

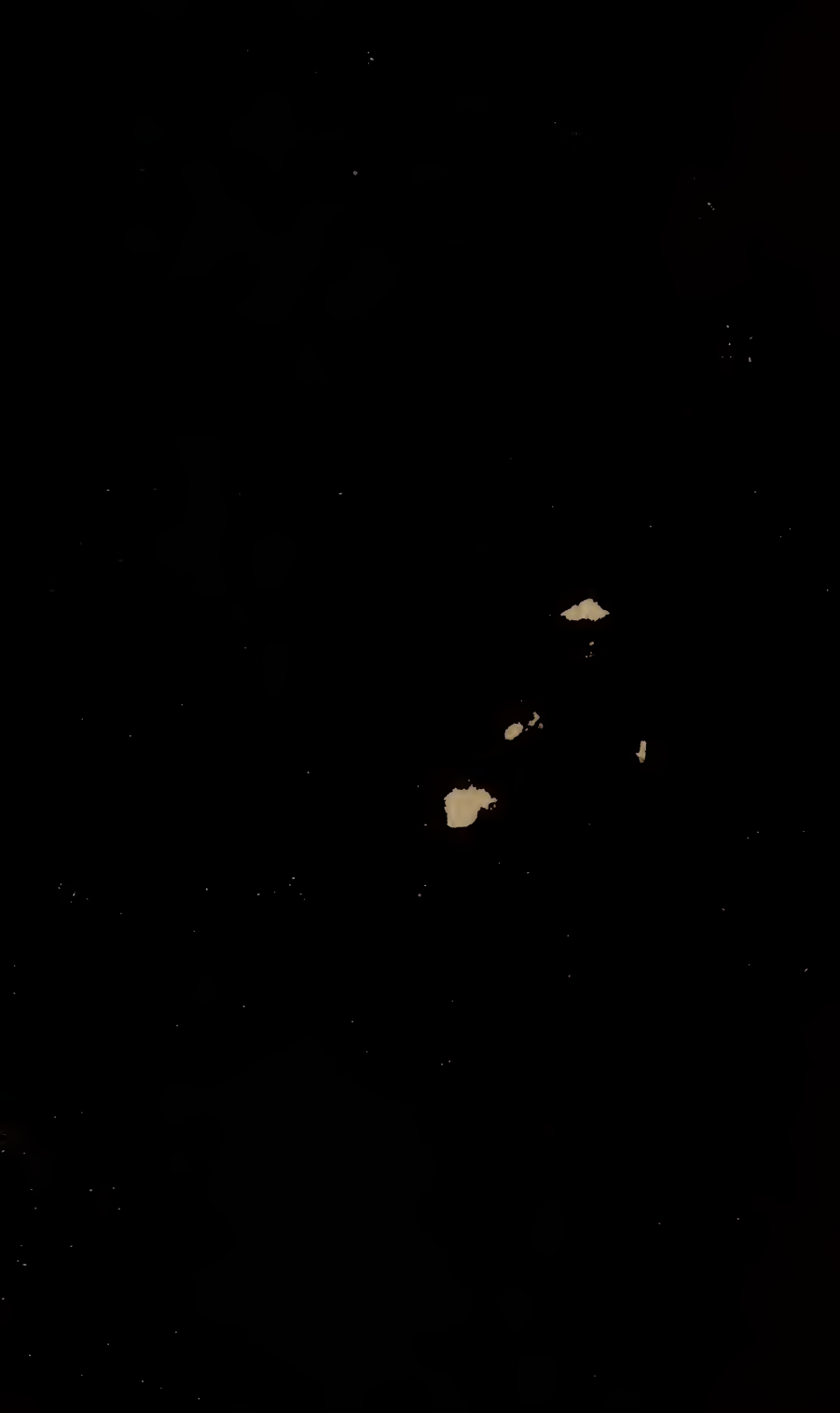
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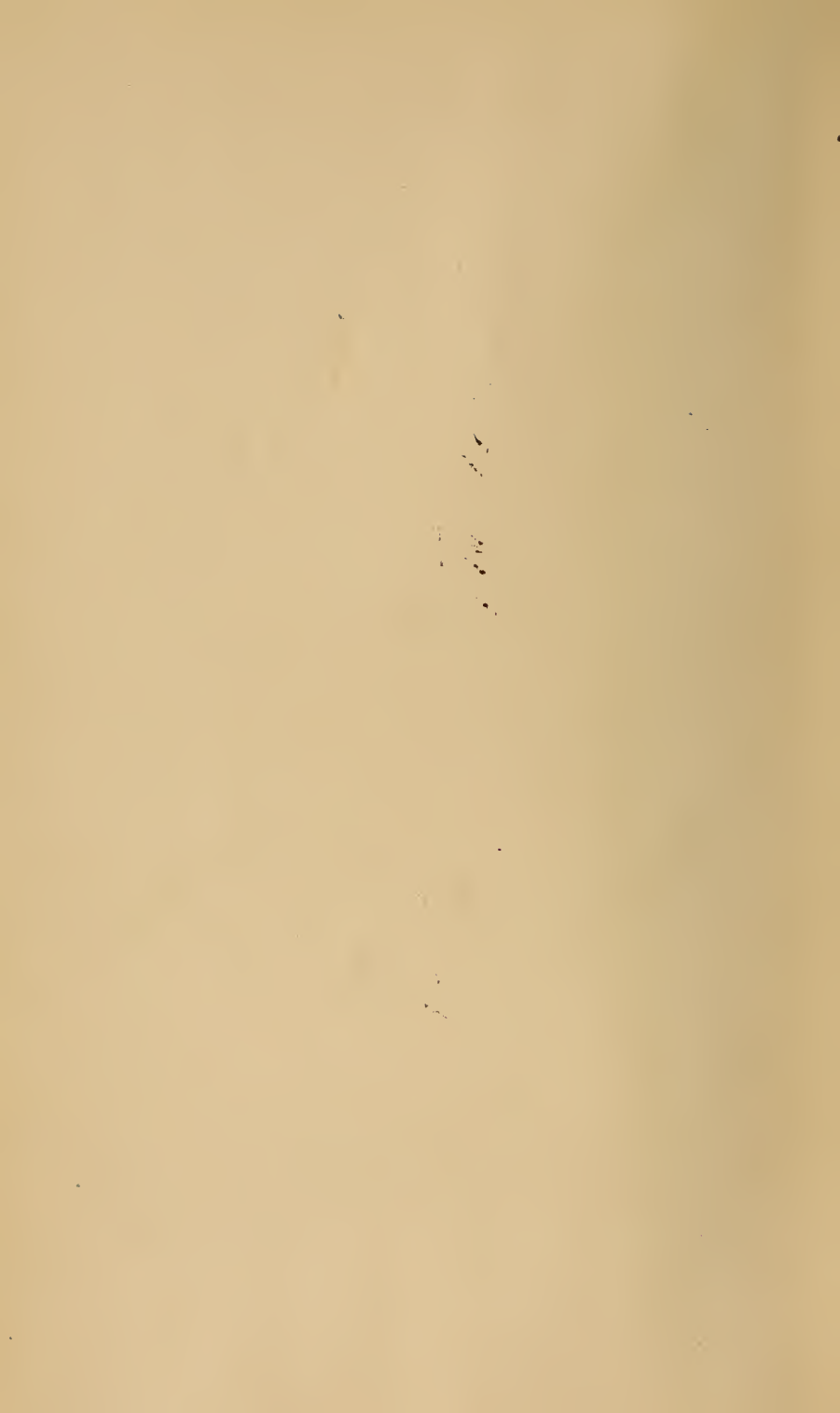
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STUDIES
IN
THE BOOK OF ACTS

Gloriosissima Civitas Dei

BY

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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following pages has for a long time felt that if the Acts of the Apostles could be generally read in the orderly way in which people usually read history, a great gain would result, not only for the better understanding of the New Testament, but for the more intelligent comprehension of the origin, organization, and early development of the Church. It has seemed to him, that even the printing of the book arranged under proper divisions and subdivisions, with proper titles prefixed to each, would accomplish a good deal in the direction just indicated. This, therefore, is the first thing he has endeavored to do; preserving, however, for convenience of reference, what otherwise would have been dispensed with, — the division into verses.

The fragmentary and desultory way in which all Holy Scripture is too often read is everywhere disastrous; but it is especially so in those parts in which we are presented with continuous history. No man would dream of reading ordinary history, whether ecclesiastical or secular, in the way in which many read the Acts of the Apostles. And it ought to be remembered that this book is history just as much as are the works of earlier or later writers of church history. The difference between it and the ordinary church histories does not lie in the character or subject-matter of the several writings, but only in the conditions under which they were composed; the Book of Acts being written under the guiding

presence of the Holy Spirit, and the others having and claiming no such presence.

Moreover, it is only by grasping the fact, so easy to take up when it is once stated, and so completely ignored by vast numbers of readers, that all the events recorded must have taken place before the record was made, that we attain correct ideas of the relations of the church with its organization, doctrine, sacraments, and worship, to the Scriptures of the New Testament. Then, and not before, we learn what so many miss of learning, the great truth that in Acts and Epistles we are not to look so much for commands as to what was *to be* done, as for recognition of what had already *been done*. Had this matter been fully understood hardly three centuries ago, a good deal of Hooker's immortal work need not have been written.

This volume is in no sense (nor was it intended to be) a commentary on the Book of Acts. It is simply what its name imports. Nor is it designed for scholars, though the writer hopes there is nothing contrary to sound scholarship in it. It is written in the firm and abiding belief that Christianity came into the world not merely as a doctrine, or a life, or an idea, or a book; but as an INSTITUTION, comprising in itself all the things just named, — being, indeed, the “Mount Sion, the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.”

These studies end with the twelfth chapter and fourth division of the book, and do not touch the last and largest portion, the Mission to the Gentiles. The change in the history, however, makes it possible to stop at this point without leaving work half done. Whether this volume will be followed by another, must depend on circumstances beyond the control of the writer.

LAY-OUT OF THE BOOK.

THE Book of Acts, regarded as a history of the foundation of the Christian Church and of its early propagation, naturally divides itself into five parts : —

I. A brief summary of events and transactions during the forty days that intervened between the resurrection and ascension of our Lord ; with special notice of what occurred in the ten days which separate the ascension, from the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Chapter i.

II. The story of Pentecost, the birthday of the Christian Church. Chapter ii. to ver. 42.

III. The Mission to the Jews, beginning at Jerusalem, and extending to Judæa and Samaria. Chapter ii. ver. 42, to chapter ix.

IV. The preparations for the Mission to the Gentiles. Chapters ix. to xii. inclusive.

V. The Mission to the Gentiles. Chapters xiii. to xxxiii. inclusive.

These different parts, it is hardly necessary to say, must be subdivided into various sections.

Thus, as we may readily see, the entire book becomes a commentary on the words of our Lord, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."¹ These words present the law for the proper arrangement of the book, and enable us to reduce its contents to an harmonious order.

¹ Acts i. 8.

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PART I.
THE FIFTY DAYS.

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS.

Part I.

(Chapter I.)

SECTION I.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE GREAT FORTY DAYS.

(*Chap. i. vv. 1-11.*)

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen :

3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God :

4 And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord,

wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you : and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up ; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

10 And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel ;

11 Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven ? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

IN connection with this summary should always be carefully read those portions of the Four Evangelists which relate to the period covered by it. Here, however, only the summary can claim attention.

1. We are at once presented with the fact that our Lord

“shewed Himself alive after His passion” to the apostles, “being seen of them forty days.” Not that He was with them continually, or continuously, during that period; but that from time to time He appeared to them. “As He was forty days after His birth before He was presented in the temple in the earthly Jerusalem, and, again, forty days after His baptism before He entered on His ministry, so now He waits forty days after His birth from the grave before He presents Himself in the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, and enters on His priestly ministry in the true Holy of Holies, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”¹

2. Two purposes of these appearances are very distinctly indicated, and we need not seek for others: first, that by many proofs He might convince the apostles of the verity of His resurrection; and secondly, that He might speak to them of the kingdom of God, and the things pertaining to it, and give them His commandments.²

3. The first of these purposes brings to mind the words of St. Peter, “Him God raised up the third day, and shewed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him after he rose from the dead;”³ and these words suggest several questions. Why should the proofs have been given to witnesses chosen before, and not to all the people? Does not the selection of witnesses suggest the idea of practising and collusion? Would not the evidence have been stronger and more irresistible had it been offered to all alike? Unbelief has not been slow to raise these difficulties, and undoubtedly believers have often been staggered at them. The following considerations may, in at least some degree, relieve them:—

In the first place, we must not be misled by the words of our version, “shewed Him openly,” into supposing that the apostle in any way contradicts what he says, immedi-

¹ Bishop Wordsworth.

² Acts i. 2, 3.

³ Acts x. 40, 41.

ately afterwards, concerning selected witnesses ; all that the words in the original mean is that our Lord was distinctly seen by, made clearly visible to, those who saw Him. There is no reference at all to the number of beholders, but only to the clearness, distinctness, and freedom from any thing like obscurity, which characterized His appearance.

Secondly, the number of witnesses selected was by no means small. St. Paul speaks of our Lord as having been seen "by more than five hundred brethren at once,"¹ many of whom were alive when he wrote. When this appearance took place, we are, of course, unable to say. The persons to whom it was granted are called brethren ; and this would indicate a personal knowledge of our Lord. The number is, at the same time, so great, that its testimony could scarcely be gainsaid ; and St. Paul's implied challenge, if it were no more than an unreal bravado, could be as easily met as it was plainly made.

Thirdly, a selection of individuals, by whom the person of one who is to be identified is well known, must secure a more trustworthy identifying testimony than could be secured from a miscellaneous crowd, many of whom had never known him, others of whom had barely seen him, while only a few of all the number were really capable of testifying intelligently. "Public appearances could have added nothing to the testimony of the chosen witnesses. By diminishing the precision of the story, they might have diminished the efficacy of its proper evidence."² Under such circumstances, selection, especially the selection of such competent witnesses as the Apostles and disciples were, is a guaranty of trustworthiness and correctness.

4. The second purpose of our Lord's appearances was that He might give "commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen." And this He did by "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Obviously the entire

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 6.

² See Bishop Horsley's *Four Discourses on the Evidences of the Resurrection*.

meaning of these statements depends on the signification of the phrase, "the kingdom of God."

We can scarcely fail to recall at once the fact, that when John Baptist began his preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, his words were, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Nor can we forget that when our Lord began His ministry, it was with the self-same words.¹ It will hardly be questioned that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God are identical terms. Teaching, moreover, about this kingdom, enters largely into the instruction given by our Lord in His parables.

These exhibit to us the kingdom of God under two distinct aspects. It appears as an outward, visible, organic body, growing and spreading in the world; and it is also a living power in human souls. The one view, we may say, looks at the kingdom objectively, the other subjectively. But to keep the balance true, neither should be omitted or neglected. The entire Church, as represented by St. Paul, is the temple of the Holy Ghost, its Vitalizer and Administrator; and yet each individual Christian is also said to be a temple of the Holy Ghost. Anyhow, the kingdom of God is the Church of God, of which our Lord is the Head and King.

Moreover, He became King of this kingdom and Head of this body in the Resurrection and Ascension; and the kingdom was given to Him because of His voluntary humiliation and obedience. He "died and rose and revived that He might be Lord both of the dead and living," and God raised Him from the dead, "and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church."² And the cause, so to speak, of this exaltation, was His humiliation and obedience. "He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name."³

Just here, in order to avoid confusion, some necessary distinctions must be kept in mind. There are two natures, the

¹ Matt. iii. 1, 2, iv. 17.

² Rom. xiv. 9; Eph. i. 22.

³ Phil. ii. 8, 9.

divine and human, united in our Lord. He is perfect God, and He is perfect man.

As God, the eternally begotten Son, the Word, the Second Person in the adorable Trinity, He is the Creator and the Upholder of the creation. "By Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible," even "the worlds;" and again we are told, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made."¹ Moreover, what He has created He sustains; "by Him all things consist," and He is ever and always "upholding all things by the word of His power."² In Him, therefore, as its Creator and Upholder, is vested "the supreme and universal dominion of the world."

But, besides this dominion, inherent in our Lord's Divine nature, and connected with his Creatorship, there is another dominion which Holy Scripture tells us was *given* to Him. He was "*made* both Lord and Christ;" the Father "set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places," and "gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church;" and to Him are applied the words of the Psalmist, "Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, and didst set Him over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet."³

This last, then, is the kingdom given Him because of His humiliation and obedience, and it is His mediatorial kingdom of which he said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."⁴ Still it was not, as Bishop Pearson says, "actually given Him at once, but part while He lived on earth, part after His death and resurrection;" the first gift enabling Him for His work, the second full and complete in its exaltation, power, and dominion.

Moreover, this kingdom is partly, and under one aspect, economical, that is, it is ordained to carry out and complete a certain work, the work of redemption; and when that work

¹ Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2; John i. 3.

³ Acts ii. 36; Eph. i. 20, 22; Heb. ii. 7, 8.

² Col. i. 17; Heb. i. 3.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 18.

is effected, that part of the power given to our Lord will end, that aspect of the kingdom will pass away. This is what St. Paul has in view when he says, "He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet;" and again, "When He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power," then He shall deliver up "the kingdom to God, even the Father," "that God may be all in all."¹

But there is another aspect of this kingdom, in which it does not appear as economical, but as abiding and eternal. The immediate work of redemption may end, but the glorious issues of redemption abide; and they still centre in the eternal King, and the unchanging Priest. This aspect of the kingdom is clearly brought out in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Father speaking to the Son says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."² It is of this aspect that the angel spoke to the Virgin Mary, when he said, "Of His kingdom there shall be no end."³ This is the kingdom of glory, in which, after the Lord has judged the world in righteousness, and when "the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, He shall reign for ever and ever."⁴

Our Lord, then, during the period in view, was teaching His apostles concerning this kingdom of which they were to be the heralds, and, under Him, the founders upon earth; inasmuch as it was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone."⁵ So that we are quite warranted in saying that what they did, in preaching the Word and establishing the Church, was the outcome of the instructions and commandments which were, during this time, imparted to them. Nor should we here forget the promise touching the Holy Ghost, that He should teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, which He, their Master, had said unto them.⁶ The record of their doings under these instructions is con-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 28.

² Heb. i. 8.

³ Luke i. 33.

⁴ Rev. xi. 15.

⁵ Eph. ii. 20.

⁶ John xiv. 26; comp. xvi. 13.

tained in this Book of Acts, which is therefore the fountain and source of Christian history, — of the history of the Church of the Redeemer of mankind.

These instructions, however, concerning the establishment and ordering of the kingdom, do not seem to have conveyed at once, to the eleven, an adequate and full conception of the character of this universal Church of God. The living power of the Holy Ghost seems to have been needful to accomplish this. The question, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" besides the improper and prying curiosity which it exhibits, shows also that the Apostles were still influenced by carnal and Jewish notions concerning that kingdom. Our Lord rebukes each fault: the first, by telling that it was not theirs "to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power," that is, has kept in His own authoritative counsel; the second, by bidding them look beyond Jerusalem and Judæa, "unto the uttermost part of the earth;" for even so far was their witness to be borne, carrying the kingdom with it. Nor was it till they had been "baptized with the Holy Ghost," till the "promise of the Father" had been made good, till they had "received power"¹ after that the Holy Ghost had come upon them and guided them into the overwhelming truth, that they understood the true character of the kingdom. Then, not before, they ceased from narrow, carnal views, and, rising to the fulness of the Divine ideal, became the large-minded, large-hearted apostles of a world-wide faith and a universal Church.

5. The section concludes with the account of the Ascension. The Lord ascended both as a King and a Priest. As a King, "when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."² As a Priest, "by His own

¹ Readers of the original will observe that the word "power" in ver. 8 is not the same word as in ver. 7, though our version does not make the difference apparent. In ver. 7, it is *ἐξουσία*, that is, authority; in ver. 8, it is *δύναμις*, that is, the living inspiration, strengthening and enabling, of the Spirit.

² Eph. iv. 8.

blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption," and there "He ever liveth to make intercession" ¹ for us. Thence, too, He is to come in like manner as He went away, "in the clouds of heaven," with "all the holy angels with Him." ² This awful coming will be His final manifestation, "the Epiphany of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." ³

¹ Heb. ix. 12, vii. 25.

² Matt. xxvi. 64, xxv. 31

³ Tit. ii. 13.

SECTION II.

THE TEN DAYS OF EXPECTATION.

(Chap. i. ver. 12 to the end.)

12. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

13. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphæus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

14. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.

15. ¶ And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16. Men *and* brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

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

22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all *men*, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

1. The upper room to which the Apostles repaired, after returning to Jerusalem, is mentioned with a definiteness that indicates a marked and well-known place. Very possibly it may have been the "large upper room" where the Eucharist was instituted, and where, after the crucifixion, the disciples were accustomed to assemble.¹ It can hardly have been a room in the temple, though the Apostles evidently continued

¹ Mark xiv. 15; Luke xxii. 12; John xx. 19, 26.

to go up to the temple at the hours of prayer. Wherever it was, it was the seed-plot of the Christian Church.

2. In the catalogue of the eleven here given, the names of "Peter and James and John" head the list. These three are also conspicuous in the Gospels. They witnessed the Transfiguration "in the holy mount," and they were with the Lord in His agony in the garden.¹ After the descent of the Holy Spirit, Peter and John appear prominently in Jerusalem and Samaria. Nothing especial is said of James till we are told that he was killed by Herod "with the sword."

To St. Peter it was given to open the door to the Gentiles, that by his "mouth they might receive the word of the gospel and believe;"² and this might lead us to regard him as the Apostle of the uncircumcision. That, however, was not so to be. St. Paul tells us, that "He who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles."³ Wherefore, St. Paul becomes the Apostle of the uncircumcision in the place of St. Peter; a position recognized by "James, Cephas, and John," who agree to go to the circumcision, while Paul and Barnabas are to go to the heathen.⁴ It is noticeable, too, that St. Peter, thus relegated to the apostleship of the circumcision, is named *after* James of Jerusalem,⁵ and from the time of the Council of Jerusalem disappears from the history in the Book of Acts. All this is utterly irreconcilable with the theory of a divinely appointed supremacy over the Church, given by our Lord to St. Peter.

St. John, in accordance with our Lord's prediction,⁶ survived the destruction of Jerusalem, and outlived all his brethren. We may say, I think, that St. Peter represents the Jewish element in the Church, and that aspect of the Church under which it appears as the completion and fulfilment of the Mosaic economy; that St. Paul represents the

¹ Matt. xvii. ; ² Pet. i. 18; Mark xiv. 33.

² Acts xv. 7.

³ Gal. ii. 8.

⁴ Gal. ii. 9.

⁵ Gal. ii. 9. Not at all the James whom Herod slew.

⁶ John xxi. 22.

Gentile element and that aspect of the Church in which it comes to us as the new creation for the Gentiles; while St. John represents the fusion of these two elements and aspects, which, as they had "a common root in the full life of Christ, the Saviour of both Gentiles and Jews, so they grew together into the unity of the Catholic Church, the true Israel of God."

Out of this great and impressive truth there has grown up the perverted notion of two opposing schools of doctrine in the Apostolic Church, which were reconciled in a third. But there were no such schools. The Faith was one. St. Paul is as clear on that point as St. Peter, and St. John as either of the other two. Nor is there any real opposition in these aspects of the Church, in themselves considered. Men might push them into opposition by pressing one into prominence to the exclusion of the other, and so, no doubt, those did at Corinth who said, on the one side, "I am of Peter," and on the other, "I am of Paul;"¹ but there was no such opposition between the Apostles themselves, nor in the aspects of the Church which they represented. Any such opposition is simply imaginary.

3. The great event of this brief period is the selection of Matthias to fill the vacancy occasioned by the treachery and death of Judas. The narrative is a very simple one. The Apostles and other disciples are together, doubtless in the "upper room." St. Peter, after urging the prophetic application of two passages in the Psalms to the case of Judas, declares that it is "necessary" that one who had been with them during our Lord's earthly ministry, and who had seen Him after He rose from the dead (even "from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up"), should be added to the eleven "to be a witness of His resurrection." Two persons are selected, and the choice between them is solemnly left to the ascended King and Head of the Church. His decision is invoked; lots are given forth, and

¹ 1 Cor. i. 12.

“*the* lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles.”

Just how the lot was cast, we are not told. But there can be no doubt that our Lord’s direct intervention was sought. The prayer offered is most certainly addressed to Him who is the “one Lord Jesus Christ.”¹ He is invoked as knowing “the hearts of all men,” and this is peculiarly insisted on in the Gospels as one of His special characteristics.² Again, He is asked which of the two He has “chosen;” and this word is the same which is used in ver. 2 of this chapter, where mention is made of “the Apostles whom He had chosen,” and also by our Lord Himself when He said, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.”³ Moreover, the term “Lord,” as applied to Jesus Christ, is “the keynote to the history of the Acts of the Apostles.” So that the first recorded prayer of the followers of Christ, after the Ascension, was addressed to Him, their Lord.

An objection has of late years been made to regarding this transaction as a designation of Matthias to the apostolate. It arises, no doubt, from the conviction that it is desirable, if not essential, to the theory of ministerial parity, to limit the number of the Apostles strictly to twelve. In order to this, since St. Paul, to name no others, was undoubtedly an Apostle, it was considered necessary to exclude Matthias from being numbered with the eleven; for his admission would carry with it the admission of an extended apostolate, and this extension would furnish an argument, or the basis of an argument, for the continuance of the apostolic office in the Church. Matthias, therefore, must be got rid of.

The riddance was attempted on this wise. It was said that not until the Day of Pentecost did the Holy Spirit descend on the Apostles “to teach them all things, and to bring to their remembrance all things whatsoever the Lord had said unto them;”⁴ that any act of theirs during the ten

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 6.

² Matt. ix. 4, xii. 25; Luke vi. 8; John ii. 24, 25.

³ John xv. 16.

⁴ John xiv. 26.

days of waiting was the act of uninspired men; and that the appointment of Matthias was only a precipitate, almost thoughtless, suggestion of St. Peter, — always hasty in word and deed, — accepted and acted on without deliberation, and therefore destitute of warrant or authority.

But, surely, such a theory, or whatever it is to be called, can only be read into the narrative: it can never be deduced from it. Not only is there no intimation that the transaction was not accordant with the will of our Lord, but the impression is certainly left on the reader's mind that the final selection of Matthias was His own act; while the solemnity of the prayer which was offered to Him precludes the thought of haste and carelessness. Moreover, we are told that on the Day of Pentecost, St. Peter stood up "with the *eleven*;" and later on, but long before the conversion of St. Paul, that "the *twelve* called the multitude of the disciples unto them."¹ Who are the eleven in the one case, or the twelve in the other, if Matthias is not to be reckoned as an Apostle?

But there is still more to be said. Granting that the act was not done under the direct guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the question immediately arises, Was it done simply at the individual instance of St. Peter, or is it to be regarded as due to instructions given by our Lord Himself? We can only balance probabilities, since no definite information is given us.

When one considers the strictness of the command to wait at Jerusalem for "the promise of the Father," a command recorded by St. Luke not only in the Acts but also in his Gospel;² and the fact that the Apostles were to be "endued with power from on high," to enable them to do what our Lord had appointed them to do, only when that promise was fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Spirit, — the great improbability of any action, unless under special direction, in the mean time, becomes apparent. When, therefore, St.

¹ Acts ii. 14, vi. 2.

² Compare Luke xxiv. 49 with Acts i. 4.

Peter says one *must* be designated to take the place of Judas, using a word [δέει] which almost always in the Gospels and Acts indicates Divine appointment or ordering, does he not seem to be communicating a direction which he has received, rather than merely giving utterance to a conviction of his own mind? And does not the ready acquiescence of the others in his proposition point in the same direction?

Besides, he very distinctly applies two prophecies, from as many Psalms, to Judas.¹ Granting that he was not speaking by inspiration, — for the reason given above, — is this a “private interpretation” of his own? or had he been taught it, and if so, by whom? St. Luke, in his Gospel, mentions two occurrences which seem to throw some light upon this query. He tells us that on the resurrection evening our Lord met two of His disciples walking towards Emmaus, and, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself;” especially, as the context shows, the things relating to His sufferings and entrance into glory.² On the same evening, the two disciples having returned to Jerusalem and told what had occurred, the Lord appeared to the eleven and those who were with them, and, having “opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”³

All this shows that our Lord, immediately after His resurrection, expounded with great fulness, to the Apostles and others, the scriptures relating to His cross and passion, His death and burial. Is He likely to have done this without expounding those that related to the self-destroyed son for whom in His marvellous Eucharistic prayer He had uttered words of wailing,⁴ declaring that his loss of himself had *fulfilled* the scriptures? What scriptures had it fulfilled, except those quoted by St. Peter? And if those scriptures

¹ Ps. lxi. 25, cix. 8.

² Luke xxiv. 26, 27.

³ Luke xxiv. 33-46.

⁴ John xvii. 12.

were in His mind in that great prayer, would He be likely to leave them out of view in expounding the scriptures of His passion? Is it not, under all the circumstances, altogether more probable that St. Peter's application of the two Psalms to Judas — and, if that, then also his proposition to fill the traitor's place — came from our Lord's teaching, than that it was a "private interpretation" of his own? All these considerations furnish, I think, a sufficient answer to a theory which has been thrust upon this passage, rather than deduced from it.

4. We meet here (ver. 14) with the last mention in the sacred histories, of the Virgin Mother. Indeed, the reticence of Scripture, all along, concerning her who was to be called by all generations Blessed, is most noteworthy. May we not say that it seems to have been purposely so ordered, to leave as little ground, and therefore as little excuse, as possible for the frightful perversions of later times? How little we are told in the Gospels we are apt to forget until we search it out and put it by itself. We find such mention of the conception, the birth, and the early years of Jesus, as is necessary to set clearly out to us the Incarnation of our Lord, — the great fundamental fact that the Eternal Son "took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance," so that in very truth she became the God-bearer [*θεοτόκος*], because she bare in her womb, and bore into the world, Him who in His one person was God as well as man; and we find no more. All that is told us is told because of our Lord, and not because of Mary. The end and purpose of all is the truth about Him, not information about her. This is the obvious law that shapes the Gospel narrative of His earlier years in their connection with His earthly mother.

When we reach the story of the Lord's ministry, the scanty notices of His mother become more scanty still, almost to the extent of utter silence. We find her with Him at the marriage at Cana, where her interference, from whatever

motive it may have proceeded, is gently rebuked in the words, "O woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." After that the silence is unbroken till His hour did come. Once when He was told that His mother and His brethren sought speech of Him, He replied, "Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?" and then, pointing to His disciples, He said, "Behold my mother and my brethren! for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."¹ Again, when one, overpowered by His words and works, exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," He answered, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."² What do these words mean, unless they exhibit a higher spiritual relationship — higher because it is spiritual — between every Christian believer and his Lord and Master, than even that which subsisted between the Divine Son and His earthly mother; a blessedness of every obedient child of God, greater even than that of her whom all generations were to call Blessed?

When the Lord's hour³ came, — it was by that word that He was wont solemnly to designate His passion and death,⁴ — His mother is seen again, but only for a moment; and in that moment He commends her to the charge of the beloved disciple.

How full of meaning are these utterances and these silences! Enough is told to set before us, in its fulness, the divine mystery of the Incarnation, and to show us that not in His circumcision only, but in all His life before He entered on His ministry, our Lord became "obedient to the law for man." Then, when we reach that ministry, we learn how He lived on a plane whose earthly relations were merged

¹ Matt. xii. 46-50.

² Luke xi. 27, 28.

³ John xix. 26, 27.

⁴ This remark applies especially to the Gospel of St. John. Compare with the expression already quoted (recorded only by St. John), these passages in his Gospel: vii. 30, viii. 20, xii. 23, 27, xiii. 1, xvii. 1; compare also vii. 6, 8, the word here being not *ώρα*, hour, as in the other places referred to, but *καιρός*, time or season.

in higher spiritual ones. At last, in the supreme moment of His earthly life, the early relation to His mother is again recognized, but only that it may be transferred, with all its duties and its privileges, to the disciple whom Jesus loved.

How exactly in accordance with this is the striking fact, that there is no record of any appearance of the risen Saviour to His mother ; no mention of her, indeed, after the resurrection, except the incidental one in this passage! Is not all this a prophetic protest against the falsehoods and perversions that man's pravity has heaped upon the name of her who by the Holy Ghost conceived in her womb, and bore into the world, the God-man Jesus Christ ?

PART II.

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Part II.

(Chapter II. to ver. 42.)

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

1. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

3. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

4. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

5. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.

6. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.

7. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilæans?

8. And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

9. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia,

10. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes,

11. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.

12. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this?

13. Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.

14. ¶ But Peter, standing up with the

eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judæa, and all *ye* that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words :

15. For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is *but* the third hour of the day.

16. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ;

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

18. And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy :

19. And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke :

20. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come :

21. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

22. Ye men of Israel, hear these words ; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know :

23. Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain :

24. Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face,

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

26. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29. Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31. He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

33. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

34. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

35. Until I make thy foes thy footstool.

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

37. Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?

38. Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

39. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call.

40. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.

41. ¶ Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.

I. THE first thing to be considered here is the time at which the great miracle of Pentecost occurred. Not that the day itself is not clearly fixed, but for other reasons which will appear as we proceed.

The three great festivals of the Mosaic dispensation were the Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, and Pentecost. It was a characteristic of all these seasons, that they were both commemorative and anticipatory. They looked back, but they looked forward also.

The Passover commemorated the deliverance of the Israelites from the *punishment* which fell on Egypt when the death-angel smote its first-born; and their deliverance, also, from the enslaving *power* of Egypt when they were taken from the land of their bondage. It looked forward to the time when the spiritual Israel, the true seed of Abraham,

should be freed from the *punishment* of sin and the *power* of sin by the death and resurrection of Him "who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." At this season, also, on the day following the Paschal Sabbath, "a sheaf of the harvest" was waved by the priest before the Lord. Thus was this great festival connected with the natural year, a characteristic not singular to itself, but marking, as we shall see, the two other festivals as well. We trace in this ritual act a commemorative, and with it an anticipatory, significancy. For while it constantly recalled, as a commemorative symbol, the sanctification of the first-born child of an Israelite, its meaning found its full expression only in that First-born of all creation, who, having died and risen again, became the "first-fruits of them that slept."¹ So the Jewish Passover carries itself over to, and is completed in, the Christian Easter.

The Feast of Tabernacles is specially presented to us as a thanksgiving for the harvest.² In this regard it stands connected, on the one side, with the Passover, the Feast of Abib, the month of green ears, when the *sheaf* of barley was offered before the Lord; and, — as we shall see, — on the other, with Pentecost, when the first *loaves* of the year were waved before the altar.³ But, besides this, this festival carried the Israelites back, by its booths of green branches and boughs, to their dwelling in booths after their deliverance from Egypt.⁴ It also commemorated — it could not fail to do so — the tabernacling of God with His people "in the wilderness," when

"By day, along the astonished lands,
The cloudy pillar glided slow:
By night, Arabia's crimsoned sands
Returned the fiery column's glow."

Surely, therefore, it looked on to a greater and more awful presence of God among men, even to that day when "the

¹ Lev. xxiii. 10, 11; Exod. xiii. 2, 4; 1 Cor. xv. 20.

³ Lev. xxiii. 10, 11, 17, 20.

² Lev. xxiii. 39, 40, 41.

⁴ Lev. xxiii. 42, 43.

Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled, ἐσκήνωσεν] among us, and we beheld His glory." ¹ If Passover became Easter, did not Tabernacles become Christmas?

Pentecost (called also the feast of harvest, the feast of weeks, the day of first-fruits) ² is specially connected with the Passover, in that the sheaf of the last-named festival is made complete in the two Pentecostal loaves. ³ It is also, as has been said, connected, as the Passover is, with the thanksgiving of the Feast of Tabernacles. Later on, the Jews called it "the concluding assembly," because it brought to its culmination the teaching of the Passover. How this culmination was reached, we may see by bringing together the Paschal sheaf and the Pentecostal loaves, which showed that "He who had delivered His people from Egypt, who had raised them from the condition of slaves to that of freemen in covenant with Himself, was the same that sustained them with bread from year to year." ⁴

Moreover, as this day, the fiftieth after the Passover, was the day on which the Lord "made a covenant in Horeb" with His people, ⁵ and gave them the code of Sinai, this great festival commemorated the giving of the law. But if it commemorated the ordering of the law of the old covenant, "written and graven in stones," it also looked on to the new covenant, of which God said to His true Israel, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." ⁶ And this covenant became a living institution, this promise was fulfilled, when "in fiery pomp" the Holy Spirit descended to be with the Church forever, "another Comforter." ⁷ With what a true insight Keble brings together the two thoughts we have been dwelling on!

"When God of old came down from heaven,
In power and wrath He came:
Before His feet the clouds were riven,
Half darkness and half flame;

¹ John i. 14.

² Exod. xxiii. 16, xxxiv. 22; Num. xxviii. 26; Deut. xvi. 10.

³ Lev. xxiii. 17, 20.

⁴ The Rev. Samuel Clark, in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

⁵ Deut. v. 2.

⁶ Jer. xxxi. 31-34; Hos. ii. 23; Zech. viii. 8; Heb. viii. 8, 9, 10.

⁷ John xiv. 16.

“Around the trembling mountain’s base,
The prostrate people lay;
A day of wrath, and not of grace,
A dim and dreadful day.

“But when He came the second time,
He came in power and love;
Softer than gale at morning prime,
Hovered His Holy Dove.

“The fires that rushed on Sinai down
In sudden torrents dread,
Now gently light a glorious crown
On every sainted head.”

What wonder that the Jewish Pentecost was vitalized into the Christian Whitsunday? What wonder that Easter and Whitsunday are the earliest annual festivals of the Christian Church? In the former, the very Paschal first-fruits were presented before God. In the latter, the old Pentecostal loaves found their complete interpretation in the “one bread and one body,” into which, “by one Spirit, we are all baptized.”¹

2. No definite information is given as to the place where the Pentecostal miracle occurred. Tradition makes it “the upper room.” The fact that the miracle occurred at the “third hour,” when the Apostles were accustomed to resort to the temple for prayer, would indicate that as the locality. The use of the word *house* [*οἶκος*] is not conclusive for either place; for it might be used of the entire temple,² or for any one of the thirty cells which surrounded it,³ as well as for a private habitation.

In favor, then, of the upper room, we have the unvarying testimony of tradition, and the improbability—whatever it is to be counted at—that the Apostles would be likely to assemble in the temple. In favor of the temple, we have the facts, that the Apostles, whether together or not, were

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17, xii. 13.

³ Josephus, *Antiq.*, viii. 2, 3.

² Kings and Chronicles, *passim*.

wont to resort thither at the hour mentioned; that they do not appear just then to have been the subjects of any special animosity; and that the apartments around the temple were open to all comers and goers.

“The solemn inauguration of the Church of Christ” might well—we may venture to think—take place “in the sanctuary of the elder covenant.”¹

3. As there are two opinions touching the place where the miracle was wrought, so there are two answers to the question, Who were the subjects of it? Some confine the miraculous action to the Apostles, others extend it to the whole body of the disciples. And a factitious importance has been given to the matter by its supposed bearing on questions relating to the Christian ministry. It has no such bearing or connection. If all the disciples were the subjects of the miracle, that would not disprove the existence of a divinely appointed ministry, “stewards of the mysteries of God.” If only the twelve were the subjects of it, that would not touch the truth that all the members of the Church of God are intrusted with “a royal priesthood.”² It is worse than foolish to drop one of two unquestionable truths, because of some merely imaginary discrepancy between them. It only increases the folly to attempt to connect them with questions of interpretation with which they are totally unconnected.

The promise that they should be “baptized with the Holy Ghost,” and should “receive power after that the Holy Ghost had come upon them,” in which power they were to be witnesses to Christ, was certainly made to the apostles; and this would seem to limit the miracle to them. On the other hand, we are told, “they were all with one accord in one place;” and while this may be spoken only of the twelve, it seems more likely that it is designed to include all the disciples. Again, in the account of the Ascension, the Apostles are called Galilæans; and here the question is asked, “Are not all these which speak Galilæans?” Probably, however,

¹ Olshausen on Acts ii. 1.

² 1 Cor. iv. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 9.

this expression ought not to be pressed in either direction. Nor is the question itself important, when once it is understood that it has no possible bearing on any theory concerning the constitution of the ministry, or its relations to the laity.

4. Far more important than any considerations relating to place or persons, are those which involve the nature and effects of the miracle itself. All miracles appeal to the senses, and the testimony of the senses is the ground of their acceptance. Were the miracle of transubstantiation true, it would be the one exception to this universal law. First, then, there came "a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind," — not a wind, but a sound like one, — "and it filled the house." There seems to be here a symbol of the way in which the Holy Spirit was to fill the Spirit-bearing Church in all the world, "Their *sound* is gone out into all lands, and their words into the ends of the world;" and also of the fulness of the outpouring of the Spirit, "which He shed on us abundantly."¹ Then came the separated "tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." The appearance as of fire fulfilled the prophecy of John Baptist, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."² The original Greek does not warrant the common idea that each tongue of fire was cleft. It only means that the tongues were parted off as from one common source; while the expression "it sat," or rested, not only points, in its use of the singular number,³ to the oneness of the source, the Holy Spirit, and intimates that the entire gift was received by each person, — *a singulis in solidum*, by each in completeness, to use Cyprian's words, — but also indicates permanency and continuance. "Thou art gone up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might *dwell* among them."

¹ Psa. xix. 4; comp. Rom. x. 18; Tit. iii. 6.

² Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16.

³ The word translated "cloven" is *διαμεριζόμεναι*. It suggests at once St. Paul's declaration, "There are diversities — *διαίρεσεις* — of gifts, but the same Spirit."

Says Bishop Andrewes, speaking of the fitness of a "solemn, set, sensible, descending" of the Spirit: It was "meet that no less honor should be done to this law of Sion, than to that of Sinai, which was public and full of majesty; and so was this to be. Meet, that having once before been upon Christ the Head, it should be so once more on the Church too, the Body. It pleased Him to vouchsafe to grace the Church, His Queen, with a like solemn inauguration to that of His own, when the Holy Ghost descended on Him in likeness of a dove; that she might, no less than He Himself, receive from heaven like solemn attestation. Lastly, meet it was that it should remain to the memory of all ages testified, that a day there was, when, even apparently to sense, mankind was visited from on high, and that this wind here, and these tongues, came not for naught, at so high a feast, in so great an assembly."¹

Whatever may be said of the "kinds of tongues" spoken of by St. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, or of our Lord's words, "They shall speak with new tongues,"² no one who reads the Book of Acts as a history can doubt that the persons of different nationalities and languages then present heard the Apostles speak, "every man in their own tongue wherein they were born;" that is, those who spoke, spoke in the various languages represented. To suppose that the "miracle consisted in the multitude hearing in various languages that which the believers spoke in their native tongue;" or that there was some unexplained "magnetic relation between the speakers and hearers;" or that the words mean "speaking with the tongue only, that is, inarticulately;" or that they who spoke did so "in unusual, enthusiastic, or poetical phraseology;" or that they spoke in "an entirely new spiritual language," — is only to encumber

¹ *First Sermon on the Sending of the Holy Ghost.* Sermons, vol. iii. p. 116, new edition. The bishop, according to common usage in his time, by "apparently" means "evidently."

² 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28; Mark xvi. 17. The phenomenon in Corinthians is barbarously called Glosollaly!

it with endless difficulties. Such conjectures may (probably they were designed to) exhibit the ingenuity of those who make them; beyond that, they accomplish nothing.

The miracle is, so to speak, the correlative of that of Babel. There, in one tongue, was proposed a wonderful work for men: here, in manifold tongues, were declared the wonderful works of God. There the one tongue, broken into many, scattered men abroad: here the many tongues, uttering one truth, drew them together. Babel tells of human discords: Pentecost proclaims Divine unity.

5. The coming of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, to establish and abide with the Church even to the end,¹ fulfils the promise of our Lord, and is the solemn inauguration of the dispensation of the Spirit, — the final dispensation from God to man. This great truth needs to be well considered and understood, for on its comprehension depends a full understanding of the true character of the new covenant in the blood of Jesus Christ.

To guard at once against a misunderstanding which would be fatal, let it be said that the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost does not at all imply that it had not before that wrought in men, both Jews and Gentiles. We are told, indeed, that the "Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified;"² and our Lord said, "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."³ But on the other hand, we know that in the "old time . . . holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;"⁴ that David prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit

¹ "In prayer for the assistance of the Holy Ghost, we should avoid expressions which ignore the great fact of Pentecost, when He was sent to earth, by our ascended Lord, to establish the Church and to abide with it forever. . . . We might as well pray for the creation of the universe, or the incarnation of Christ, as for the descent of the Holy Spirit in any sense that overlooks His indwelling in the Church, and all the true members thereof." — SPOTT, *Worship and Offices of the Church of Scotland*, p. 26. "Christ's errand being done, and He gone up on high, the Spirit this day visibly came down for Him, and in His name and stead, to take the charge, and to establish an order in the Church." — ANDREWES, *Sermon XV., On the Holy Ghost*.

² John vii. 39.

³ John xvi. 7.

⁴ 2 Pet. i. 21.

from me;"¹ that Joshua was one "in whom was the Spirit;"² and that, even before the deluge, God had said, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man."³ Have we here a contradiction? How are these apparently diverse passages to be reconciled?

The answer is not far to seek. To our Lord in His humanity the Holy Spirit was given "not by measure;"⁴ so that He dwelt in the Man Christ Jesus, "not as in other men, divided severally according to the will of God, but entirely, absolutely, without separation of office or distinction of gift." In like manner, in a fulness unknown before, the Spirit was to be sent first on the Apostles, then on the Church, to abide forever, with all powers and functions, personal and administrative, in "diversities of gifts . . . differences of administrations . . . diversities of operations."

Here, then, lay the difference. It was not "that all the special influences by which holy men spake at any time as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; all the imperfect, yet hopeful, feeling after God, if haply they might find Him, among the heathen; all the zeal of God which St. Paul acknowledges, even in the midst of error and blindness, among the Jews; all the willingness and eagerness to receive the message of salvation, when once it was preached, whether in Jews or Gentiles,"⁵—it was not that all these things came from any other than the Holy Ghost. They did all come from Him. The presence of the Holy Ghost was even the crowning glory of unfallen man.⁶ His restoration was a chief purpose of God's plan for man's redemption and salvation;⁷ and that restoration came in its fulness, when, under the new covenant, the Holy Ghost was "shed on us abundantly." As Leo the Great says, "That the disciples on the day of Pentecost were filled with the Holy Ghost, was not the beginning of the gift, *but the addition of abundance*; for patri-

¹ Ps. li. 11.² Num. xxvii. 18.³ Gen. vi. 3.⁴ John iii. 34.⁵ Moberly, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 40, second edition.⁶ Bishop Bull, *State of Man before the Fall*.⁷ Bishop Jolly, *Baptismal Regeneration*.

archs, and prophets, and priests, and all holy men that ever lived, were quickened by the sanctification of the Spirit." ¹ Thus much we must have clearly in mind at the outset.

Next, let us observe the full import of the statement just quoted, that the Holy Spirit was not given "by measure" to our Lord, when this expression is taken in connection with His words and works. His human nature received a twofold unction of the Holy Ghost. He was anointed first at His conception, when the angel said to the Virgin Mother, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee;" next at His baptism, when "the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon Him," after which He was "full of the Holy Ghost." ²

In that fulness He preached, prophesied, and wrought His miracles, applying to Himself the prophecy of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord hath anointed me," and declaring that He casts out devils "by the Spirit of God." ³ Never till we grasp this truth, so mighty and overwhelming, shall we comprehend all that is meant in applying to our Lord the words of the Psalmist, "O God! Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." ⁴

Turning now to our Lord's words addressed to His Apostles on the last evening of His mortal life, we find Him saying, "I will not leave you comfortless [orphans]; I will come to you. . . . It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." ⁵ The Lord's coming, then, of which He here speaks, cannot be His return to judgment, of which the angel said to the Apostles, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven,

¹ *Serm. II., De Pentecoste.* See also Canon Ashwell's Lectures on the Holy Catholic Church, p. 38.

² Luke iii. 22, iv. 1.

³ Isa. lxi. 1, ff.; Luke iv. 17-21; Matt. xii. 28; comp. Luke xi. 20. St. Matthew says, "If I by the Spirit of God;" St. Luke, "If I by the finger of God." This explains a line in the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, and the longer version of it in the Ordinal: *Dextra Dei tu digitus*, "The finger of God's hand."

⁴ Ps. xlv. 7; Heb. i. 9.

⁵ John xiv. 18, xv. 7.

shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Far from it. He returns not (as the heavens have received Him) "until the times of restitution of all things;"¹ but, in and by the Holy Ghost whom He sends, whom the Father sends, to work in the Church the presence of the risen Lord, the resurrection life of His anointed Spirit-bearing humanity, which is thus to abide with the Church forever.

Let us understand, however, that the Holy Spirit does not come to the Church to be a substitute for an absent Lord, to supply Christ's absence, but to bring His abiding presence, the "unspeakable gift"² of God. So Christ Himself ordains His ministers, and yet the Holy Ghost makes them "overseers over the flock;" Christ is "in us the hope of glory," and yet we become "the temples of God" by the indwelling Spirit; we are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones," and yet "by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body."³ As, in the natural world, God the Father created all things, and yet "all things were made" by the Son; so in the realm of grace Christ is ever present, ever working, but it is by the Holy Ghost. Wherefore St. Paul in one place says that by our Lord Jesus Christ "we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand;" and in another place, that through Christ we "have access by one Spirit unto the Father."⁴

Says Richard Hooker, "They which belong to the mystical body of our Saviour Christ, and be in number as the stars of heaven, divided successively, by reason of their mortal condition, into many generations, are, notwithstanding, coupled every one to Christ their Head, and all unto every particular person among themselves, inasmuch as *the same Spirit which anointed the blessed soul of our Saviour Christ doth so formalize, unite, and actuate His whole race,*

¹ Acts iii. 21.

² 2 Cor. ix. 15.

³ Acts xx. 28; Col. i. 27; 1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. v. 30; 1 Cor. xii. 13.

⁴ Rom. v. 1, 2; Eph. ii. 18.

as if both He and they were so many limbs compacted into one body, by being quickened all with one and the same soul;" and again, "We see . . . what communion Christ hath with His Church, how His Church, and every member thereof, is in Him by original derivation, and He personally in them by way of mystical association, wrought through the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . As for any mixture of the substance of His flesh with ours, the participation which we have of Christ includeth no such kind of gross surmise." ¹

Let these truths be well apprehended; and, while all materialistic views of the sacraments will be excluded, we shall rise to the full meaning of those great words that tell us how the Church of the living God, the dispensation of the Holy Ghost, "is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." ²

6. It has been remarked, that the arrangement of the names of the tribes at this time represented in Jerusalem, "follows the order of the three principal dispersions of the Jews throughout the world. The earliest dispersion was that of the ten tribes in Media and Assyria, and of the two tribes in the neighborhood of Babylon, then subject to the Parthians, who are therefore placed first. The second was the dispersion of Jews in Asia Minor, the dwellers in Cappadocia, etc., an offshoot from the Assyrian dispersion. The third was the Egyptian dispersion, planted by Ptolemy Lagus." ³ We cannot fail, also, to be reminded of the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah, which so nearly corresponds, though with a different arrangement, to the words of St. Luke: "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the

¹ *Ecl. Pol.*, Book V., c. lvi. §§ 11, 13.

² Eph. ii. 20.

³ Bishop Wordsworth. See also Pearson, *Conciones ad Clerum*, III.

Gentiles seek, and His rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again, the second time, to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.”¹ The Root of Jesse, the ensign for the nations, was now exalted to His seat of glory at the right hand of God; and Isaiah’s prophecy began to be fulfilled. But all prophecies, as Lord Bacon says, “being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are as one day, are not punctually fulfilled at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages.”² Wherefore we look for its entire fulfilment to that coming day of which St. Paul speaks, when, “the fulness of the Gentiles” having “come in . . . all Israel shall be saved.”³

Asia here, and throughout the Acts, means Proconsular Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital, and which comprised the south-western part of the peninsula of Asia Minor. It never means either the continent of Asia, or the entire of Asia Minor.

The persons assembled from these various tribes in Jerusalem are spoken of as “Jews and proselytes.” The former were those who were Jews by birth, descendants of Abraham; and these appear in this book under two designations, Hebrews and Hellenists; usually in our version, Grecians.⁴ The Hebrews were those Jews who were pure Jews, “not necessarily of unmixed Jewish descent, nor necessarily resident in Palestine, but rather distinguished by *language*, as speaking the Syro-Chaldaic, and using the Hebrew Scriptures.”⁵ The Hellenists were either Jews proper, who, living

¹ Isa. xi. 10, 11.

² *Advancement of Learning.*

³ Rom. xi. 25, 26.

⁴ In our version the word “Greeks” usually, not always, is applied to the Gentiles; and the word “Grecians,” to the Hellenists or Græcising Jews, including the proselytes.

⁵ Alford on Acts vi. i.

“in foreign countries, had adopted the prevalent form of the current Greek civilization, and with it the use of the common Greek dialect,” and who used the Septuagint version of the Scriptures ; or else, as included under the same name, proselytes.¹

It is not a little difficult to reach satisfactory conclusions concerning the proselytes who are mentioned here. The subject has been greatly confused by “the technical distinctions and regulations of the later rabbins.” It would seem, however, that at this period there were two classes of proselytes, — proselytes of righteousness, who were circumcised and also baptized ; and proselytes of the gate, who did not receive circumcision.

The former were Jews in every thing except in descent, and would appear to have been more Jewish than the Jews, more pharisaical than the Pharisees (a phenomenon not altogether unusual in the case of converts),² and, if Justin Martyr may be believed, utterly inimical to the disciples of Christ.

The latter, finding that the Apostles preached the same God in whom they already believed, rejected the legal ceremonies which they did not accept, and declared, with greater clearness and assurance, the eternal life to which they looked forward, would naturally be drawn towards the newly founded Church ; the rather, because in it they were received to equal place and privileges with all others, while by the Jews they were regarded as unclean, and admitted only to the Court of the Gentiles.³

7. St. Peter's sermon suggests some thoughts concerning the methods and characteristics of Apostolic preaching. Where a volume would hardly suffice for a full treatment of the subject, only some salient points can be touched.

The first thing that strikes one, whether in the preaching

¹ Dr. Westcott in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*.

² Matt. xxiii. 15. See also Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, chap. cxxii.

³ Bishop Pearson, *III. Concio ad Clerum*.

of St. Peter or St. Paul, is the way in which they always present, at the outset, something held in common by themselves and their hearers. It is hardly necessary to go into details. An inspection of the different discourses of these Apostles will sufficiently exhibit this characteristic, which is very much more than an illustration of the old rule of rhetoric, that a speaker must put himself into relations of sympathy with his hearers.

It is grounded on two most important truths: the first, that Christianity is the completion of Judaism, the latter without the former being a meaningless episode in the history of the race; the second, that Christianity is equally the completion of natural religion, — that is, it is, to use Bishop Butler's phrase, "a republication of natural religion."¹ But this phrase, it must be remembered, only states one aspect of our holy religion. Christianity not only republishes the great truths and laws of natural religion; it also carries them out from the meagreness of the letter to the fulness of the spirit, and in from the mere overt act to the desires and purposes of the heart. Nor is this all. Over and beyond this, dealing with those relations and duties which inhere in and grow out of man's creation, it reveals truths which could in no other way be known; it brings to every man a vital power, even the Holy Ghost, which he had not in himself, "animating, stimulating, and sanctifying individual souls;" and this same Spirit also organizes "a society of men, not merely working in men as individuals, but, over and above that, animating a society, through the influence of which society the good which He worketh in individuals is brought out into a higher perfection than without social influences could be produced."² Indeed, membership in this society or body is the means of attaining, as it is "shed on us abundantly," the vitalizing and renewing power of the

¹ *Analogy*, Part II. chap. i.

² Ashwell, *Lectures on the Holy Catholic Church*; Bishop Butler, *ut sup.*; Barry, *The World's Witness to Christ*.

Holy Ghost. These last-named topics will recur again and again, as we advance. Here it is enough to point out the way in which the faith and the Church of our Blessed Lord come in contact with Judaism and natural religion, so enabling the Apostles to find some common ground on which to place themselves, in addressing either Jews or Gentiles.¹

Secondly, if Apostolic preaching always begins from something held in common by preacher and hearers, the discourse or teaching always ends with the risen Jesus and the resurrection of the dead. A cursory inspection of the discourses and teaching recorded in the Acts will fully exhibit this characteristic, which has, indeed, been often remarked upon.

The first and obvious reason for this insistence is, that, unless the resurrection of the Lord had really occurred, the Apostles were "false witnesses of God." They might, in such case, be simply deceivers, or they might be themselves deceived. Great, however, as the difference of result in regard to their own characters would be under the one or the other of these alternatives, there would be no difference of result so far as their hearers were concerned. The witness, whether consciously or unconsciously on their part, would still be false witness.

But there seems to be another and a deeper reason for this striking characteristic. When our Lord began His ministry, "He came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God;" when He sent out His twelve apostles, "He sent them to preach the kingdom of God;" when Philip preached in Samaria, following Apostolic example,

¹ The English Puritans, with their exaggerated notions of the condition of man after the fall, greatly ignored the light of reason and the duties and obligations of natural religion. Writing in 1656, John Evelyn says, "There was now nothing practical preached, or that pressed reformation of life, but high and speculative points and strains that few understood, which left people very ignorant and of no steady principles." As extremes beget extremes, this state of things probably produced a revulsion, and "gave rise to the excessive zeal for enforcing natural religion, and for mere moral preaching, to the exclusion of the distinguishing doctrines of Christ, and particularly the operation of the Holy Ghost" (Vicesimus Knox, *Christian Philosophy*, sect. iii.), which characterized a later period.

he "preached the things concerning the kingdom of God;" when St. Paul preached in the synagogue at Ephesus, he "disputed and persuaded the things concerning the kingdom of God;" when he bade adieu to the elders of Ephesus, he reminded them that he had gone among them, "preaching the kingdom of God;" and, finally, for two years in Rome he "received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ."¹ These are only instances illustrating the point here made, namely, that the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the kingdom of God.

But, of course, this kingdom was not preached apart from the King; rather, they who preached the kingdom preached it because of the King. The kingdom was a living body vitalized by the Holy Ghost; but it was such a body only because of its risen Head and Lord, whom "God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour," giving Him "to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."² Therefore there was preached not merely a Saviour that once died upon the cross, making by his death forgiveness, sanctification, and salvation possible; but a risen and living Lord and King, who by His resurrection and ascension, and the outpouring of the Spirit, made those possibilities actual gifts, in that one Body, into which, by one Spirit, we are all baptized.³ Here we find the deepest and most underlying reason why the Apostolic preaching always culminated, so to speak, in the assertion of our Lord's resurrection. And, more than this, we learn how far they have departed from the Apostolic model who take men individually only to the cross, and leave them there with, it may be, nothing but an abstract doctrine of the atonement for the food of their souls, and do not take them to the light and life and glory of the risen Jesus at the right hand of God; or, if they do take them thither, still

¹ Mark i. 14; Luke ix. 2; Acts viii. 12, xix. 8, xx. 25, xxviii. 31.

² Acts v. 31; Eph. i. 22, 23.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

take them in their individual isolation and separation, with no efficient teaching as to that "body of Christ," *in* which — not *out of* it, and by ourselves — we are to come "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."¹

Thirdly, in the Apostolic preaching our Lord was never preached apart from His institutions and the means of grace. This follows, almost necessarily, from what has just been said concerning the preaching of the King and His kingdom; but some further explanation may be desirable.

The instruction given by Philip the deacon to the Ethiopian eunuch sets this matter in a very clear light.² The evangelist, beginning at the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, "preached unto him Jesus." And yet the first outcome of this teaching was, that the eunuch asked that he might receive holy baptism. It is, therefore, utterly impossible that Philip should have "preached Jesus" after that fashion in which many, who value themselves for their spirituality, would preach Him now. This illustrative instance may suffice for the present, inasmuch as the topic must be referred to again.

Fourthly, there was in Apostolic preaching no exclusion of teaching touching moral duties and obligations. We are told that Felix, the Roman procurator of Judæa, "sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ." But we are also told, that, in preaching the faith in Christ, St. Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come."³ In these words are comprised the duties which man owes to himself, his fellow-men, and to God. They answer directly to St. Paul's words in his Epistle to Titus, bidding him to teach men, "that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world."⁴ How often, in days far later than Apostolic times, has this sort of preaching been stigmatized

¹ Eph. iv. 7-17.

² Acts viii. 27-35.

³ Acts xxiv. 24, 25.

⁴ Tit. ii. 12.

as cold, dead, unevangelical, and not in any sense the preaching of Christ!

Such were four prominent characteristics of the preaching that once won multitudes of men to Jesus. May it not be, and is it not worth some thought, that a recurrence to this teaching might meet men's wants to-day as it met them eighteen hundred years ago, and give to the preaching of to-day some of that power which characterized the witness that the apostles bore to Christ?

8. The result of St. Peter's preaching is next to be considered; and what first challenges attention is the answer of the apostle to the question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It brings together what God's Word joins together, and what, in God's plan for man's sanctification unto life, ought always to have been kept together (but what men have been perpetually separating and keeping asunder), — inward preparation of heart, and visible ordinance of God; the individual act, and the corporate life. "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you;" such is the answer to the first question, after the descent of the Holy Ghost, touching the way of salvation. Of course faith, belief in what had been heard, is distinctly implied, we might say asserted, in what is immediately said of the glad reception of the Apostles' teaching. And this is exactly in accord with what we are taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, concerning "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," — the "foundation" of the Christian life, — in the words, "repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms." The Apostolic practice, of which we have here a very striking instance, explains the statements of the Epistle; the statements of the Epistle present a summary of the Apostolic practice. And the result is a view of the foundations of the Christian life and experience, as unlike many present notions of spiritual religion as it is possible to conceive.

In proceeding to the remainder of St. Peter's answer (for we have as yet considered only one of its three parts), cer-

tain fundamental truths concerning man and his needs must not be forgotten.

It has often been said that fallen man requires two things to restore him to what he was before the fall : first, deliverance from the punishment due to sin, by forgiveness ; secondly, deliverance from the power and bondage of sin, in sanctification of life. These are the great gifts of God in the new covenant made in the blood of His only begotten Son. These cover all the needs and all the possibilities of human life. Together they make up that state of deadness to the law, of which St. Paul speaks in such wonderful words.¹ For he is not "dead to the law," in the Apostle's meaning, who is "dead in trespasses and sins," nor yet he who sets aside God's law as a bondage from which we are released by the Spirit ; but he, and only he, who by habitual obedience in the grace of the Spirit has so taken into himself the law of God that he has transmuted law into life, — the life which "Christ liveth in him,"² — and lives it without remembrance or thought of life, even as he lives the physical life of the body under and by a law of which he never thinks. In times not long past, the first of these deliverances was insisted on and pressed as if it were the one only promise of the new covenant, while the second was neglected and passed by, or sometimes perverted into practical antinomianism, that is, into a denial of the binding obligation, under a dispensation of grace, of the moral law of God. At present, in the revulsion from this imperfect and erroneous teaching, there is a tendency, while taking juster views of the second deliverance, to ignore the first, and so to be carried off into inadequate ideas of sin and of man's need of forgiveness. The remedy for either difficulty must, obviously, be found in holding both truths together, and not in dropping now one and then the other.

If we look more carefully at the deliverance from the power and bondage of sin, which man's necessities require,

¹ Rom. vii. 4, 5, 6.

² Gal. ii. 20.

we shall find that two things seem needful to give it completeness : first, a rule for living (which will be more complete if it shall be embodied in an example), and secondly a living power of action to make the rule and the example effective to the individual soul. Thus, then, we find man's needs set before us in their full extent: provision for forgiveness; a rule of life embodied in a perfect example; a living spiritual power enabling man to keep the rule and follow the example. All this our Lord announced clearly and solemnly when He said to Thomas, "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life."¹ As the Priest, He opened the way for man into the new covenant in His blood. As the Prophet, He taught the perfected law of life, and embodied it in the perfect example of the human life of the God-man Himself. As the ascended King, He gave, and gives, the spiritual power without which man could never live the law or follow the example. To accomplish this, man was to be taken out of the sphere of his natural relations to God as his Creator, and lifted to a higher one, wherein he would come into new relations to the Redeemer and the Sanctifier; to Him who has restored man through His humanity, and sanctifies him by dwelling in him by His Spirit; who comes, as has been said before, "not to supply the absence, but to accomplish the presence," of the Son of God and Son of man, the second Adam. Into this new sphere of relation and gift, man is brought by holy baptism, which, as "the circumcision made without hands,"² places him within the new covenant, even as the circumcision made with hands placed the Israelite within the old.

We can now bring intelligently together the first two of the three divisions of St. Peter's answer to the question, What shall we do? The question itself, as we have seen, implies faith; and the Apostle enjoins repentance, thus setting forth "repentance from dead works, and faith towards God." The next step is holy baptism: "Be baptized, every

¹ John xiv. 6.

² Col. ii. 11, 12.

one of you." Then follows the evangel, the promise of the new covenant, the remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus, then, we find here, what everywhere in the New Testament underlies the ideal of a Christian life,—the transplanting of a soul from the sphere of the natural life into that of the supernatural; the removal of it from its individual isolation, into the corporate union of the body of Christ; its new birth from the world into the Church; "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Is it necessary to say that all this may be made void and of none effect by the bars of impenitence and unbelief at the beginning, or by disbelief, disobedience, and unrepented sin afterwards?

There still remain for consideration the Apostle's concluding words, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Obviously he declares the union of Jews and Gentiles in the new election, or calling, from God. The old election was the Jewish nation, and all the circumcised were the elect. The new election is the Christian Church, and all the baptized are the elect. Whether St. Peter yet knew, whether he knew before his vision at Joppa, that the Gentiles were to be called, and to come into the Church *as* Gentiles, and without being circumcised, may well be doubted, nor is it worth our while to inquire.

The special question just here relates to the words "your children." Are we to understand them as signifying your *descendants* in coming generations, or your *little ones*? The word "children" [τέκνους] settles nothing, for it may be used of either;† and we are to look elsewhere for answer, if answer is to be made.

Now, we must remember that St. Peter's reply to the question of those who had been "pricked in their heart" is not to be taken as if it stood alone and unconnected with any thing else, but as connected with the sermon which he

† See Acts xiii. 33.

had just been preaching. In that discourse, he had distinctly asserted that Jesus, whom they had crucified, was the Messiah, and, as Messiah, "by the right hand of God exalted" to the throne of David,¹ where he was to reign in an everlasting kingdom. There could surely be no question in the minds of those who heard the discourse, as to the continuance and permanency of the kingdom announced; no doubt that it was to be from generation to generation.

On the other hand, how natural would it be for the Apostle to tell them that the new covenant, like the old, was to embrace them and their little ones! How entirely does it fall in with the fact that the circumcision of the old covenant passed over into the more highly gifted baptism of the new, to say to those anxious questioners that their little ones were to be the subjects of baptism, as they had been of circumcision! If they were to be excluded, here was the place and time for excluding them. The absence of any distinct excluding declaration makes the inclusion of the little ones, in the word *children*, a moral certainty. Indeed, it may be doubted whether this interpretation would ever have been questioned, had not a modern sect been compelled by its chief article of faith, or rather of denial, to question it. Says Dean Alford, "We have a providential recognition of infant-baptism at the very founding of the Christian Church."

9. The final result of the teaching given on the Day of Pentecost was the baptism of about "three thousand souls," and the establishment of the Christian Church. As constituted on that day, the Church consisted of the twelve Apostles and the three thousand baptized persons. This statement may seem to be a very simple one; but when we examine it carefully and in detail, we shall find that it contains historical facts of the last importance.

The Apostles held their place, and received their authority, directly from the Lord Himself. They did not choose Him,

¹ Comp. Luke i. 32, 33.

but he chose them. They were not designated by the Church, for they were appointed before the Christian Church came into being. The Lord chose them, made them, appointed them, sent them, gave them authority and commission to make disciples of all nations and to preach the Gospel to every creature, gave to them the words which the Father had given Him, appointed unto them a kingdom as the Father had appointed unto Him, and gave them commandments and directions concerning that kingdom.¹ Such are the words in which Holy Scripture sets forth their appointment, and they clearly exclude any human agency in accomplishing it. God, by His Son, set them first in the Church.²

The appointment of Matthias does not invalidate this statement, because it was not a selection by the one hundred and twenty, or even by the eleven, but a choice by the Lord Himself, as is proved by the words, "shew whether of these two thou hast chosen."³

At this point of time, however, all the powers of the Christian ministry are gathered up in the twelve. All that is contained in our Lord's commissions, wheresoever given; all that St. Paul can mean when he says, "Let a man so account of us as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God,"⁴ or when he speaks of "ambassadors for Christ,"⁵ or when he says that apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are all "given for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,"⁶—all that is included in these or in any other words that speak of the Christian ministry, the Apostles had. They *were* the ministry. They held it all together,

¹ John xv. 16; Mark iii. 14, where our version reads "ordained," but the original is *ἐποίησεν* = made; Matt. x. 5, xxviii. 19; Mark xvi. 15; John xvii. 8; Luke xxii. 29; Acts i. 2, 3.

² 1 Cor. xii. 28.

³ Note the Greek *ἐξελέξατο*; the same word which occurs in John xv. 16 and Acts i. 2, in connection with the twelve.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 1.

⁵ 2 Cor. v. 20.

⁶ Eph. iv. 11, ff.

and each held it in its totality. As men, they differed in character, in personal gifts, in various ways; but in this aspect each held the grace of their common calling entire and complete.¹

All this proves, beyond a question, that the ministry, originally derived upon and concentrated in the Apostles, was not an after-thought, or a development from the Church. On the contrary, it preceded the existence of the Church. On the morning of that Day of Pentecost, there was an apostolate, but the Christian Church was not yet. On the evening of that day, there was a Christian Church, consisting of a ministry and a people, a clergy and a laity, the Apostles and the three thousand. This division therefore is original and constitutive in the Church. And in the dry light of this historic fact, all theories like those of Congregationalism, touching the origin of the Church and the ministry, disappear. First the ministry in the Apostles, then the Church constituted by their agency; first the Church at Jerusalem, then the churches ramifying from it, — these are the things which the Book of Acts exhibits, and the order in which they come. To put the Church first, and next the ministry; the churches first, and then the Church, — is as contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures as it is to the convictions of right reason and the truth of history.

¹ This fact is the basis of the famous Cyprianic statement: *Episcopatus est unus, cujus a singulis in solidum pars tenetur.*

PART III.

THE MISSION TO THE JEWS, BEGINNING IN
JERUSALEM AND EXTENDING TO
JUDÆA AND SAMARIA.

Part III.

(Chapter II. ver. 42, to Chapter IX.)

SECTION I.

THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

(*Chap. ii. ver. 42, to chap. iv.*)

42. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.

44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

45. And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all *men*, as every man had need.

46. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

47. Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

1. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, *being* the ninth *hour*.

2. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple;

3. Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

6. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7. And he took him by the right hand,

and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ancle bones received strength.

8. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

9. And all the people saw him walking and praising God:

10. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.

11. And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

12. ¶ And when Peter saw *it*, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

13. The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let *him* go.

14. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

15. And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

16. And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by

him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

17. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did *it*, as *did* also your rulers.

18. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

19. ¶ Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

20. And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you:

21. Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

22. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up

unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

23. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

25. Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

26. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

I. We find ourselves, at this point of the history, in Jerusalem, with the newly founded Church, its ministry, and people. It is in the world, and among men. It comes into contact with human life in all its varying conditions and environments. It is to act on men under those conditions. It is not an abstraction, but an institution embodying a living power and charged with a wonderful mission. It is to be God's appointed agent in carrying on to its final issues the work of man's redemption. It is to be God's family, into which men are to be adopted; His school, in which men are to be trained; His hospital, in which they are to be cured of their manifold diseases. It is to embrace in its beneficent work all human needs, whether they are needs of body or of soul.

Many persons, neglecting the obvious fact that the Church was *sent* into the world to do its work among and with the diversified conditions of humanity, have sought its origin in the pressure of those conditions on human life, and in men's attempts to meet the wants that were thus pushed to the surface. Because the Church immediately set herself to remedy a patent evil in the then existing conditions of society, — poverty, and the suffering consequent on poverty, — it has been imagined, that, under the pressure of this evil,

men united themselves together in a sort of financial association to relieve it, and that this was the origin of the Church of God! It has even been urged, that the fashion, so prevalent at that time in the Roman Empire, of combining in associations for all sorts of purposes, suggested the supposed financial association. It is needless to say that this theory, and all others like it, put entirely to one side, on one or another pretence, the testimony of the Book of Acts and other scriptures of the New Testament, and substitute *a priori* possibilities and assumptions in place of historic facts. Their shallowness is equalled only by their disloyalty to truth.

It will not serve to say, in reply, that such a theory does not deny the Divine origin of the Church because it is admitted to be "Divine, just as the solar system is Divine," or, we may add, as every thing which God has created is Divine. This misses or evades the real point at issue. The question is not whether, putting to one side all the testimony and statements of the New Testament, the Church presents herself as a "natural society" merely, "the natural outcome of natural causes," no more than "one of the guilds of the empire," working for good and beneficent ends. But it is whether, taking into account the testimony and statements of the New Testament, — which, it must be remembered, are contemporary evidence, — we can regard the Church of God as any thing but that which she has always regarded herself; namely, a society directly constituted by Almighty God, endowed with the supernatural life of the Holy Ghost, and sent into the world to leaven the world, indeed, with a new life, but to do this by applying to individual souls the atoning and sanctifying virtue of the death and life — the death of the cross and the resurrection life — of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹

Now, one who receives the plain declarations — which

¹ Compare, to illustrate the different characters of the two views here brought out, Hatch's *Bampton Lectures*, 1880, and the Rev. C. Gore's *The Church and the Ministry*.

require no more exegetical skill to interpret them than is required in interpreting an historical statement of Justin Martyr or Eusebius — (1) that the Church is the body of Christ, (2) that the Almighty Father gave our Lord to be the Head of this body, and (3) that this Head and Lord “gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,”¹ can accept no theory concerning the origin and constitution of the Church, which questions, directly or by implication, the fact that they are supernatural and Divine.

2. The first description which is given us of the newly established Church is a very comprehensive one, though it is contained in a few words. Its members, the baptized, “continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” We cannot suppose that these things were characteristics of the life of believers only for the moment, and do not, rather, bring before us what was to be abiding and continuous. In the concentrated life of a small community, such as the Church then was, in the first freshness of a new faith acting on the life, any characteristics are likely to stand out with a definiteness and prominence that will become less distinct as the community spreads in space, and lives in time, becomes less obviously one community, and loses, it may be, in the “active habit” some of the earliest “passive emotion,” or even leaves its “first love,” and “waxes cold.” That the four characteristics named above, therefore, appear more distinctly in the period of the Church’s life now under consideration, neither proves them to be only temporary, nor makes the study of them unimportant.

First, then, we hear of the apostles’ teaching, or doctrine, being steadfastly adhered to. Without insisting too strongly on the phrase “*the* doctrine,” it is still evident that this

¹ Eph. i. 22, 23, iv. 11, 12.

implies something more definite than any mere general impression or ideas, such as one gets from sermons or lectures, or any thing of the sort. And this becomes more evident when we take into account the way in which this teaching is spoken of in the Epistles, especially in the pastoral Epistles of St. Paul.

If we look carefully over the Epistles and the Revelation, we shall find that St. Paul, writing to Timothy, alleges as one chief ground of comfort, in view of his approaching martyrdom, that he has "kept the faith," and exhorts Timothy to hold fast "the faith;" that St. Jude exhorts all Christians to "contend earnestly for the faith;" that the Lord commends the angel of Pergamos because he has "not denied my faith," and makes a promise to the angel of Philadelphia, because he has "kept my word."¹ Elsewhere, we shall find St. Paul speaking of "the doctrine" and the "good confession" which Timothy had "confessed before many witnesses."² Again, we find him in another place calling this "the deposit," and "the good deposit," which Timothy is to "keep" or watch.³ Especially shall we be struck with the passage in which St. Paul calls on Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words,"⁴ remembering that the principal word in the exhortation [*ὑποτύπωσις*], translated "form" in our version, can only mean a pattern, mould, or archetype. In entire accordance with this striking expression, having evidently the same idea in mind, we shall find St. Paul commending the Roman Christians in these words: "Ye have obeyed from the heart that mould of teaching into which ye were delivered."⁵ The figure implies a *matrix*, or mould, into which the belief of the Roman Christians was cast, and by which their belief was shaped and formed. And, finally, turning once more to the instructions to Timothy, we shall find St. Paul commanding him "to commit" this faith, doctrine, deposit, form of sound

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 7; 1 Tim. i. 19; Jude 3; Rev. ii. 13, iii. 8, 10.

² 1 Tim. iv. 13, 16, vi. 12.

⁴ 2 Tim. i. 13.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 20; 2 Tim. i. 14.

⁵ Rom. vi. 17. Our version is very defective here.

words, mould of doctrine, to "faithful men who should be able to teach others."¹ All this assuredly looks towards a definite summary of the faith, something of the nature of a creed, rather than away from it.

This view is confirmed by the fact that early writers speak of such a summary as having come from the Apostles themselves. Thus Irenæus says, "The Church, though dispersed throughout the world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the Apostles and their disciples this faith;" and then he proceeds to give a formula which marvellously resembles the Apostles' Creed as we term it.² The same writer also speaks "of the unalterable rule of faith which each received in baptism."³ Tertullian also mentions the "rule of faith," and, giving it in almost the words of Irenæus, says further that it came from the Apostles, and is questioned by no one but heretics. He also calls it the "rule of the sacrament of baptism."⁴ These witnesses, the one representing the East as well as Gaul, and the other representing Africa, show how pervasive this view was. It can scarcely be doubted that it was universal.

If we proceed to inquire into the probable form of this summary, or whatever we may choose to call it, we naturally, almost necessarily, are led to the baptismal formula, "the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Into this Name persons were to be baptized, and also disciplined; and discipling into a name must, surely, imply belief in the doctrine which the name carries with it. It has been well said, that "the idea of the 'Name' has a far deeper significance in Biblical language than in our own." The writer here quoted adds that the "Divine names in the Bible give in a broad outline the course of revelation."⁵

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 2.

² Against Heresies, Book I. c. x. i. The entire chapter is well worth a careful reading.

³ *Ut sup.*, Book I. c. ix. 4.

⁴ *On Prescription against Heretics*, xiii. See note C. on p. 462 of Tertullian, vol. i. in *Library of the Fathers*, and also note P., p. 496.

⁵ Westcott: *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 232.

First, the names *El* and *Elohim* reveal the Creator. Then the names *Adonai* and *El Shaddai* declare the "sovereign might of God for the fulfilment of His counsel." Then, again, the name *Fehovah* reveals the covenant God, who keeps and fulfils His promises. And, lastly, the last and complete revelation is given in the name *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, which declares that the "God who had revealed Himself as One, was henceforth to be known as not less One, but in some mysterious manner Three."¹ In this formula, then, is revealed the Catholic faith; for "the Catholic faith is this, that we worship One God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity."

Further confirmation may be found in the fact, easily ascertained by an inspection of the old historic creeds, that all really catholic symbols are readily arranged under the three Names of the baptismal formula.

The second characteristic of the early Apostolic Church is that its members continued steadfast "in the fellowship of the Apostles." There is some difficulty both in translating and interpreting this word "fellowship." But the simplest explanation would seem to be the best. They who received the doctrine of the Apostles, and were baptized, were thereby incorporated into a fellowship or society, the sacred ministrations in which were rendered either by, or under authority from, the Apostles, and which, therefore, might well be called the Apostles' fellowship.

The third note or mark of the Apostolic Church was steadfast continuance in the "breaking of bread." It is not worth while to waste time in asking whether the direct reference of these words is to the Holy Communion or to the *agape* or love-feast, which, later on, we find connected with it. In the first place, it can never be proved that the love-feasts had come into existence at this early period; and in the next place, even were their existence proved,

¹ Moberly, *Great Forty Days*, Discourse IV. Compare Westcott, *ut sup.*, and Pearson, *On the Creed*, Art. ii.

since, by the confession of their most strenuous advocates, they were inseparably connected with the Holy Communion, and never held apart from it, the question becomes simply one of the curiosities of interpretation, an exegetical puzzle and nothing more. At all events, a grammatical possibility can hardly be allowed to supersede all moral probabilities and all historical testimony. Be the direct reference what it may, we are led up finally to the Eucharist.

Fourthly, These first Christians were steadfast in "the prayers." That they were in the habit of going up to the temple at the hours of prayer, is plain enough; while even those who wish to reduce every thing named here to a *minimum*, are still willing to admit that we "need not *altogether exclude* prayer among themselves;" a condescension of admission for which we are bound to be duly grateful. How could the Eucharist have been administered, "the cup of blessing" blessed, the Amen uttered at the giving of thanks, without worship, prayer, praise, and thanksgiving? Was baptism likely to be administered without prayer? Were they to whom their Master had taught the Lord's Prayer, likely to omit its use, or to forget to teach it to others? Were they to whose united worship the Lord had made so glorious a promise,¹ likely to neglect the assembling of themselves together? And are not the hints scattered through the Acts and the Epistles, confirmed as they are by the immemorial usage of the Church, more to the purpose than all the guesses of those who seem to think themselves nothing if they do not differ from everybody else, and especially from the witness of the Church of God?

We may sum up these four characteristics of the early Apostolic Church in the words of Bishop Pearson: "We have presented to us the form and image of the Church as it was gathered, constituted, and governed by the Apostles. Admitted to the Church by baptism, they frequented the public assemblies, sedulously attended to the doctrine of

¹ Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

the Apostles who taught them the way of God more perfectly, partook of the Eucharist, and worshipped God in public and common prayers, thus giving an example to all churches to the end of the world.”¹

3. The next record made of the Church in the freshness of its early life speaks of “the wonders and signs done by the apostles.” And this leads on to some thoughts concerning, first, the miracles of our Lord, and, next, those wrought by His Apostles and others. Now, there are in the New Testament three words which are specially used of what we call generically miracles, namely, “wonders,” “powers,” and “signs;”² and these words present to us three different aspects, so to speak, of a miracle. The appellation “wonder” recalls to us the act itself, and the impression it produces on one who witnesses it. The word “power” brings before us the ability or force by which the act is accomplished. The name “sign” fixes our thoughts on the moral and spiritual teaching which comes out from the miracle. In every miracle of the New Testament, these three things meet. Each one is a wonderful act, wrought by superhuman power, and containing spiritual and moral teaching. This fact alone lifts them quite above the level of all mere thaumaturgic tales and fables, and gives them at once a position entirely their own.

When we look at our Lord’s miracles under these three aspects, we are brought face to face with results that are well worth attentive consideration.

The action—so to speak—of the miracles is always dignified, severe, free from any thing that is puerile or trivial; and the impression produced on the beholder is entirely accordant. There is nothing in them like the

¹ Pearson, *Minor Works*, vol. i. p. 326.

² In the original, *τέρατα, δυνάμεις, σημεῖα*. The three words occur together in Acts ii. 22, and Heb. ii. 4; though *δυνάμεις* is, in our version, unfortunately translated “miracles,” and not “powers.” They also are found in 2 Cor. xii. 12, where *δυνάμεις* is translated “mighty deeds;” and, again, in 2 Thess. ii. 9. St. John often calls them simply “works.”

childish tricks and petulancies of the miracles of the Apocryphal Gospels,¹ or the sometimes ludicrous pettiness of the wonders attributed in the Roman Church to the use of chaplets, scapularies, medals, chains of safety, and amulets.² In like manner, the impression produced on those who witnessed them is always one of solemnity, and even awe. No one who beheld them ever questioned their reality, or seems to have thought of attributing them to any thing but to supernatural power. Those who received their attestation saw in them "the finger of God." Those who rejected their attestation could only say, "He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils."³

When we consider our Lord's miracles as powers, we can hardly fail to be struck with two things: first, the authority by which He works; and, secondly, the wide extent of the powers exhibited in action.⁴

In regard to the former of these, namely, the authority by which the miracles are wrought, we meet at once an apparent difficulty if not a contradiction. On the one hand our Lord says of Himself, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do;" and again, speaking of His works, He says, "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me."⁵ On the other hand, He declares, that "whatsoever things He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise;" that "as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will;" and that "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."⁶ Moreover, when He works a miracle, He speaks of no other than Himself. He speaks as He teaches, "with authority." It is an instance either of fearful presumption or of inherent power.⁷

¹ See especially the *Gospel of the Infancy*.

² *L'Arsenal de la Dévotion*.

³ Matt. ix. 34.

⁴ Persons versed in theology will recall the distinction between *potestas* and *potentia*.

⁵ John v. 19, x. 25.

⁶ John v. 19, 21, 26.

⁷ See Trench, *Notes on the Miracles of our Lord*, Preliminary Essay, chap. iv. 1.

How is all this to be explained? or are we to say that no explanation is possible? To one who holds the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, the explanation ought readily to occur, and to present no difficulty. Whatever the Son of God is or has, He is or has from the Father. "There is but one fountain or principle of Deity, God the Father, who only is God of and from Himself, the Son and Holy Ghost deriving their Deity from Him," and yet "so derived from the fountain of the Deity as that they are not separated or separable from it, but do still exist in it, and are most intimately united to it." ¹ As the life which the Son has *in* Himself, and by which He is God, is yet not *of* Himself, — in which case He would be a second and separate God, — but of the Father; so, also, the power by which He works is *in* Himself, but *of* the Father.

Read in the light of this great truth of our holy faith, the passages and facts above mentioned are harmonized, while the words of St. John, in the wonderful fifth chapter of his Gospel, meet and correct sundry errors. They teach "that Christ is the Son because He does nothing of Himself" (ver. 19); that He is God, because whatever the Father does He does (ver. 19); that He is one with the Father, because all men must honor Him as they honor the Father (ver. 23); and that He is not the Father, because He is sent by the Father (ver. 37)."²

The words that principally concern us here are these: "What things soever he [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." They should be carefully examined. They do not assert that the Son does things *similar* to those done by the Father, but that He does the *very same* things which the Father does. They do not assert, or allow the assertion, that, though the Father and the Son do the same things, they yet do them in different ways; for the word

¹ Bull, *Doctrine of the Catholic Church*, etc. Works, vol. ii. p. 1. Oxf., 1846.

² The words are Hilary's. They are quoted in *Catena Aurea*, from his *Treatise on the Trinity*, Lib. VII. c. 21.

“likewise,” in our version, is not a mere extension of, or pleonastic addition to, the word “also.” It has its own separate force, and expresses the way or manner in which the things are done. Our Lord, therefore, here claims for himself the powers of Omnipotence.¹

Do His miracles bear out this claim? A classification of those that are recorded — possibly suggesting the reason why the record contains just the selection of all the works “which Jesus did” that it presents to us — will answer that question affirmatively. It will then be seen that they exhibit power over inanimate things and irrational beings; over the forces of the natural world; over men in their bodies and their souls, in life and after death; and over the angelic hosts, unfallen or fallen. It will be further seen that under each of these divisions, powers of the most varied and wide-reaching character are exercised. For instance, and simply for purposes of illustration, — which is all that can be attempted here, — in the world of nature our Lord controls alike the productive and destructive forces; in the case of the human body, there is no disease or trouble that he does not heal; in the realm of death he raises persons from the dead at all the stages of the progress of decay. Indeed, the more we study these wonderful phenomena, the more we shall be convinced that the powers which our Lord exercised are co-extensive with any ideas which we can form of the Divine Omnipotence.

When from the miracles of our Lord we turn to those of the Apostles, recorded in the Acts, two differences, to name no more, are very apparent. In the first place, the Apostles not only make no claim of any authority inherent in themselves, but they most carefully and anxiously repudiate such a claim. Our Lord says to the winds and waves, “Peace, be still;” to the widow’s son, “Young man, I say unto thee, Arise;” to the deaf ear and the dumb tongue, “Be opened;”

¹ The two points here made, together with the conclusion from them, come out more clearly in the original than in our version. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Lib. XX., treats the matter at length.

to the dead man in the sepulchre, "Lazarus, come forth." But the Apostles act, solely and ever, "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," and they disclaim any "power or holiness" of their own.¹ There are only two exceptions to this otherwise universal rule. When St. Peter raised Dorcas, he said to her, "Tabitha, arise;" but he was then alone, no spectators were present, and there was no danger that he would be misunderstood, or supposed to be claiming any thing for himself.² St. Paul also said to the cripple at Lystra, "Stand upright on thy feet;" but when this was misunderstood, and the people took him and Barnabas for gods, they made haste to correct the error by saying, "We also are men of like passions with you."³ These exceptions only serve to make their rule of action more impressive.

In the next place, we find the range of the powers exercised by the Apostles and others greatly circumscribed, as compared with that exhibited in the miracles of our Lord. St. Peter and St. Paul each work a miracle of resurrection and a miracle of punishment, and all the other miracles recorded are those of healing to the bodies or the souls of men. These two differences in regard to authority of action and range of operation are surely most striking and suggestive.

It remains to say something of the third aspect of a miracle, expressed in the word "sign." In this regard, every miracle may be termed an acted parable; that is, the outward act, by which the emotions of the spectator are aroused, and the power of the worker of the miracle is exhibited, contains a spiritual truth; and this truth relates to some work of the Holy Ghost wrought in human souls, analogous to the physical work which the miracle presents to us.

It is impossible, here, to go into full details. Two illustrations must suffice. As our Lord healed "all manner of diseases" by which men's bodies are afflicted, so the Holy Spirit brings forgiveness and healing to all sins by which men's souls are burdened. As He raised to life human

¹ Acts iii. 6, 12.² Acts ix. 40.³ Acts xiv. 8-16.

bodies in different stages of decay, — the centurion's daughter when the breath had just left her lips, the widow's son as he was borne to the sepulchre, Lazarus after his entombment, — so the Holy Spirit raises human souls from all depths of sin into lives of righteousness. These miracles of grace, perpetually wrought in the Church of God, continue and bear witness to the miracles of the Gospels. Do they not, also, explain and fulfil our Lord's words, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father" ?¹

Says Augustine, speaking of the miracles of our Lord, "These things the Lord once did, that He might call men to belief. This faith now glows in the Church, spread abroad throughout the world. And now He works greater cures, for the sake of which He disdained not to work those lesser ones. For, as the soul is better than the body, so the health of the soul is greater than the health of the body. The blind flesh does not now open its eyes by a miracle of the Lord, but the blind soul doth open its eyes to the word of the Lord. The dead corpse does not now arise ; but the dead soul, which lay in a living corpse, does arise. The deaf ears of the body are not now opened, but how many have the close-shut ears of their hearts opened to the Word of God!"²

This fact, namely, that any miracle contains under its outward reality a spiritual verity, explains the possibility of the theory that the miracles of the Gospel are only instructive "myths," and presents to us the half-truth which that distorted and imperfect theory takes up as the ground of its specious denials.

Finally, from this inside view — if so one may call it — of our Lord's miracles, there comes out to us an argument, of no slight cogency, for the truthfulness and accuracy of the Evangelists who record them. What is the likelihood that a deliberate forger or a fanatical enthusiast could contrive,

¹ John xiv. 12.

² Sermon lxxxviii. (*alias* xviii.) on Matt. xx. 30, sect. iii.

with conscious purpose to deceive on the one hand, or under strong delusion on the other, a series of miracles which should always be dignified and lofty, never puerile or belittling in their character and results; which should bring to our view powers that in their aggregate are co-extensive with any ideas we can form of omnipotence; and which should always carry with them symbolic teachings that have been visible in human lives for eighteen centuries? Surely there can be but one answer to that question; and that answer must lead us to the conclusion that the Evangelists were neither deceivers nor deceived, but that they honestly, and in good faith, recorded works done by Him "by whom were all things created, that are in heaven and in earth," and "who upholdeth all things by the word of His power."¹

4. "There were, in the ancient Church, some heretics, who, under pretence of greater heights in religion, would allow no men to possess any thing as their own right and property in this world, but obliged all men to renounce their title to every thing, and to have all things in common; pronouncing a peremptory sentence against all rich men, that unless they gave up their possessions, and forsook all that they enjoyed, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven. These men called themselves *Apotactici*, from renouncing the world; and *Apostolici*, from their pretended imitation of the Apostles; and *Encratitæ*, from their ostentation of temperance and abstinence above all other men."² The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, and other fanatics since, have followed in the same track.

These errorists sustain their theories by the statement here made, that "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need;" and further on, that "as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles' feet;

¹ Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 3.

² Bingham, *Antiquities*, etc., Book XVI. c. xii. § 1.

and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”¹

If we did not look beyond the words just quoted, and isolated them from every thing else in the New Testament, they might seem to warrant the conclusions drawn from them. But this method of exposition, though it unfailingly characterizes all known sects, is contrary to all right reason, and to the declarations of Scripture itself. It is perfectly clear from the words of St. Peter to Ananias, “Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?”² that, whatever gifts were made, they were entirely voluntary, and obligatory only so far as it is always a duty to minister to the wants of the poor. Besides, St. Paul’s exhortation, “Charge them who are rich in this world . . . that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate;” St. James’s denunciation of distinguishing between rich and poor in the assemblies of Christians; St. John’s warning, “Whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”³ all show that there was inequality, and therefore not community, in their possessions, among the members of the Church in the days of the Apostles.

There is a passage in the First Apology of Justin Martyr, and another in the Apology of Tertullian, which, taken by themselves, may seem to afford some support to the theory of a community of goods in the early Church, but which, fairly examined, really give none.

Justin Martyr in one place says, “We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and communicate to every one in need.”⁴ But in another place, describing the weekly worship of the Christians, he explains himself as follows: “They *who are well to do* and willing, give what

¹ Acts ii. 44, 45; iv. 34, 35.

² Acts v. 4.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18; Jas. ii. 1-4; 1 John iii. 17.

⁴ *Apol.*, I. xiv.

each thinks fit ; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows, . . . and, in a word, takes care of all who are in need.”¹

So, too, Tertullian says, in even stronger words than those of Justin, “ We, therefore, who are united in mind and soul, doubt not about having our possessions in common. With us all things are shared promiscuously, except our wives.”² But this statement is explained by what he has just before said : “ Every man placeth there a small gift on one day in each month, or whenever he will, so he do but will, and so he be but able ; for no man is constrained, but contributeth willingly.”³ And he goes on to say that these deposits are disbursed for the poor and suffering. Clearly, neither Tertullian nor Justin had in mind any community of goods which was not consistent with inequalities of possessions and voluntary gifts, according to St. Paul’s rule of individual ability.

Abundant, most abundant, almsgiving was the only such community known in the Church of Apostolic times. But abundant, most abundant, it assuredly was ; furnishing herein an example to all coming ages. No man called his possessions his own.⁴ Each held them, that is, as a stewardship in trust, not for himself only, but for others also. And this, in a vastly higher way than could have been reached by any compulsory community of goods, made “ all things common ” among the believers, and lay at the root of their abounding ministrations. Such a conviction, indeed, must always lie at the root of all true almsgiving. He who holds all that he has simply as God’s stewardship will, assuredly, so minister his stewardship as to fulfil the law of Christ in helping others to bear their burdens.⁵

5. The new believers seem to have been in the habit of gathering together in the temple, probably at the third and ninth hours, the times of the morning and evening sacrifices.

¹ *Apol.*, I. lxxvii.

³ *Apol.*, I. as before.

⁵ Gal. vi. 2.

² *Apol.*, I. xxxix.

⁴ Acts iv. 32.

“Although Moses did not, in the law, distinctly order prayers, nevertheless the pious Jews were in the habit of praying, especially at the hours of the offering of the sacrifices.” The evening sacrifice was offered at the ninth hour, and with it the prayers at that time began.¹ The reason for going up to the temple at the ninth hour would equally apply to the third hour, so that these would appear to have been the hours when the believers met in the temple for daily prayer. Further on it will be necessary to say something of the way in which the Mosaic and Christian dispensations, so to speak, overlapped each other; but that subject does not come into view here.

6. The miracle of healing the lame man requires — after what has been said above — no special notice. But some things in St. Peter’s address to the people ought not to be passed by.

(a) The Apostle attributes the denial of the “Holy One and the Just,” and the death of “the Prince of life,” to the ignorance of the Jews and their rulers; and then adds, “But those things which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled.” These words carry us back at once to the wonderful prayer of our Lord on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”²

That this ignorance, whatever it may have been, did not nullify the responsibility or remove the sin of all the Jews and all their rulers, is clear from our Lord’s words to the Pharisees, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth;” and also to the Apostles, “If I had not come, and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin.”³ No doubt the ignorance asserted applies in different degrees to

¹ Pearson, *Minor Works*, vol. i. p. 330.

² Luke xxiii. 34.

³ John ix. 41, xv. 22, 24.

different classes and individuals among the Jews. "It admits of all degrees, — from the unlearned, who were implicitly led by others, and hated Him because others did, up to the most learned of the scribes, who knew and rightly interpreted the Messianic prophecies, but, from moral blindness or perverted expectations, did not recognize them in our Lord." ¹ Who were exempted from responsibility, and who were not exempted, under this plea of ignorance, is not for us to say. All are in the hands of a merciful Judge, whose judgments are always guided by perfect equity. There we may be well content to leave them.

This question, however, touching ignorance as an excuse for wrong-doing, is a very practical one; and probably its solution cannot be better stated than it has been stated by Bishop Sanderson, that prince among casuists. ² "For our clearer understanding of which point, — viz., whether or no, or how far, ignorance and error may excuse or lessen sinful actions proceeding therefrom, in point of conscience, — let us first lay down one general, certain, and fundamental ground, whereupon, indeed, dependeth especially the resolution of almost all those difficulties that may occur in this and many other like questions. And that is this: It is a condition so essential to every sin, to be voluntary, that, all other circumstances and respects laid aside, every sin is by so much greater or less by how much it is more or less voluntary. For, whereas there are in the reasonable soul three prime faculties from which all human actions flow, — the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetite or affections, — all of these concur, indeed, to every action properly human; yet so as the will carryeth the greatest sway, and is, therefore, the justest measure of the moral godness or badness thereof. In any of the three there may be a fault, all of them being depraved in the state of corrupt nature; and the

¹ Dean Alford, on the passage.

² Charles I. was wont to say, "I carry my ears to hear other preachers, but I carry my conscience to hear Mr. Sanderson."

truth is, there is in every sin, every complete sin, a fault in every of the three. And, therefore, all sins, by reason of the blindness of the understanding, may be called ignorances; and by reason of the impotency of the affections, infirmities; and by reason of the perverseness of the will, rebellions. But, for the most part, it falleth out so that, although all the three be faulty, yet the obliquity of the sinful action springeth most immediately and chiefly from the special fault of one or other of the three. If the main defect be in the understanding, not apprehending the good it should, or not aright, the sin arising from such defect we call more properly a sin of ignorance. If the main defect be in the affections, some passion blinding or corrupting the judgment, the sin arising from such defect we call a sin of infirmity. If the main defect be in the will, with perverse resolution bent upon any evil, the sin arising from such wilfulness we call a rebellion, or a sin of presumption. And certainly these sins of presumption are the greatest of the three, because the wilfullest; and those of ignorance the least, because there is in them the least disorder of the will, which doth its office, in some measure, in following the guidance of the understanding: the greater fault being, rather, in the understanding for misguiding it. And of sins of ignorance, compared one with another, that is ever the least wherein the defect is greater in the understanding, and in the will less.”¹

From these clearly worked-out premises, the bishop draws two “material conclusions, — the one, that error and ignorance doth not always and wholly excuse from sin; the other, that some kind of ignorance and error doth excuse from sin, sometimes wholly, but very often at least in part.”

(b) We have next to consider the important passage contained in vv. 19, 20, and 21 of this third chapter. The first thing to be noted is the inadequacy of our version, where

¹ Bishop Sanderson, Sermon VI., *Ad Populum*. Montgomery's ed., vol. i. pp. 502, 503.

it reads, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, *when* the times of refreshing *shall* come from the presence of the Lord." The correct rendering would be, "*in order that* seasons of refreshing *may* come," etc. By these words the Apostle declares that the coming of the "seasons of refreshing" and, also, the "times of restitution," or restoration "of all things," have been made "*to depend* on the repentance of the Jews, and their reception of the gospel."

One must tread warily, and speak "with bated breath," when he enters the field of unfulfilled prophecy. But we can hardly go astray if we take into our thoughts, just here, St. Paul's words where he says, "that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved."¹ Of course he here speaks of Gentiles and Israel—as he usually does in the Epistle to the Romans—as a whole, in the gross, and is not dealing with them severally or individually.

It may suffice to say that the declarations of St. Peter and St. Paul together teach us that on the incoming of the Gentiles shall follow the conversion of Israel, which shall again be followed by the seasons of refreshing and the times of restoration of all things; that we are then led on and up to the great and final "Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ."² With the revelation thus made to us, it will be wisest to rest content, and not to wander into speculations of our own.

(c) The prophecy of Moses which St. Peter (in verses 22 and 23) quotes, freely, from Deuteronomy,³ and which St. Stephen also quotes in his defence before the Sanhedrim,⁴ must not be carelessly passed by. It was a prophecy well known to the Jews in the time of our Lord, as is shown in the question to John Baptist (after he had declared that he was neither the Christ nor Elias), "Art thou that prophet?"⁵

¹ Rom. xi. 25, 26.

³ Deut. xviii. 18, 19.

² 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Tit. ii. 13.

⁴ Acts vii. 37.

⁵ John i. 20, 21; comp. John vi. 14, vii. 40, 41; Matt. xvi. 14. See also Davison, *Discourses on Prophecy*, pp. 149-153.

There was, however, a difference of opinion as to the personality of "the prophet." Some seem to have identified him with Messiah, others to have distinguished him from Messiah. And this last-named class appear to have believed that he would be one of the "old prophets risen from the dead."

For us, there can be no doubt as to the application of the prophecy to our Lord. He Himself declares that Moses wrote of Him,¹ and these are "the only words in which Moses, speaking in his own person, gives any such prediction;" St. Peter and St. Stephen, as has been said, both apply the prophecy to Him; and it is the basis of the argument contained in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Taking this point, then, as settled, before we go on to consider the resemblances and contrasts between Moses and our Lord, we must bear in mind that prophecy "distinguishes itself into two parts, which may be called the moral or doctrinal, and the predictive." In like manner, the prophets are teachers of doctrinal and moral truth, as well as foretellers of the future. They carry on, and enlarge into specialty of detail, the original promise given in Paradise of a Redeemer,² till its general and indeterminate prophecies touching the bruised head and the bruised heel expand into Isaiah's wonderful words which describe Messiah the Conqueror and Messiah the Sufferer; till in "the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Father of a new age or dispensation, the Prince of Peace,"³ we learn the meaning of the bruised head; and in "the Man of sorrows, despised, rejected, and cut off from the land of the living,"⁴ we are taught the mystery of the bruised heel. But these same prophets also carry on, unfold, and enlarge the doctrinal and ethical truths that were given men under the patriarchal and Mosaic covenants, in a way parallel to that in which they enlarge the

¹ John v. 46; comp. John i. 21.

² Gen. iii. 15.

³ Isa. ix. 6.

⁴ Isa. liii. 3, 8.

predictions of the same dispensations. "And it is remarkable that the prophet who of all others [Isaiah] is the most full and explicit in delineating the Messiah's kingdom of redemption, is equally distinguished for the copiousness and variety of his lessons of holiness."¹ It is only by thus keeping in view the full scope and significancy of the words "prophecy" and "prophet," that we can intelligently approach the resemblances and contrasts between Moses and our Lord.

The resemblances are manifold;² but without entering into special details, the great thing to be observed — underlying as it does every thing else — is the fact that Moses was the Apostle and Mediator of the Jewish covenant, and that Jesus Christ is the Apostle and Mediator of the Christian covenant; so that each was a revealer of a new dispensation; and, moreover, each "was faithful to Him that appointed him."³ Several subjects are here presented to our consideration.

I. The two covenants: "the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage," the other the "Jerusalem which is above, free, [and] the mother of us all;"⁴ the one a covenant "which decayeth and waxeth old, [and] is ready to vanish away,"⁵ the other "a better covenant," even an everlasting one, "established upon better promises;"⁶ the one "dedicated" or inaugurated with "the blood of bulls and goats," the other with "the blood of Christ."⁷

II. Each of these covenants is called the "house of God;"⁸ the former being "the Church in the wilderness," the latter "the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."⁹ Of the former, Moses was the apostle; of the

¹ Davison, *Discourses*, etc., p. 47.

² See Denton, *Commentary on the Acts*, vol. i. p. 113.

³ Heb. iii. 2; comp. Gal. iii. 19.

⁴ Gal. iv. 24, 26.

⁵ Heb. viii. 13.

⁶ Heb. viii. 6.

⁷ Heb. ix. 18, 19, 14.

⁸ See, for the Mosaic covenant, Num. xii. 7, compared with Heb. iii. 2; and for the Christian, 1 Tim. iii. 15, compared with Heb. iii. 6.

⁹ Acts vii. 38; 1 Tim. iii. 15.

latter, Christ, and not the apostle only, but also the divinely appointed and living Head.¹ In these different houses, or Churches, both Moses and our Lord "were faithful."² But there the resemblance ends, and the contrasts begin. And those contrasts are very striking and instructive.

Our Lord, the Word of God the Father, created all things, and, in especial, built and (so to speak) furnished the house of God in which he was faithful. This is distinctly declared in the Epistle to the Hebrews,³ which also, by its silence as to Moses in these regards, asserts impliedly that he did not build the house, "the Church in the wilderness," in which he was faithful.

Then, again, Moses was a "servant" in the house which he did not build; while our Lord was "a Son over His own house."⁴

And, moreover, Moses testified of a revelation to be made; Christ made the revelation of which Moses testified.⁵

To these contrasts, we must add further that Moses, while he was an Apostle and Prophet, was neither Priest nor King. In the old covenant, the priesthood went in the line of Aaron, and God was the only true King of Israel. But our Lord is not only the Prophet greater than Moses, He is the Priest also, greater than Aaron, because He is after the order of Melchisedec, which is superior to the Levitical order;⁶ because His priesthood is unchangeable;⁷ because He needs not to offer for his own sins, since He alone of men was sinless;⁸ and because His offering is not imperfect and repeated, but perfect, and offered once for all, the "one sacrifice for sins forever."⁹ And He is also King, "heir of all things," as well as Maker of the world; King in the realm not of nature only, but in that of grace as well; "Head over

¹ On the term apostle, as applied to Moses, see Exod. iii. 10, 13, 14; as applied to our Lord, John xx. 21. Justin Martyr calls our Lord "our Teacher, both Son and *Apostle* of God." *Apol.*, i. 12.

² Heb. iii. 5, 6.

⁵ Heb. iii. 5; comp. i. 2, and xii. 25.

³ Heb. iii. 3, 4.

⁶ Heb. vii.

⁸ Heb. vii. 26, 27.

⁴ Heb. iii. 5, 6.

⁷ Heb. vii. 24.

⁹ Heb. ix. 28, x. 12.

all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.”¹

III. It may not be out of place to conclude what has been said of Moses and the greater Prophet, with a word or two touching the difference between the revelations made under the two covenants. The great difference, and the only one that will be noted here, is plainly set forth in the first two verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “God, who, in divers portions and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken unto us by His Son.”

In this pregnant passage, we have to consider (*a*) “time past,” as over against “these last days;” (*b*) the “divers portions” and “divers manners” of the revelation made by the prophets, as over against the silence, in that regard, as to the revelation made by the Son of God; (*c*) the “prophets,” as over against “His Son.”

(*a*) The “time past” covers all time in which there were revelations made by prophets; that is, from antediluvian days down to the time when our Lord’s ministry on earth began. If this stretches beyond the beginnings of the Israelitish covenant, it nevertheless includes it.

The “last days” include all time from the beginning of our Lord’s ministry on earth till His return to judgment. They mean the same thing as the “ends of the world,” which St. Paul tells the Corinthians are come upon us;² the same thing as those “last days” in which the same Apostle tells Timothy that “perilous times shall come.”³ In other words, the “last days” are the days of the Christian, the final, dispensation.

(*b*) The mention of “the divers portions” recalls to us the fact that under the old covenant the revelation was progressive, and not given once for all. Something has already been said touching this matter, but a little more detail may not be undesirable. All that was revealed to the prophets

¹ Eph. i. 22, 23.

² 1 Cor. x. 11.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 1.

was not revealed at once and to a single person, nor was the whole revelation declared and published by any one such person. Truths were revealed to and declared by Isaiah, which were not revealed to or declared by Moses; so that the old revelation was not, at any one point, complete and perfect. Not that there was any contradiction between these different parts, or that they were not in entire harmony with each other; but only that one part carried on towards completion, and filled out, another part. Two instances, which shall be given even at the risk of repetition, may serve to put this matter in a clearer light.

If we look back to the first prophecy of the suffering Messiah, how dim and destitute of any thing like detail are the words, "Thou shalt bruise His heel"! But follow along the Old-Testament Scriptures through its line of prophecies, and see how the revelation grows, until "the advent of the Redeemer was but the visible appearance of the divine light with which the radiant cloud of prophecy had long been ready to break forth."¹ And yet the revelation was not complete until the Redeemer came. Prophecy was, indeed, "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn." But our Lord was "the day-star" arising in men's hearts.²

Or, again, take the great ethical subject repentance, and consider how the revelation concerning it grows from the law to, and in, the prophets. "The law includes a general promise of pardon to the people when in captivity, in case of their national repentance, the pardon to comprehend a restoration to their land. The prophets address the individual, and guarantee the promise to every soul 'turning from the error of his ways.' The law, in this point, regards the nation as the object of the grace. The prophets do more; they descend to the interests of personal religion."³ Great, however, as the advance was in this important matter, the revelation was not yet complete; not even when John

¹ Davison, *Discourses*, etc., p. 74.

³ Davison, *Discourses*, etc., p. 61.

² 2 Pet. i. 19.

Baptist came, preaching "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:" not, in truth, until the Lord said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" not till St. Paul wrote, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." ¹

These instances, with what has been said before, explain the statement that the older revelation was made in "divers portions."

This older revelation was also given in "divers manners," i.e., by various methods. Says Bishop Andrewes, "One manner, by dreams in the night; another manner, by visions; and then again of two manners, either presented to the outward sense, as Esay vi., or in an ecstasy represented to the inward, as Dan. x.; another yet, by *Urim* in the breast of the priest; and yet another, by a still small voice in the ears of the prophet; and sometimes by an angel speaking in him. But most-what by His Spirit. And, to trouble you no more, very sure it is that, as for the matter in many broken pieces, so for the manner in many diverse fashions, spake He unto them." ²

(c) "The prophets" are contrasted with "His Son." Who are meant by the prophets? In answering that question, we must take into account not only the prophets themselves, but also the fathers to whom they spoke. "By the fathers must be meant not merely the patriarchs, but all former generations of Israel; in a word, the forefathers. The idea implied in prophets must be taken in an equally wide sense. . . . Prophets here, according to the context, comprehends all Old-Testament organs of revelation, so far as they were mere organs of God, in opposition to the Son, who was more than an organ," ³ being "the brightness of" the Father's "glory, and the express image of His person." And it must also, one would think, include John Baptist.

Now, over against the progressive revelation made by the prophets, in "divers portions" and in "divers manners," is

¹ Eph. i. 7.

³ Olshausen on Heb. i. 1.

² Bishop Andrewes, Sermon VII., *On the Nativity*.

set that revelation which God has made by His Son. Obviously, these two revelations are intended to be placed in striking contrast; and as obviously the contrast, in regard to the latter, centres in the words "His Son." There are no words or phrases which are put in direct contrast with the divers portions and manners. At first thought, then, it may seem as if the contrast limped, if it did not actually fail. But is this so? Are not the missing words necessarily implied? Are they not involved in the character of the Son? To quote Bishop Andrewes again, "God, in time past, spake by the prophets; and but by prophets He spake not from Moses to John Baptist, who was the horizon of the law and gospel. I will not stand to run through them all. And now the Apostle, when he is come to us 'in the last days,' when he should oppose three more to match the former three, he doth not, but passeth by the two first,—the parts and the manner,—and so insinuates thus much, that He hath spoken to us entirely without reservation, and uniformly without variation. . . . God spake once and twice, a third time He will not speak. This is His last time: He will speak no more. Look for no more pieces, nor fancy no more fashions. It is finished: there are no more to look for."¹

So we reach the great, underlying difference between the revelation made under the old covenant, and that made by our Lord under the new: the former, progressive, and, up to the very last, incomplete; the latter, once for all, complete and final.

7. The beautiful, peaceful picture of the growth of the Church, "praising God and having favor with all the people," which this section exhibits, is summed up in the words, "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."² The words "such as should be saved" are a most

¹ Sermon VII., *On the Nativity*.

² I have retained the words "to the Church," because, even if, as is most probable, the true reading is not *τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ*, but *ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό*, the result is the same. If they were added to the Church, they were together in unity; if they were added together, it was in the Church.

imperfect and unfortunate translation of the Greek (τοὺς σωζομένους). The word is "a present participle in a middle sense." By neglecting this very obvious fact, the expression has been perverted in the interests of Calvinism. On the contrary, it is directly opposed to Calvinistic notions. "It is remarkable that the tense used (viz., the present) is the only tense which excludes the Calvinistic interpretation. Both the future and the past would have favored it." ¹ The passage simply means that they who were added to the Church (or together) were, as coming under the new covenant, placed in a state or way of salvation. Nothing is intimated as to the final result in the cases of individuals, or as to their final perseverance, or as to their being predestinated to eternal life. Among those added, as we learn farther on, were Ananias and Sapphira. Were they gifted, as being predestinated, with final perseverance? Rightly interpreted, the passage has not the slightest tincture of Calvinism in it.

¹ Bishop Middleton: *On the Greek Article*, p. 269, Rose's ed.

SECTION II.

THE EARLIEST TRIAL FROM WITHOUT; THE FIRST PERSECUTION.

(Chap. iv. 1-31.)

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

2. Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3. And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in hold unto the next day : for it was now eventide.

4. Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.

5. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes,

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

7. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?

8. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel,

9. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;

10. Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

11. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

12. Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

13. ¶ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they

marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

14. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

15. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

16. Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them *is* manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny *it*.

17. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.

18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

19. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

21. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all *men* glorified God for that which was done.

22. For the man was above forty years old, on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

23. ¶ And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

24. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou *art* God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is:

25. Who by the mouth of thy servant

David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?

26. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ.

27. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together,

28. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

29 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,

30. By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

31. And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.

1. IT is obvious to remark that our Lord foretold tribulation, suffering, and persecution for His Church. And early, almost, indeed, before the sights and sounds of Pentecost have passed away from eye and ear, does the fulfilment of the prophecy begin. It sprung from hatred of that doctrine in which the Apostolic preaching always culminated. The Sadducees were sorely offended because St. Peter and St. John "preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead;" for "the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit." These trifling unbelievers appear at that time to have had control of the Sanhedrim, or great council of the Jews, and to have carried with them the principal members of the priesthood.

So begins the fulfilment of our Lord's words, "They will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in the synagogues, and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles."¹ This first persecution exhausts itself, however, in imprisonment and threatenings; there is neither scourging nor death. These will come in time, but they are not yet. The testimony, too, is as yet against the Jews only. That against the Gentiles will come, also, in time.

Let us also notice that the testimony which the Apostles bear, like the word they preach, is a "two-edged sword."² It is a testimony for them that receive it, against them that reject it. And even so the word preached is a "savour of

¹ Matt. x. 17, 18.

² Rev. i. 16, ii. 12.

life unto life" or of "death unto death,"¹ as it is received or rejected. The testimony or the preaching the same ever and always; but with what different results! So "the same fire reddens the gold, and burns the dross; under the same threshing-sledge the grain is cleansed, and the chaff is crushed out; by the same press-beam the oil is separated from the dregs."²

2. The closing words of St. Peter's reply to the questions of the Sanhedrim, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," have given rise to many searchings of heart, and have been perverted to most unwarrantable conclusions. "The Apostle does not say there is no salvation except in our *hearing of Christ*, but that there is no salvation except *in and through Christ*."³

When the protevangel was given, the blessed promise of a coming Redeemer made to our first parents in paradise,⁴ no child of Adam had been born into the world. Every human being, therefore, born or to be born since, has been born, or will be born, under the beneficent operation of that promise, and, in so far as that promise involves a covenant, under some sort of covenant with God.

If the Mosaic covenant could not, after the lapse of four hundred and fifty years, disannul the covenant with Abraham "confirmed of God in Christ," so that it should "make the promise" given to Abraham "of none effect" (and so St. Paul reasons in his Epistle to the Galatians),⁴ no more can it disannul and make of none effect the covenant promise made in Paradise. No doubt, in the case of any descendant of the twelve sons of Jacob, if one of them refused the Mosaic covenant, he would be precluded from pleading that he was still under the Abrahamic promise or the older one made in Paradise. But, surely, all Abraham's descendants who were

¹ 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

² Augustine: *City of God*, Book I. c. viii.

³ Denton, *Comment. on Acts*, vol. i. p. 126.

⁴ Gen. iii. 15.

⁵ Gal. iii. 15-18.

not also descended from the twelve patriarchs were under the promise made to their great ancestor ; and all mankind were under that older promise, and, therefore, the subjects of our Lord's redemption.

In the same way, all to whom the Christian covenant is offered, and who knowingly and wilfully reject it, put themselves out of all covenant relation to God. But do not those to whom the Christian covenant has never been duly offered, still come under the original paradisaic promise? If any man is saved, he is not saved away from Christ, apart from Christ, but in Christ and by the power of His name.¹ If the intensely subjective individualism which Puritanism has engendered incapacitates men from understanding or appreciating the objective value and power of Christ's redemption, and so leads them to "wrest the Scriptures," the fault is not in Scripture but in themselves, victims as they are of an utterly unscriptural system. May we not believe that Cornelius, whose prayers and alms came up as a memorial before God, might have been saved had he died before the gospel was preached to him? And if saved, could he have been saved but by virtue of the sacrifice and in the power of the Name of Jesus Christ?

Says Jeremy Taylor, "There are many secret and undeserved mercies of which men can give no account till they come to give God thanks at their publication ; and of this sort is that mercy which God reserves for the souls of many millions of men and women, concerning whom we have no hopes if we account concerning them by the usual proportions of revelations and Christian commandments. . . . The effect of this consideration I would have to be this : that we may publicly worship this mercy of God which is kept in

¹ This is really all that is asserted in the Eighteenth Article of Religion. It anathematizes — and so did St. Paul (Gal. i. 8, 9) — those who preach a gospel which grounds salvation on what one does "in a law or sect," as having power in itself, and it asserts that all who are saved are saved in Christ. But it does not say that none can be saved but those who have *heard* the gospel. Writers differing as widely as Bishops Burnet, Harold Browne, Forbes of Brechin, and Dr. Hey agree in this.

secret, and that we be not too forward in sentencing all heathens and prevaricating Jews to the eternal pains of hell, but to hope that *they* have a portion in the secrets of the Divine mercy, where, also, unless many of *us* have some little portions deposited, our condition will be very uncertain and sometimes most miserable.”¹

It may be said that this contradicts the well-known principle *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, no salvation outside the Church. But, surely, that phrase is to be regarded not as absolute, but as conditional; and conditional in this regard, that it presupposes the offer of covenant grace and salvation in the Church, and its rejection. Till the offer has been made, there can be no rejection. Till there is wilful rejection, there can be so far forth no actual sin committed. But more than this. Was the Holy Spirit never working among men before the Day of Pentecost? “Far, far from that. The Spirit worketh ever, and we see His work and His teaching all down the Old Testament dispensation; and I for one would gladly believe that the Spirit had also worked on many a heathen sage and moralist before the coming of the Lord.”² Before Pentecost His work was done in individual souls, while after Pentecost He organizes a society of men, the Church of God, and in that organization works in a higher way, and through more powerful influences, than He did on individuals, and moreover is in it “shed on us *abundantly*,”³ in a measure before unknown.

Even Augustine distinguished between the soul of the Church, the Holy Ghost, and the body of the Church, the external profession of the faith and participation of the sacraments; and admits that the former may be received when the latter cannot be had. “There are some,” he says, “even of those who live badly, or are sunk in heresies or heathen superstitions; and yet even there ‘the Lord knoweth them that are His; for, in the infallible foreknowledge of God,

¹ Quoted in Bishop Heber's *Sermons in England*, Sermon vii.

² Canon Ashwell: *Lectures on the Holy Catholic Church*, p. 38.

³ Tit. iii. 6.

many who seem without are within, and many who seem within are without." ¹

"Although by the promulgation of the gospel, and the universal commission to evangelize all nations, the condition of the heathen is changed, yet certainly it is not changed for the worse. Because God has intrusted to His Church some better thing for them, He has not therefore withdrawn any thing they before enjoyed. We may assume, then, at least, that they are as before ; and that they whom the one Church has never gathered into her precinct may yet be drawn by the one great Spirit, and saved by the unseen virtue of the one great Sacrifice. There is nothing in Holy Scripture warranting us to believe that the benefit of the atonement offered for the sin of the world is necessarily restricted to those who have explicit offers of salvation. It is revealed, indeed, that there is no other meritorious cause of salvation than the blood-shedding of Christ alone ; but we are not told that the relation towards God, even of those that never come to a knowledge of redemption, may not be altogether changed. But although we may have this hope, the Church is no less bound to go forth and preach to them the one faith, and the only salvation in the one Church of Christ, than if God had openly revealed what He has absolutely kept secret from us. I mean the rule of His dealings with them." ²

3. Two things are specially striking in connection with this entire transaction : the power and ability of St. Peter's answer to the questions of the Sanhedrim, and the boldness of the reply of the two Apostles to the threatenings launched at them.

In thinking of the former, we are at once carried back to those prophetic commands of our Lord in which He instructed the Apostles to take no thought, when they were delivered up, "how or what" they should say for themselves,

¹ Augustine: *On Baptism, against the Donatists*, Book V. c. xxvii. Benedictine ed., col. ix., vol. 107, 108.

² Manning: *The Unity of the Church*, Part III., c. i. p. 291.

because what they were to say should "be given" them, both as to matter and to manner.¹ And this was to be accomplished by the teaching and in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In thinking of the latter, as we hear the Apostles saying, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." We remember the night of the Lord's betrayal, when "all the disciples," and with them Peter and John, "forsook Him and fled," and when Peter denied Him with oaths and blasphemy.

Here is, assuredly, a marvellous change, too marvellous not to be noted. Rationalism itself, in its most extreme forms, has been compelled to admit this;² has been compelled to own that in the interval between the betrayal of the Lord, and the day when Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrim, "something of a nature encouraging beyond what was ordinary must have taken place to transform the Apostles" into what they now appear to be; nay, that, without the occurrence of this extraordinary something, their conduct is inexplicable.

What this something was, may be a puzzle to unbelievers and rationalists. To believers, there is no puzzle about it. It is the promise of the Father, the power received at Pentecost, which has wrought this transformation. Accept the one gracious miracle, and all becomes plain; deny it, and you have to face a thousand impossibilities.

4. The apostles, after they were set free, seem to have gone to some place where the believers were wont to assemble for united prayer. Where this place was, we are not told. Possibly it may have been in the temple. Having come thither, and detailed the circumstances of their arrest and trial to those who were gathered together, "they lift up their voice with one accord to God" in the prayer which is

¹ Matt. x. 19, 20; Mark xiii. 11; Luke xii. 11, 12. St. Matthew includes manner and matter in the words $\pi\omega\varsigma \eta \tau\epsilon$.

² Paulus and Strauss admit so much. See Lee: *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 248, and note 5, Am. ed.

recorded. The phraseology seems to indicate that all present united vocally in the prayer. Whether all spake together, by the working of the Holy Spirit, or whether one led — so to speak — and the others followed him, there would seem to have been united vocal utterance. And surely no light warrant is thus afforded to such utterances in the worship of the Church.

In the prayer itself, two things must be specially noted. We find in it, first, the distinct acknowledgment that the "God of nature is also the God of grace," a truth which is as needful to be remembered now as in the early days when Manichæans denied it. So Polycarp in his martyrdom addressed God as "the God of angels, and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before Thee."¹

Farther on, we find it said, "For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done." Our version here is defective, because it easily leads readers to think that the slayers of our Lord were gathered to do that which God had determined they should do; whereas the original conveys no such meaning. The verb translated "to be done" is not the verb, or any part of it, before translated "to do." It is a totally different word. A better version would be, "for to do whatever Thy hand and Thy counsel predetermined to take place."² God had indeed appointed that Christ should die for all men. But he had not fore-ordained or decreed the means by which His death was brought about. They were acts of the free will of those who employed them; and for which they, therefore, were responsible. No doubt the evil was overruled for the great-

¹ *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, c. xiv.

² Bishop Wordsworth notices the difference. They were gathered ποιῆσαι (= to do) what God had appointed γένεσθαι (= to take place, or to be). The latter verb, in order to warrant our version, should have been πεποιθήσθαι, which it is not.

est possible good ; but it remained evil still, and they who did the evil were responsible for it.

As God, although He may use evil done by another for a good end, never Himself does evil that He may from it elicit good, so it is not lawful for us to do evil that good may come from it. To *use* what is evil, for a good purpose, is one thing. To *do* evil, for the purpose of bringing about good, is another thing. We must never think that God antecedently wills, approves, or selects any thing that is evil, as being, in its own nature, fitted to produce any good result.¹

¹ Bishop Sanderson, *Lectures on Conscience*, Lect. ii. § 7.

SECTION III.

THE EARLIEST TRIAL FROM WITHIN: ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

(Chap. iv. 32 to chap. v. 12.)

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

33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

34. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,

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

36. And *Joses*, who by the apostles was surnamed *Barnabas*, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus,

37. Having land, sold *it*, and brought the money, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

2. And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy to *it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet.

3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

4. Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

6. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*.

7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.

8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much.

9. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.

10. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying *her* forth, buried *her* by her husband.

11. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

1. IF our Lord had foretold persecution from without, bringing with it trial and suffering, no less clearly had he foretold evil springing up within the Church, marring the Divine ideal of the Bride of Christ, and frustrating, so far forth, the gracious purposes of our heavenly Father. The parables of the field in which the tares were mingled with the wheat, and the drag-net which held within its folds the good fishes and the bad, sufficiently illustrate this very

solemn truth. As, under the older dispensation, God had "a vineyard in a very fruitful hill;" as then He had to say, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"¹ so has it been under the dispensation of the Spirit. Man's weakness mars, man's sin thwarts, ever and always, God's gracious purposes in his behalf.

But how are we to reconcile this state of things in the Christian Church (foreshadowed in the sad story that forms the principal subject of this section) with such glowing words as those of Isaiah in the sixtieth chapter of his prophecies, or of St. Paul to the Ephesians, when he says, "Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish"?² Is there such hopeless contradiction between these passages and our Lord's prophetic parables as to make any attempt to reconcile them a waste of time? Or has man utterly destroyed and brought to nought the plans of God?

The difficulty is greater in appearance than in reality; for, in the first place, we must remember that the prophets, in their raptured visions, present to us the Divine ideal of the Church, — what it would have been had it not been intrusted, under the Spirit, to the administration of men who, however weak and sinful, were still free agents. And, secondly, we must not forget that the Church, "now living by faith while she is a pilgrim among evil men," will, "in the stability of that eternal habitation which she now patiently waits for," become indeed "the most glorious city of God,"³ and make

¹ Isa. v. 1, 4.

² Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. Compare Cant. iv. 7, a passage which St. Paul evidently had in mind, but which modern Romanism, in the teeth of all Catholic exposition, applies, not to the Church, but to the Virgin Mary.

³ Augustine, *City of God*, preface.

real every loftiest vision and every most glowing word of prophecy.

They "walk in a vain show" who dream of a Church here on earth in which no evil shall be found. Nay, more, they decline at last — so all experience teaches — into Antinomian heresy, deny the obligation of God's moral law, and fall into "wretchedness of carnal living." Beginning with claiming exalted purity, they end, as a rule, with "wallowing in the mire."

2. After what was said above concerning the alleged "community of goods" in the church at Jerusalem, nothing need be added here; and we can proceed at once to that which is the main subject of the section.

The sin of Ananias and Sapphira is, in the last analysis, neither more nor less than sacrilege. It led on, indeed, to another and most fearful sin, but it was the original offence. A certain offering had been made to God, and then a part of it withdrawn. It was the sin of Achan.¹ In his case, something had been dedicated to God under the ban, or curse, and Achan purloined a part of it. Ananias and Sapphira did the same thing, and committed the same crime, which they afterwards attempted to conceal by falsehood.

And the lie was not to men, but to God. Perverse ingenuity has tried to rid itself of the attestation here given to the Deity of the Holy Ghost, but in vain. The offenders did not defraud men, they defrauded the *Holy Ghost* (ver. 3); they did not lie to men, they lied to *God* (ver. 4). The conclusion is inevitable. "As certainly as the Apostles were men, so certainly was the Holy Ghost, in the esteem of St. Peter, God."²

¹ Josh. vii. 1. The LXX. read here ἐνοσφίσαντο ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀναθέματος; and in Acts we read ἐνοσφίσαντο ἀπὸ τῆς τιμῆς. Comp. Tit. ii. 10.

² Pearson, *On the Creed*, art. Holy Ghost.

SECTION IV.

THE SECOND PERSECUTION.

(Chap. v. 12-42.)

12. ¶ And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

15. Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid *them* on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

16. There came also a multitude *out* of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

17. ¶ Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

18. And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

19. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

20. Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life.

21. And when they heard *that*, they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught. But the high priest came, and they that were with him, and called the council together, and all the senate of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22. But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned, and told,

23. Saying, The prison truly found we shut with all safety, and the keepers stand-

ing without before the doors: but when we had opened, we found no man within.

24. Now when the high priest and the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these things, they doubted of them whereunto this would grow.

25. Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

26. Then went the captain with the officers, and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

27. And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28. Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29. ¶ Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

30. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

31. Him hath God exalted with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32. And we are his witnesses of these things: and *so is* also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.

33. ¶ When they heard *that*, they were cut *to the heart*, and took counsel to slay them.

34. Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space.

35. And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, *even* as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

38. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this

counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41. ¶ And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

I. IN this section we have presented to us, as usual, the calm before the storm. Solomon's porch seems to have been the place where the Apostles mostly preached. In the same place—a colonnade on the east side of the temple, believed to be a part of the original building—our Lord had preached,¹ and declared Himself as the Christ and the Son of God, appealing to the works wrought in His Father's name as His sufficing witness. Here the Apostles preached and declared the same Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, and wrought signs and wonders in His Name. The upper room had, even before this time, become too "strait" to hold the Church, now "breaking forth on the right hand and on the left,"² and entering on its course of unlimited expansion.

2. Some perplexity has been caused by the statement that "of the rest durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified them." The way in which the Jewish authorities are set over against the body of the people, later on, suggests that by the words, "the rest," St. Luke intends to designate the rulers. However that may be, it is clear that our Lord's prophetic declaration that the disciple should be "as his master, and the servant as his lord,"³ is here finding fulfilment. As the Pharisees and rulers did not believe in

¹ John x. 23. See also above, Acts iii. 11.

² Isa. xlix. 20, liv. 3.

³ Matt. x. 25.

the Christ, while "the common people heard Him gladly,"¹ so is it now with those whom He sent.

3. It is noticeable how the persecution becomes more severe as the spread of the kingdom advances. In the first persecution only two Apostles appear; now more, perhaps the twelve, are seen. Then the two Apostles were placed under ward,² in some prison house; now all are placed in the public prison. Then they were dismissed after being threatened;³ now they are let go after scourging. Death has not yet been inflicted, but it is looming in the near future.

As dangers, however, multiply, and strengthening for the doing of their duty becomes more needful, so help and assurance are increased, and deliverance by supernatural aid is manifested. An angel, plainly sent by our Lord, opens the prison-doors, and sends them to the temple to preach there that life, in all its aspects for time and for eternity, which flows down to men, in the power of the Holy Spirit, from the resurrection life of the incarnate God, who is "the way, and the truth, and the life."

This is the first angelic appearance recorded in the Book of Acts. It carries us back, in thought, to the visions of Jacob and Elisha, to the deliverance of Daniel, and the ministrations to our Lord after His temptation and in the garden of His agony.⁴ It ought to make us remember, and be thankful for the remembrance, that these blessed beings, who always do God service in heaven, do also "succor and defend" His children upon earth.⁵

4. Those who have been trained in the historic creeds will have no difficulty in following intelligently St. Peter's brief address to the council. The mention, however, of the "witness of the Holy Ghost" may well be considered more at length.

There was a witness of the Holy Ghost to Christ our

¹ John vii. 48; Mark xii. 37.

² Acts iv. 3.

³ Acts iv. 17, 18.

⁴ Gen. xxviii. 12; 2 Kings vi. 17; Dan. vi. 22; Matt. iv. 11; Luke xxii. 43.

⁵ Collect for St. Michael and All Angels.

Lord, before He came to earth. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," and in the "old time, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."¹ Our Lord, also, in the walk to Emmaus on the first Easter Day, "beginning at Moses and the prophets, expounded unto them, in all the scriptures, the things concerning Himself;"² and St. Peter declared to Cornelius and those who were with him, "to Him give all the prophets witness."³

During His earthly ministry, our Lord spoke especially of the witness of John Baptist, of the witness of the works which He did, and of the witness of His Father.⁴ But the Holy Ghost also bore witness to Him, even as John Baptist said of Him on whom he saw "the Spirit descending and remaining on Him."

After His resurrection, and during the Apostolic age, the Apostles constantly testified to Him; "God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers powers, and gifts of the Holy Ghost."⁵

And, indeed, in all time, since the great Day of Pentecost, the witness of the Spirit has been borne; the witness to individual souls, by which "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit," that we are the children of God;⁶ the public, open, continuous witness of "the Spirit and the water and the blood;"⁷ the water of the Lord's own baptism at Jordan, and the water, "sanctified to the mystical washing away of sin," in every Christian baptism since Pentecost; the blood of our Lord's own Passion, and of every commemoration of that Passion, and every representation of the blood then outshed, made before God the Father in the Holy Eucharist.⁸ Much more might be added, but this must suffice.

¹ Rev. xix. 10; 2 Pet. i. 21.

³ Acts x. 43.

² Luke xxiv. 27.

⁴ John v. 31-37.

⁵ Heb. ii. 4. Our version translates *δυνάμεις* by "wonders." Comp. Acts i. 8, v. 32, x. 39, etc.

⁶ Bishop Bull's *Discourse III.*, "The Witness of the Spirit," is as valuable as when it was written.

⁷ 1 John v. 6, 8.

⁸ Canon Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, pp. 173-177.

5. It must be remembered, that all for which St. Luke is responsible in the matter of the address of Gamaliel, is the correctness of its record. Gamaliel was not inspired; and none of his words, however wise they may be, can be quoted as words of inspiration. It is necessary to bear this in mind, because his counsel to "refrain from these men," etc., is often quoted as an inspired utterance; and his words are often spoken of as being the words of St. Luke. This they are in no sense, any more than the words of Gallio or Felix or Agrippa are. His words may be, they are, wiser words than those of the three just named. But they are still simply and only his own.¹

6. At the close of their first imprisonment, when the Apostles had returned "to their own company," they prayed for boldness to speak the word of the Lord. Now they depart from their second imprisonment and the scourging that followed it, "rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." They have risen, therefore, to a higher point in spiritual attainment, even to the level of the eighth beatitude and its special application. Faithfulness in standing by the truth, fortitude in bearing suffering for it, have grown up into rejoicing that they are counted worthy to suffer. Such is the law of the Christian life in all things. Each step leads on to another, and still another, and from the beginnings — however small — believers go on unto completion. May we not believe that St. Peter had this, among other experiences, in mind, when he wrote, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you" ?²

¹ Of course, if St. Luke represents Gamaliel as speaking of a Theudas who did not "rise up" till many years later than the date of his speech, that would utterly destroy the Evangelist's character for accuracy and veracity. But Theudas was a very common name, and the difficulty is easily disposed of. See especially, Denton, *Comment. on Acts*, vol. i. p. 173, note B. The case of Judas of Galilee presents no difficulty whatever.

² 1 Pet. iv. 14.

SECTION V.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE DIACONATE.

(Chap. vi. 1-6.)

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

2. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.

3. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.

4. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.

5. ¶ And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Phillip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch:

6. Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid *their* hands on them.

I. THE immemorial view of the Church has been that this section records the institution of the diaconate.¹ Of late years this view has been questioned by many who seem to attach a greater value to their own critical hypotheses and guesses, and etymological and grammatical niceties and possibilities, than they do to all historical testimony and recorded facts.²

¹ Irenæus, *Against Heresies* (Book I. c. xxvi. sect. 3), says this in so many words. Eusebius says the same (*Ecc. Hist.*, Lib. II. c. i.). So does the Council of Neocæsarea, held before 325 (Can. XV.). Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Justin Martyr recognize deacons as an order in the ministry. Later testimony abounds. To oppose to this torrent of historical witness, *possible* meanings of two or three Greek words, is simply absurd.

² Not to encumber the text with these objections, some of them are thrown into this foot-note. (1) The name "deacon" is not given to the seven. It is, at least, intimated in the words "daily ministration" [διακονία] and "to serve [διακονεῖν] tables." Under its aspect of service every partaker in the one ministry may be called, no doubt, a deacon. But we are concerned with *things*, not words. (2) There "must have been some persons of an inferior grade to aid the Apostles before the event here recorded occurred." What an individual thinks as to what must or ought to have been, cannot be made into history. (3) Because in chap. v. 6, the "young men" who buried Ananias are called νεώτεροι, and this word seems to be the correlative of πρεσβυτέροι, it has been argued that they were an

2. The immediate difficulty which was the occasion of the action here recorded arose from the increase in the number of believers. As they were multiplied, the persons needing ministrations of alms would be multiplied also. Indeed, the number of such persons would seem to have been greater in Jerusalem and Judæa than in other places where the Church had gained a foothold. We know that help was at different times sent from Antioch, Macedonia, and Achaia, to the "brethren dwelling in Judæa," and "the poor saints at Jerusalem."¹ Moreover, this necessity of providing for the poor must go with the Church wherever it goes, and it must continue in all time, being not a temporary but a permanent thing. The occasion, then, of which the Apostles availed themselves, would be in the nature of things a permanent and universal one, suggesting, at least, the permanency and universality of the provision made to meet it. The same line of remark will apply to all the ordinary offices and duties of the Christian ministry as yet held and exercised by the Apostles alone: wherefore we need not wonder if other duties than those pertaining to the daily ministrations are committed to the seven; nor yet if we find, as we shall find, others besides the seven sharing in the powers of the one ministry.

3. We have here mention of what some have called two parties, though they might better be called two classes, in the Church; namely, Hebrews and Hellenists, or, as we read in our version, Grecians. "The Hellenists were the Grecian Jews; not only those who were themselves proselytes, nor only those who came of families once proselytized, but all who, on account of origin or habitation, spoke Greek as their ordinary language, and used ordinarily the Septuagint version. The Hebrews were the pure Jews, not neces-

order, or *quasi* order, of the ministry. But they are called in v. 10 *νεανίσκοι* (young men), and this would hardly be the case if the former word were an official title; had the *presbuteroi* been anywhere called *γέροντες* (old men), to what diatribes should we have been treated on the impossibility of their being an order in the ministry!

¹ Acts xi. 29; Rom. xv. 26.

sarily resident in Palestine, nor necessarily of unmixed Jewish descent, but rather distinguished by language, as speaking the Syro-Chaldaic, and using the Hebrew Scriptures.”¹

Obviously the latter class would be likely to be in the majority at Jerusalem; so that their widows would be better known, and have more friends, than those of the former. Hence arose, naturally, the complaints of neglect.

This neglect is connected with “the daily ministrations,” by which we are to understand the daily gifts of food and alms; and though the widows spoken of can hardly yet be regarded as an organized body, as they appear in 1 Tim. v. 3 ff., still we find them as special recipients of the benefactions of the faithful, and can see how the official title — so to speak — afterwards given originated.

4. The names of the seven are Greek. But that would not prove that all were Hellenists; for St. Luke, writing for Greeks, would naturally give all the names in that language. At the same time, it is clear enough that all but one were born Jews, since only one is specially mentioned as a proselyte. It has been suggested that three were Hebrews, three Hellenists, and one a proselyte. But this is mere conjecture.

5. There is a certain similarity, and also a contrast, in the methods observed in appointing the seven, and those which appear in the selection of Matthias. In both cases there is a selection or designation of persons; in the earlier case, of two by the “hundred and twenty;” in the later, of seven by the “whole multitude.” In neither case did the selection accomplish the appointment, or vest with the office. In the one, solemn reference is made to our Lord to designate “whether of the two” He had chosen. In the other, those selected are presented to the Apostles, and by them “appointed over this business.” Only the change of the words “whom *we* may appoint,” into the words “whom

¹ Dean Alford, *in loc.* For the sake of perspicuity, I have quoted Alford's words for the second time.

ye may appoint," — a change, by the way, once made in an edition of the Scriptures, — can ever so twist this passage from its real import, as to make it available for the theory that office in the Church is given by election of "the congregation."

6. "The duty to which the deacons were set apart was 'to serve tables;' and they were 'appointed over the business' which consisted in 'the daily ministrations.' Their office, however, was not merely civil or economical: it was also sacred and ecclesiastical."¹ The service may well be understood, as history has interpreted it, to relate not merely to those tables from which ordinary food was distributed, but to *the Table* of which Christians are partakers.

Their functions, however, were not confined to this; for although we have nothing in the way of detail concerning any of the seven, except Stephen and Philip, it is perfectly fair to reason from them to others. Stephen preached with "wisdom and spirit" in Jerusalem, while Philip by his preaching won the title of Evangelist.² He also baptized as well as preached in Samaria.³ The theory sometimes advanced, that it was Philip the Apostle, and not Philip the Deacon, who "went down to the city of Samaria," must be forced upon Scripture, and cannot be read in it. For, in the first place, we find that when so many Christians left Jerusalem at the time of Philip's preaching in Samaria, the Apostles remained in that city; and, in the next place, we are told that after his interview with the Ethiopian, Philip "preached in all the cities till he came to Cæsarea;" and further when St. Paul, later on, found him in Cæsarea, he is distinctly called one of the seven.⁴ It was the Deacon, then, and not the Apostle, who preached and baptized in Samaria; so that we are warranted in the conclusion, that, in the Apostolic Church, deacons ministered alms, served at the Lord's Table, preached, and baptized.

¹ Pearson: *Minor Works*, vol. i. p. 346.

² Acts xxi. 8.

³ Acts viii. 12, 38.

⁴ Acts viii. 1, 40, xxi. 8.

7. Later on, we find deacons at Philippi and Ephesus ;¹ while the testimony as to their continuance in the Church of the sub-apostolic age, and from that time onward, is beyond dispute.

¹ Phil. i. 1 ; 1 Tim. iii. 8 ff.

SECTION VI.

THE THIRD PERSECUTION.

(Chap. vi. 7 to chap. viii. 5.)

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

8. And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

9. ¶ Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called *the synagogue* of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.

10. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and *against* God.

12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon *him*, and caught him, and brought *him* to the council,

13. And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law :

14. For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

15. And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

1. Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

2. And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran,

3. And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.

4. Then came he out of the land of the Chaldæans, and dwelt in Charran: and

from thence, when his father was dead, he removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell.

5. And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not *so much as* to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when *as yet* he had no child.

6. And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years.

7. And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place.

8. And he gave him the covenant of circumcision: and so *Abraham* begat Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day; and Isaac *begat* Jacob; and Jacob *begat* the twelve patriarchs.

9. And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him,

10. And delivered him out of all his afflictions, and gave him favour and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

11. Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction: and our fathers found no sustenance.

12. But when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

13. And at the second *time* Joseph was made known to his brethren; and Joseph's kindred was made known unto Pharaoh.

14. Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to *him*, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls.

15. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers,

16. And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor *the father* of Sychem.

17. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18. Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19. The same dealt subtly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months :

21. And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23. And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24. And seeing one of *them* suffer wrong, he defended *him*, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian ;

25. For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them : but they understood not.

26. And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren ; why do ye wrong one to another ?

27. But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ?

28. Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday ?

29. Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

30. And when forty years were expired there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31. When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight : and as he drew near to behold *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32. *Saying*, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac,

and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet : for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send *to be* a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36. He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37. ¶ This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me ; him shall ye hear.

38. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and *with* our fathers : who received the lively oracles to give unto us :

39. To whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust *him* from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,

40. Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us : for *as for* this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

41. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

42. Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven ; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices *by the space* of forty years in the wilderness ?

43. Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them : and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as he had appointed, speaking unto Moses, that he should make it according to the fashion that he had seen

45. Which also our fathers that came

after brought in with Jesus into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David ;

46. Who found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob.

47. But Solomon built him an house.

48. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; as saith the prophet,

49. Heaven *is* my throne, and earth *is* my footstool ; what house will ye build me ? saith the Lord : or what *is* the place of my rest ?

50. Hath not my hand made all these things ?

51. ¶ Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers *did*, so *do* ye.

52. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One ; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers :

53. Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept *it*.

54. ¶ When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58. And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him* : and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

1. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem ; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles.

2. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him.

3. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison.

4. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.

I. GROWTH and increase arouse anger again ; and another and severer persecution ensues, culminating in death. As yet, the spirit of persecution is awakened only among the Jews. The pagan Roman power takes no part in it. It will not be long, however, before it will intervene. At the same time that trial from without will be increasing, there will be a corresponding increase of trial from within. We have already met with Ananias and Sapphira ; we shall soon meet with Simon Magus ; then will come the "divisions" and "heresies" which "must be,"¹ — not by God's appointment, but through man's perverseness, — and so the epitome which the Church of the Apostolic age presents of the Church's story in all time will be complete.

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 19.

2. Of the Jewish synagogues, it is impossible here to speak at length. If they did not arise during the Babylonish captivity, that long trial did at least give them form, influence, and permanency. So far as we are concerned with them in connection with the Book of Acts, it may suffice to say that "the synagogue services consisted of certain solemn prayers, followed by lessons of Holy Scripture, — from the Law and the Prophets, according to a fixed order, — with addresses of explanation and exhortation. It is said that these prayers were composed by Ezra. They consisted originally of eighteen forms, including acts of confession, praise, supplication, and thanksgiving; and to these a nineteenth prayer was added in later times, apparently imprecating God's wrath upon the followers of Christ. At all events, it is certain that they are very ancient."¹ This was undoubtedly the method of the synagogue service while our Lord was on earth; and the narrative given by St. Luke, of what occurred in the synagogue at Nazareth (iv. 16–27), shows how scrupulously He governed Himself by the rules that regulated the ordinary service.

3. It forms no part of the plan of these pages to enter on such a line of discussion as would be involved in stating and answering specific difficulties that have been raised concerning St. Stephen's defence before the sanhedrim.² But there are matters connected with this first martyrdom that should not be passed by.

(a) The charge brought by St. Stephen's accusers resolves itself into a charge of blasphemy; and the counts in it, so to speak, are two: first, "blasphemous words" against the temple, in that he prophesied its destruction; secondly, against the law, in that he declared that "Jesus of Naza-

¹ Burbidge, *Liturgies and Offices of the Church*, p. 2; Prideaux, *Connections*, etc., vol. i. pp. 358–376, ed. London, 1831.

² Those who desire to see these difficulties, and the answers made to them, are referred to the articles on St. Stephen, by the late Dean of Westminster and the Rev. Professor Gardiner, in the American edition of *Smith's Bible Dictionary*; and to Bishop Wordsworth's and Mr. Denton's Commentaries.

reth" should "change the customs which Moses taught." The similarity between the charge against our blessed Lord and that made against the first martyr has been often noticed, and is obvious at a glance.¹ There is the same similarity in the testimony by which the charges were sustained. In both cases, there was false witness; and "the falsehood of the witness consisted in taking words out of their context, and misrepresenting what, perhaps, *totidem verbis*, had actually been said."

(b) The charge naturally shapes St. Stephen's defence, which was probably spoken in "the Hebrew tongue." We must observe here, (1) that the defence is not so much a defence of himself personally, as it is a vindication of his teaching; (2) that he was charged with teaching that the temple would be destroyed and the law subverted, and that this falsely represented teaching involved, in the mind of his judges, blasphemy; (3) that he has in mind not merely the charge brought against himself, but also the convictions of those to whom he spoke, namely, that the Divine love and favor were confined to one nation, — their own, — and to one place, — Jerusalem and the temple; and that his exposure of the falsity of these convictions constitutes, therefore, his personal defence. Bearing all this in mind, we have the clew to the speech, and are able to analyze it.

"St. Stephen had taught, and he repeats the same teaching here, that the possession of the law given by God on Sinai, and of the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, of the temple and of the land of promise, were not exclusive titles to the mercies and the protection of God; that these were not of avail without the obedience of the heart; that God required *not sacrifice* unless with it was contrition for sin, and active *mercy*, love towards our fellowmen. Although he acknowledges God to be the God of Abraham, whose son he himself is, yet he points out that God *appeared unto . . . Abraham* before the covenant of

¹ Compare Matt. xxvi. 61; Mark xiv. 58.

circumcision had been given, whilst he was a stranger to Canaan, a dweller in a foreign land; that He watched over and was with Joseph when, rejected by his brethren, he dwelt in a strange land; that His providence regarded the patriarchs of the nation whilst they dwelt in Egypt, and were *evil entreated* by Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and that He blessed them there, though they dwelt far from the Holy Place. He then passes on to the life of the great lawgiver, and shows that Moses, though a fugitive and rejected by his *brethren*, — a type of that Prophet like unto Moses, who *came unto His own, and His own received Him not*, — was yet chosen by God to be the deliverer and leader of His people. He shows them that though they made their *boast of the law*, yet no sooner had they *received the law by the disposition of angels*, than they broke the law and became idolaters, and worshipped Moloch and Remphan; so that, whilst prior to the giving of the law of which they boasted, and without it, Abraham was drawn from the midst of idolatry, and was accepted by God, they, with the law in their hands, provoked God, and were in punishment carried away from their land, — the land of God, — *beyond Babylon*. He tells them, that, though the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness had been fashioned after things in heaven and by command of God, yet this was only for a time, and in place of it David desired to build a temple, and Solomon was permitted to do so; and that even this could not be *the place of rest* to Him who made the heavens His *throne* and earth His *footstool*, for *the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands*. At this point, it would seem, St. Stephen was interrupted, probably by the outcries of the people; and he turns to rebuke those who resisted the words, not of man, but of the Holy Ghost, and who had been the *betrayers and murderers of the Just One*, the Messiah, as their fathers had slain the prophets who foretold of His coming.

“Here the fury of the people could be no longer restrained, and, refusing any longer to listen to his words, they hurried

him to death. His speech, however, did not fall to the ground; it sank into the heart of one of his persecutors, Saul of Tarsus, and bore fruit not only in his speedy conversion, but afterwards in the speeches which he made, and the epistles which he wrote to the churches which had been gathered together by him, or strengthened by his teaching. With more epigrammatic force than truth, St. Paul has been spoken of as a 'colossal St. Stephen,' since, judging from this speech, St. Stephen must have been a man of rare intellectual power. His influence on St. Paul is very marked; and much of the Epistle to the Romans, and the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, is but an expansion and comment on this speech, oftentimes in the very words used by the first martyr."¹

4. One can hardly fail to be struck with the brevity, the simplicity, and the freedom from harrowing details and passionate expressions, which characterize the account of the martyrdom. And yet what a picture do its few words present to us, bringing together, as they do, "the heavenly places" with their abiding rest, and the world in which they who followed Christ were to "have tribulation"! In heaven we see the Lord in "the glory of God the Father," standing² at His right hand, ready to "succor all those who suffer for Him." On earth we behold a martyrdom, which, as it stands nearest in time to the awful Sacrifice on the cross, so it most nearly approaches it in its circumstances and surroundings. As the Lord prayed for His murderers, so did Stephen "the crowned one."³ As the Son commended His spirit into the hands of His Father, so did His first martyr commend his into the hands of his Saviour and his God.

5. A scattering abroad followed on the persecution, though

¹ This admirable analysis is from Denton's *Commentary on Acts*, vol. i. p. 195, ff.

² The accuracy with which the collect for St. Stephen's Day follows the words of Holy Scripture has often been commented on.

³ Says Archbishop Trench, "The play upon Stephen's name is a very favorite one with the early Church writers,—the *nomen et omen* which lay in that name Stephen (*στέφανος*) for the first winner of the martyr's crown."

the Apostles did not leave Jerusalem. Sometimes God's scatterings are in judgment. Such was the scattering at Babel, and that of the ten tribes. So the name Jezreel was given to the son that Gomer bore to Hosea,¹ indicating the scattering in punishment soon to fall on Israel. But there is also a scattering which is not for punishment, but for sowing. So, in a later passage of Hosea, Israel is called Jezreel,² because of the sowing of the Church, not in Judæa, but in the whole world. "Jews were the instruments. Of them, according to the flesh, Christ came; of them were the Apostles, and Evangelists, and all writers of Holy Scripture; of them was the Church first formed, into which the Gentiles were received, being, with them, knit into one in Christ."³

¹ Hos. i. 4.

² Hos. ii. 22.

³ Pusey, on Hosea *in loc.*

SECTION VII.

THE MISSION TO SAMARIA.

(Chap. viii. 5-40.)

5. Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them.

6. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

7. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed *with them*: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed.

8. And there was great joy in that city.

9. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:

10. To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God.

11. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries.

12. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

15. Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

16. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.)

17. Then laid they *their* hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.

18. And when Simon saw that through

laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

19. Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

20. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.

21. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

22. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.

23. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and *in* the bond of iniquity.

24. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.

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

26. And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.

27. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28. Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30. And Philip ran thither to *him*, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31. And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33. In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.

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

35. Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

36. And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?

37. And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

38. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

39. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.

40. But Philip was found at Azotus: and passing through he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cæsarea.

1. JERUSALEM, Judæa, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the earth: such, according to our Lord's words, was the order of places in which the Apostles were to bear witness to Him. Jerusalem stands first, the central point from which the Church was to go forth. Judæa, with Jerusalem, may well seem to represent faithful Judah and Benjamin. Samaria, in some sort, represents the ten tribes; for Ephraim was paramount among them, and the northern kingdom was at last really Ephraim, and is so spoken of in the prophecies; while "the head of Ephraim is Samaria."¹ Beyond lay the Gentiles, to "the uttermost parts of the earth." The progress of the Church was, therefore, a regular outward movement from a central point; not a chance medley of sporadic movements, springing up here and there, no one knows how, and afterwards united in some way, no one knows what. The witness in Samaria, however, was not first borne by Apostles; for, while others were scattered, they clearly remained in Jerusalem. Nor can there be any doubt that the Philip who preached and baptized in Samaria — i.e., the city of that name — was Philip the Deacon.²

2. Something has been already said concerning the characteristics of Apostolic preaching. Further light is shed upon

¹ Isa. vii. 2, 5, 8; Hos. xi. 3, 8, 9, 12.

² See *ante*, sect. v.

this subject by the account here given us of the preaching of Philip. We are told first that he "preached Christ;" and this is expanded into the statement that he preached "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ." We are also told that at Ephesus St. Paul, preaching to Jews and Gentiles "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," and declaring "all the counsel of God," preached for three years "the kingdom of God;" and that at Rome, "for two whole years," he "received all that came to him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ." All this has been referred to before, and hardly needs to be dwelt on in any detail again.

The Jew needed to be lifted up from the idea of an earthly to that of a spiritual kingdom; to be taught the full breadth of the promise made to Abraham, "In thy Seed [which is Christ] shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and to learn that "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."¹ The Gentiles had to be instructed in the character of that same covenant kingdom, which to them was indeed a "new creation." Jews and Gentiles alike must be taught concerning the "Name which is above every name," — the Name of Him who was to "save His people from their sins," from the punishment of their sins by the "redemption through His blood," and from the power of sin by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost sanctifying them to God. They must also be taught concerning the Anointed One, the Priest, the Prophet, and the King, "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." This teaching, accepted by the Samaritans, was, as ever, followed by their baptism, by which they became members of that covenant-kingdom of which Christ is the living Head.

3. Something now appears which Philip, although he preached and baptized, was not competent to do. The Apostles, hearing at Jerusalem the tidings of the conversion

¹ Gen. xxii. 18; Gal. iii. 7-9.

of the Samaritans, sent down Peter and John to lay their hands on those who had been baptized.

Had St. Peter been invested by our Lord with supreme authority over the whole Church, including his brethren in the apostolate, this sending by the Apostles would be a strange anomaly. Surely it would have been his duty to send, and he might well and rightly have refused to be sent. We have here, therefore, one of the many incidental proofs, — all the more valuable because they are incidental, — that neither he nor the other Apostles recognized any such position as has been claimed for him.

Precisely what is meant by the words, "Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus"? Are we to understand that the inward gift had not been received by them, or that they had not manifested its reception by outward, visible, or audible signs? The expression, "as yet He was *fallen* upon none of them," contains, it is believed, the clew to the answers to these questions. In the account of St. Peter's interview with Cornelius and his friends, we are told that "the Holy Ghost *fell* on all them which heard the word," immediately upon which they spake with tongues, and magnified God. Again, in St. Peter's account given at Jerusalem in justification of what he had done in Cæsarea, he says, "As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost *fell* on them *as on us at the beginning*," namely, with sensible miraculous accompaniments.¹ All this seems to warrant us in thinking that "the gift of the Holy Ghost [here mentioned] was not that which is regenerating, and necessary to pardon and satisfaction (else all these baptized persons must be supposed till so long after unpardoned), but it was that extraordinary gift, which was for the first sealing

¹ Acts x. 44, 46, xi. 15. The Greek word is all along some form of the verb ἐπιπίπτω. Comp. Acts xix. 6. "This outward evidence of the gift of the Spirit has been alleged as a reason why in the primitive Church the chrism was not used in Confirmation."

and propagating the gospel, of which others could be discerning judges (such as languages, prophesies, healings, miracles, etc.), which they were not of sincere inward holiness.”¹

This gives rise to another question: Are we to conclude that the action here spoken of, the laying-on of hands, was only occasional and temporary? Or had it a meaning and a place apart and aside from those sensibly miraculous manifestations which then accompanied it?

That such manifestations did accompany it here, and in the instance recorded in the nineteenth chapter of this book; is unquestioned. But these facts, even when we take into account the cessation of such manifestations in after years, cannot be admitted as sufficient to settle the question in the negative. If this position is assumed, it will prove a great deal too much; for, since miraculous manifestations then accompanied prayer, preaching, and even the singing of hymns, we should be compelled to conclude that they too—and they are only mentioned as a few instances out of many—were occasional and temporary, and must cease when the accompanying manifestations ended. Indeed, under such a ruling it is difficult to see what would become of Christianity itself.

In both cases where the laying-on of hands is mentioned in the Acts, it follows immediately upon baptism. It is also to be observed, that it is administered by three representative Apostles,—Peter, an Apostle finally of the circumcision; Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles; and John, the Apostle, so to speak, of the reconciliation. Unless, therefore, some stronger objection can be brought than the one *in limine* just noticed, there is no reason why the ordinance should not be regarded as one of permanent and continuous use.

Is there, on the other hand, any reason why it should be so regarded? If we turn to the sixth chapter of the

¹ Baxter: *Notes on the New Testament*.

Epistle to the Hebrews, we shall find certain "first principles" set forth, which constitute the foundation of Christian life and character; and from which we are exhorted to "go on unto completeness." It is not necessary to notice here more than four of the six first principles enumerated; i.e., repentance, faith, baptisms, and the laying-on of hands. It is obvious enough, that, in the Apostolic administration of the Church, repentance and faith were the pre-requisites for baptism, and that baptism was universally administered as the sacrament of adoption. Nor do any who claim the name of Christian, deny or doubt that in all time, even to the world's end, these internal preparations are necessary, and this divine ordinance is to be administered.

What, now, shall we say of that which in this enumeration follows baptism, — "the laying-on of hands"? It surely cannot be supposed that into an enumeration of things which must always have their place in any and every Christian life, and in connection with an ordinance which is confessedly permanent and continuous, another ordinance should be, without any warning or explanation, introduced, which is only occasional and temporary. As little can it be supposed that the laying-on of hands here spoken of can be that used in the miraculous restoration of the sick, or in ordaining to the Christian ministry. The absurd impossibility of such a view, when one remembers the subject-matter of the enumeration, — i.e., the foundations of each Christian life, — is evident at a glance. What is there left but that laying-on of hands which Sts. Peter and John ministered in Samaria, and which St. Paul ministered at Ephesus?

That such was the view taken by the undivided Church of Christ, is evident from the universal practice of fifteen centuries. Questions may have been raised as to who was to administer it, as to who should receive it, as to the ceremonies which should accompany it; but the rite itself remained till it was dropped from his discipline by the autocrat of Geneva. Till then, Jerome's words were true of all parts of

the Church : "the bishop went forth, and laid his hands on those who had been baptized by presbyters and deacons."¹

4. We are told that the Samaritans were baptized "in the Name of the Lord Jesus;" in the second chapter, St. Peter commands those who were pricked in their heart to "be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ;" and, in the nineteenth chapter, those persons at Ephesus who had been baptized "unto John's baptism . . . were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus." Are we, therefore, to understand that the Apostles and others did not baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? It is extremely improbable, that, after our Lord's solemn charge, they should have changed the form He gave them; and the circumstances connected with the baptism at Ephesus, above referred to, amount almost to a demonstration that they did not. When the "certain disciples" said to the Apostle, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost," he asks them, in evident surprise, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" He clearly imagines that they could not have been baptized without hearing of the Holy Ghost. And this not only proves that our Lord's words must have been those used in baptism, but it also throws light upon the statement immediately following: "When they heard this they were baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus." We are warranted, therefore, in believing that the expression is a brief way of speaking of the entire form, just as believing in Jesus includes believing, also, in the Father and the Holy Ghost. Or we may say, with Ambrose and Basil, that baptism in the Name of Jesus Christ means the baptism instituted by Christ the Lord, as distinguished from that of John.²

5. The case of Simon the sorcerer presents several points — one of special practical importance — for consideration;

¹ Jerome, *Cont. Lucif.*, c. iv.

² Ambrose, *De Spiritu Sancto*, i. 3; Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, c. 12. Compare Justin Martyr, *Apology*, i. 61. See, also, Moberly, *Forty Days*, pp. 206-209; and App., p. 289.

though it is not worth while to go into details of his history, which is, after all, uncertain, and largely legendary. We are concerned with him only as he appears here, with his character and his sin. He was a Samaritan by birth, and a sorcerer by trade. Whether he really believed himself to be all that he seems to have claimed to be, and that his deluded followers believed him to be, may be doubted. The Samaritans, we are told, called the angels "the powers of God;" and the text, fully translated, shows that they regarded Simon as "that power of God which is called the great one," namely, the great angel.

The sin of Simon, like that of Ananias and Sapphira, was an outcome of that "love of money," which St. Paul tells us is "the root of all evil."¹ How truly were his other words fulfilled in those three unhappy persons: "which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows"! How striking is the fact that the earliest blots on the fair record of the Church should have come from one—and that a common—form of that "covetousness which is idolatry"² In the instances of Ananias and Sapphira, the outcome was the sin of Achan,—sacrilege. In that of Simon,³ it was the sin of Esau, of Balaam, of Gehazi, and of Judas Iscariot; with only this difference, that in his case the attempted traffic failed, while in the others it was accomplished. All this gives us a deep and awful view of the power and extent of that concupiscence which "lusteth always contrary to the spirit," and comes under the prohibition of the Tenth Commandment.

The indignant and even awful words of St. Peter, addressed to Simon, while they distinctly declare the depths of his

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 10.

² Col. iii. 5.

³ Simony, named from Simon Magus, is the crime of obtaining orders or benefices, in a word, any position which entitles to the administration of spiritual gifts, by money, subserviency, or flattery. It puts temporal things over against spiritual, and regards the one as equivalent to the other. It is, therefore, a profanation.

sin, and the depravity of his heart, still hold out hope of forgiveness, and the possibility of repentance. Our Lord Himself had said "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations."¹ It was not that repentance, and a promise annexed to it, had never been heard of before. "The law included a general promise of pardon to the people when in captivity, in case of their national repentance;² the pardon to comprehend a restoration to their land. The prophets addressed the individual, and guaranteed the promise to every soul turning from the error of his ways.³ The law in this point regards the nation as the object of grace. The prophets do more: they descend to the interests of personal religion."⁴

The power of repentance, then, its place not only in the life of the Jewish nation, but in every individual life, were known before the Lord came. But when the Son of man was revealed as having "power on earth to forgive sins;"⁵ when He spoke of the "joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;"⁶ when the commission was imparted, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained,"⁷—then, and thenceforth, men were to hear as the ages rolled on, not merely the promise of forgiveness, however great that promise might be, but the very voice of the God-man saying, "Thy sins be forgiven, go in peace."

Again, St. Peter's words declare the possibility of forgiveness, even of very grievous post-baptismal sin, and therefore the possibility of repentance for such sin. We may not lessen or extenuate the guilt of sin wilfully committed against the light and grace which belong to the baptized. We may not forget that Baptism, rightly received, is the one complete absolution in this life,— "one Baptism for the remission of sins." Grace despised, conscience silenced,

¹ Luke xxiv. 47.

² Deut. xxx. 1-6; compare Neh. i. 8, 9.

³ Ezek. xviii.; Isa. lvii. 15-18.

⁴ Davison: *Discourses on Prophecy*, p. 61.

⁵ Matt. ix. 6.

⁶ Luke xv. 7, 10.

⁷ John xx. 22, 23.

evil deliberately chosen, — all these things enter into wilful sin committed after baptism. And yet, even for this, unless St. Peter deceived the wretched sorcerer with unreal words, there may be repentance and forgiveness. So wide, so free, is the great mercy of God!

There are, in the New Testament, three passages which can hardly fail to suggest themselves in connection with this most solemn subject. The first is the declaration of our Lord himself: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come."¹ One sin, then, there plainly is for which there can be no forgiveness. This is not the place for inquiring what the sin against the Holy Ghost is, since it clearly is not the sin of Simon. We may, however, observe that it is committed not merely "by interpretation in our actions, but directly in our words and expressions." It is expressly called speaking "against the Holy Ghost."²

The second passage occurs in the Epistle to the Hebrews: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance."³ It is curious to observe the totally different conclusions that have been drawn from this passage.

In the early Church, the Montanists and Novatians drew from it the conclusion that no sin committed after baptism

¹ Matt. xii. 31, 32.

² Kettlewell, *Measures of Christian Obedience*, Book V. c. vi. Augustine held that no one can be guilty of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost so long as life lasts. *Sermo lxxii.*, 3, 21.

³ Heb. vi. 4-6. The word translated "fall away" is *παραισώμενος*.

could be forgiven; and this led to the indefinite delay of baptism in individual cases. On this error the Church set her sentence of condemnation. It was, however, practically revived at the time of the Reformation, by the Anabaptists, against whom the sixteenth of the Articles of Religion is directed.

Another conclusion drawn from this same passage was that those who had really and effectually received the Holy Spirit (and none could receive it but such as were arbitrarily elected to life eternal) could not fall away. This idea, being formulated, was the doctrine of final perseverance, one of the five points of Calvinism. And this is also denied in the article above referred to.¹

The third passage is found in the First Epistle of St. John: "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it."² Here we must observe, in regard to the character of the sin, that it is a state of the soul which manifests itself not so much in any specific act or acts, as such, but in an open, notorious, and persistent evil life, which is the "revelation of the moral life." Such a service of sin is slavery to it, and the wages of such sin is death. Such was, in regard to temporal punishments, the condition of the house of Eli,³ and of the people for whom Jeremiah was forbidden to intercede.⁴ We shall be safe in saying that wilful and continuous impenitence is beyond pardon; but it will be wise, also, to say with Origen, "What kind of sins are sins to death, what not to death but to loss, cannot easily be determined by any man."⁵

6. The Ethiopian eunuch,⁶ the account of whose conver-

¹ Our English version makes it possible to imagine that an impossible thing is supposed in the words "if they shall fall away." The original Greek allows no such interpretation.

² 1 John v. 16. ³ 1 Sam. ii. 25, iii. 14. ⁴ Jer. vii. 16, xi. 14, xiv. 11, xv. 1, 2.

⁵ Westcott, *The Epistles of St. John*, in *loc.* and p. 199.

⁶ The same appellation is given to Potiphar in the LXX., Gen. xxxvii. 36, xxxix. 1. It probably means no more here than it does there; i.e., a confidential minister in high position. Pliny tells us that Candace was a name common to queens of the region spoken of, as Pharaoh was to the sovereigns of Egypt.

sion immediately follows the story of the wretched sorcerer, stands out in marked and happy contrast with him who had "neither part nor lot" in the Word. He was a proselyte, and very probably a proselyte of righteousness, a Jew in all but race, and, as such, read with reverent care the Jewish Scriptures, not doubtless in the Hebrew tongue, but in that language which was then world-wide, the Greek, and in that version which we now call the Septuagint.

The passage read was the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, — beautifully called the "Golden Passional" of the evangelical prophet; and this was the "place of the Scripture" which Philip, following the example of our Lord in the walk to Emmaus, "opened" to his hearer. Who can doubt what, in "preaching Jesus" from that passage, Philip taught his hearer, if, as surely was the case, he unfolded the meaning of that wonderful prophecy respecting Christ? "For this prophecy declares His incarnation and life of humiliation; His death contrary to justice; His resurrection, by which the death contrary to justice was reversed; His ascension to the right hand of power, and the future rule and judgment which He shall exercise over mankind."¹

Unbelieving criticism halts and stumbles at the application of Isaiah's words to Christ. But are we to suppose that the Divine guidance which sent Philip on the road to Gaza, and bade him draw near to the Ethiopian, and withdrew him when his work was done, deserted him and left him to himself in his exposition of God's word and his teaching to the proselyte? Of course human perversity is capable of this or any other absurdity. But one who reads with an open mind and a humble heart, remembering also that our Lord Himself, "beginning at Moses and *all the prophets*, expounded unto" the two disciples, "in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself," will say as St. Clement does when he quotes the passage, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the sceptre of the Majesty of God, came not in the arrogance of boasting

¹ Denton, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. i. p. 292.

and pride, though He was able to do so; but in humility, even as *the Holy Spirit spake* concerning Him.”¹

The question, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” indicates also that Philip in preaching Jesus had taught how those who believed were to be disciplined into the Lord. We may also — though it is a matter of vastly less importance — notice, in passing, that if the words translated “went down into the water” and “were come up out of the water,” necessarily imply immersion, then Philip must have been immersed as well as the Ethiopian, since the words are spoken of both; while, if they do not necessarily imply the immersion of the Evangelist-Deacon, neither can they be insisted on in the case of his companion.

¹ *Epistle to the Corinthians*, c. xvi.

PART IV.

THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE MISSION TO THE
GENTILES.

Part IV.

(Chapters IX. to XII. inclusive.)

SECTION I.

THE CONVERSION OF SAUL, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

(Chap. ix. 1-32.)

1. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

2. And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

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

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

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought *him* unto Damascus.

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10. ¶ And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I *am here*, Lord.

11. And the Lord *said* unto him, Arise,

and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for *one* called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting *his* hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, *even* Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

20. And straightway he preached Christ

in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.

21. But all that heard *him* were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

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

23. ¶ And after that many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him :

24. But their laying await was known of Saul. And they watched the gates day and night to kill him.

25. Then the disciples took him by night, and let *him* down by the wall in a basket.

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the

disciples : but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

27. But Barnabas took him, and brought *him* to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

28. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.

29. And he spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians : but they went about to slay him.

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

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

I. "SAUL, who is also called Paul," has already been seen by us as the one at whose feet the witnesses against St. Stephen "laid down their clothes," and who was "consenting" to the first martyr's death. This passive, or comparatively passive, attitude, is now exchanged for one of active persecution. Up to this time we have seen Saul as a "Pharisee, the son of Pharisees;" trained by Gamaliel, "the glory of the law;" a "Hebrew of the Hebrews;" "touching the law, blameless;" a zealot for all the traditions and ordinances of his fathers; and, consequently, scorning, with a scorn which only such a man could know, Jesus of Nazareth, His disciples, and the faith they held and taught.

But now the scorn deepens into hatred, and the hatred becomes active persecution, and Saul ravages the Church; drags men and women to prison, and gives his voice for putting them to death; breathes out threatening and slaughter against the disciples; compels them to blaspheme, and persecutes them even to strange cities. It is a frightful picture, and one cannot wonder that it recurred again and again to the Apostle's mind with all its memories of cruelty and blood.

Do we not sometimes see something quite analogous to this in other lives than that of Saul? We are told that the Emperor Julian once said, speaking of the Faith to a Christian bishop, "I was ignorant about it, I knew it, I rejected it;" and the bishop replied, "You were ignorant about it, but you never knew it; for, had you known it, you would not have rejected it." Similar instances are not infrequent in our own time. Many a man has taken up with some imperfect and distorted view of Christianity, and, when he has become convinced of its unreality, has become first a scorner and then a hater of that which he supposes himself to have tried and found wanting. Many another has taken up with one of those "half gospels" which are winning adherents on all sides, and has reached the same result. Sometimes the hatred takes on the form of actual persecution; at other times—just now, more commonly—it works itself out in serious or ribald denunciation of the Christian Faith. In all cases the root of the scorn, hatred, or denunciation is to be found in ignorance and misapprehension. Meantime, no form of unbelief is more difficult to deal with.

2. There are in the Book of Acts three separate accounts of the conversion of St. Paul: (1) St. Luke's narrative in this place, (2) the Apostle's own account in his address to the mob in Jerusalem, and (3) his fuller statement in his speech before Agrippa. The three should be read together, and may very well be considered here.

Those who are anxious to find contradictions and discrepancies in Holy Scripture have discovered two such in these several accounts of St. Paul's conversion. In the first place, it is alleged, that whereas, in this ninth chapter, St. Luke affirms that "the men who journeyed with him *stood* speechless," the Apostle in his defence before Agrippa says, "and when we were all *fallen to the earth*." When, however, we remember that the Greek word translated *stood* is frequently used to signify merely cessation of motion,¹ the difficulty

¹ Any ordinary lexicon.

vanishes. They stopped, and fell to the ground. No special position is indicated.

Again, it is objected that Luke says here, that those who journeyed with St. Paul were "hearing a voice;" while he himself, in his defence before the mob in Jerusalem, says, "they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me." Had these words occurred anywhere but in Holy Scripture, it is not likely that any question would have been raised about them. They heard the sound of a voice, but not its articulate speech.

3. A use has been sometimes made of the conversion of Saul, which neither Scripture nor right reason warrants. Saul's condition of disbelief in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God was, immediately on the sight of "the heavenly vision," exchanged for one of belief. But it was not an instant passage from the depths of sin to the height of holiness in his personal character. That he had sinned, and sinned deeply, in persecuting the Church of God, who could have felt more than he did? The sense of it was a burden that he bore through all his life; and it not only brought to his lips the cry, "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle," but it doubtless entered into that deepest of all confessions, "sinners, of whom I am chief."

In thinking, however, of these last-quoted words, we must not forget that none have ever had so deep a sense of sin, as those who have reached the greatest heights of holiness; and that this, probably, lies at the foundation of St. Paul's startling confession. Assuredly his life before his conversion had not been a life of careless, thoughtless indulgence, far less a life of wilful sin. He does not so speak of himself, nor does any thing we can learn of him warrant any such conclusion. On the contrary, in his address to the Sanhedrim¹ he says, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." At the same time he always speaks of

¹ Acts xxiii. 1.

himself as going onward, not looking back upon any thing already done, not even upon his conversion, but "pressing toward the mark;" running as not uncertainly, fighting not as one that beateth the air; striving if by any means he "might attain to the resurrection of the dead."

All this is utterly inconsistent with any idea that the work of and for St. Paul, in his character and life, was all done at once, "in the twinkling of an eye," in his conversion. And the theory that not only was this the character of the Apostle's conversion, but that it is also the model and norm for the conversion of all who are really Christians, has wrought more mischief to human souls than all the indulgences with which Roman greed has pretended to sell the grace of God for money.

4. If any man might hold himself excused from the observance of an established Christian ordinance, surely St. Paul might. With his bodily eye he had seen the Lord Jesus; with his bodily ear he had listened to His words; on him had fallen blindness because of "the glory of that light;" by the touch of a human hand, divinely commissioned for the work, his sight had been restored, and he had been "filled with the Holy Ghost." May we not suppose that such an one is placed beyond the obligation which, in reference to any ordinances, rests on ordinary believers? Is he to stand on the same level with all others in this regard, — nay, with Ananias and Sapphira, and Simon Magus? His own words answer these questions. The same voice that said to him, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight," said also, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins. . . . And immediately he was baptized." If words have any meaning, these words, taken with St. Peter's exhortation, "be baptized every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins," do clearly connect such remission with holy baptism, and do, therefore, also connect holy baptism with the words of the Lord, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached, *in His Name*, among all nations." This will proba-

bly be denied by none but those who arrogate to themselves the name of "Bible Christians," under which appellation they seem to claim for themselves the right to deal with God's Word pretty much as they please.

5. Either between the first and second sentences in ver. 19, or else between vv. 19 and 20, a period intervenes concerning which St. Luke is entirely silent. Indeed, we should have known nothing of it, had not St. Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, and in his defence against those who disparaged his apostleship, mentioned it. It appears, then, from Gal. i. 17, that St. Paul immediately after his conversion "went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus;" and, further, that three years elapsed after his conversion before he "went up to Jerusalem."

How much of this period was spent in Arabia, and how much at Damascus, we cannot determine. We are told, indeed, that after his return the Apostle "preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God," and, also, that "after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him." The expression "many days" might seem to intimate that the greater part of the three years was spent in Damascus. But, on the other hand, when we remember that the words translated "many days"¹ do not necessarily imply a *great* length of time, and might as well be rendered "a considerable period," it is clear that no decisive conclusion can be grounded on them. It may very well be, therefore, that a good part of the three years was passed in that silent retirement, in which St. Paul received the gospel which he preached, not from man² "but by revelation of Jesus Christ;" being thus placed³ "not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles," in that he had been taught by the risen Lord, what they had learned from the same Lord both before His death and after His resurrection.

If this be so, what a reproof is here ministered to those who, by short cuts and with hasty preparation, would thrust

¹ ἡμεραι ικαναι.

² Gal. i. 11, 12.

³ 2 Cor. xi. 5.

themselves into Holy Orders ; what an even stronger reproof to those who, in whatever station, help on such a hurrying process, and condone such an imperfect preparation ! Men cannot now go into some Arabia, there to meet the Lord face to face for their instruction ; but they can withdraw to give time and thought and study to the " Word of God."

Whither St. Paul turned his steps in going to Arabia, we do not know. The mere name settles nothing. Nor is there any thing forbidding us to suppose that it is the same Arabia which the Apostle had in mind when he said of Hagar the bondwoman (the type of the old covenant, as Sarah the free woman was of the new), " this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia,"¹ while there is much to say in support of the supposition. " For if we suppose that the Apostle at this critical moment betook himself to the Sinaitic peninsula, the scene of the giving of the law, then his visit to Arabia becomes full of meaning. He was attracted thither by a spirit akin to that which formerly had driven Elijah to the same region. Standing on the threshold of the new covenant, he was anxious to look upon the birthplace of the old ; that dwelling for a while in seclusion in the presence of ' the mount that burned with fire,' he might ponder over the transient glories of the ' ministration of death,' and apprehend its real purpose in relation to the more glorious covenant which was now to supplant it. Here, surrounded by the children of the desert, the descendants of Hagar the bondwoman, he read the true meaning and power of the law. In the rugged and barren region whence it issued, he saw a fit type of that bleak desolation which it created, and was intended to create, in the soul of man. In the midst of such scenes and associations, his spirit was attuned to harmony with his divine mission, and fitted to receive fresh ' visions and revelations of the Lord.' Thus in the wilderness of Sinai, as on the Mount of the Transfiguration, the three dispensations met in one. Here Moses had received the tables

¹ Gal. iv. 25.

of the law amid fire and tempest and thick darkness. Here again Elijah, the typical prophet, listened to the voice of God, and sped forth refreshed on his mission of righteousness. And here lastly, in the fulness of time, St. Paul, the greatest preacher of Him of whom both the law and the prophets spoke, was strengthened and sanctified for his great work, was taught the breadth as well as the depth of the riches of God's wisdom, and transformed from the champion of a bigoted and narrow tradition into the large-hearted Apostle of the Gentiles."¹

The question has been asked, Why does St. Luke omit in his history what St. Paul introduces into his Epistles, i.e., the mention of the time spent in Arabia? Such questions are not, as a rule, very profitable; but it does not seem difficult to answer this one. The purpose of the Book of Acts is not biographical, or in any sense personal. What is necessary in order to tell the story of the way in which the Lord's commands were carried out, the Faith propagated, and the Church established, that is told. Beyond that, personal details are very rarely given. It was the *Gloriosissima Civitas Dei*—the most glorious City of God—that was in the writer's mind, and not the personal history of those who were chosen by the Lord to labor in the building. That personal history, then, appears only so far as such a narrative requires.

On the other hand, in the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul is vindicating his apostolate from the attacks of those who disparaged it; and he is compelled in so doing to assert that his apostleship came to him from no human source, nor by any human agency; and, further, that the same thing is true of the gospel which he preached, and which he was taught only "by revelation of Jesus Christ."² In proving this he naturally, and almost necessarily, mentions that seclusion from men in Arabia, when he, like Moses, spake with the Angel Jehovah "face to face." In view of these facts it is

¹ Bishop Lightfoot, *Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 88.

² Gal. i. 11, 12.

not difficult to understand the silence of the Acts, and the breaking of the silence in the Epistle to the Galatians.

6. The visit to Jerusalem here recorded was undoubtedly the first made by St. Paul after his conversion. It is, also, the same spoken of in Gal. i. 18, 19, and the manner of the Apostle's escape from Damascus is mentioned in 2 Cor. xi. 33. It would seem that the Damascene Jews enlisted the service of Aretas, the father-in-law of Herod Antipas, to secure St. Paul at the gates of the city.¹ Escaping their vigilance, he goes up to Jerusalem, his special purpose being to converse with St. Peter. Barnabas, knowing, apparently, what was not as yet known to the body of the disciples (who naturally distrusted the persecuting Saul, whose violence they well remembered), brought him to the Apostles Peter and "James the Lord's brother." Quite probably the other Apostles were absent from Jerusalem; at all events, he saw none of them. His visit was, indeed, a short one, of only "fifteen days;" being brought to an end by the conspiracy against his life. This resulted in his flight to Cæsarea, the civil capital of Palestine, and to Tarsus his native city.

St. Paul's special and personal purpose in this visit was to "become acquainted" with St. Peter.² The word used in the original implies no inequality between the two apostles. Any admission of such inequality would be fatal to St. Paul's vindication of his apostolate in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians; and would destroy all the force of his assertion that James, *Cephas*, and John "in conference added nothing to him." Nor is it difficult to see why St. Paul should desire to communicate with his brother Apostle. It is hardly conceivable that in the revelations and instructions which he received in his retirement in Arabia, he should not have learned that "God made choice" that by Peter's "mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the

¹ "Let down by the wall in a basket;" here it is ἐν σπυρίδι: in 2 Cor. xi. it is ἐν σαργάνῃ. The first word seems to indicate the use to which the basket was put, i.e., to carry something; the second, the mode of its construction, i.e., of twigs or rope.

² Gal. i. 18, ἰστορήσαι Κηφᾶν. See Ellicott *in loco*.

gospel, and believe.”¹ What, then, could be more natural than that St. Paul to whom the Lord had said, “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee ; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me,”² — what could be more natural, than that the Apostle to whom this was said should desire to know and converse with that other Apostle who had been commissioned to open the door to the Gentiles ? The result of this and later communications was, that James, Cephas, and John went to the circumcision, while Paul and Barnabas went to the heathen.³

¹ Acts xv. 7 ; comp. Matt. xvi. 19.² Acts xxvi. 16-18.³ Gal. i. 9.

SECTION II.

TRAVELS AND LABORS OF ST. PETER.

(Chap. ix. 32-43.)

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

33. And there he found a certain man named Æneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy.

34. And Peter said unto him, Æneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

35. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.

36. ¶ Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37. And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died: whom when they had washed, they laid *her* in an upper chamber.

38. And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that

Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring *him* that he would not delay to come to them.

39. Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning *him* to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41. And he gave her *his* hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

42. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord.

43. And it came to pass, that he tarried many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

I. ST. PETER, we are told, came to "the *saints* which dwelt at Lydda." There are two words — to name no more — in our version of the New Testament, which have been strangely perverted from their proper signification; while much perplexity, and even confusion, have followed on the perversion. These words are "elect" and "saints."¹ Many persons, whenever they fall upon the first of these words, have at least a confused idea that it necessarily implies final salvation; and when they meet with the second have, probably, a less confused notion that it necessarily implies internal personal sanctification of heart and life.

¹ In the original, κλητοί and ἅγιοι.

All this confusion has arisen from reading definitions into the words of Scripture, instead of bringing definitions out from them. One needs hardly to go beyond St. Paul's salutations, at the beginning of several of his Epistles, to see that the "elect" are those who, in the good pleasure of God, are *called* or *chosen* to receive the offer of the Gospel Covenant, and to be received into the one covenanted Body; and that the "saints" are those who are set apart and separated by holy baptism as members of that covenanted Body. All baptized persons are, therefore, in this the primary sense of the words, "elect" and "saints." The purpose of their election is that they may "make their calling and election sure;" the purpose of their separation and setting apart is that they may become truly "holy, unblamable, and unprovable before God." These purposes may be frustrated and brought to naught, but the fact of the calling and separation remains untouched.¹

2. The two miracles here recorded illustrate what was said above, concerning the care exhibited by the Apostles to prevent any idea, on the part of those who witnessed the miracles wrought by them, that they wrought them by their own power or in their own names. When St. Peter, apparently in the presence of other persons, cured Æneas of his palsy, he said, "Christ Jesus maketh thee whole." When, with no witnesses present, he raised Dorcas from the dead, he simply said, "Tabitha, arise."

¹ The difference between ἁγιος and ἅσιος should also be borne in mind; the former indicating an objective separation, the latter a subjective sanctification. Trench, *Synonymes*, § lxxxviii.

SECTION III.

THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE GENTILES.

(Chap. x. 1-48.)

1. There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

2. A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5. And now send men to Joppa, and call for *one* Simon, whose surname is Peter :

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

7. And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually;

8. And when he had declared all *these* things unto them, he sent them to Joppa.

9. ¶ On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour :

10. And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

11. And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth :

12. Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

13. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

14. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

15. And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

16. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

17. Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

18. And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

19. ¶ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

20. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

21. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what *is* the cause wherefore ye are come?

22. And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

23. Then called he them in, and lodged *them*. And on the morrow Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24. And the morrow after they entered into Cæsarea. And Cornelius waited for

them, and had called together his kinsmen and near friends.

25. And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped *him*.

26. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.

27. And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together.

28. And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

29. Therefore came I *unto you* without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?

30. And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

31. And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God.

32. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the seaside: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee.

33. Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.

34. ¶ Then Peter opened *his* mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons:

35. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.

36. The word which *God* sent unto the

children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:)

37. That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judæa, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;

38. How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

39. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree:

40. Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

41. Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, *even* to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

42. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God *to be* the Judge of quick and dead.

43. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

44. ¶ While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word

45. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.

46. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter,

47. Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days.

I. IN his address before the council held at Jerusalem,¹ St. Peter says, "Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe." The words translated "a good while ago" really mean during the earthly

¹ Acts xv. 7-12.

life of our Lord.¹ There is certainly nothing recorded in the Gospels to which St. Peter's declaration can well apply, except the very solemn occurrence in the "coasts of Cæsarea Philippi,"² not long before our Lord's final departure from Galilee, when He said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." If this promise is simply repeated in the words that follow it, then it was given to all the Apostles as well as to St. Peter.³ If it is any thing special to St. Peter, to what can it more probably be referred than to the effect of that Apostle's preaching on the Day of Pentecost, by means of which three thousand Jews and proselytes of righteousness were baptized, and to his action in opening the door to Cornelius and others, recorded in the section we are now considering?

2. Three centurions are mentioned in the New Testament, and all with words of commendation: the first, he of whom our Lord said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;"⁴ the second, he who standing by the cross exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God;"⁵ the third, Cornelius, the first called of the Gentiles. This surely proves that there is nothing in the life of a soldier, in itself, inconsistent with a Christian man's profession.

3. It is hardly worth while to inquire whether Cornelius was strictly a Gentile, or a proselyte of the gate. We have no means of answering that question, nor is it important to have it answered, since the Jews regarded such proselytes very much as they did the Gentiles; and, whatever Cornelius may have been, those who were baptized with him were unquestionably Gentiles, and, therefore, the first-fruits from heathendom.

¹ The Greek is ἀπὸ ἡμερῶν ἀρχαίων. Now, ἀρχὴ is constantly used to signify the beginning of our Lord's ministry (Luke i. 2; John viii. 25, xv. 27). So ἀρχαῖος is used to designate a disciple who was one while Christ was on earth (Acts xxi. 16). Granting that—as has been said—the meaning of both noun and adjective must be determined, in individual instances, by context and circumstances, do not both these in Acts xv. point in one direction, i.e., to our Lord's earthly ministry?

² Matt. xvi. 13–20.

⁴ Matt. viii. 10.

³ Matt. xviii. 18; John xx. 21–23.

⁵ Matt. xxvii. 54.

4. We are told of Cornelius, that he was "devout," that he "feared God with all his house," that he "gave much alms," and that he "prayed to God alway." It will not be amiss to consider carefully and in some detail what these words imply.

Any one who believes that God created him, and placed him in this earthly life, can hardly fail, on reflection, to see that so placed he is not simply an isolated and disconnected unit, standing merely in a certain juxtaposition to other isolated and disconnected units, like a single grain in a sand-heap. Indeed, the very moment that we pass outside of inanimate things, and those of the very lowest order, we have left isolation behind us. Plants have relations to each other by which their growth, fructification, and character are modified. Beasts and birds have similar relations. Most of all, man has them. To get entirely rid of them, is impossible. For, were each man placed on that favorite resort of hard-pressed reasoners, a desert island, with no human being near him, he would, as we shall soon see, be rid of only one of the relations which his creation necessitates, and of no more.

Now, the relations spoken of above are three in number: first, that in which a man stands towards God; secondly, that which he sustains towards his fellow-men; and thirdly, that which he occupies — as we may say — towards himself. Moreover, these relations cannot be regarded as mere abstractions. They are living things. And they live and move in correspondent duties, which are very various, which appear in manifold forms and with manifold connections, but which, nevertheless, may be classified in exact accordance with the relations out of which they spring. And thus we reach again a threefold division, and we find duties that we owe to God, duties that we owe to our fellow-men, and duties that we owe to ourselves. The correspondence of relations and duties is entire.

We need not waste time in inquiring how far man, without

extraneous aid, and reasoning merely from the fact of creation and the essential conditions of life and society, might reach some general conclusions concerning the relations and duties spoken of above. For, in the first place, man has never been left entirely to himself in these regards ; and, anyhow, outside the Scriptures the comprehension of their *entire* extent and mutual interdependence cannot be found.

We may be told, indeed, that heathen philosophers have set forth sound moral precepts. But we must remember that "there is hardly one of them who has not imposed his sanction on some atrocious immorality. Even the divine Plato recommends the murder of sickly and feeble infants, expressly allows drunkenness at the feasts of Bacchus, and authorizes some of the worst forms of licentiousness." And we must also remember that all these precepts are conveyed in an abstract and not in a concrete form, and that, therefore, they lack the clearness and definiteness which are requisite if they are to be of any practical value.

Again, we may be told that modern deists have, in many cases, inculcated a true, pure, and even severe morality. But here it must be borne in mind that all these persons have grown up and lived under a condition of things, and with an environment, which have been largely, if not entirely, due to the moulding influences of Christianity. Principles and laws of life are generally recognized, and therefore known to them, which could never have been known or taught but for the centuries of Christian influences which have established them. So that they are really using the knowledge which Christianity has given them, to prove that men do not need Christianity at all !

When we come to the code of Sinai, the Ten Commandments of the law, we find all these relations and their resultant duties fully recognized. The first four Commandments set forth duties to God ; the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth declare our duties to our fellow-men in relation to their lives, families, property, and characters ; the fifth

invests with new sanctions the divine institution of the family, and places it between duties to God and duties to man, because in it these several duties are first learned ; and the tenth, going down into the heart and life, indicates, in one marvellous and all-embracing provision, our duties to ourselves, connecting them also with our duties to our fellow-men in a way that is equally marvellous to a thoughtful mind.

Advancing, again, to our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, we find these same relations recognized in it, and the same duties inculcated. Indeed, apart from these, it seems impossible to analyze these great teachings of our Lord.

What strikes us first is the clear statement that our Lord abrogates or destroys no jot or tittle of the law of God. If there are in the code of Moses things, institutions, rites, ordinances, ceremonies, which are ordained as typical and "the shadow of good things to come," these He fulfils. And fulfilment is neither abrogation nor destruction. If there are those great moral rules which, grounded on the eternal principles of right and wrong, are from the beginning, and only change by being more completely unfolded and therefore understood, these He carries out from the letter into the spirit ; and, investing them with fuller sanctions, makes them also live in nobler forms. It is the old tree, planted long ages since, nay, coeval with the race, with its deeply penetrating roots and well-compacted and shapely trunk, spreading out into a new wealth of branch and twig, foliage and flower and fruit ; but it is the old tree still.

If now we turn to the last half of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, we shall find a striking agreement in the arrangement of the duties spoken of, with that which we found in the Ten Commandments ; the only difference being that the duties due to our fellow-men come first to view.¹

First, then, two of the old laws are rehearsed, — those,

¹ It is worth while to read, just here, 1 John iv.

namely, forbidding murder and adultery, — and they are carried inward from the outward act to the thought and intent of the heart; and thus an explanation is afforded as to how the new teaching fulfils the old.

Then follows a re-assertion of the sacred institution of the family, and the miserable abuse of multiplied causes of divorce — which destroy that ordinance of God — is scathingly denounced.

Next comes a prohibition of irreverence and profanity toward God's Holy Name; and do not these two things lie at the root of most human failures in the duties which men owe to their Creator?

Precisely, then, as in the code of Sinai, the family is again placed between duties to God and duties to men, as the point where both meet, and where the earliest instruction in both is given.

And, lastly, just as in the Ten Commandments we found at the close of all the words, "Thou shalt not covet;" so here we find two duties to ourselves — touching indeed (all such duties must) those we owe to others — inculcated, which really cover all the ground: namely, the meekness that patiently endures injury and wrong, and the love that forgives, and prays for, and does good to enemies.

So the identity of the precepts given, and of their arrangement, as between the code delivered among the rugged cliffs of the Arabian desert, and that pronounced upon the sunny hillside of Judæa, is perfect: duties to God and man centring in the family coming first, and duties to one's self closing the record of injunctions.

But there is still more to be said. If we pass from the fifth to the sixth chapter of this Gospel, we are confronted with something that has puzzled many a reader. After a general direction, not to "do our righteousness¹ before men," — that is, to avoid all ostentation in what we do, —

¹ The Authorized Version reads "alms;" but "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνην) is undoubtedly the correct reading.

three things are named, alms-giving, prayer, and fasting. But no man, surely, will say that these three things are all the duties of the Christian life. Why, then, are they named here? Simply because they are representative duties. Each represents one of the three divisions of duty which have been under review. In alms-giving, which stretches out the hand to help the needy, we find a representative of our duties to our fellow-men. In prayer, which is the very life of our relations to our Heavenly Father, we have a representative of the duties which we owe to God. In fasting, which is nothing and less than nothing if it is made to end in itself, and is not used simply as a means to the great end of self control, — in this we are presented with a representative of the duties we owe to ourselves. So the classification and arrangement remain unchanged.

Nor is the case altered if we turn to the Apostolic teaching. When St. Paul preached to Félix “the faith in Christ,” we are told that “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.”¹ Righteousness covers the duties to God and man; temperance,² which, in Scripture, reaches far beyond the conventional signification attached to it now, covers all duties which a man owes to himself, comprised in the one word “self-control.” When the same Apostle, writing to Titus, would sum up the duties of the Christian life, and give its outline, he says, “Teaching us . . . that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present life;”³ soberly in ourselves, righteously towards our neighbors, godly towards our Heavenly Father. So does the Apostle of the Gentiles echo the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, — as that echoed and carried out the teaching of the Ten Commandments; as they echoed and enlarged the less clear but undoubted teaching of the law of nature.

Now, a man who “was a devout man, and one that feared

¹ Acts xxiv. 24, 25.

² In the original, ἐγκράτεια; see Gal. v. 22, 23; 2 Pet. i. 6; Tit. i. 8.

³ Tit. ii. 12.

God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always" (and all this Cornelius was and did), was certainly one who "feared God, and wrought righteousness," according to the light that he had and the power that was given him. He lived up to the law of nature as he knew it; possibly he knew more, even, from his contact with the Jews. And so he was "accepted," according to what he had, and not according to what he had not; accepted not in or for himself and his own works, but because of the merit of that one mighty Sacrifice, the objective value of which reached to and touched one who had never known of it nor of its Offerer. God alone knows of how many in different lands and ages these same things may be said. It is enough that He does know, and that the One great Sacrifice has such power and efficacy. If the subjective narrowness of sectarianism cannot comprehend this objective value of the Redeemer's death; if it cannot comprehend how those who have never known or thought about it—especially the latter—can be benefited by it,—one can only lament that it has lost so grand and blessed a portion of the heritage of the Catholic Church, and lament even more that this is not all which it has lost.

It will not be amiss to read, in connection with this passage in Acts, and what has been said upon it, the parable of the talents, and the account of the general judgment, in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.¹ The former of these presents the rule by which Christians will be judged, and the latter that by which others will be judged. The reading will give us fresh motives for acknowledging and adoring the mercy and the justice of our God and Father.

But let no man quote these words of St. Peter, as justifying one born and trained in Christian lands, and even brought into the Church of God, in neglecting God's ordinances, institutions, and laws. He is not a devout man, he does not

¹ Bishop Seabury has two admirable sermons on these passages, — Discourses xiv. and xv.

fear God and work righteousness, who attempts this ; who turns from the light of the gospel and the ordinances of Christ's Church, and acknowledges no law and no light but that of Nature, as he calls it.

5. Those who received the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Ghost were nevertheless baptized. The lesson is as clear as in the case of St. Paul. No gifts dispense with the established ordinances of God where those ordinances may be had.

SECTION IV.

RECEPTION AT JERUSALEM OF THE INTELLIGENCE THAT THE GENTILES WERE ADMITTED TO THE CHURCH.

(Chap. xi. 1-18.)

1. And the apostles and brethren that were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.

2. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him,

3. Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them.

4. But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them, saying,

5. I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me:

6. Upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

7. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat.

8. But I said, Not so, Lord: for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth.

9. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

10. And this was done three times. and all were drawn up again into heaven.

11. And, behold, immediately there were three men already come unto the house where I was, sent from Cæsarea unto me.

12. And the Spirit bade me go with them, nothing doubting. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered into the man's house:

13. And he shewed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter;

14. Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

15. And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.

16. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.

17. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?

18. When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

WE can hardly comprehend the feeling, amounting to consternation, with which the Jewish converts must have received the intelligence that the Gentiles were to be admitted to membership and privileges in the Church of God. Isaiah had indeed declared that "the Gentiles should come to the light" that was to shine upon the future Israel, flying to it "as a cloud, and as the doves to the windows;"

that "all nations" should flow unto the "mountain of the Lord's House;" that God would take of the Gentiles "for priests and for Levites;" and that there should be "a root of Jesse" to which "the Gentiles should seek."¹ And long before the day when God made with His people the covenant in Horeb, He had said to Abraham, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."²

But all these, and manifold other prophecies, had been read under the influence of prejudice, contempt, and even hatred, which had deepened and strengthened as the centuries had gone by. The veil was on the heart of the Jewish people "in the reading of the Old Testament."³ So that even when they acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah, and came into the Church of the new covenant, they brought with them their old prejudices and convictions, and clung very generally to their former antagonism to the Gentiles, and also to their attachment to the Mosaic ceremonial law. Several questions, then, must almost inevitably be presented to the Church for discussion and settlement, and that at an early day: first, Are the Gentiles to be admitted to the Church? secondly, If so admitted, are they to stand on a footing of equality with the Jews, or is the old separation to continue? thirdly, If they are so to stand, then are circumcision and the ceremonial law to be imposed on them? fourthly, If these are not to be imposed on the Gentiles, are they still to bind or only to be permitted to the Jews; fifthly, If permitted, is the permission to be permanent or temporary? sixthly, If temporary, when is the permission to cease?

The first of these questions appears to have been sufficiently answered by St. Peter's statements recorded in this section, and accepted by those who heard them. The second is impliedly answered here, and, together with the third, would seem to have been fully answered in the council at Jerusalem, of which we read in the fifteenth chapter of Acts.

¹ Isa. lx. 1, 8, ii. 2, lxvi. 21, xi. 10.

² Gen. xxii. 18.

³ 2 Cor. iii. 13-15.

It is obvious, however, from what St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Galatians, that the question came up again at Antioch, and in its most offensive form in Galatia ; while the other questions found their settlement only as time went on, and were not probably disposed of till after the destruction of Jerusalem.

While, however, we fully understand that Jews and Gentiles are on a footing of entire equality in the Church of God ; that no Gentile was expected, from the beginning, to observe the Mosaic law ; that it was not even binding on, but only permitted for a season to, the Jews ; and that now even that permission is a thing of the far-off past, — still the question meets us, Why was any such permissive use accorded to the Jews, and when did it come to an end ?

It may help us to reach what is believed to be the true answer to this question, to remember, that in none of the works of God, so far as our knowledge extends, is there any abrupt transition from one to another, or any clear-cut and absolute division between them. In the natural world, day and night are not clearly and instantly separated, but there are the morning and the evening twilight ; the seasons rise or fade into and overlap each other : and so it is in regard to the various stages of human life, infancy, youth, manhood, and old age. Nor is it otherwise in those dispensations and periods in and by which our Heavenly Father has carried on His one great plan of man's redemption and salvation to its final form — final, that is, for this world — in the Christian Dispensation ; while the reverent-minded and thoughtful student of the story of these dispensations can hardly fail to be struck with the place which God's judgments occupy in it. Indeed, "the righteous judgments of God, like the weldings of a forge, have served to overlap and bind together the several portentous periods of human history. The ark which preserved Noah and his sons as the progenitors of the second period, floated over the waves of the Deluge, and bound together, in awful punishment and

stupendous mercy, the ante-diluvian and the post-diluvian periods. The rejection of the patriarchal Church for their idolatry, and the symbolic warning of Sodom and Gomorrah, were many years after the call of Abraham, with which the third period began. The judgments upon Israel and Judah were still more lasting. They bound together the fourth and fifth periods by a still more fiery indignation. The sixth period began at the Resurrection; but the judgment which blended the fifth period with it did not begin till the seventy weeks of mercy were ended, and continued till the forty-second year after the crime for which Judah was rejected.”¹ Then came the destruction of Jerusalem, the last great type that will be given of the day “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire.”²

Some thoughts like these would seem to have been in Augustine’s mind when he wrote to Jerome: “For now when the Faith had come, which was before declared by those observances (i.e., of the Mosaic law), and was revealed after the death and resurrection of the Lord, they lost, so to speak, their life. Notwithstanding, like dead bodies they were carried out by the care of relatives, in some sort to burial, not in pretence but religiously, and were not immediately abandoned or cast out to the detractions of enemies as to the bitings of dogs. Now, however, if any Christian, Jew though he may have been, undertakes to celebrate these rites, digging up as it were slumbering ashes, he is not a pious bearer of the corpse, but an impious violator of the sepulchre.”³ Farther on, in the same Epistle, he expresses his entire agreement with the opinion of Jerome, that “the

¹ Dr. Jarvis, *Church of the Redeemed*, p. 597; compare also pp. 2 and 593. The writer’s first period ends with the Deluge; the second, with the call of Abraham; the third, with the separation of Israel, and the giving of the law; the fourth, with the Babylonish captivity; the fifth, with the destruction of the second temple; the sixth is still in progress. This arrangement has been criticised as “defective and injudicious.” It is, at all events, Scriptural.

² 2 Thess. i. 7, 8.

³ Epistle lxxxii.

ceremonies of the Jews are pernicious and deadly¹ to Christians; and that whoever observes them, whether a Jew or Gentile by birth, has plunged into the abyss of Satan."

May we not fairly say, that, up to the death and resurrection of our Lord, the Mosaic ceremonial law was living though not life-giving; that after the Lord's resurrection, and till the final destruction of the temple, it was moribund, though its observance was permitted to the Jewish, while it was never laid upon the Gentile converts; that after the final destruction of the temple, with which the last vestiges of the Mosaic Dispensation disappeared, this permission ended, and observance of Jewish ceremonies was forbidden to any Christian man?²

These considerations explain St. Paul's acts and words which have seemed to many persons to be inconsistent with each other. When he says, "unto the Jews I became" — not a Jew, but — "*as a Jew*,"³ he means that under the permission noted above he was willing to observe ceremonial ordinances, not as binding, not as bringing any spiritual advantage, but simply as allowed in order to remove Jewish prejudices not yet conquered. So he caused Timothy, the son of a Jewess, to be circumcised; and shaved his head, in consequence of a Nazaritic vow, at Cenchrea; and shared in the same vow with others at Jerusalem.⁴ When he says, "to them that are without law [I became] as without law,"⁵ he means that among the Gentiles he asserted his rights as a freeman of Christ, which, indeed, he had not denied among the Jews, and recognized, as he himself says, no distinction between Jew and Gentile as members of the Body of Christ. So he refused to allow Titus, the son of heathen parents, to

¹ *Mortifera*, implying very much more than that they had merely "lost their life" and were *defuncta*, dead.

² In the first period the legal ceremonies were *viva non vivifica*; in the second, *morbunda sed non mortifera*; in the third, *mortua et mortifera*.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 20.

⁴ Acts xvi. 3, xviii. 18, xxi. 26.

⁵ 1 Cor. ix. 21.

be circumcised; and withstood Peter "to the face," when that Apostle (exhibiting again something of the lack of courage which led to his sad denial of his Lord) yielded to the Judaizers at Antioch, and would have "compelled the Gentiles to live as do the Jews."¹ There was no inconsistency in all this. What there was, was that true charity which "hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things."

There is not infrequently made, to-day, an utter perversion of what St. Paul says concerning Mosaic ordinances, by applying his words to Christian ordinances. How have self-righteousness and false spiritualism disorted themselves in this ample field, and converted passages, which had only in view observances of the old ceremonial law, into condemnations, or at least disparagements, of the divinely ordered ordinances of the Church! Because St. Paul speaks of certain things in that law as "weak and beggarly elements of bondage,"² therefore the most venerable institutions of the Church, even those that are divine, are to be so stigmatized. Because he says that "in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature,"³ therefore baptism and the Eucharist are of no avail; and this in the face of the fact that in the very Epistle in which this statement occurs, the Apostle also says, "as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ."⁴ May it be that they who thus wrest Holy Scripture, know not what they do!

All ordinances, in all dispensations, are means to an end that lies beyond them, and is greater than they are or can be. In any true conception of these, therefore, there are two things which cannot safely be severed, and one held to the exclusion of the other. These are the ordinance itself, and the end which it is a means of reaching. It is easy on the one side so to exalt the means as to disparage, if not to

¹ Gal. ii. 11-15.

² Gal. iv. 9.

³ Gal. vi. 15.

⁴ Gal. iii. 27.

forget, the end; and, on the other side, so to dwell on the end as to belittle, if not to put aside, the means.

The Jews made this mistake concerning their sacrifices. They made them end in themselves. They fancied that God instituted them for the sake of having them. They forgot that there were moral purposes to be answered by them, and that these purposes were greater than the sacrifices themselves. This is what Jeremiah means when he represents God as saying, "I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice."¹ That is, my purpose in regard to the ceremonial law was not fulfilled in the mere offering of the sacrifice: there was something beyond that, namely spiritual instruction and moral discipline. In precisely the same way there have been, and no doubt are now, in the Church, persons who treat the divine ordinances of the new law in the same way; forgetting that they are means through which, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, we are united to the resurrection life of our blessed Lord, and through Him to the Father; and ending every thing in and with the ordinance itself.

The other danger is, however, in these days more pressing and more prevalent. Men are impatient of having any thing, as some say, put between their souls and Christ; as others say, between themselves and God. The former disparage sacraments; the latter disparage, if they do not reject, the Mediator. They admit means to an end everywhere but in religion. There they clamor for the end without the means. Alas that their unwisdom works such fearful harm to human souls!

¹ Jer. vii. 22. There is an excellent note, in reply to the interpretation put upon this passage by the "new school" of critics, in the note at the end of this chapter in the *Speaker's Commentary*.

SECTION V.

OTHER PREPARATIONS FOR THE MISSION TO THE GENTILES.

(Chap. xi. 19-30.)

19. ¶ Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.

20. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.

22. ¶ Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch.

23. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.

24. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.

25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul:

26. And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

27. ¶ And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch.

28. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar.

29. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judæa:

30. Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

1. THIS section takes us back to the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and narrates certain events which were preparatory to the Mission to the Gentiles, the story of which begins at the thirteenth chapter, and, with the exception of the account of the council at Jerusalem (if, indeed, that is an exception), occupies the remainder of this book. Its beginning illustrates, as has been said before, one of the ways in which the Church grows by persecution. The sowers are scattered abroad, and the field in which the Word is sown is enlarged.

2. Phenice was a narrow strip of land sloping from the foot of Lebanon to the seacoast. Tyre and Sidon were

among its cities. Cyprus was the native land of Barnabas, and many Jews had settled there. Antioch stands, in importance, next to Jerusalem in the history of Christianity, and, indeed, has been called the Gentile Jerusalem. It was situated on the Orontes, just where that river breaks through the mountain-range, at the point of meeting of the chains of Lebanon and Taurus, and at the distance of about sixteen miles from its seaport Seleucia. "Here the first Gentile church was founded; here the disciples of Christ were first called Christians; here St. Paul exercised, so far as is distinctly recorded, his first ministerial work; hence he started at the beginning of his first missionary journey, and hither he returned. So again, after the Apostolic Council, he began and ended his second missionary journey at this place. This, too, was the starting-point of the third missionary journey, which was brought to a termination by the imprisonment at Jerusalem and Cæsarea." ¹ Antioch had, besides its ecclesiastical, its civil, importance; in that, while it had been the capital of the Greek kings of Syria, it had become, in the times of the Apostles, the residence of the Roman governors of the province.

We have here an illustration of the way in which the Apostles fulfilled the command to be witnesses to our Lord, not only "in Jerusalem and in all Judæa and in Samaria," but also "unto the uttermost part of the earth." The method was to seize a central point, and to work out from it. The first central point was Jerusalem, which thus became the mother — not the mistress — of all the churches. Then came Samaria, the city where Philip the Deacon preached and baptized, and St. Peter and St. John administered the laying-on of hands. Next followed Antioch. And then, as we follow St. Paul in his journeyings, we reach successively Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Rome. All these places were centres of intel-

¹ Dean Howson in *Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

lectual, commercial, or political life and influence, — places which not only had large numbers dwelling in them, but to which others were drawn for the various purposes indicated by their several characteristics.

Not only do we thus find the method employed by the Apostles in propagating the gospel, and, perhaps, gain a hint as to the best method for our own time, but we also find a wonderful exhibition of the faith and courage of the Apostles themselves. "Obscure as they were, they were not content with taking up obscure ground; they did not secrete themselves in rural and sequestered neighborhoods, and trust to emerge by degrees, as their new principles should creep through the country, without observation: they boldly fixed their headquarters, by preference, in the most conspicuous and flourishing towns; Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, being all of them sites the most commanding; cities, populous, busy, alive, intelligent, pre-eminently set on a hill; serving, in addition to their general aptitude for the purposes contemplated by the Apostles, to convince mankind that humble teachers of the gospel, who planted their standards so bravely, must be confident in their cause, must feel their strength, were ready to challenge inquiry, and were convinced that their efforts would make an impression on the world."¹

When from the Apostolic age we pass on to later times, we find these same places re-appearing in a way that is very significant. They have become the seats of bishops; and when, later on, convenience of ecclesiastical administration requires it, some of them become metropolitan sees, and a few the seats of patriarchs. In all cases, more especially in those of metropolitanical and patriarchal sees, it is quite as much the civil importance of the city that determines its ecclesiastical position as any merely ecclesiastical relations or associations; indeed, we may fairly say that civil consider-

¹ J. J. Blunt, *History of the Christian Church during the First Three Centuries*, pp. 53, 54.

ations outweigh ecclesiastical ones. Thus the Council of Antioch, in 341, says, "It behooves the Bishops in every province to own him who presides over the metropolis, and who is to take care of the whole province; because *all who have business* come together from every side to the metropolis. Wherefore it has been decreed that he should have a *precedence of rank*,"¹ etc. In the same way the "Fathers gave honorary *privileges* to Old Rome, because it was the imperial city;" and when Constantinople became New Rome, they gave it *equal privileges*; "judging, with reason, that the city which was honored with the sovereignty and senate, and which enjoyed *equal privileges* with the elder royal Rome, should be magnified like her in ecclesiastical matters, being the second after her."² This was the declaration of the Council of Chalcedon in 451; and it confirms the action of the first Council of Constantinople in 381, which gave "*prerogatives of honor* to Constantinople . . . because it is New Rome." All this can have only one meaning. It clearly indicates that the honorary precedences in the great Patriarchates were mainly due to the civil importance of the cities where they had their seat. The ecclesiastical ideas are of a later date.

3. There is a various reading in ver. 20, of which something should be said. Some manuscripts read *Hellenistas*, translated in our version "Grecians," and meaning, as has been said, Greek-speaking Jews. Others read *Hellenas*, in our version "Greeks," and meaning Gentiles.³ Except for the sake of an accurate text, the reading is not material. If the preaching spoken of was to the Greek-speaking Jews it probably preceded, if it was to the Gentiles it probably

¹ Canon IX. The words translated "precedence of rank" are in the original τῆ τιμῆ προηγείσθαι.

² Council of Chalcedon, Can. XXVIII.: Privileges, τὰ πρεσβεία; equal privileges, τὰ ἴσα πρεσβεία. Council of Constantinople, Can. III.: Prerogatives of honor, πρεσβεία τῆς τιμῆς.

³ See especially Westcott and Hort, *New Testament*, vol. i. App. p. 93; and Scrivener, *Introduction to Criticism of New Testament*, p. 536 (2d ed.).

followed, the conversion of Cornelius; though it may very well have preceded any *action*, in consequence of that conversion, at Jerusalem.

4. There is something peculiarly attractive in the character of Barnabas, as it is brought before us in the few and slight hints and touches that are given in the Acts. The very name added by the Apostles to his own, Barnabas, whether we interpret it Son of Consolation or Son of Prophecy, is suggestive. As a Son of Consolation, he ministered of his worldly substance to those who were in want. As a Son of Prophecy, which word in the New Testament means first of all exhortation, "he exhorted all, that, with purpose of heart, they should cleave unto the Lord."¹ His abundant alms-giving attests his love for Christ. His bringing Saul to the Apostles, when the disciples were "all afraid of him," exhibits the charity that "thinketh no evil." His seeking Saul at Tarsus, his bringing him to Antioch, and his willingness to take the lower place when the Apostle of the Gentiles is called up to the higher, — all show to us the truly noble man, ready to abase himself (as one has said, "to obliterate himself"),² so only the great work might go forward. We are prepared to be told, even from these outlines, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord." We can hardly help the thought that St. Paul had him in mind when, in the Epistle to the Romans, he wrote, "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another, . . . distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality."³

5. It can never be fully determined whether the name Christians was given to the disciples at Antioch by the Jews, the Gentiles, or the believers themselves. It seems hardly probable that the Jews would give it, inasmuch as its

¹ Acts iv. 36, xi. 23.

² Renan says this! See Dean Howson's *Bohlen Lectures* for 1880. I cannot but think that scant justice has been done to this modest but very valuable little book.

³ Rom. xii. 10, 13. The original, *φιλοξενίαν*, means a good deal more than *hospitality* in our ordinary use of the word.

application would involve connecting the name Messiah or Christ with the despised Nazarenes or Galilæans. As little is it likely to have been given by the heathen, who surely could have known nothing of the claims of Christians to share in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and to whom our Lord was presented less as the promised Messiah than as the Son of God raised from the dead with power. Far more likely is it that they who must have been taught that they had "an unction from the Holy One," that He who anointed them was God, and that the anointing which they had received was to abide with them,¹ — far more likely is it that these should have taken to themselves, not in arrogance but in deep humility, the name "anointed-ones." It would be the solemn reference of all that they had and were, to another than themselves, even to the Holy Spirit of God. If the testimony of Tacitus, that Christians were commonly so called from "Christ, who suffered during the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate," is to be taken as proof that the name was given by the enemies of the Lord, so be it. Names neither create nor give dignity to things, but things dignify and sometimes create names. Of all ridiculous things, those are most ridiculous which with sounding and pretentious titles lack correspondent realities.

However it originated, the name became one that its wearers honored and gloried in. "That I may not only be called a Christian, but may be found to be one," writes Ignatius to the Romans; and again to the Magnesians, "Whoever is called by any other name than this [Christian] is not of God." "I am a Christian," says Polycarp to the proconsul. The martyrs at Lyons and Vienne proclaim themselves Christians; and in the Clementine Liturgy prayer is offered "for every Christian soul," and God is thanked "that the name of Christ has been called upon us."²

¹ 1 John ii. 20; 2 Cor. i. 21; 1 John ii. 27.

² Ignatius, *Romans*, c. iii.; *Magnesians*, c. x. *Polycarp's Martyrdom*, c. x. *Letter from Lyons and Vienne*, Eusebius, *Ecl. Hist.*, Lib. v. c. 1. *Clementine Liturgy*, Deacons' Litany and Thanksgiving after Communion.

6. In connection with the mission of Barnabas and Paul, as bearers of alms to Jerusalem for the relief of the brethren in Judæa, we find the first mention of presbyters or elders. No special account is given us, such as we find in the case of the deacons, of their institution or of the mode of their appointment. Their existence, not only at Jerusalem, but elsewhere, is abundantly proved from Holy Scripture. In returning from their first missionary tour, Sts. Paul and Barnabas "ordained them elders [presbyters] in every Church." St. Paul summoned the "elders [presbyters] of the Church" of Ephesus to Miletus; and we find them at Philippi, at Ephesus again, and in Crete.¹ Many early writers thought that they, as well as the deacons, were taken from the seventy whom the Lord appointed after He had chosen the twelve.²

St. Paul alone, of all the New-Testament writers, uses another word to designate this order in the Ministry, namely, bishops [ἐπισκόπους].³ St. Luke when he is writing history, St. James, and St. Peter, speak of them only as presbyters [πρεσβυτέρους].⁴ This, therefore, would seem to have been their proper title, and St. Paul had apparently in mind the character of their office and its duties; while their proper appellation took cognizance of their age rather than of their work. Nor does St. Paul always call them *episcopoi*; on the contrary, he just as often terms them presbyters.

Theodoret tells us⁵ "that they formerly called the same persons presbyters and bishops, and those who are now called

¹ Acts xiv. 23, xx. 17; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. v. 1; Tit. i. 5

² Luke x. 1. See Archbishop Potter, *Church Government*, chap. ii., at the end.

³ Acts xx. 28; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1, 2; Tit. i. 7.

⁴ Acts xiv. 23, xx. 17; Jas. v. 14; 1 Pet. v. 1.

⁵ Theodoret on 1 Tim. iii. As Theodoret was placed in a monastery at the age of seven years, under the tuition of Theodore of Mopsuestia and Chrysostom, and became bishop of Cyrus in Syria in 420, this carries his testimony back to within three hundred years of the Apostolic age. And when one remembers how few intermediate witnesses this period would require to fill up the gap between him and that age, his testimony may surely be received. On new applications of old words, see Bentley's Answer to Collins; in Bishop Randolph's *Enchiridion*, vol. v. p. 203 ff.

bishops they called apostles; but as time went on, they left the name apostle to those who were truly apostles, and to those that were once called apostles they gave the name of bishops."

It is quite obvious that the presbyters occupy a position intermediate between apostles and deacons. Nor do we find any other orders of ministers than these three, mentioned in the Acts. For when Philip is called an evangelist, is it immediately added that he was "one of the seven." ¹

¹ Acts xxi. 8.

SECTION VI.

THE FOURTH PERSECUTION.

(Chap. xii.)

1. Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth *his* hands to vex certain of the church.
2. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.
3. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)
4. And when he had apprehended him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.
5. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.
6. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.
7. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon *him*, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from *his* hands.
8. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me.
9. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.
10. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him.
11. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and *from* all the expectation of the people of the Jews.
12. And when he had considered *the thing*, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.
13. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda.
14. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate.
15. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.
16. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened *the door*, and saw him, they were astonished.
17. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place.
18. Now as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers, what was become of Peter.
19. And when Herod had sought for him, and found him not, he examined the keepers, and commanded that *they* should be put to death. And he went down from Judæa to Cæsarea, and *there* abode.
20. ¶ And Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's *country*.
21. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them.

22. And the people gave a shout, *saying*, *It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.*

23. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.

24. ¶ But the word of God grew and multiplied.

25. And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and took with them John, whose surname was Mark.

I. HITHERTO the persecutions of the disciples have originated with, and been carried on by, the Jews. Now we reach the point where, whatever may have been the originating cause of the attack, the power of pagan Rome appears as directly concerned in it. In how many ways does this Book of Acts present an epitome of the fortunes of the Church! The trials from without, originating in the frenzied hatred of the Jew, or the "superb contempt" of the Roman, and involving threatening, imprisonment, scourging, death; the trial from within, the sins of Ananias and Sapphira, and of Simon Magus, and the worse than follies of the Judaizers,—how much of the future story of the Church is imaged in these things! And then, God be thanked, on the other side, the growth without and the growth within, the increase of the mustard-seed, and the working of the leaven, souls gathered, holy lives, blessed deaths,—all the proofs of a Divine presence, and a heavenly life, in the mystical Body of Christ, the New Jerusalem, the Church of the living God.

2. Several Herods are mentioned in the Gospels and Acts: (1) Herod the Great, the rebuilder of the temple, and the murderer of the Holy Innocents; ¹ (2) Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, the slayer of John Baptist, and the one to whom Pilate sent our Lord; ² (3) Herod Philip I., the first husband of Herodias; ³ (4) Herod Philip II., "tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis;" ⁴ (5) Herod Agrippa I., the Edomite, the actor in this fourth persecution; and (6) Herod Agrippa II., before whom and Festus, St. Paul made his defence. ⁵

¹ Matt. ii. 1.

² Matt. xiv. 1-12; Mark vi. 14-29; Luke ix. 7-9, xxiii. 7.

³ Mark vi. 17; Luke iii. 19.

⁴ Luke iii. 1.

⁵ Acts xxv.

If we may believe the testimony of Josephus, the Herod here mentioned was beneficent and kindly in temper; and, while he "was more friendly to the Greeks than to the Jews," he still "loved to live continually at Jerusalem," and was so careful in the observance of the law that no day "passed over his head without its appointed sacrifice."¹ He was also, however, selfishly ambitious and fond of popularity; and therefore, as Pilate was "willing to content the people" by giving up our Lord to be crucified, and as Felix and Festus were "willing to do the Jews a pleasure"² in the case of St. Paul, so he, for similar reasons, "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the Church." His beneficence and kindness were outward shows to promote his selfish ends, and not principles that lived in his real character.

3. The James who is here mentioned as having met his martyrdom, not by any Jewish punishment, but by that sword which was one of the insignia of the civil power, was the brother of John, and one of the three Apostles who appear so distinctly in the Gospels.³ He is known as James the Greater. The incident in the Gospels to which one's thoughts go back is that visit of Salome, the wife of Zebedee, to our Lord, when she joined with her two sons, James and John, in asking that they might sit, the one on His right hand and the other on His left, in His kingdom; and when our Lord asked whether they were able to drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism, and they replied that they were able.⁴ The event proved that this was no vain boast. The baptism and the cup came to St. James now in one supreme moment; to St. John they were present through long years of patient endurance.

We may all of us well remember what Gregory the Great says: "That there are two kinds of martyrdom, the one

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book XIX., vii. 3.

² Mark xv. 15; Acts xxiv. 27, xxv. 9.

³ Matt. xvii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 18; Mark xiv. 33.

⁴ Matt. xx. 20-23; Mark x. 35-40. Compare for the baptism, Luke xii. 50; and for the cup, Mark xiv. 36.

the apostleship of the uncircumcision was transferred from St. Peter to St. Paul; "for He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in [Paul] towards the Gentiles." Nor is it without meaning, that, after St. Peter thus passed into the apostolate of the circumcision, he is named *after* James "the Lord's brother;" and that, in immediate connection with this, we are told how St. Paul at Antioch "withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed."¹ These things are simply and absolutely inexplicable on the modern, ultramontane, and Jesuit theory of a supremacy over the Church vested in St. Peter. That theory involves as complete a break with Scripture as it does with historic testimony.

5. The Mary at whose house the disciples were gathered was probably a sister of Barnabas.² Her son, John Mark, is sometimes spoken of by his double name, sometimes as John, sometimes as Mark.³ It would seem that he had been converted by St. Peter, who calls him his son.⁴ He accompanied Barnabas and Saul when they returned to Antioch from Jerusalem, and also went with them on their first missionary journey. For some unexplained reason, though evidently one not creditable to him, he left them at Perga in Pamphylia, and went back to Jerusalem; and this desertion on his part gave rise to the "sharp contention" between Paul and Barnabas.⁵ "It has been surmised that filial anxiety about [his mother's] welfare during the persecutions and the famine which distressed the Church at Jerusalem was the chief cause of Mark's withdrawal from the missionary labors of Paul and Barnabas."⁶ More probably it was a failing in cour-

¹ Gal. ii. 9, 11.

² Col. iv. 10. Alford in his *Prolegomena* [chap. iii. sec. 1] *on the Gospels*, makes Mary the *sister* of Barnabas, and in his comment on Acts xii. 12 says she was his *aunt*!

³ John Mark, Acts xii. 12, 25, and xv. 37; John, Acts xiii. 5, 13; Mark, Acts xv. 39; Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11, Phil. 24.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 13.

⁵ Acts xiii. 13, xv. 38, 39.

⁶ Dean Plumptre in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*.

age to meet the difficulties and dangers of the way. Whatever it was, it is clear that it did not permanently separate him from the Apostle to the Gentiles. For St. Paul mentions him as one of his "fellow workers unto the kingdom of God who have been a comfort unto" him; and, in the last Epistle that he ever wrote, commends him, as profitable to [him] for the ministry.¹

The testimony of all antiquity connects Mark closely with St. Peter, and makes him the Apostle's amanuensis and interpreter.² If some of the most distinguished of the early writers and historians may be believed, he accompanied St. Peter to Rome, and was afterwards sent on a mission to Egypt, where he founded the Church of Alexandria, so long a centre of the best learning, and so prominent in early Christian history; thence he went preaching in various places; but returned finally to Alexandria, became its bishop, and suffered martyrdom.³

6. When the damsel who had recognized St. Peter's voice persisted in declaring to those who had assembled to pray for his deliverance that he stood at the gate, they replied, "It is his angel." In saying this they simply expressed a common belief of the Jews of our Lord's time, a belief general, also, among the early Christians, and assuredly forbidden to no one to entertain, — that to each person there is allotted a guardian angel, whose special ministrations are devoted to him.

Bishop Bull says all that need be said on this matter. After quoting our Lord's words, "*their* angels do always

¹ Col. iv. 10, 11; 2 Tim. iv. 11.

² Irenæus, *Against Heresies* (Lib. III. chap. i. § 1), calls him "the disciple and interpreter of Peter;" and again (Lib. III. chap. x. § 6), "the interpreter and follower of Peter."

³ Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and Jerome, all bear this testimony. Whatever may be thought of St. Mark's visit to Rome, his relations to St. Peter and his connection with Alexandria and Egypt appear to be established. Bishop Pearson — as others also have done — thought that the Babylon spoken of at the conclusion of St. Peter's second Epistle was neither Rome nor Babylon the Great, but Babylon in Egypt, otherwise known as Old Cairo. Pearson, *Minor Works*, vol. ii. p. 353 ff.

behold the face of my Father which is in heaven,"¹ he goes on: ". . . Another text, which seems plainly to countenance the opinion of guardian angels, is that known one in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we read that St. Peter having been imprisoned by Herod, and being miraculously delivered out of prison by an angel, presently comes to the house of Mary, the mother of John, whose surname was Mark, where many Christians were met together unto prayer, and probably praying for St. Peter's deliverance; coming to this house, and knocking and desiring entrance, the maid that came to the door hearing and knowing his voice, and being surprised with joy and wonder at his unexpected coming, left the door shut as it was, and, running back to the company, tells them that Peter was at the door. But they, being persuaded that Peter was at that time fast enough in his chains, slighted the maid's report, yea, and accused her of madness. But she soberly and constantly affirming that it was even so as she had said, they then (supposing it impossible it should be Peter himself) make this conclusion, *It is his angel*; i.e., his guardian angel, assuming at that time his shape and voice. The whole story you may read, vv. 12-16 of that chapter.

"They who tell us here that the word *ἄγγελος* may be translated *a messenger*, and so be understood of a messenger sent by St. Peter from his prison, to give the brethren intelligence of his concerns, do, in my judgment, fasten an intolerably absurd sense upon the text. For, with what reason, I beseech you, could those Christians imagine that the maid, to whom the Apostle was so well known (as the text itself expressly affirms), should mistake a messenger from Peter for Peter himself, especially after the maid had so positively and constantly affirmed that she was sure it

¹ Matt. xviii. 10. As in most cases, so here, there are two opposite errors to be avoided: first, the practical denial that there are such beings as angels; and, secondly, the offering worship to a guardian angel, which must be, of necessity, an act of idolatry. Angels refused worship when attempted to be offered by St. John. One angel only claimed it, and he was a fallen one. Matt. iv. 9; Luke iv. 7.

was Peter? Besides, if the Christian brethren, when they made this conclusion, *It is his angel*, had meant only that it was a messenger from St. Peter, they would doubtless have presently either gone themselves, or sent the maid again to the door to let in the messenger, that they might know what news he brought from the Apostle, about whom they were so solicitous. But this they did not, as the text plainly intimates, being under a consternation, till after the continual knocking of St. Peter; and then they took courage to go themselves and open the door.

“Lastly, It is here again to be remembered that the persons who spoke these words, *It is his angel*, were Jews, and consequently that the words are to be understood as spoken *ex sententia Judæorum*, in a sense agreeable to the opinion of the Jews, who generally acknowledged such guardian angels, as hath been already more than once observed. This opinion they retained after they had been taught the doctrine of Christianity; nor doth the holy text reflect any the least blame upon their opinion.”¹

“From these and the like texts of Scripture, seeming so plainly to favor the general belief of Jews, Christians, yea, and of the wiser heathens, I cannot but judge it highly probable that every faithful person at least hath his particular good genius, or angel, appointed by God over him, as the guardian and guide of his life. But yet, if any man shall look on our inferences from these texts as not demonstrative, and shall modestly doubt of or dissent from so received an opinion, for my part I shall not quarrel with him, provided that in general he acknowledges the ministry of angels for

¹ It is almost inconceivable, but nevertheless true, that there are persons, who, when they read the words “It is his angel,” suppose them to mean that St. Peter’s *ghost* had appeared to the damsel! This absurd mistake grows out of some confused idea that good people when they die become angels; an idea fostered by certain so-called hymns. In a New-England burial-ground there is a headstone which says of the person whom it commemorates, that on a given day “her ethereal part became a seraph.”

Indeed, the prevalent irrecognition of the existence of angels, and the rejection of the doctrine of the intermediate state, cannot but help to make people the victims of the wildest delusions, even those of Swedenborgianism and Spiritualism.

the good of those who *shall be heirs of salvation*, as need shall require."

7. After St. Peter has concluded the account of his deliverance, he adds, "Go show these things unto James and to the brethren." Who is this James? He cannot, of course, be "James the brother of John," whose martyrdom had preceded St. Peter's imprisonment. There can be no doubt that the person intended is "James the Lord's brother," whom St. Paul saw on his first visit to the Church in Jerusalem.¹ This James sustained a very special relation to that Church. For, besides St. Paul's visit to him, just noted, and St. Peter's reference to him here, we find him presiding in the Council of Jerusalem; to him St. Paul "went in" on his return from his third missionary tour; and they who came from Jerusalem, disturbing the Church at Antioch, "came from James."² What possible reason can be given against saying with all antiquity that he was the first Bishop of Jerusalem?

Was he one of the original twelve? If so, he must have been "James the son of Alphæus," known as "James the Less;" for, in addition to the consideration just spoken of, St. Mark says expressly, that "Mary the mother of James the Less" (literally the little), who must have been the wife of Alphæus, "was looking on afar off" at our Lord's crucifixion;³ while it is certain that Salome, and not Mary, was the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James the Greater, and John.⁴

Still there are very great difficulties in the way of identifying James the Less with James the Lord's brother. It is impossible to note them in detail here, and it must suffice to mention two principal ones. In the first place, we are told that at a period undoubtedly subsequent to the appointment of the twelve, when, indeed, our Lord was taking His

¹ Gal. i. 19; compare Acts ix. 27.

² Acts xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 12.

³ Mark xv. 40.

⁴ Matt. xxvii. 56, compared with Mark xv. 40.

final departure from Galilee, His brethren did not believe in Him.¹ Now, this could hardly have been said, had one of them so conspicuously believed in Him as to be numbered among the Apostles. Jerome attempts to meet the difficulty by saying that James "was not one of those who disbelieved." But this is mere conjecture. In the next place, at a period still subsequent to the call of the twelve, our Lord's brethren are clearly distinguished from the Apostles as they come with His mother "desiring to speak with Him;"² and the same distinction is made when we are told that the Apostles, having returned from the mountain of the Ascension, "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren."³

It may be asked whether there is any account in the New Testament of James's abandonment of his disbelief in our Lord. The reply must be, there is no direct account. But there is something in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which may throw some light upon the matter. St. Paul there gives an enumeration of those to whom our Lord appeared after His resurrection, as follows: "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. [After that] He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this day, but some are fallen asleep. After that He was seen of James, then of all the apostles." Now it is, of course, possible that the James mentioned here was one of the twelve. But it seems more probable that he was not; for if with the twelve he had already seen the Lord, it adds nothing to the number of witnesses to name him again and by himself. And the Apostle's purpose is evidently to enumerate the witnesses to the resurrection, and not the appearances of our Lord. The only objection to this adding James to the Apostles is,

¹ John vii. 5.

² Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 31; Luke viii. 19.

³ Acts i. 14.

that the magical number twelve will be destroyed by being increased. But this it must be, at any rate. For even if the phrase "all the Apostles" is to be understood as meaning only the twelve (which is highly improbable), still St. Paul must be added here, and from other places in the New Testament we must also add, to say the least, Barnabas, Andronicus, and Junia; while, if the magical number¹ is once overpassed, it cannot matter how many are to be added to it.

Where all is conjecture, may we not venture to suppose, that "James the brother of the Lord," having seen Him after His resurrection, abandoned his unbelief, and with the other brethren joined himself to the disciples, and was placed by the college of apostles at the head of the Church in Jerusalem? Anyhow, if he is to be included in the original twelve, he furnishes the first instance of a localized apostleship. If he is not to be so included, he furnishes the first instance of an extended, as well as a localized, apostleship. In either case we find in Jerusalem a body of Deacons and a body of Presbyters, with one set over them as Apostle or Bishop, or what you will; an arrangement which looks marvellously like a Diocesan Episcopacy existing in the "Apostles' time."

Another question is raised concerning this James; namely, how are we to understand the appellation, "the brother of the Lord"? And this question carries with it the interpretation of the phrase, "the brethren of the Lord." It can never be so answered as to preclude all doubt and discussion, nor is it important that it should be.

In the early ages the prevalent opinion (one cannot say universal) was that the brethren of the Lord were the sons of Joseph by a former wife, and were so called in the same way that Joseph was called His father, "by an exceptional use of the term adapted to the exceptional fact of the mirac-

¹ The Church has always regarded the number twelve as a *mystical* number, implying completeness. It was reserved to the advocates of parity to turn mystery into superstition, and give a *magical* character to the mystical number.

ulous Incarnation." Tertullian appears to be the only writer of note who dissented from this opinion.

Towards the close of the fourth century (about 383), one Helvidius, who lived at Rome, writing against the notion that a celibate life was, in itself, superior in holiness to a married life, took the ground that our Lord's mother bore other children to Joseph.

In replying to him, Jerome advocated an entirely novel view; namely, that the Lord's brethren were, according to the flesh, only His cousins, the sons of Alphæus, whose wife Mary he regarded as the sister of our Lord's mother.¹

The first of these three opinions has widely prevailed in the Eastern Church, while the third has met with more acceptance in the West. Of late years, indeed, among European writers and scholars, the first theory has largely dropped out of sight, and discussion has turned mainly on the second and third. I confess that, notwithstanding its apparent abandonment, the oldest view appears to me the most probable.

8. It is not without interest, to read, in connection with St. Luke's account of the death of Herod, the narrative of Josephus:—

"Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judæa, he came to the city Cæsarea, which was formerly called Strato's Tower; and there he exhibited shows in honor of Cæsar, upon his being informed that there was a certain festival celebrated to make vows for his safety; at which festival a great multitude was gotten together of the principal persons, and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of which shows, he put on a garment made wholly of silver, and of a contexture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning; at which time the silver of his garment, being illuminated by

¹ This whole subject is treated very fully by Bishop Lightfoot, in *Dissertation II.*, appended to his Commentary on Galatians. The reader may also be referred to a brief Treatise, *James the Lord's Brother*, by Chauncey W. Fitch, D.D.

the first reflection of the sun's rays upon it, shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him; and presently his flatterers cried out, one from one place and another from another (though not for his good), that 'he was a god;' and they added, 'Be thou merciful to us; for, although we have hitherto revered thee only as a man, yet shall we henceforth own thee as superior to mortal nature.'"

"Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But as he presently afterward looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a certain rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of ill tidings, as it had once been the messenger of good tidings to him; and fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his bowels, and began in a most violent manner. He, therefore, looked upon his friends, and said, 'I, whom you call a *god*, am commanded presently to depart this life; while Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called *immortal*, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept of what Providence allots, as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived ill, but in a splendid and happy manner.' When he said this, his pain was become violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude presently sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber; and, as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not himself forbear weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain for five days, he departed this life."¹

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book XIX, c. viii. 2. Compare Book XVIII. c. vi. 7.

Thus far we have read of the days preceding the great Pentecost, of the birthday of the Church, of the mission to the Jews and Samaritans, and of the preparations for the world-wide mission to the Gentiles. It is a brief narrative, and yet how much it contains! The *primordia*, the foundations of that Covenant Kingdom which is to carry to the nations God's final revelation of Himself, have been brought before us. We have seen the outlines, if nothing more, of its organization, its ministry, its sacraments, and its worship. We have been told of the doctrine committed to it to teach, the ideal and the law of life it is to enjoin on men, and of the great motive-power which stands behind and gives life to doctrine, ideal, and law. Where shall we find that motive-power? In the Holy Ghost, concerning whom it has been well said, "Christ's errand being done, and He gone up on high, the Spirit came down for Him and in His Name and stead, to take the charge and to establish an order in the Church."¹ Even at the risk of repetition, some closing words must be added.

This book has been called the "Gospel of the Holy Ghost." And it may well be so called.² It begins with the mention of the commandments, which "through the Holy Ghost" the Lord gave to His Apostles, and the promises that they should "be baptized with the Holy Ghost," and should "receive power after that the Holy Ghost" had come upon them. It ends with the application to the Jews of the words which "the Holy Ghost spake by Esaias the prophet;" and all along the course of the history, we find the record of the "diversities of gifts," all proceeding from "the same Spirit."³ The gift of sanctifying grace, given to each man for his individual building-up in the Christian life; the gifts of special endowments to be used for the common profit,⁴ whatever may become of us; the gift of grace

¹ Andrewes, *On the Sending of the Holy Ghost*. John Scott, *Christian Life*, chap. vii. sec. vi. § vi.

² See Dean Howson's *Bohlen Lectures* for 1881, p. 177, ff.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 4.

⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 7; πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον.

for a holy calling,¹ even the ministry of Christ and the stewardship of the mysteries of God,² — all these come through the one Spirit, and are specially presented in this Book of Acts as so coming; and He, therefore, is made prominent in this third age of Divine revelation — in which indeed we are living — as the One Paraclete dwelling in the Church as the Body of Christ, and, equally, in the souls of individual Christians.

He of whom the angel said to the Blessed Virgin, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,”³ He it was by whom the Lord Jesus was “conceived by the Holy Ghost,” and so became “Incarnate.” Nor, thus appearing at the beginning of our Lord’s human life, does He disappear, and leave the Incarnation an isolated act. On the contrary, poured on Christ’s humanity “not by measure,”⁴ He abides with that humanity, and ever and always sanctifies it.

In like manner, when the Lord’s mystical Body was to come into the world, even His Church, “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,”⁵ it was the power of the Highest in the Holy Ghost that gave it life on the day of Pentecost, and that, “shed on it abundantly,” is, according to the Lord’s own promise, to “abide with it forever.”⁶ So are made good the Apostle’s words, “For through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”⁷

This Dispensation, therefore, under which we are living, is the Dispensation of the Spirit. In it the Holy Spirit ever worketh. All is done by Him. Wherefore all is spiritual, and not fleshly; all is lifted out of man’s sphere of opera-

¹ Eph. iii. 7, 8.

² Bishop Andrewes, as above, *Sermon XV.*; Bishop Sanderson, *Sermon III., Ad Clerum.*

³ Luke i. 35.

⁶ John xiv. 16.

⁴ John iii. 34.

⁷ Eph. ii. 18.

⁵ Eph. i. 23.

tion; all is lifted up to a plane far above any thing that is carnal and material.

Now, this blessed truth is in danger from more quarters than one. There are those who can not or will not see "that as the Son was equally God with the Holy Ghost, when the Holy Ghost descended on Him at His baptism as man, so the Holy Ghost was equally God with the Son when sent by Him from heaven on His ascension to apply the benefits of His Incarnation,"¹ including His one sacrifice, to his elect on earth. Failing to grasp this truth, and therefore fearing lest by admitting the work of the Spirit they may derogate from the honor of the Son,² they shrink from the full meaning of the words of the Constantinopolitan Symbol, "the Lord the Life-Giver," in which they confess with their lips what they—we may hope unconsciously—deny in their hearts, touching the Third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity.

Others, again, having lost all idea of the personality of the Holy Ghost, and conceiving of Him only as a Divine quality, or, at most, a Divine influence, cannot comprehend, or make real to themselves, His relation to the Covenant Body of the Christian Dispensation. His name occurs, indeed, to them in the forms of baptism and of blessing, and they read about Him in the New Testament. But no thought of Him as an actual Person administering the "dispensation of the fulness of times" ever occurs to them; while the idea of addressing a prayer to Him would strike them with astonishment, if with nothing more.

Still others, forgetting apparently that sacraments do not stand in the natural, but in the supernatural order, and taking up materialistic theories concerning them, especially concerning the Holy Eucharist, fix the thought upon the act of the earthly minister, and do not rise to Him who

¹ Ffoulkes, *Primitive Consecration*, etc., p. 11.

² The difficulty is as old as the time of Basil (370), who answered it in his treatise *De Spiritu Sancto*.

works in all sacraments and means of grace, the One Spirit by whom "we are all baptized into one body, . . . and have been made to drink into one Spirit."¹

One there is, and only one, who has dared to arrogate to himself the title that belongs of right to the Holy Spirit, and to claim for himself that power which is the special power of the same Spirit; the power of which our Lord spake when He said to His Apostles, "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."²

Against all such misconceptions, perversions, pitiable neglect, or arrogant assumption, this Book of Acts makes continual and continuous protest. Its teaching, in this regard, is the culmination of all its teaching, historical, doctrinal, or ethical.

"The way to the knowledge of God is from the One Spirit, through the One Son, to the One Father. And, on the other hand, the natural order of goodness and sanctification,³ and the regal dignity extends from the Father, by the Only-Begotten, to the Spirit."

"He saith, 'There are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are differences of operations, but the same God, which worketh all in all.' And again he saith, 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.' Let us not think that because the Apostle mentions first the Spirit, next the Son, and thirdly God and the Father, he intends to change the usual order. For he begins from our own relative position. We, receiving gifts, first meet Him who distributes them, then we recognize Him through whom they come, and so lift up our thoughts to the Source and Cause of all good things."⁴

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

² John xvi. 13.

³ Rom. ii. 14, 15, 25-29; 2 Thess. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2.

⁴ Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, sects. xxxvii., xlvi.; in Harvey's *Eccl. Ang. Vindex Catholicus*, vol. i. pp. 382, 399.

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