Ananias as a man does with his friend" [OLSHAUSEN].

how much evil he hath done to thy saints--"*Thy* saints," says Ananias to Christ; therefore Christ is God [BENGEL]. So, in Ac 9:14, Ananias describes the disciples as "those that called on Christ's name." See on [Ac 7:59, 60](#); and compare 1Co 1:2.

14. here he hath authority, &c.--so that the terror not only of the great persecutor's name, but of this commission to Damascus, had travelled before him from the capital to the doomed spot.

15. Go thy way--Do as thou art bidden, without gainsaying.

he is a chosen vessel--a word often used by Paul in illustrating God's sovereignty in election (Ro 9:21-23; 2Co 4:7; 2Ti 2:20, 21 [ALFORD]. Compare Zec 3:2).

16. I will show him--(See Ac 20:23, 24; 21:11).

how great things he must suffer for my name--that is, Much he has done against that Name; but now, when I show him what great things he must suffer for that Name, he shall count it his honor and privilege.

17-19. Ananias went his way, and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul--How beautifully childlike is the obedience of Ananias to "the heavenly vision!"

the Lord, even Jesus--This clearly shows in what sense the term "Lord" is used in this book. It is JESUS that is meant, as almost invariably in the Epistles also.

who appeared unto thee in the way--This knowledge by an inhabitant of Damascus of what had happened to Saul before entering it, would show him at once that this was the man whom Jesus had already prepared him to expect.

and be filled with the Holy Ghost--which Ananias probably, without any express

instructions on that subject, took it for granted would descend upon him; and not necessarily after his baptism [BAUMGARTEN, WEBSTER and WILKINSON]--for Cornelius and his company received it before theirs (Ac 10:44-48) --but perhaps immediately after the recovery of his sight by the laying on of Ananias' hands.

18. there fell from his eyes as it were scales--"This shows that the blindness as well as the cure was supernatural. Substances like scales would not form naturally in so short a time" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. And the *medical* precision of Luke's language here is to be noted.

was baptized--as directed by Ananias (Ac 22:16).

19. when he had received meat, he was strengthened--for the exhaustion occasioned by his three days' fast would not be the less real, though unfelt during his struggles. (See on [Mt 4:2](#)).

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples at Damascus--making their acquaintance, in another way than either he or they had anticipated, and regaining his tone by the fellowship of the saints; but not certainly in order to learn from them what he was to teach, which he expressly disavows (Ga 1:12, 16).

20-22. preached Christ . . . that he is the Son of God--rather, "preached Jesus," according to all the most ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament (so Ac 9:21, "all that call on this name," that is, *Jesus*; and Ac 9:22, "proving that this *Jesus* is very *Christ*").

23. And after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him--*Had we no other record than this, we should have supposed that what is here related took place while Saul continued at Damascus after his baptism. But in Ga 1:17, 18 we learn from Paul himself that he "went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus," and that from the time of his first visit to the close of his second, both of which appear to have been short, a period of three years elapsed; either three full years, or one full year and part of two others. (See on [Ga 1:16-18](#)).* That such a blank should occur in the Acts, and be filled up in Galatians, is not more remarkable than that the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, their stay there, and their return thence, recorded only by Matthew, should be so entirely passed over by Luke, that if we had only his Gospel, we should have supposed that they returned to Nazareth immediately after the presentation in the temple. (Indeed in one of his narratives, Ac 22:16, 17, Paul himself takes no notice of this period). But *wherefore this journey?* Perhaps (1) because he felt a period of repose and partial seclusion to be needful to his spirit, after the violence of the change and the excitement of his new occupation. (2) To prevent the rising storm which was gathering against him from coming too soon to a head. (3) To exercise his ministry in the Jewish synagogues, as opportunity afforded. On his return, refreshed and strengthened in spirit, he immediately resumed his ministry, but soon to the imminent hazard of his life.

24, 25. they watched the gates night and day to kill him--The full extent of his danger appears only from his own account (2Co 11:32): "In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me"; the exasperated Jews having obtained from the governor a military force, the more surely to compass his destruction.

25. Then the disciples . . . by night let him down--"through a window" (2Co 11:33).

by the wall--Such overhanging windows in the walls of Eastern cities were common, and are to be seen in Damascus to this day.

Ac 9:26-31. SAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM AFTER HIS CONVERSION.

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem--"three years after" his conversion, and particularly "to see Peter" (Ga 1:18); no doubt because he was the leading apostle, and to communicate to him the prescribed sphere of his labors, specially to "the Gentiles."

he assayed to join himself to the disciples--simply as one of them, leaving his apostolic commission to manifest itself.

they were all afraid of him, &c.--knowing him only as a persecutor of the faith; the rumor of his conversion, if it ever was cordially believed, passing away during his long absence in Arabia, and the news of his subsequent labors in Damascus perhaps not having reached them.

27. But Barnabas . . . brought him to the apostles--that is, to Peter and James; for "other of the apostles saw I none," says he fourteen years after (Ga 1:18, 19). Probably none of the other apostles were there at the time (Ac 4:36). Barnabas being of Cyprus, which was within a few hours' sail of Cilicia, and annexed to it as a Roman province, and Saul and he being Hellenistic Jews and eminent in their respective localities, they may very well have been acquainted with each other before this [HOWSON]. What is here said of Barnabas is in fine consistency with the "goodness" ascribed to him (Ac 11:24), and with the name "son of consolation," given him by the apostles (Ac 4:36); and after Peter and James were satisfied, the disciples generally would at once receive him.

how he had seen the Lord . . . and he--the Lord.

had spoken to him--that is, how he had received his commission direct from the Lord Himself.

28, 29. And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem--for fifteen days, lodging with Peter (Ga 1:18).

29. disputed against the Grecians--(See on [Ac 6:1](#)); addressing himself specially to them, perhaps, as being of his own class, and that against which he had in the days of his ignorance been the fiercest.

they went about to slay him--Thus was he made to feel, throughout his whole course, what he himself had made others so cruelly to feel, *the cost of discipleship*.

30. they brought him down to Cæsarea--on the coast (see on [Ac 8:40](#)); accompanying him thus far. But Paul had another reason than his own apprehension for quitting Jerusalem so soon. "While he was praying in the temple, he was in a trance," and received express injunctions to this effect. (See on [Ac 22:17-21](#)).

and sent him forth to Tarsus--In Ga 1:21 he himself says of this journey, that he "came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"; from which it is natural to infer that instead of sailing direct for Tarsus, he landed at Seleucia, travelled thence to Antioch, and penetrated from this northward into Cilicia, ending his journey at Tarsus. As this was his first visit to his native city since his conversion, so it is not certain that he ever was there again. (See on [Ac 11:25](#)). It probably was now that he became the instrument of gathering into the fold of Christ those "kinsmen," that "sister," and perhaps her "son," of whom mention is made in Ac 23:16, &c.; Ro 16:7, 11, 21 [HOWSON].

Ac 9:31. FLOURISHING STATE OF THE CHURCH IN PALESTINE AT THIS TIME.

31. Then had all the churches rest--rather, "the Church," according to the best manuscripts and versions. But this rest was owing not so much to the conversion of Saul, as probably to the Jews being engrossed with the emperor Caligula's attempt to have his own image set up in the temple of Jerusalem [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 18.8.1, &c.].

throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria--This incidental notice of distinct churches already dotting all the regions which were the chief scenes of our Lord's ministry, and that were best able to test the facts on which the whole preaching of the apostles was based, is extremely interesting. "The fear of the Lord" expresses their holy walk; "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," their "peace and joy in believing," under the silent operation of the blessed Comforter.

Ac 9:32-43. PETER HEALS ENEAS AT LYDDA AND RAISES TABITHA TO LIFE AT JOPPA.

The historian now returns to Peter, in order to introduce the all-important narrative of Cornelius (Ac 10:1-48). The occurrences here related probably took place during Saul's sojourn in Arabia.

32-35. as Peter passed throughout all quarters--not now fleeing from persecution, but peacefully visiting the churches.

to the saints which dwelt at Lydda--about five miles east of Joppa.

34. And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole--(See on [Ac 3:6](#)).
make thy bed--(See on [Joh 5:8](#)).

35. all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron--(or "Sharon," a rich vale between Joppa and Caesarea).

saw him, and turned to the Lord--that is, there was a general conversion in consequence.

36-39. at Joppa--the modern *Jaffa*, on the Mediterranean, a very ancient city of the Philistines, afterwards and still the seaport of Jerusalem, from which it lies distant forty-five miles to the northwest.

Tabitha . . . Dorcas--the *Syro-Chaldaic* and *Greek* names for an *antelope* or *gazelle*, which, from its loveliness, was frequently employed as a proper name for women [MEYER, OLSHAUSEN]. Doubtless the interpretation, as here given, is but an echo of the remarks made by the Christians regarding her--how well her character answered to her name.

full of good works and alms-deeds--eminent for the activities and generousities of the Christian character.

37. when they had washed--according to the custom of civilized nations towards the dead.
in an--rather, "the"

upper chamber--(compare 1Ki 17:19).

38. the disciples sent unto Peter--showing that the disciples generally did not possess miraculous gifts [BENGEL].

39. all the widows--whom she had clad or fed.

stood by him weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made--that is, (as the tense implies), showing these as specimens only of what she *was in the habit of making*.

40-43. Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down--the one in imitation of his Master's way (Lu 8:54; and compare 2Ki 4:33); the other, in striking contrast with it. The *kneeling* became the lowly servant, but not the Lord Himself, *of whom it is never once recorded that he knelt in the performance of a miracle*.

opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up--The graphic minuteness of detail here imparts to the narrative an air of charming reality.

41. he gave her his hand, and lifted her up--as his Lord had done to his own mother-in-law (Mr 1:31).

43. with one Simon a tanner--a trade regarded by the Jews as half unclean, and consequently disreputable, from the contact with dead animals and blood which was connected with it. For this reason, even by other nations, it is usually carried on at some distance from towns; accordingly, Simon's house was "by the seaside" (Ac 10:6). Peter's lodging there shows him already to some extent above Jewish prejudice.

CHAPTER 10

Ac 10:1-48. ACCESSION AND BAPTISM OF CORNELIUS AND HIS PARTY; OR, THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE GENTILES.

We here enter on an entirely new phase of the Christian Church, the "opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles"; in other words, the recognition of Gentile, on terms of perfect equality with Jewish, discipleship without the necessity of circumcision. Some beginnings appear to have been already made in this direction (see on [Ac 11:20, 21](#)); and Saul probably acted on this principle from the first, both in Arabia and in Syria and Cilicia. But had he been the prime mover in the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church, the Jewish party, who were never friendly to him, would have acquired such strength as to bring the Church to the verge of a disastrous schism. But on Peter, "the apostle" specially "of the circumcision," was conferred the honor of initiating this great movement, as before of the first admission of Jewish believers. (See on [Mt 16:19](#)). After this, however, one who had already come upon the stage was to eclipse this "chiefest of the apostles."

1, 2. Cæsarea--(See on [Ac 8:40](#)).

the Italian band--a cohort of Italians, as distinguished from native soldiers, quartered at Cæsarea, probably as a bodyguard to the Roman procurator who resided there. An ancient coin makes express mention of such a cohort in Syria. [AKERMAN, *Numismatic Illustrations of the New Testament*.]

2. A devout man, &c.--an uncircumcised Gentile proselyte to the Jewish faith, of whom there were a very great number at this time; a distinguished proselyte, who had brought his whole household establishment under the hallowing influence of the Jewish faith and the regular

observance of its principal seasons of worship.

gave much alms to the people--that is, the *Jewish* people, on the same principle as another centurion before him (Lu 7:5); thinking it no "great thing," if they had "sown unto him spiritual things, that they should reap his carnal things" (1Co 9:11).

prayed to God alway--at the stated daily seasons. (See on [Ac 10:3](#)).

3-6. saw . . . evidently--"distinctly."

the ninth hour of the day--three o'clock, the hour of the evening sacrifice. But he had been "fasting until that hour" (Ac 10:30), perhaps from the sixth hour (Ac 10:9).

4. What is it, Lord?--language which, tremulously though it was uttered, betokened childlike reverence and humility.

Thy prayers and thine alms--The way in which both are specified is emphatic. The one denotes the spiritual outgoing of his soul to God, the other its practical outgoing to men.

are come up for a memorial before God--that is, as a *sacrifice* well-pleasing unto God, as an odor of a sweet smell (Re 8:4).

5. send to Joppa . . . for one Simon, &c.--(See on [Ac 9:11](#)).

7, 8. when the angel . . . was departed, he called--immediately doing as directed, and thereby showing the simplicity of his faith.

a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually--of the "soldiers under him," such as the centurion at Capernaum had (Mt 8:9). Who this "devout soldier" was, can only be matter of conjecture. DA COSTA [*Four Witnesses*] gives a number of ingenious reasons for thinking that, having attached himself henceforth to Peter--whose influence in the composition of the second Gospel is attested by the earliest tradition, and is stamped on that Gospel itself--he is no other than the Evangelist *Mark*.

9-16. upon the housetop--the flat roof, the chosen place in the East for cool retirement.
the sixth hour--noon.

10. a trance--differing from the "vision" of Cornelius, in so far as the things seen had not the same *objective* reality, though both were supernatural.

12. all manner of four-footed beasts, &c.--that is, the *clean* and the *unclean* (ceremonially) all mixed together.

14. Not so, Lord--See *Marginal* reference.

I have never eaten anything that is common--that is, *not sanctified* by divine permission to eat of it, and so "unclean." "The distinction of meats was a sacrament of national distinction, separation, and consecration" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

15. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common--The ceremonial distinctions are at an end, and Gentiles, ceremonially separated from the chosen people (Ac 10:28), and debarred from that access to God in the visible ordinances of His Church which they enjoyed, are now on a perfect equality with them.

16. done thrice--See Ge 41:32.

17-24. while Peter doubted . . . what this should mean, behold, the three men . . . stood before the gate . . . and asked--"were inquiring," that is, in the act of doing so. The preparations here made--of Peter for his Gentile visitors, as of Cornelius for him--are devoutly to be noted. But besides this, at the same moment, "the Spirit" expressly informs him that three men were inquiring for him, and bids him unhesitatingly go with them, as sent by Him.

21. I am he whom ye seek--This seems to have been said without any communication being made to Peter regarding the men or their errand.

22. they said, Cornelius . . . a just man, &c.--fine testimony this from his own servants. **of good report among all the nation of the Jews**--specified, no doubt, to conciliate the favorable regard of the Jewish apostle.

to hear words of thee--(See on [Ac 11:14](#)).

23. called them in and lodged them--thus partially anticipating this fellowship with Gentiles.

Peter went . . . with them, and certain brethren--six in number (Ac 11:12).

from Joppa--as witnesses of a transaction which Peter was prepared to believe pregnant with great consequences.

24. Cornelius . . . called together his kinsmen and near friends--implying that he had been long enough at Cæsarea to form relationships there and that he had intimate friends there whose presence he was not ashamed to invite to a religious meeting of the most solemn nature.

25-29. as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him--a mark of the highest respect.

fell down at his feet, and worshipped him--In the East this way of showing respect was customary not only to kings, but to others occupying a superior station; but among the Greeks and Romans it was reserved for the gods. Peter, therefore, declines it as due to no mortal [GROTIUS]. "*Those who claim to have succeeded Peter, have not imitated this part of his conduct*" [ALFORD] (therein only verifying 2Th 2:4, and compare Re 19:10; 22:9).

28. Ye know it is . . . unlawful . . . for . . . a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation, &c.--There was no express prohibition to this effect, and to a Certain extent intercourse was certainly kept up. (See the Gospel history, towards the end). But intimate social fellowship was not practiced, as being adverse to the spirit of the law.

29. I ask therefore, &c.--The whole speech is full of dignity, the apostle seeing in the company before him a new brotherhood, into whose devout and inquiring minds he was divinely directed to pour the light of new truth.

30-33. Four days ago--the messengers being despatched on the first; on the second reaching Joppa (Ac 10:9); starting for Cæsarea on the third; and on the fourth arriving.

33. we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God--Beautiful expression of entire preparedness to receive the expected divine teaching

through the lips of this heaven-commissioned teacher, and delightful encouragement to Peter to give free utterance to what was doubtless already on his lips!

34, 35. Peter opened his mouth--(See on [Mt 5:2](#)).

Of a truth I perceive--that is, "I have it now demonstrated before mine eyes."

that God is no respecter of persons--Not, "I see there is no capricious *favoritism* with God," for Peter would never imagine such a thing; but (as the next clause shows), "I see that God has respect only to *personal character and state* in the acceptance of men, national and ecclesiastical distinctions being of no account."

35. But in every nation--not (observe), in every *religion*; according to a common distortion of these words.

he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness--This being the well-known phraseology of the Old Testament in describing the truly godly man, within the pale of revealed religion, it cannot be alleged that Peter meant it to denote a merely *virtuous* character, in the heathen sense; and as Peter had learned enough, from the messengers of Cornelius and from his own lips, to convince him that the whole religious character of this Roman officer had been moulded in the Jewish faith, there can be no doubt that the apostle intended to describe exactly such saintship--in its internal spirituality and external fruitfulness--as God had already pronounced to be genuine and approved. And since to such "He giveth more grace," according to the law of His Kingdom (Jas 4:6; Mt 25:29), He sends Peter, not to be the instrument of his *conversion*, as this is very frequently called, but simply to "show him the way of God more perfectly," as before to the devout Ethiopian eunuch.

36-38. the word . . . sent unto the children of Israel--for to them (he would have them distinctly know) the Gospel was first preached, even as the facts of it took place on the special theater of the ancient economy.

preaching peace by Jesus Christ--the glorious sum of all Gospel truth (1Co 1:20-22).

he is Lord of all--exalted to embrace under the canopy of His peace, Jew and Gentile alike, whom the blood of His Cross had cemented into one reconciled and accepted family of God (Eph 2:13-18).

37. That word . . . ye how--The facts, it seems, were too notorious and extraordinary to be unknown to those who mixed so much with Jews, and took so tender an interest in all Jewish matters as they did; though, like the eunuch, they knew not the significance of them.

which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee--(See Lu 4:14, 37, 44; 7:17; 9:6; 23:5).

after the baptism which John preached--(See on [Ac 1:22](#)).

38. Now God anointed Jesus of Nazareth--rather, "Jesus of Nazareth (as the burden of that 'published word'), how God anointed Him."

with the Holy Ghost and with power--that is, at His baptism, thus visibly proclaiming Him MESSIAH, "the Lord's Christ." See Lu 4:18-21. For it is not His unction for personal holiness at His incarnation that is referred to--as many of the Fathers and some moderns take it--but His investiture with the insignia of the Messianic office, in which He presented Himself after His baptism to the acceptance of the people.

went about doing good--holding up the *beneficent* character of all His miracles, which was their predicted character (Isa 35:5, 6, &c.).

healing all that were oppressed of the devil--whether in the form of demoniacal possessions, or more indirectly, as in her "whom Satan had bound with a spirit of infirmity eighteen years" (Lu 13:16); thereby showing Himself the Redeemer from all evil.

for God was with him--Thus gently does the apostle rise to the supreme dignity of Christ with which he closes, accommodating himself to his hearers.

39-43. we are witnesses of all . . . he did--not objects of superstitious reverence, but simply *witnesses* to the great historical facts on which the Gospel is founded.

slew and hanged--that is, slew by hanging.

on a tree--So Ac 5:30 (and see on [Ga 3:13](#)).

40-41. showed him openly; Not to all the people--for it was not fitting that He should subject Himself, in His risen condition, to a second rejection in Person.

but unto witnesses chosen before of God . . . to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose, &c.--Not the less certain, therefore, was the fact of His resurrection, though withholding Himself from general gaze in His risen body.

he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead--He had before proclaimed Him "Lord of all," for the dispensing of "*peace*" to all alike; now he announces Him in the same supreme lordship, for the exercise of *judgment* upon all alike. On this divine ordination, see Joh 5:22, 23, 27; Ac 17:31. Thus we have here all Gospel truth in brief. But, *forgiveness through this exalted One* is the closing note of Peter's beautifully simple discourse.

43. To him give all the prophets witness--that is, This is the burden, generally of the prophetic testimony. It was fitter thus to give the spirit of their testimony, than to quote them in detail on such an occasion. But let this apostolic statement of the evangelical import of the Old Testament writings be devoutly weighed by those who are disposed to rationalize away this element in the Old Testament.

whosoever believeth in him--This was evidently said with special reference to the Gentile audience then before him, and formed a noble practical conclusion to the whole discourse.

44, 45. While Peter yet spake . . . the Holy Ghost fell--by visible and audible manifestation (Ac 10:46).

45. they of the circumcision . . . were astonished . . . because that on the Gentiles also was poured out, &c.--without circumcision.

46. heard them speak with tongues and magnify God--As on the day of Pentecost it was no empty miracle, no mere speaking of foreign languages, but utterance of "the wonderful works of God" in tongues to them unknown (Ac 2:11), so here; but more remarkable in this case, as the speakers were perhaps less familiar with the Old Testament songs of praise.

46-48. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water . . . which have received the Holy Ghost, &c.--Mark, he does not say, They have received the Spirit, what need have they for water? but, Having the living discipleship imparted to them and visibly stamped upon them, what objection can there be to admitting them, by the seal of baptism, into the full fellowship of the Church?

47. which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we--and are thus, in all that is essential

to salvation, on a level with ourselves.

48. he commanded them to be baptized--not doing it with his own hands, as neither did Paul, save on rare occasions (1Co 1:14-17; compare Ac 2:38; Joh 4:2).

prayed . . . him to tarry certain days--"golden days" [BENGEL], spent, doubtless, in refreshing Christian fellowship, and in imparting and receiving fuller teaching on the several topics of the apostle's discourse.

CHAPTER 11

Ac 11:1-18. PETER VINDICATES HIMSELF BEFORE THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM FOR HIS PROCEDURE TOWARDS THE GENTILES.

1-11. the apostles and brethren . . . in Judea--rather, "throughout Judea."

2. they . . . of the circumcision--not the Jewish Christians generally, for here there were no other, but such as, from their jealousy for "the middle wall of partition" which circumcision raised between Jew and Gentile, were *afterwards* known as "they of the circumcision." They doubtless embraced apostles as well as others.

3, 4. Thou wentest in . . . But Peter rehearsed the matter, &c.--These objectors scruple not to demand from Peter, though the first among the apostles, an explanation of his conduct; nor is there any insinuation on Peter's part of disrespect towards his authority in that demand--a manifest proof that such authority was unknown both to the complainers and to himself.

12-18. we entered the man's house--No mention of Cornelius' name, much less of his high position, as if that affected the question. To the charge, "Thou wentest in to *men* uncircumcised," he simply speaks of the uncircumcised "*man*" to whom he had been divinely sent.

13. seen an angel--literally, "*the* angel," for the rumor took that definite shape.

14. Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved--The historian makes the angel express this much more generally (Ac 10:6). So also the subsequent report of it by the deputies and by Cornelius himself to Peter (Ac 10:22, 32). But as Peter tarried with Cornelius certain days, and they doubtless talked over the wonderful scene together, perhaps this fuller and richer form of what the angel said was given to Peter; or the apostle himself may have *expressed* what the angel certainly *designed* by directing them to send for him. Observe, "salvation" is here made to hang upon "*words*," that is, the Gospel message concerning Christ. But on the "salvation" of Cornelius, see on [Ac 10:34, 35](#). On that of his "house," see on [Lu 19:10](#).

16, 17. Then remembered I the word . . . John . . . baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then, &c.--that is, "Since God Himself has put them on a level with ourselves, by bestowing on them what the Lord Jesus pronounced the higher baptism of the Holy Ghost, would it not have been to withstand God if I had withheld from them the lower baptism of water, and kept aloof from them as still 'unclean?'"

18. held their peace and glorified God--Well had it been if, when Paul afterwards adduced equally resistless evidence in justification of the same line of procedure, this Jewish party had shown the same reverential and glad submission!

Then hath God also granted to the Gentiles, &c.--rather, "granted to the Gentiles also." (See a similar misplacement of "also" in Heb 12:1). To "*grant* repentance unto life"--that is, "such as issues in life" (compare 2Co 7:10, "repentance unto salvation")--is more than to be willing to pardon upon repentance [GROTIUS]. The case of Cornelius is so manifestly one of *grace* reigning in every stage of his religious history, that we can hardly doubt that this was just the feature of it which they meant here to express. *And this is the grace that reigns in every conversion.*

Ac 11:19-24. THE GOSPEL BEING PREACHED TO GENTILES AT ANTIOCH ALSO BARNABAS IS SENT THITHER FROM JERUSALEM, WHO HAILS THEIR ACCESSION AND LABORS AMONG THEM.

19. they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen--and who "went everywhere preaching the word" (Ac 8:4).

travelled as far as Phenice--that part of the Mediterranean coast which, commencing a little north of Cæsarea, stretches northwards for upwards of one hundred miles, halfway to Antioch.

and Cyprus--(See on [Ac 4:36](#)). An active commercial intercourse subsisted between Phenice and Cyprus.

and Antioch--near the head of the northeast coast of the Mediterranean, on the river Orontes, and containing a large colony of Jews, to whose religion there were there numerous proselytes. "It was almost an Oriental Rome, in which all the forms of the civilized life of the empire found some representative; and through the two first centuries of the Christian era it was what Constantinople became afterwards, 'the Gate of the East'" [HOWSON].

20. some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene--(see on [Lu 23:26](#)); as Lucius, mentioned in Ac 13:1.

spake unto the Grecians--rather, "the *Greeks*," that is, uncircumcised Gentiles (as the true reading beyond doubt is). The Gospel had, from the first, been preached to "the Grecians" or Greek-speaking *Jews*, and these "men of Cyprus and Cyrene" were themselves "Grecians." How, then, can we suppose that the historian would note, as something new and singular (Ac 11:22), that some of the dispersed Christians preached to *them*?

21. a great number believed--Thus the accession of Cornelius and his party was not the first admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church. (See on [Ac 10:1](#).) Nay, we read of no influence which the accession of Cornelius and his house had on the further progress of the Gospel among the Gentiles; whereas there here open upon us operations upon the Gentiles from quite a different quarter, and attended with ever growing success. The only great object served by the case of Cornelius was *the formal recognition of the principles which that case afterwards secured.* (See on [Ac 15:19-29](#).)

22. sent . . . Barnabas . . . as far as Antioch--implying that even on the way to Antioch he found churches to visit [OLSHAUSEN]. It was in the first instance, no doubt, a mission of inquiry; and no one could be more suitable to inquire into the proceedings of those Cyprians and Cyrenians than one who was himself a "Grecian" of Cyprus (Ac 4:36), and "a son of

consolation."

23. when he . . . had seen the grace of God--in the new converts.
was glad--owned and rejoiced in it at once as divine, though they were uncircumcised.
exhorted them all that with purpose of heart--as opposed to a hasty and fickle discipleship.
they would cleave unto the Lord--the Lord Jesus.

24. For he was a good man--The sense of "good" here is plainly "large-hearted," "liberal-minded," rising above narrow Jewish sectarianism, and that because, as the historian adds, he was "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith."

and much people were added unto the Lord--This proceeding of Barnabas, so full of wisdom, love, and zeal, was blessed to the great increase of the Christian community in that important city.

Ac 11:25, 26. BARNABAS, FINDING THE WORK IN ANTIOCH TOO MUCH FOR HIM, GOES TO TARSUS FOR SAUL--THEY LABOR THERE TOGETHER FOR A WHOLE YEAR WITH MUCH SUCCESS, AND ANTIOCH BECOMES THE HONORED BIRTHPLACE OF THE TERM *CHRISTIAN*.

25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul--Of course, this was after the hasty despatch of Saul to Tarsus, no doubt by Barnabas himself among others, to escape the fury of the Jews at Jerusalem. And as Barnabas was the first to take the converted persecutor by the hand and procure his recognition as a disciple by the brethren at Jerusalem (Ac 9:27), so he alone seems at that early period to have discerned in him those peculiar endowments by virtue of which he was afterwards to eclipse all others. Accordingly, instead of returning to Jerusalem, to which, no doubt, he sent accounts of his proceedings from time to time, finding that the mine in Antioch was rich in promise and required an additional and powerful hand to work, he leaves it for a time, takes a journey to Tarsus, "finds Saul" (seemingly implying--not that he lay hid [BENGEL], but that he was engaged at the time in some preaching circuit--see on [Ac 15:23](#)), and returns with him to Antioch. Nor were his hopes disappointed. As co-pastors, for the time being, of the Church there, they so labored that the Gospel, even in that great and many-sided community, achieved for itself a name which will live and be gloried in as long as this world lasts, as the symbol of all that is most precious to the fallen family of man:--"*The disciples were called CHRISTIANS first in Antioch.*" This name originated not within, but without, the Church; not with their *Jewish* enemies, by whom they were styled "Nazarenes" (Ac 24:5), but with the *heathen* in Antioch, and (as the form of the word shows) with the *Romans*, not the *Greeks* there [OLSHAUSEN]. It was not at first used in a good sense (as Ac 26:28; 1Pe 4:16 show), though hardly framed out of contempt (as DE WETTE, BAUMGARTEN, &c.); but as it was a noble testimony to the light in which the Church regarded Christ--honoring Him as their only Lord and Saviour, dwelling continually on His name, and glorying in it--so it was felt to be too apposite and beautiful to be allowed to die.

Ac 11:27-30. BY OCCASION OF A FAMINE BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURN TO JERUSALEM WITH A CONTRIBUTION FOR THE RELIEF OF THEIR SUFFERING BRETHREN.

27. came prophets from Jerusalem--inspired teachers, a class we shall afterwards frequently meet with, who sometimes, but not necessarily, foretold future events. They are

classed next to apostles (1Co 12:28, 29; Eph 4:11).

28. that there should be great dearth throughout all the world--the whole Roman empire.

which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar--Four famines occurred during his reign. This one in Judea and the adjacent countries took place, A.D. 41 [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.2,5]. *An important date for tracing out the chronology of the Acts.* (But this subject is too difficult and extensive to admit of being handled here).

29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief, &c.--This was the pure prompting of Christian love, which shone so bright in those earliest days of the Gospel.

30. sent it to the elders--an office well known to be borrowed from the synagogue; *after the model of which, and not at all of the temple, the Christian Churches were constituted by the apostles.*

by the hands of Barnabas and Saul--This was Saul's SECOND VISIT TO JERUSALEM after his conversion.

CHAPTER 12

Ac 12:1-19. PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH BY HEROD AGRIPPA I--MARTYRDOM OF JAMES AND MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE OF PETER.

1-3. Herod the king--grandson of Herod the Great, and son of Aristobulus. He at this time ruled over all his father's dominions. PALEY has remarked the accuracy of the historian here. For thirty years before this there was no king at Jerusalem exercising supreme authority over Judea, nor was there ever afterwards, save during the three last years of Herod's life, within which the transactions occurred.

2. killed James . . . with the sword--beheaded him; a most ignominious mode of punishment, according to the Jews. Blessed martyr! Thou hast indeed "drunk of thy Lord's cup, and hast been baptized with his baptism." (See on [Mr 10:38-40](#).) A grievous loss this would be to the Church; for though nothing is known of him beyond what we read in the Gospels, the place which he had as one of the three whom the Lord admitted to His closest intimacy would lead the Church to look up to him with a reverence and affection which even their enemies would come to hear of. They could spring only upon one more prized victim; and flushed with their first success, they prevail upon Herod to seize him also.

3. because he saw it pleased the Jews--Popularity was the ruling passion of this Herod, not naturally so cruel as some of the family [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 19.7.3].

to take Peter also--whose loss, at this stage of the Church, would have been, so far as we can see, irreparable.

Then were the days of unleavened bread--seven in number, during which, after killing and eating the Passover, no leaven was allowed in Jewish houses (Ex 12:15, 19).

4. delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers--that is, to four parties of four each,

corresponding to the four Roman watches; two watching in prison and two at the gates, and each party being on duty for the space of one watch.

intending after Easter--rather, "after the Passover"; that is, after the whole festival was over. (The word in our King James Version is an ecclesiastical term of later date, and ought not to have been employed here).

to bring him forth to the people--for execution; for during "the days of unleavened bread," or the currency of any religious festival, the Jews had a prejudice against trying or putting anyone to death.

5, 6. prayer was made without ceasing--rather, "instant," "earnest," "urgent" (*Margin*); as in Lu 22:44; Ac 26:7; and 1Pe 4:8 (see *Greek*).

of the church unto God for him--not in public assembly, for it was evidently not safe to meet thus; but in little groups in private houses, one of which was Mary's (Ac 12:12). And this was kept up during all the days of unleavened bread.

6. And when Herod would have brought him forth--"was going to bring him forth."

the same night--but a few hours before the intended execution. Thus long were the disciples kept waiting; their prayers apparently unavailing, and their faith, as would seem from the sequel, waxing feeble. Such, however, is the "law" of God's procedure (De 32:36 and see on [Joh 21:3](#)).

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains--Roman prisoners had a chain fastened at one end to the wrist of their right hand, and at the other to the wrist of a soldier's left hand, leaving the right arm of the keeper free in case of any attempt to escape. For greater security the prisoner was sometimes, as here, chained to two soldiers, one on each side. (See Ac 21:23.) Ye think your prey secure, bloodthirsty priests and thou obsequious tyrant who, to "please the Jews," hast shut in this most eminent of the servants of Christ within double gates, guarded by double sentinels, while double keepers and double chains seem to defy all rescue! So thought the chief priests, who "made the sepulchre of the Lord sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." But "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh at you." Meanwhile, "Peter is sleeping!" In a few hours he expects a stingless death; "neither counts he his life dear unto him, so that he may finish his course with joy and the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus." In this frame of spirit he has dropped asleep, and lies the picture of peace.

7-11. the angel of the Lord--rather, "an angel."

came upon him--so in Lu 2:9, expressive of the unexpected nature of the visit.

smote Peter on the side . . . Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off . . . Gird thyself . . . And so he did . . . Cast thy garment--tunic, which he had thrown off for the night.

8. about thee . . . follow me--In such graphic minuteness of detail we have a charming mark of reality: while the rapidity and curtness of the orders, and the promptitude with which they were obeyed, betoken the despatch which, in the circumstances, was necessary.

9. wist not that it was true; but thought he saw a vision--So little did the apostle look for deliverance!

10. first and the second ward . . . the iron gate that leadeth unto the city--We can only conjecture the precise meaning of all this, not knowing the position of the prison.

passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him--when he had placed him beyond pursuit. Thus "He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their heads

cannot perform their enterprise" (Job 5:12).

11. when Peter was come to himself--recovered from his bewilderment, and had time to look back upon all the steps that had followed each other in such rapid succession.

Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me, &c.--another evidence that Peter expected nothing but to seal his testimony with his blood on this occasion.

12-17. he came to the house of Mary, &c.--who "must have had a house of some pretensions to receive a large number; and, accordingly, we read that her brother Barnabas (Col 4:10) was a person of substance (Ac 4:37). She must also have been distinguished for faith and courage to allow such a meeting in the face of persecution" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. To such a house it was natural that Peter should come.

mother of John . . . Mark--so called to distinguish him from the apostle of that name, and to distinguish her from the other Marys.

where many were gathered together praying--doubtless for Peter's deliverance, and continuing, no doubt, on this the last of the days of unleavened bread, which was their last hope, all night in prayer to God.

13. came to hearken--not to open; for neither was it a time nor an hour of night for that, but to listen who was there.

14. opened not for gladness, but ran in and told, &c.--How exquisite is this touch of nature!

15. Thou art mad--one of those exclamations which one can hardly resist on hearing what seems far "too good to be true."

she constantly affirmed--"kept steadfastly affirming."

that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel--his disembodied spirit, his ghost; anything, in fact, rather than himself. Though this had been the burden of their fervent prayers during all the days of unleavened bread, they dispute themselves out of it as a thing incredible. Still, it is but the unbelief of the disciples who "believed not *for joy* and wondered" at the tidings of their Lord's resurrection. How often do we pray for what we can hardly credit the bestowment of, when it comes in answer to our prayers! This, however, argues not so much hard unbelief as that kind of it incident to the best in this land of shadows, which perceives not so clearly as it might how very near heaven and earth, the Lord and His praying people, are to each other.

16. Peter continued knocking--delay being dangerous.

17. But he, beckoning . . . with his hand to hold their peace--a lively touch this. In the hubbub of joyful and wondering interrogatories there might mingle reflections, thrown out by one against another, for holding out so long against the testimony of Rhoda; while the emotion of the apostle's own spirit would be too deep and solemn to take part in such demonstrations or utter a word till, with his hand, he had signified his wish for perfect silence.

Go show these things unto James and to the brethren--Whether James the son of Alphaeus, one of the Twelve, usually known as "James the Less," and "James the Lord's brother" (Ga 1:19), were the same person; and if not, whether the James here referred to was the former or the latter, critics are singularly divided, and the whole question is one of the most

difficult. To us, it appears that there are strong reasons for thinking that they were *not* the same person, and that the one here meant, and throughout the Acts, is *the apostle* James. (But on this more hereafter). James is singled out, because he had probably begun to take the oversight of the Church in Jerusalem, which we afterwards find him exercising (Ac 15:1-29).

And he departed, and went into another place--according to his Lord's express command (Mt 10:23). When told, on a former miraculous liberation from prison, to go and speak unto the people (Ac 5:20), he did it; but in this case to present himself in public would have been to tempt God by rushing upon certain destruction.

18, 19. as soon as it was day, &c.--His deliverance must have been during the fourth watch (three to six A.M.); else he must have been missed by the keepers at the change of the watch [WIES].

19. examined the keepers--who, either like the keepers of our Lord's sepulchre, had "shaken and become as dead men" (Mt 28:4), or had slept on their watch and been divinely kept from awaking.

commanded that they should be put to death--Impotent vengeance!

Ac 12:20-25. HEROD'S MISERABLE END--GROWING SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL--
BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURN TO ANTIOCH.

20. Herod was . . . displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon--for some reason unknown; but the effect on their commercial relations made the latter glad to sue for peace.

their country was nourished by the king's country--See 1Ki 5:11; Eze 3:7; Eze 27:17. Perhaps the famine (Ac 11:28) made them the more urgent for reconciliation.

21. And upon a set day Herod . . . made an oration unto them--to the Tyrians and Sidonians especially.

22, 23. the people gave a shout, &c.--JOSEPHUS' account of his death is remarkably similar to this [*Antiquities*, 19.8.2]. Several cases of such deaths occur in history. Thus was this wretched man nearer his end than he of whom he had thought to make a public spectacle.

24. But the word grew, &c.--that is, Not only was the royal representative ignominiously swept from the stage, while his intended victim was spared to the Church, but the cause which he and his Jewish instigators sought to crush was only furthered and glorified. How full of encouragement and consolation is all this to the Christian Church in every age!

25. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem--where, it thus appears, they had remained during all this persecution.

when they had fulfilled their ministry--or service; that mentioned on Ac 11:29, 30.

took with them John . . . Mark--(See on [Ac 12:12](#)), not to be confounded with the second Evangelist, as is often done. As his uncle was Barnabas, so his spiritual father was Peter (1Pe 5:13).

*PAUL'S FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY:
In Company with Barnabas.
Ac 13:1-14:28.*

Ac 13:1-3. BARNABAS AND SAUL, DIVINELY CALLED TO LABOR AMONG THE GENTILES, ARE SET APART AND SENT FORTH BY THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH.

The first seven chapters of this book might be entitled, *The Church among the Jews*; the next five (chapters eight through twelve), *The Church in Transition from Jews to Gentiles*; and the last sixteen (chapters thirteen through twenty-eight), *The Church among the Gentiles* [BAUMGARTEN]. "Though Christianity had already spread beyond the limits of Palestine, still the Church continued a stranger to *formal* missionary effort. Casual occurrences, particularly the persecution at Jerusalem (Ac 8:2), had hitherto brought about the diffusion of the Gospel. It was from Antioch that teachers were first sent forth with the definite purpose of spreading Christianity, and organizing churches, with regular institutions (Ac 14:23)" [OLSHAUSEN].

1. there were . . . certain prophets--(See on [Ac 11:27](#)).

and teachers; as Barnabas, &c.--implying that there were others there, besides; but, according to what appears the true reading, the meaning is simply that those here mentioned were in the Church at Antioch as prophets and teachers.

Simeon . . . Niger--of whom nothing is known.

Lucius of Cyrene-- (Ac 2:20). He is mentioned, in Ro 16:21, as one of Paul's kinsmen.

Manaen--or Menahem, the name of one of the kings of Israel (2Ki 15:14).

which had been brought up with--or, the foster brother of.

Herod the tetrarch--that is, Antipas, who was himself "brought up with a certain private person at Rome" [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 17.1,3]. How differently did these two foster brothers turn out--the one, abandoned to a licentious life and stained with the blood of the most distinguished of God's prophets, though not without his fits of reformation and seasons of remorse; the other, a devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus and prophet of the Church at Antioch! But this is only what may be seen in every age: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.' If the courtier, whose son, at the point of death, was healed by our Lord (Joh 4:46) was of Herod's establishment, while Susanna's husband was his steward (Lu 8:3), his foster brother's becoming a Christian and a prophet is something remarkable.

and Saul--last of all, but soon to become first. Henceforward this book is almost exclusively occupied with him; and his impress on the New Testament, on Christendom, and on the world is paramount.

2. As they ministered to the Lord--The word denotes the performance of *official* duties of any kind, and was used to express the priestly functions under the Old Testament. Here it signifies the corresponding ministrations of the Christian Church.

and fasted--As this was done in other cases on special occasions (Ac 13:3, 14, 23), it is not improbable that they had been led to expect some such prophetic announcement at this time.

the Holy Ghost said--through some of the prophets mentioned in Ac 13:1.

Separate me--So Ro 1:1.

for the work whereunto I have called them--by some communication, perhaps, to themselves: in the case of Saul at least, such a designation was indicated from the first (Ac 22:21). *Note.*--While the *personality* of the Holy Ghost is manifest from this language, His supreme *divinity* will appear equally so by comparing it with Heb 5:4.

3. laid their hands on them--(See on [Ac 6:6](#)) --"recommending them to the grace of God for the work which they had to fulfil" (Ac 14:26).

sent them away--with the double call--of *the Spirit* first, and next of *the Church*. So clothed, their mission is thus described: "They being sent forth by the Holy Ghost." Have we not here for all time the true principle of appointment to sacred offices?

Ac 13:4-12. ARRIVING IN CYPRUS THEY PREACH IN THE SYNAGOGUES OF SALAMIS--AT PAPHOS, ELYMAS IS STRUCK BLIND, AND THE GOVERNOR OF THE ISLAND IS CONVERTED.

4, 5. departed unto Seleucia--the seaport of Antioch, from which it lay nearly due west fifteen miles, and five from the Mediterranean shore, on the river Orontes.

thence sailed to Cyprus--whose high mountain summits are easily seen in clear weather from the coast [COLONEL CHESNEY in HOWSON]. "Four reasons may have induced them to turn in first to this island: (1) Its nearness to the mainland; (2) It was the native place of Barnabas, and since the time when Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, and "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus," family ties had not been without effect on the progress of the Gospel. (3) It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcomed in Cyprus when brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark, to their own connections or friends. The Jews were numerous in Salamis. By sailing to that city, they were following the track of the synagogues; and though their mission was chiefly to the Gentiles, their surest course for reaching them was through the proselytes and Hellenizing Jews. (4) Some of the Cypriotes were already Christians. Indeed, no one place out of Palestine, except Antioch, had been so honorably associated with the work of successful evangelization" [HOWSON].

5. and when they were at Salamis--the Grecian capital of the island, on the eastern side, and not many hours' sail from Seleucia. At this busy mercantile port immense numbers of Jews were settled, which accounts for what is here said, that they had more than one synagogue, in which Barnabas and Saul preached, while other cities had one only.

they had . . . John--Mark.

to their minister--"for their officer". (See on [Lu 4:20](#)). With what fruit they preached here is not said. Probably their feeling was what Paul afterwards expressed at Antioch in Pisidia (Ac 13:46).

6. when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos--on the opposite or west side of the island, about one hundred miles by land, along the south coast; the Roman capital, where the governor resided.

they found a . . . sorcerer--one of a numerous class of impostors who, at this time of general unbelief, were encouraged even by cultivated Romans.

7. Which was with the deputy--properly, "*the proconsul*." This name was reserved for the governors of settled provinces, which were placed under the Roman Senate, and is never given in the New Testament to Pilate, Felix, or Festus, who were but *procurators*, or subordinate administrators of unsettled, imperial, military provinces. Now as Augustus reserved Cyprus for himself, its governor would in that case have been not a proconsul, but simply a procurator, had not the emperor afterwards restored it to the Senate, as a Roman historian [DIO CASSIUS] expressly states. In most striking confirmation of this minute accuracy of the sacred historian, coins have actually been found in the island, stamped with the names of *proconsuls*, both in

Greek and Latin [AKERMAN, *Numismatic Illustrations of the New Testament*]. (GROTIUS and BENDEL, not aware of this, have missed the mark here).

Sergius Paulus, a prudent man--an intelligent man, who thirsting for truth, sent for Barnabas and Saul, desiring ("earnestly desiring") to hear the Word of God.

8-12. But Elymas--or "the wise."

for so is his name by interpretation--the word is from the *Arabic*.

withstood them--perceiving, probably, how eagerly the proconsul was drinking in the word, and fearing a dismissal. (Compare 2Ti 3:8).

9. Then Saul . . . also . . . called Paul--and henceforward Paul only; a softening of his former name, in accommodation to Roman ears, and (as the word signifies "little") probably with allusion as elsewhere to his insignificance of stature and appearance (2Co 10:1, 10) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

filled with the Holy Ghost--the Spirit coming mightily upon him.

set his eyes on him and said--Henceforward Barnabas sinks into the background. The whole soul of his great colleague, now drawn out, as never before, shoots, by the lightning gaze of his eye, through the dark and tortuous spirit of the sorcerer. What a picture!

10. full of all subtlety--referring to his magic arts.

and all malice--The word signifies "readiness for anything," knavish dexterity.

thou child of the devil . . . enemy of all righteousness--These were not words of passion, for immediately before uttering them, it is said he was "filled with the Holy Ghost" [CHRYSOSTOM].

wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord--referring to his having to that hour made a trade of leading his fellow creatures astray.

11. the hand of the Lord is upon thee, and thou shalt be blind for a season--the judgment being mercifully designed to lead him to repentance. The tradition that it did is hardly to be depended on.

there fell on him a mist, &c.--This is in Luke's *medical* style.

12. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord--so marvellously attested; compare Mr 1:27. What fruit, if any, followed this remarkable conversion, or how long after it the missionaries remained at Paphos, we know not.

Ac 13:13-52. AT PERGA JOHN MARK FORSAKES THEM--AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA, PAUL PREACHES WITH GLORIOUS EFFECT--THE JEWS, ENRAGED, EXPEL THEM OUT OF THEM COASTS.

13. they came to Perga in Pamphylia--The distance from Paphos to Attalia, on the Gulf of Pamphylia (see on [Ac 14:25](#)), sailing in a northwest direction, is not much greater than from Seleucia to Salamis on the east. Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia, on the river Cestrus, and about seven miles inland from Attalia.

and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem--As Paul afterwards peremptorily refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey, because he "had departed [or 'fallen off'] from them and had not gone with them to the work" (Ac 15:38), there can be no

doubt that he had either wearied of it or been deterred by the prospect of the dangers which lay before him. (But see on [Ac 15:37](#), &c.).

14. departed from Perga--apparently without making any stay or doing any work: compare the different language of Ac 14:25, and see immediately below.

came to Antioch in Pisidia--usually so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, from which they had started, though it actually lies in Phrygia, and almost due north from Perga. It was a long journey, and as it lay almost entirely through rugged mountain passes, while "rivers burst out at the base of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines," it must have been a perilous one. The whole region was, and to this day is, infested by robbers, as ancient history and modern travels abundantly attest; and there can be but little doubt that to this very journey Paul many years after alludes, when he speaks amidst his "journeyings often," of his "*perils of rivers*" (as the word is), and his "*perils of robbers*" (2Co 11:26). If this journey were taken in May--and earlier than that the passes would have been blocked up with snow--it would account for their not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; "men, women, and children, flocks, herds, camels, and asses, all ascending at the beginning of the hot season from the plains to the cool basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries" [HOWSON].

15-17. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand--as was his manner on such occasions (Ac 21:40; and see Ac 26:1).

Men of Israel, and ye that fear God--by the latter expression meaning religious proselytes, who united with the Jews in all acts of ordinary worship.

and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in Egypt--by marvellous interpositions for them in their deepest depression.

18-22. forty years suffered he their manners--rather, according to what appears the true reading, "cherished he them" (as a nurse the infant in her bosom).

20. after that he gave . . . judges . . . about the space of four hundred and fifty years--As this appears to contradict 1Ki 6:1, various solutions have been proposed. Taking the words as they stand in the *Greek*, thus, "after that, by the space of four hundred fifty years, He gave judges," the meaning may be, that about four hundred fifty years elapsed from the time of the covenant with Abraham *until* the period of the judges; which is historically correct, the word "about" showing that chronological exactness was not aimed at. But taking the sense to be as in our version, that it was the period of the judges itself which lasted about four hundred fifty years, this statement also will appear historically correct, if we include in it the interval of subjection to foreign powers which occurred during the period of the judges, and understand it to describe the whole period from the settlement of the tribes in Canaan to the establishment of royalty. Thus, from the Exodus to the building of the temple were five hundred ninety-two years [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 8.3.1]; deduct forty years in the wilderness; twenty-five years of Joshua's rule [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 5.1.29]; forty years of Saul's reign (Ac 13:2); forty of David's and the first four years of Solomon's reign (1Ki 6:1), and there remain, just four hundred forty-three years; or, in round numbers, "about four hundred fifty years."

21. God gave . . . them Saul . . . of the tribe of Benjamin--That the speaker was himself of the same name and of the same tribe, has often been noticed as in all likelihood present to the apostle's mind while speaking.

forty years--With this length of Saul's reign (not mentioned in the Old Testament),

JOSEPHUS coincides [*Antiquities*, 6.14.9].

22. I have found David, &c.--This quotation is the substance of Ps 89:20; 1Sa 13:14; and perhaps also of Ps 78:70-72.

23-25. Of this man's seed hath God, according to . . . promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus--The emphasis on this statement lies: (1) in the *seed* from which Christ sprang--David's--and the *promise* to that effect, which was thus fulfilled; (2) on the *character* in which this promised Christ was given of God--"a SAVIOUR." His personal name "JESUS" is emphatically added, as designed to express that very character. (See on [Mt 1:21](#)).

26-31. children . . . of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth God--Gentile proselytes.

to you is the word of this salvation sent--both being regarded as one class, as "the Jew first," to whom the Gospel was to be addressed in the first instance.

27. For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, &c.--The apostle here speaks as if the more immediate guilt of Christ's death lay with the rulers and people of the metropolis, to which he fondly hoped that those residing at such a distance as Antioch would not set their seal.

28. found no cause of death--though they *sought* it (Mt 26:59, 60).

29. they took him down . . . and laid him in a sepulchre--Though the burial of Christ was an act of honor and love to Him by the disciples to whom the body was committed, yet since His enemies looked after it and obtained a guard of soldiers to keep watch over it as the remains of their own victim, the apostle regards this as the last manifestation on their part of enmity to the Saviour, that they might see how God laughed all their precautions to scorn by "raising Him from the dead."

31. he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, &c.--that is, by those who, having gone out and in with Him in closest intimacy during all His public ministry, which lay chiefly in Galilee, and having accompanied Him on His last journey to Jerusalem, could not possibly be mistaken as to the identity of the risen One, and were therefore unexceptionable and sufficient witnesses.

33. God hath fulfilled the same--"hath completely fulfilled."

in that he hath raised up Jesus again--literally, "raised up"; but the meaning is (notwithstanding the contrary opinion of many excellent interpreters) "*from the dead*"; as the context plainly shows.

as it is written in the second psalm--in many manuscripts "the first Psalm"; what we call the first being regarded by the ancient Jews as only an introduction to the Psalter, which was considered to begin with the second.

this day have I begotten thee--As the apostle in Ro 1:4 regards the resurrection of Christ merely as the *manifestation* of a prior Sonship, which he afterwards (Ac 8:32) represents as *essential*, it is plain that this is his meaning here. (Such *declarative* meaning of the verb "to be" is familiar to every reader of the Bible). See Joh 15:8, "So shall ye be," that is, *be seen* to be "My disciples." It is against the whole sense of the New Testament to ascribe the *origin* of

Christ's Sonship to His resurrection.

34-37. now no more to return to corruption--that is, to the grave where death reigns; and compare Ro 6:9, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, *death hath no more dominion over him.*"

I will give you the sure mercies of David-- (Isa 55:3). The word rendered "mercies" is peculiar, denoting the *sanctity* of them, as comprehending the whole riches of the new covenant; while the other word, "sure," points to the *certainty* with which they would, through David's Seed, be at length all substantiated. See on [Joh 1:14](#). But how do these words prove the resurrection of Christ? "They presuppose it; for since an eternal kingdom was promised to David, the Ruler of this kingdom could not remain under the power of death. But to strengthen the indefinite prediction by one more definite, the apostle adduces Ps 16:10, of which Peter had given the same explanation (see on [Ac 2:27](#); Ac 2:30, 31), both apostles denying the possibility of its proper reference to David" [OLSHAUSEN].

36. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God--rather, "served," in his own generation, the will (or "counsel") of God; yielding himself an instrument for the accomplishment of God's high designs, and in this respect being emphatically "the man after God's own heart." This done, he "fell asleep, and was gathered to his fathers, and saw corruption." David, therefore (argues the apostle), could not be the subject of his own prediction, which had its proper fulfilment only in the resurrection of the uncorrupted body of the Son of God, emphatically God's "Holy One."

38-41. the forgiveness of sins--the first necessity of the sinner, and so the first experienced blessing of the Gospel.

39. by him all that believe are justified from all things--The sense requires that a pause in the sentence be made here: "By him the believer is absolved from all charges of the law." What follows,

from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses--is not an *exceptional* but an *explanatory* clause. The meaning is not, "Though the law justifies from many things, it cannot justify from all things, but Christ makes up all deficiencies"; but the meaning is, "By Christ the believer is justified from all things, whereas the law justifies from nothing." (*Note.*--The deeper sense of justification, the *positive* side of it, is reserved for the Epistles, addressed to the justified themselves: and whereas it is the *resurrection* of Christ here, and throughout the Acts chiefly, which is dwelt on, because the first thing in order to bring peace to the guilty through Christ was to establish His Messiahship by His resurrection, in the Epistles to believers His *death* as the way of reconciliation is fully unfolded).

40. Beware, therefore, &c.--By this awful warning of the Old Testament the apostle would fain "shut them up unto the faith."

41. ye will not believe though a man declare it unto you--that is, even on unexceptionable testimony. The words, from Hab 1:5, were originally a merciful but fruitless warning against the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the Babylonish captivity. As such nothing could more fitly describe the more awful calamity impending over the generation which the apostle addressed.

42, 43. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath--rather (according to what is beyond doubt the true reading), "Now, as they were going out [of the synagogue], they besought"--that is, not the Gentiles, whose case comes in afterwards, but the mixed congregation of Jews and proselytes, to whom the discourse had been addressed, entreated to have another hearing of such truths; those of them, that is, who had been impressed. "And after the breaking up of the synagogue, many of" both classes, Jews and religious; proselytes, followed Paul and Barnabas (observe, from this time forward, the inverted order of these names; except Ac 14:14; 13:7; 12:25; see on [Ac 14:14](#); [Ac 13:7](#); [Ac 12:25](#)). These names evidently been won to the Gospel by what they had heard, and felt a clinging to their spiritual benefactors.

43. who, speaking to them--following up the discourse in the synagogue by some further words of encouragement.

persuaded them to continue in the grace of God--which they had experienced through the Gospel. (Compare Ac 11:23).

44-48. the next sabbath came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God--the intervening days having been spent in further inquiry and instruction, and the excitement reaching the Gentiles, who now for the first time crowded, along with the usual worshippers, into the synagogue.

45. But when the Jews--those zealots of exclusive Judaism.

saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy--rather, "indignation," and broke out in their usual manner.

contradicting and blaspheming--There is nothing more awful than Jewish fury and execration of the name of Jesus of Nazareth, when thoroughly roused.

46. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, &c.--This is in the highest style of a last and solemn protestation.

It was necessary that the word should first have been spoken to you--See the direction of Christ in Lu 24:47; also Ro 1:16.

since ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life--pass sentence upon yourselves.

47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, &c.--These and other predictions must have been long before this brought vividly home to Paul's mind in connection with his special vocation to the Gentiles.

I have set thee--that is, Messiah; from which Paul inferred that he was but following out this destination of his Lord, in transferring to the Gentiles those "unsearchable riches" which were now by the Jews rejected and despised.

48. when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad--to perceive that their accession to Christ was a matter of divine arrangement as well as apostolic effort.

and glorified the word of the Lord--by a cordial reception of it.

and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed--a very remarkable statement, which cannot, without force, be interpreted of anything lower than this, that *a divine ordination to eternal life is the cause, not the effect, of any man's believing.*

49-52. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region--implying

some stay in Antioch and missionary activity in its vicinity.

50. the devout and honourable women--female proselytes of distinction, jaundiced against the new preachers by those Jewish ecclesiastics to whom they had learned to look up. The potent influence of the female character both for and against the truth is seen in every age of the Church's history.

expelled them--an easier thing than to refute them.

51. shook off the dust of their feet against them--as directed (Mt 10:14).

came unto Iconium--a populous city about forty-five miles southeast from Pisidian Antioch: at the foot of Mount Taurus; on the borders of Lycaonia, Phrygia, and Pisidia; and in later times largely contributing to the consolidation of the Turkish empire.

52. the disciples--who, though not themselves expelled, had to endure sufferings for the Gospel, as we learn from Ac 14:22.

were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost--who not only raised them above shame and fear, as professed disciples of the Lord Jesus, but filled them with holy and elevated emotions.

CHAPTER 14

Ac 14:1-7. MEETING WITH SIMILAR SUCCESS AND SIMILAR OPPOSITION AT ICONIUM, PAUL AND BARNABAS FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES TO LYSTRA AND DERBE, AND PREACH THERE.

"After this detailed account of Paul's labors at Pisidian Antioch, Luke subjoins only brief notices of his further labors, partly because from the nature of the case his discourses must have embraced nearly the same topics, and partly because the consequences that resulted assumed quite a similar shape" [OLSHAUSEN].

1. they went both together into the synagogue--Though Paul was now the prominent speaker and actor, yet in everything Barnabas went along with him.

a . . . multitude . . . of the Greeks believed--meaning probably the religious proselytes, as opposed to "the Gentiles" mentioned Ac 14:2.

3. Long time therefore abode they--because in spite of opposition they were meeting with so much success.

speaking boldly in the Lord--rather, "in dependence on the Lord," that is, on their glorified Head.

who gave testimony to the word of his grace--a notable definition of the Gospel, whose whole burden is GRACE.

and granted--"granting," that is, who confirmed the Gospel by granting miraculous attestation to it. (The "and" is wanting in the best manuscripts).

5. an assault made . . . to stone them--rather here, "an impetuous movement" with a view to stoning them: for in 2Co 11:25, Paul says, "*Once* I was stoned," and that was at Lystra, as expressly related in Ac 14:19. (PALEY'S remarks--*Horæ Paulinæ*--on this singular coincidence between the Epistle and the history are very striking).

fled--(See Mt 10:23).

6. unto Lystra and Derbe--the one some twenty miles to the south, the other some sixty miles to the east of Iconium, somewhere near the bases of what are called the Black Mountains and the roots of Mount Taurus; but their exact position has not yet been discovered.

Ac 14:8-21. AT LYSTRA PAUL HEALING A CRIPPLE, THE PEOPLE ARE SCARCE RESTRAINED FROM SACRIFICING TO THEM AS GODS, BUT AFTERWARDS, THEIR MINDS BEING POISONED, THEY STONE PAUL, LEAVING HIM FOR DEAD--WITHDRAWING TO DERBE, THEY PREACH AND TEACH THERE.

There being no mention of the synagogue at Lystra, it is probable there were too few Jews there to form one.

8-10. there sat there a certain man . . . a cripple from his mother's womb . . . The same heard Paul speak--in the open air and (Ac 14:11) to a crowd of people.

9. who steadfastly beholding him--as he did Elymas the sorcerer when about to work a miracle on him.

and perceiving that he had faith to be healed--Paul may have been led by the sight of this cripple to dwell on the Saviour's miracles of healing, and His present power; and perceiving from the eagerness with which the patient drank in his words, that he was prepared to put his own case into the Redeemer's hands, the Spirit of the glorified Physician came all upon Paul, and "with a loud voice" he bade him "stand upright upon his feet." The effect was instantaneous--he sprang to his feet "and walked."

11-13. in the speech of Lycaonia--whether a corruption of the *Greek* tongue, which was well enough understood in this region, or the remains of some older tongue, is not known.

The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men--the language of an unsophisticated people. But "that which was a superstition in Lycaonia, and for which the whole "creation" groaned, became a reality at Bethlehem" [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

12. they called Barnabas, Jupiter--the father of the gods, from his commanding mien (CHRYSOSTOM thinks).

and Paul, Mercurius--the god of eloquence and the messenger and attendant of Jupiter, in the heathen mythology.

13. the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city--that is, whose temple stood before their city, brought oxen and garlands--to crown the victims and decorate, as on festive occasions, the porches.

14-18. when . . . Barnabas and Paul heard--Barnabas is put first here, apparently as having been styled the "Jupiter" of the company.

they rent their clothes and ran in--rather (according to the true reading), "ran forth."

among the people, crying out . . . Sirs, why do ye these things?--This was something more than that abhorrence of idolatry which took possession of the Jews as a nation from the time of the Babylonish captivity: it was that delicate sensibility to everything which affects the

honor of God which Christianity, giving us in God a reconciled Father, alone can produce; making the Christian instinctively feel himself to be wounded in all dishonor done to God, and filling him with mingled horror and grief when such gross insults as this are offered to him.

15. We . . . are men of like passions, &c.--How unlike either imposture or enthusiasm is this, and how high above all self-seeking do these men of Christ show themselves to be!

unto the living God--This is the most glorious and distinctive of all the names of God. It is the familiar phraseology of the Old Testament. which, in such contrast with all that is to be found within the literature of heathenism, is shown to be, with its sequel, the New Testament, the one Book of the true religion.

who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all . . . therein--This idea of *creation*, utterly unknown alike to rude and to cultivated heathenism, would not only define what was meant by "the living God," but open up a new world to the more thoughtful part of the audience.

16. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways--that is, without extending to them the revelation vouchsafed to the seed of Abraham, and the grace attending it; compare Ac 17:30; 1Co 1:21. Yet not without guilt on their part was this privation (Ro 1:20, &c.).

17. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness--Though the heinousness of idolatry is represented as so much less in the heathen, by how much they were outside the pale of revealed religion, he takes care to add that the heathen have divine "witness" enough to leave them "without excuse."

he did good--scattering His beneficence everywhere and in a thousand forms.

rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons--on which human subsistence and all human enjoyment depend. In Lycaonia, where, as ancient writers attest, rain is peculiarly scarce, this allusion would have all the greater effect.

filling our hearts with food and gladness--a natural colloquialism, the heart being gladdened by the food supplied to the body.

18. with these sayings scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice to them--In spite of this, and Peter's repudiation of all such honor (Ac 10:26), how soon idolatrous tendencies began to show themselves in the Christian Church, at length to be systematized and enjoined in the Church of Rome!

19. came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium--Furious zeal that would travel so far to counteract the missionaries of the Cross!

persuaded the people--"the multitudes."

and having stoned Paul--(See on [Ac 14:5](#)). Barnabas they seem to have let alone; Paul, as the prominent actor and speaker, being the object of all their rage. The words seem to imply that it was the Jews who did this; and no doubt they took the lead (Ac 14:19), but it was the act of the instigated and fickle multitudes along with them.

drew him out of the city--By comparing this with Ac 7:58 it will be seen that the Jews were the chief actors in this scene.

20. as the disciples stood round about him--sorrowing. So his labors here had not been in vain: "Disciples" had been gathered, who now rallied around the bleeding body. And *one appears to have been gained on this occasion, of far more importance than all the rest*--

TIMOTHEUS. See on [Ac 16:1-3](#). (It could scarcely have been at the *subsequent* visit, Ac 14:21, for the reason given in 2Ti 3:10, 11; while at the *third* visit, Ac 16:1-3, he was already a Christian).

he rose up--It is possible that this recovery was natural; the insensibility occasioned by such treatment as he had received sometimes passing away of itself, and leaving the patient less hurt than appeared. But certainly the impression naturally left on the mind by the words is that the restoration was miraculous; and so the best interpreters understand the words. This is confirmed by what follows.

came into the city--Noble intrepidity!

next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe--a journey for which he could hardly be fit if his recovery had been natural. (As to Derbe, see on [Ac 14:6](#)).

21. and when they had preached . . . to that city and had taught many--rather, "had made many disciples" (*Margin*); but probably without suffering any persecution, as Derbe is not mentioned along with Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (2Ti 3:11).

Ac 14:21-28. PAUL AND BARNABAS RETRACE THEIR STEPS, RETURN TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA, AND THUS COMPLETE THEIR FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

21, 22. they returned . . . to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls, &c.--At Derbe, Paul was not far from the well-known pass which leads down from the central tableland to Cilicia and Tarsus. But his thoughts did not center in an earthly home. He revisited the places where he had been reviled and persecuted, but where he had left as sheep in the desert the disciples whom his Master had enabled him to gather. They needed building up and strengthening in the faith, comforting in the midst of their inevitable suffering, and fencing round by permanent institutions. Undaunted therefore by the dangers that awaited them, our missionaries return to them, using words of encouragement which none but the founders of a true religion would have ventured to address to their earliest converts, that "we can only enter into the kingdom of God by passing through much tribulation" [HOWSON].

23, 24. when they had ordained them elders--literally, "chosen by show of hands." But as that would imply that this was done by the apostles' own hands, many render the word, as in our version, "ordained." Still, as there is no evidence in the New Testament that the word had then lost its proper meaning, as this is beyond doubt its meaning in 2Co 8:19, and as there is indisputable evidence that the concurrence of the people was required in all elections to sacred office in the earliest ages of the Church, it is perhaps better to understand the words to mean, "when they had made a choice of elders," that is, superintended such choice on the part of the disciples.

and had prayed with fasting--literally, "fastings," thus setting them solemnly apart. This last clause confirms our interpretation of the former. For if "ordination" was by prayer and fasting (see Ac 13:3), why should it be said they first "ordained elders," and after that "prayed with fasting?" Whereas if the first clause refer to the *choice* and the second to the *ordination*, all is natural.

they commended--"committed"

them--that is, all these churches.

to the Lord--Jesus.

25. when they had preached the word in Perga--now doing what, for some reason, they

had not done on their former visit, but probably with no visible fruit.

they went down into Attaila--a seaport on the Gulf of Pamphylia, drawing to itself the commerce of Egypt and Syria.

26. sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended--(See on [Ac 13:3](#)).

27. when they had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, &c.--As their call and mission had been solemn and formal, in the presence of and by the Church as well as the Holy Ghost, they dutifully, and no doubt with eager joy, convened the church and gave their report of "all that God had done with them," that is, by and for them. **and how**--in particular.

he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles--to such even as before had not been proselytes. (See on [Ac 11:21](#); and on the language, see 1Co 16:9; 2Co 2:12; Col 4:3). The ascribing directly to God of such access to the Gentiles is to be noted.

28. there they abode long time--"no little time." From the commencement of the mission till they left Antioch to go up to attend the council at Jerusalem, some four or five years elapsed; and as the missionary journey would probably occupy less than two years, the rest of the time would be the period of their stay at Antioch. (But see [Chronological Table](#).)

CHAPTER 15

Ac 15:1-35. COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM TO DECIDE ON THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION FOR THE GENTILE CONVERTS.

1, 2. certain men--See the description of them in Ga 2:4.

2. Paul and Barnabas--now the recognized heads of the Church at Antioch.

had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined--that is, the church did.

that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them--Titus was one (Ga 2:1); probably as an uncircumcised Gentile convert endowed with the gifts of the Spirit. He is not mentioned in the Acts, but only in Second Corinthians, Galatians, Second Timothy, and the Epistle addressed to him [ALFORD].

should go up to Jerusalem . . . about this question--That such a deputation should be formally despatched by the Church of Antioch was natural, as it might be called the mother church of Gentile Christianity.

3-6. being brought on their way by the church--a kind of official escort.

they passed through Phenice--(See on [Ac 11:19](#)).

and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy to the brethren--As the converts in those parts were Jewish (Ac 11:19), their spirit contrasts favorably with that of others of their nation.

4. And when they were come to Jerusalem--This was Paul's THIRD VISIT TO JERUSALEM after his conversion, and *on this occasion took place what is related in Ga 2:1-10*. (See there).