

THE ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

Commentary by **DAVID BROWN**

INTRODUCTION

THIS book is to the Gospels what the fruit is to the tree that bears it. In the Gospels we see the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying: in the Acts we see it bringing forth much fruit (^{48124}John 12:24). There we see Christ purchasing the Church with His own blood: here we see the Church, so purchased, rising into actual existence; first among the Jews of Palestine, and next among the surrounding Gentiles, until it gains a footing in the great capital of the ancient world — sweeping majestically from Jerusalem to Rome. Nor is this book of less value as an Introduction to the Epistles which follow it, than as a Sequel to the Gospels which precede it. For without this history the Epistles of the New Testament — presupposing, as they do, the historical circumstances of the parties addressed, and deriving from these so much of their freshness, point, and force — would in no respect be what they now are, and would in a number of places be scarcely intelligible.

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

In our day, however, its authenticity has, like that of all the leading books of the New Testament, been made the subject of keen and protracted controversy. DE WETTE, while admitting Luke to be the author of the entire work, pronounces the earlier portion of it to have been drawn up from

unreliable sources (*New-Testament Introduction*, 2a, 2C). But the Tubingen school, with BAUR at their head, have gone much farther. As their fantastic theory of the post-Joannean date of the Gospels could not pretend even to a hearing so long as the authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles remained unshaken, they contend that the earlier portion of this work can be shown to be unworthy of credit, while the latter portion is in flat contradiction to the Epistle to the Galatians — which this school regard as unassailable — and bears internal evidence of being a designed distortion of facts for the purpose of setting up the catholic form which Paul gave to Christianity in opposition to the narrow Judaic but original form of it which Peter preached, and which after the death of the apostles was held exclusively by the sect of the Ebionites. It is painful to think that anyone should have spent so many years, and, aided by learned and acute disciples in different parts of the argument, should have expended so much learning, research, and ingenuity in attempting to build up a hypothesis regarding the origination of the leading books of the New Testament which outrages all the principles of sober criticism and legitimate evidence. As a school, this party at length broke up: its head, after living to find himself the sole defender of the theory as a whole, left this earthly scene complaining of desertion. While some of his associates have abandoned such heartless studies altogether for the more congenial pursuits of philosophy, others have modified their attacks on the historical truth of the New Testament records, retreating into positions into which it is not worth while to follow them, while others still have been gradually approximating to sound principles. The one compensation for all this mischief is the rich additions to the apologetical and critical literature of the books of the New Testament, and the earliest history of the Christian Church, which it has drawn from the pens of THIERSCH, EBRARD, and many others. Any allusions which it may be necessary for us to make to the assertions of this school will be made in connection with the passages to which they relate — in Acts, First Corinthians, and Galatians.

The manifest connection between this book and the third Gospel — of which it professes to be simply the continuation by the same author — and the striking similarity which marks the style of both productions, leave no room to doubt that the early Church was right in ascribing it with one consent to Luke. The difficulty which some fastidious critics have made about the sources of the earlier portion of the history has no solid ground. That the historian himself was an eye-witness of the earliest scenes — as HUG concludes from the circumstantiality of the narrative — is altogether improbable: but there were hundreds of eye-witnesses of some of the scenes, and enough of all the rest, to give to the historian, partly by oral, partly by written testimony, all the details which he has embodied so

graphically in his history; and it will appear, we trust, from the commentary, that Deuteronomy Wette's complaints of confusion, contradiction, and error in this portion are without foundation. The same critic, and one or two others, would ascribe to Timothy those later portions of the book in which the historian speaks in the first person plural — "we"; supposing him to have taken notes of all that passed under his own eye, which Luke embodied in his history just as they stood. It is impossible here to refute this gratuitous hypothesis in detail; but the reader will find it done by EBRARD (*The Gospel History*, sect. 110, Clark's translation; sect. 127 of the original work, *Wissenschaftliche Kritik der Evangelische Geschichte*, 1850), and by DAVIDSON (*Introduction to New Testament*, Vol. II, pp. 9-21).

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

Much has been written about the object of this history. Certainly "the Acts of the Apostles" are but very partially recorded. But for this title the historian is not responsible. Between the two extremes — of supposing that the work has no plan at all, and that it is constructed on an elaborate and complex plan, we shall probably be as near the truth as is necessary if we take the design to be to record the diffusion of Christianity and the rise of the Christian Church, first among the Jews of Palestine, the seat of the ancient Faith, and next among the surrounding Gentiles, with Antioch for its headquarters, until, finally, it is seen waving over imperial Rome, foretoking its universal triumph. In this view of it, there is no difficulty in accounting for the almost exclusive place which it gives to the labors of Peter in the first instance, and the all but entire disappearance from the history both of him and of the rest of the Twelve after the great apostle of the Gentiles came upon the stage — like the lesser lights on the rise of the great luminary.

CHAPTER 1

ACTS 1:1-11.

INTRODUCTION — LAST DAYS OF OUR LORD UPON EARTH — HIS ASCENSION.

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

Theophilus — (See on ^{<4008>}Luke 1:3).

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

2. after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments, etc. — referring to the charge recorded in ^{<4088>}Matthew 28:18-20 ^{<4165>}Mark 16:15-18 ^{<2444>}Luke 24:44-49. It is worthy of notice that nowhere else are such communications of the risen Redeemer said to have been given “through the Holy Ghost.” In general, this might have been said of all He uttered and all He did in His official character; for it was for this very end that God “gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (^{<4034>}John 3:34). But after His resurrection, as if to signify the new relation in which He now stood to the Church, He signaled His first meeting with the assembled disciples by *breathing* on them (immediately after dispensing to them His *peace*) and saying, “*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*” (^{<4022>}John 20:22) thus anticipating the donation of the Spirit from His hands (see on ^{<4021>}John 20:21,22); and on the same principle His parting charges are here said to have been given “through the Holy Ghost,” as if to mark that He was now all redolent with the Spirit; that what had been husbanded, during His

suffering work, for His own necessary uses, had now been set free, was already overflowing from Himself to His disciples, and needed but His ascension and glorification to flow all forth. (See on ^{<1139>}John 7:39.)

3-5. showed himself alive — As the author is about to tell us that “*the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*” was the great burden of apostolic preaching, so the subject is here fully introduced by an allusion to the primary evidence on which that great fact rests, the repeated and undeniable manifestations of Himself in the body to the assembled disciples, who, instead of being predisposed to believe it, had to be overpowered by the resistless evidence of their own senses, and were slow of yielding even to this (^{<1164>}Mark 16:14).

after his passion — or, suffering. This primary sense of the word “passion” has fallen into disuse; but it is nobly consecrated in the phraseology of the Church to express the Redeemer’s final endurances.

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

speaking of — rather “speaking.”

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

4. should not depart from Jerusalem — because the Spirit was to glorify the existing economy, by descending on the disciples at its metropolitan seat, and at the next of its great festivals after the ascension of the Church’s Head; in order that “out of Zion might go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (^{<2108>}Isaiah 2:3; and compare ^{<2249>}Luke 24:49).

5. ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence — *ten* days hence, as appears from ^{<2315>}Leviticus 23:15,16; but it was expressed thus indefinitely to exercise their faith.

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

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

8. receive power — See ^{<249>}Luke 24:49.

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

9-11. while they beheld, he was taken up — See on ^{<250>}Luke 24:50-53. Lest it should be thought He had disappeared when they were looking in some other direction, and so was only *concluded* to have gone up to heaven, it is here expressly said that “*while they were looking* He was taken up, and a cloud received Him *out of their sight*.” So Elijah, “If thou *see me* when I am taken from thee” (^{<110>}2 Kings 2:10); “And Elisha *saw it*” (^{<4112>}Acts 1:12). (See on ^{<493>}Luke 9:32.)

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

two men in white apparel — angels in human form, as in ^{<246>}Luke 24:4.

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

^{<4112>}ACTS 1:12-26.

RETURN OF THE ELEVEN TO JERUSALEM — PROCEEDINGS IN THE UPPER ROOM TILL PENTECOST.

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

13. went up into an upper room — perhaps the same “large upper room” where with their Lord they had celebrated the last Passover and the first Supper (^{<2212>}Luke 22:12).

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

Peter, etc. — (See on ^{<400>}Matthew 10:2-4).

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

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

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

with his brethren — (See on ^{<400>}John 7:3).

15-26. in those days — of expectant prayer, and probably towards the close of them, when the nature of their future work began more clearly to dawn upon them, and the Holy Ghost, already “breathed” on the Eleven (^{<400>}John 20:22), was stirring in Peter, who was to be the leading spirit of the infant community (^{<400>}Matthew 16:19).

the number ... about an hundred and twenty — Many, therefore, of the “five hundred brethren” who saw their risen Lord “at once” (^{<400>}1 Corinthians 15:6), must have remained in Galilee.

18. falling headlong, etc. — This information supplements, but by no means contradicts, what is said in ^{<400>}Matthew 27:5.

20. his bishopric — or “charge.” The words are a combination of ^{<400>}Psalms 69:25 and ^{<400>}Psalms 109:8; in which the apostle discerns a greater than David, and a worse than Ahithophel and his fellow conspirators against David.

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

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

unto that same day when he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection — How clearly is the primary office of the apostles here expressed:

(1) to testify, from personal observation, to the one great fact of “the resurrection of the Lord Jesus”;

(2) to show how this glorified His whole previous life, of which they were constant observers, and established His divine claims.

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

two — The choice would lie between a very few.

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

which knowest the hearts of all men — See ^{<124>}John 2:24,25 21:15-17 ^{<123>}Revelation 2:23.

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

26. was numbered — “voted in” by general suffrage.

with the eleven apostles — completing the broken Twelve.

CHAPTER 2

ACTS 2:1-13.

DESCENT OF THE SPIRIT — THE DISCIPLES SPEAK WITH TONGUES — AMAZEMENT OF THE MULTITUDE.

1-4. when the day of Pentecost was fully come — The fiftieth from the morrow after the first Passover sabbath (^{<B235>}Leviticus 23:15,16).

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

2. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, etc. — “The whole description is so picturesque and striking that it could only come from an eye-witness” [OLSHAUSEN]. The suddenness, strength, and diffusiveness of the sound strike with deepest awe the whole company, and thus complete their preparation for the heavenly gift. Wind was a familiar emblem of the Spirit (^{<3509>}Ezekiel 37:9 ^{<B388>}John 3:8 20:22). But this was not a rush of actual wind. It was only a sound “*as of*” it.

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

4. they ... began to speak with ... tongues, etc. — real, living languages, as is plain from what follows. The thing uttered, probably the same by all, was “the wonderful works of God,” perhaps in the inspired words of the Old Testament evangelical hymns; though it is next to certain that the speakers themselves understood nothing of what they uttered (see on ^{<4341>}1 Corinthians 14:1-25).

5-11. there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation — not, it would seem, permanently settled there (see ^{<4119>}Acts 2:9), though the language seems to imply more than a temporary visit to keep this one feast.

9-11. Parthians, etc. — Beginning with the farthest east, the Parthians, the enumeration proceeds farther and farther westward till it comes to Judea; next come the western countries, from Cappadocia to Pamphylia; then the southern, from Egypt to Cyrene; finally, apart from all geographical consideration, Cretes and Arabians are placed together. This enumeration is evidently designed to convey an impression of universality [BAUMGARTEN].

~~4124~~ ACTS 2:14-36.

PETER FOR THE FIRST TIME, PUBLICLY PREACHES CHRIST.

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

15. these are not drunken — meaning, not the Eleven, but the body of the disciples.

but the third hour — nine A.M. (see ²¹⁰⁶Ecclesiastes 10:16 ²³⁵¹Isaiah 5:11 ³¹⁷1 Thessalonians 5:17).

17. in the last days — meaning, the days of the Messiah (²⁴⁰Isaiah 2:2); as closing all preparatory arrangements, and constituting the final dispensation of God's kingdom on earth.

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

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

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

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

19. I will show wonders, etc. — referring to the signs which were to precede the destruction of Jerusalem (see on ¹²⁵Luke 21:25-28).

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

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

by miracles ... which God did by him — This is not a low view of our Lord’s miracles, as has been alleged, nor inconsistent with ^{<4121>}John 2:11, but is in strict accordance with His progress from humiliation to glory, and with His own words in ^{<4159>}John 5:19. This view of Christ is here dwelt on to exhibit to the Jews the whole course of Jesus of Nazareth as the ordinance and doing of *the God of Israel* [ALFORD].

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

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

24. was not possible he should be holden of it — Glorious saying! It was indeed impossible that “the Living One” should remain “among the dead” (^{<2418>}Luke 24:5); but here, the impossibility seems to refer to the prophetic assurance that He should not see corruption.

27. wilt not leave my soul in hell — in its disembodied state (see on ^{<2163>}Luke 16:23).

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

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

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

29-36. David ... is ... dead and buried, etc. — Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, sees in this sixteenth Psalm, one Holy Man, whose life of high devotedness and lofty spirituality is crowned with the assurance, that though He taste of death, He shall rise again without seeing corruption, and be admitted to the bliss of God’s immediate presence. Now as this was palpably untrue of David, it could be meant only of One other, even of Him whom David was taught to expect as the final Occupant of the throne of Israel. (Those, therefore, and they are many, who take David himself to be the subject of this Psalm, and the words quoted to refer to Christ only *in a more eminent* sense, nullify the whole argument of the apostle). The Psalm is then affirmed to have had its only proper fulfillment in JESUS, of whose resurrection and ascension they were witnesses, while the glorious effusion

of the Spirit by the hand of the ascended One, setting an infallible seal upon all, was even then witnessed by the thousands who stood listening to Him. A further illustration of Messiah's ascension and session at God's right hand is drawn from ^{<480>}Psalm 110:1, in which David cannot be thought to speak of himself, seeing he is still in his grave.

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

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

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

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

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

37-40. pricked in their hearts — the begun fulfillment of ^{<320>}Zechariah 12:10, whose full accomplishment is reserved for the day when “all Israel shall be saved” (see on ^{<510>}Romans 11:26).

what shall we do? — This is that beautiful spirit of genuine compunction and childlike docility, which, discovering its whole past career to have been one frightful mistake, seeks only to be set right for the future, be the change involved and the sacrifices required what they may. So Saul of Tarsus (^{<400>}Acts 9:6).

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

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

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

all afar off — the Gentiles, as in ~~4017~~Ephesians 2:17), but “to the Jew first.”

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

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

~~4121~~ACTS 2:41-47.

BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

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

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

42. continued steadfastly in — “attended constantly upon.”

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

fellowship — in its largest sense.

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

prayers — probably, stated seasons of it.

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

44. all that believed were together, and had all things common — (See on ⁴⁰⁶⁴Acts 4:34-37).

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

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

eat their meat with gladness — “exultation.”

and singleness of heart.

47. Praising God — “Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, *for God now accepteth thy works*” (²¹⁰⁰Ecclesiastes 9:7, also see on ⁴⁰⁸⁹Acts 8:39).

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

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

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

such as should be saved — rather, “the saved,” or “those who were being saved.” “The young Church had but few peculiarities in its outward form, or even in its doctrine: the single discriminating principle of its few members was that they all recognized the crucified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. This confession would have been a thing of no importance, if it had only presented itself as a naked declaration, and would never in such a case have been able to form a community that would spread itself over the whole Roman empire. It acquired its value only through the power of the Holy Ghost, passing from the apostles as they preached to the hearers; for He brought the confession from the very hearts of men (⁴⁰²⁸1 Corinthians 12:3), and like a burning flame made their souls glow with love. By the power of this Spirit, therefore, we behold the first Christians not only in a state of active fellowship, but also internally changed: the narrow views of the natural man are broken through; they have their possessions in common, and they regard themselves as one family” [OLSHAUSEN].

CHAPTER 3

ACTS 3:1-26.

PETER HEALS A LAME MAN AT THE TEMPLE GATE — HIS ADDRESS TO THE WONDERING MULTITUDE.

1-11. Peter and John — already associated by their Master, first with James (^{402B}Mark 1:29 5:37 9:2), then by themselves (^{422B}Luke 22:8; and see ^{433B}John 13:23,24). Now we find them constantly together, but John (yet young) only as a silent actor.

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

2. a certain man lame from his mother's womb — and now “above forty years old” (^{402C}Acts 4:22).

was carried — was wont to be carried.

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

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

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

7. And he took ... and lifted him up — precisely what his Lord had done to his own mother-in-law (^{403B}Mark 1:31).

his feet — “soles.”

and ankle bones, etc. — the technical language of a physician (^{504A}Colossians 4:14).

8. leaping up, stood ... walked ... entered the temple walking, leaping, and praising God — Every word here is emphatic, expressing the perfection of the cure, as ^{403C}Acts 3:7 its immediateness.

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

10. they knew that it was he which sat for alms, etc. — (Compare ^{<4308>}John 9:8).

11. the lame man ... held, etc. — This is human nature.

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

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

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

13. The God of Abraham, etc. — (See on ^{<4102>}Acts 2:22; ^{<4126>}Acts 2:36).

hath glorified his Son Jesus — rather, “his Servant Jesus,” as the same word is rendered in ^{<4128>}Matthew 12:18, but in that high sense in which Isaiah applies it always to Messiah (^{<2301>}Isaiah 42:1 49:6 52:13 53:11). When “Son” is intended a different word is used.

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

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

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

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

I wot — “know.”

through ignorance ye did it — (See *marginal references*, ^{<4234>}Luke 23:34 ^{<4137>}Acts 13:27 26:9).

18. that Christ — The best manuscripts read, “that His Christ.”

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

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

20. he shall send Jesus Christ — The true reading is, “He shall send your predestinated (or foreordained) Messiah, Jesus.”

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

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

22-26. a prophet ... like unto me — particularly *in intimacy of communication with God* (⁴⁰¹⁶Numbers 12:6-8), *and as the mediatorial Head of a new order of things* (⁵⁸⁰⁴Hebrews 3:2-6). Peter takes it for granted that, in the light of all he had just said, it would be seen at once that One only had any claim to be that Prophet.

him shall ye hear in all things, etc. — This part of the prediction is emphatically added, in order to shut up the audience to the obedience of faith, on pain of being finally “cut off” from the congregation of the righteous (⁴³⁰⁰Psalms 1:1).

24. foretold of these days — of Messiah; all pointing to “the time of reformation” (⁵⁹⁰⁰Hebrews 9:10), though with more or less distinctness.

25. Ye are the children ... of the covenant — and so the natural heirs of its promises.

in thy seed, etc. — (See on ⁴⁸⁰⁰Galatians 3:8, etc.).

26. God, having raised up — not from the dead, but having provided, prepared, and given.

his Son Jesus — “His Servant Jesus” (see on ⁴⁴⁰⁰Acts 3:13).

sent him to bless you — literally, “sent Him blessing you,” as if laden with blessing.

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

CHAPTER 4

ACTS 4:1-13.

PETER AND JOHN BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM.

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

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

and the Sadducees — who “say that there is no resurrection” (^{423B}Acts 23:8), irritated at the apostles “preaching through (rather, ‘in’) Jesus the resurrection from the dead”; for the resurrection of Christ, if a fact, effectually overthrew the Sadducean doctrine.

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

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

5. their rulers, etc. — This was a regular meeting of the Sanhedrim (see on ^{410B}Matthew 2:4).

6. Annas ... and Caiaphas — (See on ^{418B}Luke 3:2).

John and Alexander — of whom nothing is known.

7. By what power or ... name have ye done this — thus admitting the reality of the miracle, which afterwards they confess themselves unable to deny (^{406B}Acts 4:16).

8. Then, filled with the Holy Ghost, said — (See ^{413B}Mark 13:11 ^{421B}Luke 21:15).

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

by the name of Jesus, etc. — (See on ^{418B}Acts 3:13, etc.).

even by him doth this man stand before you whole — for from ^{<404>}Acts 4:14 it appears that the healed man was at that moment before their eyes.

11. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, etc. — This application of ^{<432>}Psalms 118:22, already made by our Lord Himself before some of the same “builders” (^{<424>}Matthew 21:42), is here repeated with peculiar propriety after the deed of rejection had been consummated, and the rejected One had, by His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, become “the head of the corner.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard — There is here a wonderful union of sober, respectful appeal to the better reason of their judges, and calm, deep determination to abide the

consequences of a constrained testimony, which betokens a power above their own resting upon them, according to promise.

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

⋄ACTS 4:23-37.

PETER AND JOHN DISMISSED FROM THE SAMHEDRIM, REPORT THE PROCEEDINGS TO THE ASSEMBLED DISCIPLES — THEY ENGAGE IN PRAYER — THE ASTONISHING ANSWER AND RESULTS.

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

24. they lifted up their voice — the assembled disciples, on hearing Peter's report.

with one accord — the breasts of all present echoing every word of this sublime prayer.

Lord — (See on ⋄LUKE 2:29). Applied to God, the term expresses absolute authority.

God which hast made heaven and earth — against whom, therefore, all creatures are powerless.

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

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

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

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

31-37. place was shaken — glorious token of the commotion which the Gospel was to make (^{<447b>}Acts 17:6; compare ^{<446b>}Acts 16:26), and the overthrow of all opposing powers in which this was to issue.

they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake, etc. — The Spirit rested upon the entire community, first, in the very way they had asked, so that they “spake the word with boldness” (^{<449>}Acts 4:29,31); next, in melting down all selfishness, and absorbing even the feeling of individuality in an intense and glowing realization of Christian unity. The community of goods was but an outward expression of this, and natural in such circumstances.

33. with great power — effect on men’s minds.

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

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

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

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

a Levite — who, though as a tribe having no inheritance, might and did acquire property as individuals (^{<458b>}Deuteronomy 18:8).

Cyprus — a well-known island in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER 5

⌄ ACTS 5:1-11.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

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

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

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

3-6. why hath Satan filled — “why ... fill — “why hast thou suffered him to fill”

thine heart — so criminally entertaining his suggestion? Compare ⌄ Acts 5:4, “why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart?” And see ⌄ John 13:2,27.

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

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

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

5. Ananias ... gave up the ghost ... great fear came on all that heard these things — on those without the Christian circle; who, instead of disparaging the followers of the Lord Jesus, as they might otherwise have done on the discovery of such hypocrisy, were awed at the manifest

presence of Divinity among them, and the mysterious power of throwing off such corrupt matter which rested upon the young Church.

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

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

9. How is it that ye have agreed together — (See on ^{<4482>}Acts 5:2).

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

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

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

11. And great fear came upon all the church, etc. — This effect on the Christian community itself was the chief design of so startling a judgment; which had its counterpart, as the sin itself had, in *Achan* (^{<4003>}Joshua 7:1-26), while the *time* — at the commencement of a new career — was similar.

^{<4452>}ACTS 5:12-26.

**THE PROGRESS OF THE NEW CAUSE LEADS TO THE ARREST
OF THE APOSTLES — THEY ARE MIRACULOUSLY
DELIVERED FROM PRISON, RESUME THEIR TEACHING, BUT
ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE CONDUCTED BEFORE THE
SAMHEDRIM.**

12. Solomon's Porch — (See on ^{<6123>}John 10:23).

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

15. into the streets — “in every street.”

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

shadow of Peter ... might overshadow some of them — Compare ^{<492>}Acts 19:12 ^{<486>}Luke 8:46. So Elisha. Now the predicted greatness of Peter (^{<468>}Matthew 16:18), as the directing spirit of the early Church, was at its height.

17-23. sect of the Sadducees — See on ^{<400>}Acts 4:1 for the reason why this is specified.

19. by night — the same night.

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

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

called ... all the senate, etc. — an unusually general convention, though hastily summoned.

23. the prison ... shut ... keepers ... before the doors, but ... no man within — the reverse of the miracle in ^{<463>}Acts 16:26; a similar contrast to that of the nets at the miraculous draughts of fishes (^{<476>}Luke 5:6 ^{<4211>}John 21:11).

24-26. they doubted — “were in perplexity.”

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

^{<4157>}ACTS 5:27-42.

SECOND APPEARANCE AND TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM — ITS RAGE CALMED BY GAMALIEL — BEING DISMISSED, THEY DEPART REJOICING, AND CONTINUE THEIR PREACHING.

27, 28. ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine — noble testimony to the success of their preaching, and (for the reason mentioned on ^{<400>}Acts 4:4) to the truth of their testimony, from reluctant lips!

28. intend to bring this man's blood upon us — They avoid naming Him whom Peter gloried in holding up [BENGEL]. In speaking thus, they seem to betray a disagreeable recollection of their own recent imprecation, "His blood be upon us," etc. (⁴¹⁷⁵Matthew 27:25), and of the traitor's words as he threw down the money, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (⁴²⁰⁴Matthew 27:4).

29, 30. Then Peter, etc. — (See on ⁴⁴²²Acts 2:22, and ⁴⁴⁸³Acts 3:13, etc.).

31. Prince and a Savior — the first word expressing that *Royalty* which all Israel looked for in Messiah, the second the *Saving* character of it which they had utterly lost sight of. Each of these features in our Lord's work enters into the other, and both make one glorious whole (compare ⁴⁴⁸⁵Acts 3:15 ⁸¹⁰⁰Hebrews 2:10).

to give — dispensing as a "Prince."

repentance and remission of sins — as a "Savior"; "repentance" embracing all that change which issues in the faith which secures "forgiveness" (compare ⁴⁴²⁸Acts 2:38 20:21). How gloriously is Christ here exhibited; not, as in other places, as the *Medium*, but as the *Dispenser* of all spiritual blessings!

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

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

counsel to slay them — How different this feeling and the effect of it from that "pricking of the heart" which drew from the first converts on the day of Pentecost the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (⁴⁴²⁵Acts 2:37). The words used in the two places are strikingly different.

34. Then stood up ... Gamaliel — in all probability one of that name celebrated in the Jewish writings for his wisdom, the son of Simeon (possibly the same who took the infant Savior in his arms, ⁴¹²⁵Luke 2:25-35), and grandson of HILLEL, another celebrated rabbi. He died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem [LIGHTFOOT].

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

37. Judas of Galilee — (See on ^{<0109>}Luke 2:2, and ^{<0131>}Luke 13:1-3) [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 13.1.1].

38. if ... of men, it will come to naught — This neutral policy was true wisdom, in the then temper of the council. But individual neutrality is hostility to Christ, as He Himself teaches (^{<0123>}Luke 11:23).

40-42. beaten them — for disobeying their orders (compare ^{<0216>}Luke 23:16).

41. departed ... rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name — “thought worthy by God to be dishonored by man” (^{<0152>}Matthew 5:12 ^{<0044>}1 Peter 4:14,16) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. *This was their first taste of persecution*, and it felt sweet for His sake whose disciples they were.

42. in every house — in private. (See on ^{<0126>}Acts 2:46).

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

CHAPTER 6

~~400~~ACTS 6:1-7.

FIRST ELECTION OF DEACONS.

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

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

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

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

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

It is not reason — The word expresses dislike; that is “We cannot submit.”

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

to serve tables — oversee the distribution of provisions.

3. look ye out among you — that is, ye, “the multitude,” from among yourselves.

seven men of honest report — good reputation (~~400~~Acts 10:22 ~~500~~1 Timothy 3:7).

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

and wisdom — discretion, aptitude for practical business.

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

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

5. Stephen, etc. — As this and the following names are all *Greek*, it is likely they were all of the “Grecian” class, which would effectually restore mutual confidence.

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

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

a great company of the priests were obedient, etc. — This was the crowning triumph of the Gospel, whose *peaceful* prosperity was now at its greatest height. After Stephen’s teaching and trial made it clear that sacerdotal interests could not stand with the Gospel, such priestly accessions became rare indeed. Note

(1) how easily misunderstandings may arise among the most loving and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus: but

(2) How quickly and effectually such misunderstandings may be healed, where honest intentions, love, and wisdom reign:

(3) What a beautiful model for imitation is furnished by the class here complained of, who, though themselves the majority, chose the new office-bearers from amongst the complaining minority!

(4) How superior to the lust of power do the apostles here show themselves to be, in not only divesting themselves of the immediate superintendence of temporal affairs in the Christian community, but giving the choice of those who were to be entrusted with it to the disciples at large!

(5) How little of formal organization did the apostles give to the Church at first, and when an emergency arose which demanded something more, how entirely was the remedy suggested by the reason of the thing!

(6) Though the new office-bearers are not expressly called *Deacons* here, it is universally admitted that this was the first institution of that order in the Church; the success of the expedient securing its permanency, and the qualifications for “the office of a Deacon” being laid down in one of the apostolical Epistles immediately after those of “a Bishop” (^{<408>}1 Timothy 3:8-13).

~~<408>~~ACTS 6:8-15.

STEPHEN ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM.

8. And Stephen, etc. — The foregoing narrative seems to be only an introduction to what follows.

full of faith — rather, “of grace,” as the best manuscripts read.

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

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

them of Cilicia — amongst whom may have been Saul of Tarsus (^{<408>}Acts 7:58 21:39).

and of Asia — (See on ^{<408>}Acts 16:6).

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

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

and against God — This must refer to the supreme dignity and authority which he claimed for Christ, as the head of that new economy which was so speedily to supersede the old (compare ^{<406>}Acts 7:56,59,60).

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

CHAPTER 7

ACTS 7:1-60.

DEFENSE AND MARTYRDOM OF STEPHEN.

In this long defense Stephen takes a much wider range, and goes less directly into the point raised by his accusers, than we should have expected. His object seems to have been to show

- (1) that so far from disparaging, he deeply revered, and was intimately conversant with, the whole history of the ancient economy; and
- (2) that in resisting the erection of the Gospel kingdom they were but treading in their fathers' footsteps, the whole history of their nation being little else than one continued misapprehension of God's high designs towards fallen man and rebellion against them.

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

appeared unto our father Abraham before he dwelt in Charran, and said, etc. — Though this first call is not expressly recorded in Genesis, it is clearly implied in ^{<0157>}Genesis 15:7 and ^{<0107>}Nehemiah 9:7; and the Jewish writers speak the same language.

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

6-8. four hundred years — using round numbers, as in ^{<0153>}Genesis 15:13,16 (see on ^{<0107>}Galatians 3:17).

7. after that shall they come forth, and serve me in this place — Here the promise to Abraham (^{<0156>}Genesis 15:16), and that to Moses (^{<0102>}Exodus

3:12), are combined; Stephen's object being merely to give a rapid summary of the leading facts.

8. the covenant of circumcision — that is, the covenant of which circumcision was the token.

and so — that is, according to the terms of this covenant, on which Paul reasons (^{<881>}Galatians 3:1-26).

the twelve patriarchs — so called as the founders of the twelve tribes of Israel.

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

14. threescore and fifteen souls — according to the *Septuagint* version of ^{<8427>}Genesis 46:27, which Stephen follows, including the five children and grandchildren of Joseph's two sons.

17. But when — rather, "as."

the time of the promise — that is, for its fulfillment.

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

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

Moses was born — the destined deliverer.

exceeding fair — literally, "fair to God" (*Margin*), or, perhaps, divinely "fair" (see on ^{<8123>}Hebrews 11:23).

22. mighty in words — Though defective in utterance (^{<8140>}Exodus 4:10); his recorded speeches fully bear out what is here said.

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

23-27. In ^{<4173>}Acts 7:23,30,36, the life of Moses is represented as embracing three periods, of forty years each; the Jewish writers say the same; and

though this is not expressly stated in the Old Testament, his age at death, one hundred twenty years (^{<6307>}Deuteronomy 34:7), agrees with it.

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

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

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

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

26. next day he showed himself unto them as they strove — Here, not an Israelite and an Egyptian, but two parties in Israel itself, are in collision with each other; Moses, grieved at the spectacle, interposes as a mediator; but his interference, as unauthorized, is resented by the party in the wrong, whom Stephen identifies with the mass of the nation (^{<4075>}Acts 7:35), just as Messiah's own interposition had been spurned.

28, 29. Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday? — Moses had thought the deed unseen (^{<0102>}Exodus 2:12), but it now appeared he was mistaken.

29. Then fled Moses, etc. — for “when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses” (^{<0105>}Exodus 2:15).

30-34. an angel of the Lord — rather, “the Angel of the Covenant,” who immediately calls Himself JEHOVAH (Compare ^{<4078>}Acts 7:38).

35-41. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge, etc. — Here, again, “*the stone which the builders refused is made the head of the corner*” (^{<4022>}Psalms 118:22).

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

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

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

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

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

42-50. gave them up — judicially.

as ... written in the book of the prophets — the twelve minor prophets, reckoned as one: the passage is from ^{<3165>}Amos 5:25.

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

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

carry you beyond Babylon — the well-known region of the captivity of Judah; while “Damascus” is used by the prophet (^{<3167>}Amos 5:27), whither the ten tribes were carried.

44. Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness — which aggravated the guilt of that idolatry in which they indulged, with the tokens of the divine presence constantly in the midst of them.

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

brought in with Jesus — or Joshua.

into the possession — rather, “at the taking possession of [the territory of] the Gentiles.”

unto the days of David — for till then Jerusalem continued in the hands of the Jebusites. But Stephen’s object in mentioning David is to hasten from the tabernacle which he set up, to the temple which his son built, in Jerusalem; and this only to show, from their own Scripture (²¹⁰Isaiah 66:1,2), that *even that temple*, magnificent though it was, *was not the proper resting-place of Jehovah upon earth*; as his audience and the nations had all along been prone to imagine. (What that resting-place was, even “*the contrite heart, that trembleth at God’s word*,” he leaves to be gathered from the prophet referred to).

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

52. Which of, etc. — *Deadly hostility to the messengers of God*, whose high office it was to tell of “the Righteous One,” that well-known prophetic title of Messiah (²⁵¹Isaiah 53:11 ²¹⁶Jeremiah 23:6, etc.), and this *consummated by the betrayal and murder of Messiah Himself*, on the part of those now sitting in judgment on the speaker, are the still darker features of the national character depicted in these withering words.

53. Who have received the law by the disposition — “at the appointment” or “ordination,” that is, by the ministry.

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

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

55. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God — You who can transfer to canvas such scenes as these, in which the rage of hell grins horribly from men, as they sit condemned by a frail prisoner of their own, and see heaven

beaming from his countenance and opening full upon his view — I envy you, for I find no words to paint what, in the majesty of the divine text, is here so simply told. “But how could Stephen, in the council-chamber, see heaven at all? I suppose this question never occurred but to critics of narrow soul, one of whom [MEYER] conjectures that he saw it through the window! and another, of better mould, that the scene lay in one of the courts of the temple” [ALFORD]. As the sight was witnessed by Stephen alone, the opened heavens are to be viewed as revealed to his bright beaming spirit.

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

56. I see ... the Son of man standing, etc. — This is the only time that our Lord is by human lips called THE SON OF MAN after His ascension (^{<46113>}Revelation 1:13 14:14 are not instances). And why here? Stephen, full of the Holy Ghost, speaking now not of himself at all (^{<44075>}Acts 7:55), but entirely by the Spirit, is led to repeat the very words in which Jesus Himself, *before this same council*, had foretold His glorification (^{<42664>}Matthew 26:64), assuring them that that exaltation of the SON OF MAN which they should hereafter witness to their dismay, was already begun and actual [ALFORD].

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

58. cast him out of the city — according to ^{<43244>}Leviticus 24:14 ^{<44559>}Numbers 15:35 ^{<42113>}1 Kings 21:13; and see ^{<58302>}Hebrews 13:12.

and stoned — “proceeded to stone” him. The actual stoning is recorded in ^{<44075>}Acts 7:59.

and the witnesses — whose hands were to be first upon the criminal (^{<45707>}Deuteronomy 17:7).

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

at a young man’s feet whose name was Saul — How thrilling is this our first introduction to one to whom Christianity — whether as developed in

the New Testament or as established in the world — owes more perhaps than to all the other apostles together! Here he is, having perhaps already a seat in the Sanhedrim, some thirty years of age, in the thick of this tumultuous murder of a distinguished witness for Christ, not only “consenting unto his death” (^{<481>}Acts 8:1), but doing his own part of the dark deed.

59, 60. calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, etc. — An unhappy supplement of our translators is the word “God” here; as if, while addressing the Son, he was really calling upon the Father. The sense is perfectly clear without any supplement at all — “calling upon [invoking] and saying, Lord Jesus”; Christ being the Person directly invoked and addressed by name (compare ^{<494>}Acts 9:14). Even GROTIUS, DE WETTE, MEYER, etc. admit this, adding several other examples of direct prayer to Christ; and PLINY, in his well-known letter to the Emperor Trajan (A.D. 110 or 111), says it was part of the regular Christian service to sing, in alternate strains, a hymn to Christ as God.

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit — In presenting to Jesus the identical prayer which He Himself had on the cross offered to His Father, Stephen renders to his glorified Lord absolute divine worship, in the most sublime form, and at the most solemn moment of his life. In this commitment of his spirit to Jesus, Paul afterwards followed his footsteps with a calm, exultant confidence that with Him it was safe for eternity (^{<512>}2 Timothy 1:12).

60. cried with a loud voice — with something of the gathered energy of his dying Lord (see on ^{<696>}John 19:16-30).

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

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

he fell asleep — *never said of the death of Christ.* (See on ^{<514>}1 Thessalonians 4:14). How bright the record of this first martyrdom for Christ, amidst all the darkness of its perpetrators; and how many have been cheered by it to like faithfulness even unto death!

CHAPTER 8

~~400E~~ ACTS 8:1-4.

PERSECUTION CONTINUED, IN WHICH SAUL TAKES A PROMINENT PART — HOW OVERRULED FOR GOOD.

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

they were all scattered abroad — all the leading Christians, particularly the preachers, agreeably to their Lord's injunctions (~~400E~~ Matthew 10:23), though many doubtless remained, and others (as appears by ~~400E~~ Acts 9:26-30) soon returned.

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

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

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

haling men and women, etc. — See his own affecting confessions afterwards (~~400E~~ Acts 22:4 26:9,10 ~~400E~~ 1 Corinthians 15:9 ~~400E~~ Galatians 1:13 ~~400E~~ Philippians 3:6 ~~400E~~ 1 Timothy 1:13).

4. they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching — Though solemnly enjoined to do this (~~400E~~ Luke 24:47 ~~400E~~ Acts 1:8), they would probably have lingered at Jerusalem, but for this besom of persecution which swept them out. How often has the rage of Christ's enemies thus "turned out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel" (see ~~400E~~ Philippians 1:12,13).

ACTS 8:5-25.

SUCCESS OF PHILIP'S PREACHING IN SAMARIA — CASE OF SIMON MAGUS.

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

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

6-8. the people with one accord gave heed to ... Philip — the way being prepared perhaps by the fruits of our Lord's sojourn, as He Himself seems to intimate (see on ^{<40>}John 4:31-38). But “we may mark the providence of God in sending a Grecian, or a Hellenistic Jew, to a people who from national antipathy would have been unlikely to attend to a *native* of Judea” [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

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

9-13. used sorcery — magical arts.

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

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

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

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

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

he continued with Philip — “was in constant attendance upon” him.

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

15, 16. prayed ... they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus) — As the baptism of adults presupposed “the renewing of the Holy Ghost” (⁴⁶¹⁸⁵Titus 3:5-7 ⁴⁶²³1 Corinthians 12:13), of which the profession of faith had to be taken for evidence, this communication of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the apostles’ hands was clearly a *superadded* thing; and as it was only *occasional*, so it was invariably *attended with miraculous manifestations* (see ⁴⁴⁰⁴Acts 10:44, where it followed Peter’s preaching; and ⁴⁴⁹¹Acts 19:1-7, where, as here, it followed the laying on of hands). In the present case an important object was served by it — “the sudden appearance of a body of baptized disciples in Samaria, by the agency of one who was not an apostle, requiring the presence and power of apostles to perform their special part as the divinely appointed founders of the Church” [ALFORD]. Beautiful, too, was the spectacle exhibited of Jew and Samaritan, one in Christ.

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

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

20. Thy money perish with thee — that is, “Accursed be thou and thy money with thee.” It is the language of mingled horror and indignation, not unlike our Lord’s rebuke of Peter himself (⁴¹⁶³Matthew 16:23).

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

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

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

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

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

25. and they — Peter and John.

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

returned ... and preached ... in many villages of the Samaritans — embracing the opportunity of their journey back to Jerusalem to fulfill their Lord's commission to the whole region of Samaria (^{<4008>}Acts 1:8).

^{<4008>}ACTS 8:26-40.

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.

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

26-28. the angel of the Lord — rather, “an angel.”

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

which is desert — that is, *the way*; not Gaza itself, which was the southernmost city of Palestine, in the territory of the ancient Philistines. To go from a city, where his hands had been full of work, so far away on a desert road, could not but be staggering to the faith of Philip, especially as he was kept in ignorance of the object of the journey. But like Paul, he “was

not disobedient to the heavenly vision”; and like Abram, “he went out not knowing whither he went” (⁴⁰⁹Acts 26:19 ³⁸¹⁰⁸Hebrews 11:8).

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

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

Candace — the family name of the queens of Upper Egypt, like Pharaoh, Caesar, etc. (as appears from classic authors).

had come to Jerusalem to worship — that is, to keep the recent feast of Pentecost, as a Gentile proselyte to the Jewish faith. (See ²⁵⁰⁸Isaiah 56:3-8, and ⁶¹²¹John 12:20).

28. Was returning — Having come so far, he not only stayed out the days of the festival, but prolonged his stay till now. It says much for his fidelity and value to his royal mistress that he had such liberty. But the faith in Jehovah and love of His worship and word, with which he was imbued, sufficiently explain this.

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

29-31. the Spirit said — by an unmistakable voice within, as in ⁴¹⁰⁹Acts 10:19 16:6,7.

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

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

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

32, 33. The place ... was this, He was led as a sheep, etc. — One cannot but wonder that this, of all predictions of Messiah’s sufferings in the Old

Testament the most striking, should have been that which the eunuch was reading before Philip joined him. He could hardly miss to have heard at Jerusalem of the sufferings and death of Jesus, and of the existence of a continually increasing party who acknowledged Him to be the Messiah. But his question to Philip, whether the prophet in this passage meant himself or some other man, clearly shows that he had not the least idea of any connection between this prediction and those facts.

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

35. Then Philip opened his mouth — (See on ^{<418E>}Matthew 5:2).

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

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

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

what doth hinder me to be baptized? — Philip had probably told him that this was the ordained sign and seal of discipleship, but the eunuch’s question was likely the first proposal of its application in this case. (^{<418E>}Acts 8:37 is wanting in the principal manuscripts and most venerable versions of the New Testament. It seems to have been added from the formularies for baptism which came into current use).

38. they went down both into the water, and he baptized him, etc. — probably laving the water upon him, though the precise mode is neither certain nor of any consequence.

39, 40. the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip — To deny [as MEYER, OLSHAUSEN, BLOOMFIELD] the miraculous nature of Philip’s disappearance, is vain. It stands out on the face of the words, as just a repetition of what we read of the ancient prophets, in ^{<118E>}1 Kings 18:12 ^{<118E>}2 Kings 2:16. And the same word (as BENGEL remarks) is employed to express a similar idea in ^{<471E>}2 Corinthians 12:2,4 ^{<504E>}1 Thessalonians 4:17.

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

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

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

at Azotus — the ancient Ashdod.

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

till he came to Caesarea — fifty-five miles northwest of Jerusalem, on the Mediterranean, just south of Mount Carmel; and so named by Herod, who rebuilt it, in honor of Caesar Augustus. Henceforth we lose sight of zealous and honored Philip, as by and by we shall lose sight even of Peter. As the chariot of the Gospel rolls on, other agents are raised up, each suited to his work. But “he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.” (See on ⁴⁰⁰¹John 4:31-38).

CHAPTER 9

ACTS 9:1-25.

CONVERSION OF SAUL, AND BEGINNINGS OF HIS MINISTRY.

1. Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, etc. — The emphatic “yet” is intended to note the remarkable fact, that up to this moment his blind persecuting rage against the disciples of the Lord burned as fiercely as ever. (In the teeth of this, NEANDER and OLSHAUSEN picture him deeply impressed with Stephen’s joyful faith, remembering passages of the Old Testament confirmatory of the Messiahship of Jesus, and experiencing such a violent struggle as would inwardly prepare the way for the designs of God towards him. Is not dislike, if not unconscious disbelief, of *sudden conversion* at the bottom of this?) The word “slaughter” here points to cruelties not yet recorded, but the particulars of which are supplied by himself nearly thirty years afterwards: “And I persecuted this way *unto the death*” (⁴⁰⁴Acts 22:4); “and when they were *put to death*, I gave my voice [vote] against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to [did my utmost to make them] blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange [foreign] cities” (⁴⁰⁵Acts 26:10,11). All this was *before* his present journey.

2. desired ... letters — of authorization.

to Damascus — the capital of Syria and the great highway between eastern and western Asia, about one hundred thirty miles northeast of Jerusalem; the most ancient city perhaps in the world, and lying in the center of a verdant and inexhaustible paradise. It abounded (as appears from JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.20,2) with Jews, and with Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith. Thither the Gospel had penetrated; and Saul, flushed with past successes, undertakes to crush it out.

that if he found any of this way, whether men or women — Thrice are *women* specified as objects of his cruelty, as an aggravated feature of it (⁴⁰⁶Acts 8:3 22:4; and here).

3. he came near Damascus — so ⁴⁰⁷Acts 22:6. Tradition points to a bridge near the city as the spot referred to. Events which are the turning

points in one's history so imprint themselves upon the memory that circumstances the most trifling in themselves acquire by connection with them something of their importance, and are recalled with inexpressible interest.

suddenly — At what time of day, it is not said; for artless simplicity reigns here. But he himself emphatically states, in one of his narratives, that it was “*about noon*” (⁴²¹⁶Acts 22:6), and in the other, “*at midday*” (⁴⁰³³Acts 26:13), when there could be no deception.

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

4-6. he fell to the earth — and his companions with him (⁴⁰³⁴Acts 26:14), who “saw the light” (⁴²¹⁹Acts 22:9).

and heard a voice saying unto him — “in the Hebrew tongue” (⁴⁰³⁴Acts 26:14).

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

why persecutest thou me? — No language can express the affecting character of this question, addressed from the right hand of the Majesty on high to an infuriated, persecuting mortal. (See ⁴¹⁵⁶Matthew 25:45, and that whole judgment scene).

5. Who art thou, Lord? — “Jesus knew Saul ere Saul knew Jesus” [BENGEL]. The term “Lord” here is an indefinite term of respect for some unknown but august speaker. That Saul saw as well as *heard* this glorious Speaker, is expressly said by Ananias (⁴¹⁹⁷Acts 9:17 22:14), by Barnabas (⁴¹⁹⁷Acts 9:27), and by himself (⁴⁰³⁶Acts 26:16); and in claiming apostleship, he explicitly states that he had “*seen the Lord*” (⁴¹⁰¹1 Corinthians 9:1 15:8), which can refer only to this scene.

I am Jesus whom thou persecutest — The “I” and “thou” here are touchingly emphatic in the original; while the term “JESUS” is purposely chosen, to convey to him the thrilling information that the hated name which he sought to hunt down — “*the Nazarene*,” as it is in ⁴⁰²⁸Acts 22:8 — was now speaking to him from the skies, “crowned with glory and honor” (see ⁴²¹⁹Acts 26:9).

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

6. And he, trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said — (The most ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament lack all these words *here* [including the last clause of ⁴⁰¹⁵Acts 9:5]; but they occur in ⁴⁰³⁴Acts 26:14 and ⁴⁰²⁰Acts 22:10, from which they appear to have been inserted here). The question, “What shall I do, Lord?” or, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” indicates a state of mind singularly interesting (see on ⁴⁰³⁷Acts 2:37). Its elements seem to be these:

- (1) Resistless conviction that “Jesus whom he persecuted,” now speaking to him, was “Christ the Lord.” (See on ⁴⁰¹⁵Galatians 1:15,16).
- (2) As a consequence of this, that not only all his religious views, but his whole religious character, had been an entire mistake; that he was up to that moment fundamentally and wholly wrong.
- (3) That though his whole future was now a blank, he had absolute confidence in Him who had so tenderly arrested him in his blind career, and was ready both to take in all His teaching and to carry out all His directions. (For more, see on ⁴⁰³⁹Acts 9:9).

Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee, etc. — See on ⁴⁰³⁵Acts 8:26-28.

7. the men ... stood speechless — This may mean merely that they remained so; but if the *standing* posture be intended, we have only to suppose that though at first they “all fell to the earth” (⁴⁰³⁴Acts 26:14), they arose of their own accord while Saul yet lay prostrate.

hearing a — rather “the”

voice — Paul himself says, “they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me” (⁴⁰²⁹Acts 22:9). But just as “the people that stood by *heard*” the voice that saluted our Lord with recorded words of consolation and assurance, and yet *heard not* the articulate words, but thought “it thundered” or that some “angel spake to Him” (⁴⁰²⁸John 12:28,29) — so these men heard the *voice* that spake to Saul, but heard not the *articulate words*. Apparent discrepancies like these, in the different narratives of the same scene in one and the same book of Acts, furnish the strongest confirmation both of the facts themselves and of the book which records them.

8. Saul arose ... and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man — after beholding the Lord, since he “could not see for the glory of that light” (^{4021b}Acts 22:11), he had involuntarily closed his eyes to protect them from the glare; and on opening them again he found his vision gone. “It is not said, however, that he was *blind*, for it was no punishment” [BENGEL].

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink — that is, according to the *Hebrew* mode of computation: he took no food during the remainder of that day, the entire day following, and so much of the subsequent day as elapsed before the visit of Ananias. Such a period of entire abstinence from food, in that state of mental absorption and revolution into which he had been so suddenly thrown, is in perfect harmony with known laws and numerous facts. But what three days those must have been! “Only one other space of three days’ duration can be mentioned of equal importance in the history of the world” [HOWSON]. Since Jesus had been revealed not only to his *eyes* but to his *soul* (see on ⁴⁰¹⁵Galatians 1:15,16), the double conviction must have immediately flashed upon him, that his whole reading of the Old Testament hitherto had been wrong, and that the system of legal righteousness in which he had, up to that moment, rested and prided himself was false and fatal. What materials these for spiritual exercise during those three days of total darkness, fasting, and solitude! On the one hand, what self-condemnation, what anguish, what death of legal hope, what difficulty in believing that in such a case there could be hope at all; on the other hand, what heartbreaking admiration of the grace that had “pulled him out of the fire,” what resistless conviction that there must be a purpose of love in it, and what tender expectation of being yet honored, as a chosen vessel, to declare what the Lord had done for his soul, and to spread abroad the savor of that Name which he had so wickedly, though ignorantly, sought to destroy — must have struggled in his breast during those memorable days! Is it too much to say that all that profound insight into the Old Testament, that comprehensive grasp of the principles of the divine economy, that penetrating spirituality, that vivid apprehension of man’s lost state, and those glowing views of the perfection and glory of the divine remedy, that beautiful ideal of the loftiness and the lowliness of the Christian character, that large philanthropy and burning zeal to spend and be spent through all his future life for Christ, which distinguish the writings of this chiefest of the apostles and greatest of men, were all quickened into life during those three successive days?

10-16. a certain disciple ... named Ananias — See on ⁴⁰²⁰Acts 22:12.

to him said the Lord — that is, Jesus. (See ⁴⁰¹³Acts 9:13,14,17).

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

and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus — There is something touching in the minuteness of these directions. Tarsus was the capital of the province of Cilicia, lying along the northeast coast of the Mediterranean. It was situated on the river Cydnus, was a “large and populous city” (says XENOPHON, and see ^{442B}Acts 21:39), and under the Romans had the privilege of self-government.

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

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

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

how much evil he hath done to thy saints — “*Thy saints*,” says Ananias to Christ; therefore Christ is God [BENGE]. So, in ^{404A}Acts 9:14, Ananias describes the disciples as “those that called on Christ’s name.” See on ^{407B}Acts 7:59,60; and compare ^{400C}1 Corinthians 1:2.

14. here he hath authority, etc. — so that the terror not only of the great persecutor’s name, but of this commission to Damascus, had traveled before him from the capital to the doomed spot.

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

he is a chosen vessel — a word often used by Paul in illustrating God’s sovereignty in election (^{412B}Romans 9:21-23 ^{404C}2 Corinthians 4:7 ^{412D}2 Timothy 2:20,21 [ALFORD]. Compare ^{400E}Zechariah 3:2).

16. I will show him — (See ^{442C}Acts 20:23,24 21:11).

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

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

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

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

and be filled with the Holy Ghost — which Ananias probably, without any express instructions on that subject, took it for granted would descend upon him; and not necessarily after his baptism [BAUMGARTEN, WEBSTER and WILKINSON] — for Cornelius and his company received it before theirs (⁴⁰⁰⁴Acts 10:44-48) — but perhaps immediately after the recovery of his sight by the laying on of Ananias’ hands.

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

was baptized — as directed by Ananias (⁴⁰²⁶Acts 22:16).

19. when he had received meat, he was strengthened — for the exhaustion occasioned by his three days’ fast would not be the less real, though unfelt during his struggles. (See on ⁴⁰⁰⁵Matthew 4:2).

Then was Saul certain days with the disciples at Damascus — making their acquaintance, in another way than either he or they had anticipated, and regaining his tone by the fellowship of the saints; but not certainly in order to learn from them what he was to teach, which he expressly disavows (⁴⁰¹²Galatians 1:12,16).

20-22. preached Christ ... that he is the Son of God — rather, “preached Jesus,” according to all the most ancient manuscripts and versions of the New Testament (so ⁴⁰²¹Acts 9:21, “all that call on this name,” that is, *Jesus*; and ⁴⁰²²Acts 9:22, “proving that this *Jesus* is very *Christ*”).

23. And after many days were fulfilled, the Jews took counsel to kill him — *Had we no other record than this, we should have supposed that what is here related took place while Saul continued at Damascus after his baptism. But in ^{<4017>}Galatians 1:17,18 we learn from Paul himself that he “went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus,” and that from the time of his first visit to the close of his second, both of which appear to have been short, a period of three years elapsed; either three full years, or one full year and part of two others. (See on ^{<4016>}Galatians 1:16-18). That such a blank should occur in the Acts, and be filled up in Galatians, is not more remarkable than that the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, their stay there, and their return thence, recorded only by Matthew, should be so entirely passed over by Luke, that if we had only his Gospel, we should have supposed that they returned to Nazareth immediately after the presentation in the temple. (Indeed in one of his narratives, ^{<4026>}Acts 22:16,17, Paul himself takes no notice of this period). But *wherefore this journey?* Perhaps*

(1) because he felt a period of repose and partial seclusion to be needful to his spirit, after the violence of the change and the excitement of his new occupation.

(2) To prevent the rising storm which was gathering against him from coming too soon to a head.

(3) To exercise his ministry in the Jewish synagogues, as opportunity afforded. On his return, refreshed and strengthened in spirit. he immediately resumed his ministry, but soon to the imminent hazard of his life.

24, 25. they watched the gates night and day to kill him — The full extent of his danger appears only from his own account (^{<4113>}2 Corinthians 11:32): “In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me”; the exasperated Jews having obtained from the governor a military force, the more surely to compass his destruction.

25. Then the disciples ... by night let him down — “through a window” (^{<4113>}2 Corinthians 11:33).

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

~~40B~~ ACTS 9:26-31.

SAUL'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM AFTER HIS CONVERSION.

26. And when Saul was come to Jerusalem — “three years after” his conversion, and particularly “to see Peter” (~~40B~~Galatians 1:18); no doubt because he was the leading apostle, and to communicate to him the prescribed sphere of his labors, specially to “the Gentiles.”

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

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

27. But Barnabas ... brought him to the apostles — that is, to Peter and James; for “other of the apostles saw I none,” says he fourteen years after (~~40B~~Galatians 1:18,19). Probably none of the other apostles were there at the time (~~40B~~Acts 4:36). Barnabas being of Cyprus, which was within a few hours' sail of Cilicia, and annexed to it as a Roman province, and Saul and he being Hellenistic Jews and eminent in their respective localities, they may very well have been acquainted with each other before this [HOWSON]. What is here said of Barnabas is in fine consistency with the “goodness” ascribed to him (~~40B~~Acts 11:24), and with the name “son of consolation,” given him by the apostles (~~40B~~Acts 4:36); and after Peter and James were satisfied, the disciples generally would at once receive him.

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

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

28, 29. And he was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem — for fifteen days, lodging with Peter (~~40B~~Galatians 1:18).

29. disputed against the Grecians — (See on ~~40B~~Acts 6:1); addressing himself specially to them, perhaps, as being of his own class, and that against which he had in the days of his ignorance been the fiercest.

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

30. they brought him down to Caesarea — on the coast (see on ^{<480>}Acts 8:40); accompanying him thus far. But Paul had another reason than his own apprehension for quitting Jerusalem so soon. “While he was praying in the temple, he was in a trance,” and received express injunctions to this effect. (See on ^{<427>}Acts 22:17-21).

and sent him forth to Tarsus — In ^{<402>}Galatians 1:21 he himself says of this journey, that he “came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia”; from which it is natural to infer that instead of sailing direct for Tarsus, he landed at Seleucia, traveled thence to Antioch, and penetrated from this northward into Cilicia, ending his journey at Tarsus. As this was his first visit to his native city since his conversion, so it is not certain that he ever was there again. (See on ^{<412>}Acts 11:25). It probably was now that he became the instrument of gathering into the fold of Christ those “kinsmen,” that “sister,” and perhaps her “son,” of whom mention is made in ^{<426>}Acts 23:16, etc. ^{<510>}Romans 16:7,11,21 [HOWSON].

^{<408>}ACTS 9:31.

FLOURISHING STATE OF THE CHURCH IN PALESTINE AT THIS TIME.

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

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

~~<40E>~~ **ACTS 9:32-43.**

PETER HEALS ENEAS AT LYDDA AND RAISES TABITHA TO LIFE AT JOPPA.

The historian now returns to Peter, in order to introduce the all-important narrative of Cornelius (~~<40E>~~ Acts 10:1-48). The occurrences here related probably took place during Saul's sojourn in Arabia.

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

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

34. And Peter said unto him, Eneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole — (See on ~~<40E>~~ Acts 3:6).

make thy bed — (See on ~~<40E>~~ John 5:8).

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

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

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

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

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

37. when they had washed — according to the custom of civilized nations towards the dead.

in an — rather, "the"

upper chamber — (compare ~~<1179>~~ 1 Kings 17:19).

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

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

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

40-43. Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down — the one in imitation of his Master's way (^{<40>}Luke 8:54; and compare ^{<41>}2 Kings 4:33); the other, in striking contrast with it. The *kneeling* became the lowly servant, but not the Lord Himself, *of whom it is never once recorded that he knelt in the performance of a miracle*.

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

41. he gave her his hand, and lifted her up — as his Lord had done to his own mother-in-law (^{<42>}Mark 1:31).

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

CHAPTER 10

~~400~~ACTS 10:1-48.

ACCESSION AND BAPTISM OF CORNELIUS AND HIS PARTY; OR, THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE GENTILES.

We here enter on an entirely new phase of the Christian Church, the “opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles”; in other words, the recognition of Gentile, on terms of perfect equality with Jewish, discipleship without the necessity of circumcision. Some beginnings appear to have been already made in this direction (see on ~~401~~Acts 11:20,21); and Saul probably acted on this principle from the first, both in Arabia and in Syria and Cilicia. But had he been the prime mover in the admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church, the Jewish party, who were never friendly to him, would have acquired such strength as to bring the Church to the verge of a disastrous schism. But on Peter, “the apostle” specially “of the circumcision,” was conferred the honor of initiating this great movement, as before of the first admission of Jewish believers. (See on ~~409~~Matthew 16:19). After this, however, one who had already come upon the stage was to eclipse this “chiefest of the apostles.”

1, 2. Caesarea — (See on ~~408~~Acts 8:40).

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

2. A devout man, etc. — an uncircumcised Gentile proselyte to the Jewish faith, of whom there were a very great number at this time; a distinguished proselyte, who had brought his whole household establishment under the hallowing influence of the Jewish faith and the regular observance of its principal seasons of worship.

gave much alms to the people — that is, the *Jewish* people, on the same principle as another centurion before him (~~405~~Luke 7:5); thinking it no “great thing,” if they had “sown unto him spiritual things, that they should reap his carnal things” (~~401~~1 Corinthians 9:11).

prayed to God alway — at the stated daily seasons. (See on ^{<400>}Acts 10:3).

3-6. saw ... evidently — “distinctly.”

the ninth hour of the day — three o’clock, the hour of the evening sacrifice. But he had been “fasting until that hour” (^{<400>}Acts 10:30), perhaps from the sixth hour (^{<400>}Acts 10:9).

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

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

are come up for a memorial before God — that is, as a *sacrifice* well-pleasing unto God, as an odor of a sweet smell (^{<400>}Revelation 8:4).

5. send to Joppa ... for one Simon, etc. — (See on ^{<400>}Acts 9:11).

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

a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually — of the “soldiers under him,” such as the centurion at Capernaum had (^{<400>}Matthew 8:9). Who this “devout soldier” was, can only be matter of conjecture. DA COSTA [*Four Witnesses*] gives a number of ingenious reasons for thinking that, having attached himself henceforth to Peter — whose influence in the composition of the second Gospel is attested by the earliest tradition, and is stamped on that Gospel itself — he is no other than the Evangelist *Mark*.

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

the sixth hour — noon.

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

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

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

I have never eaten anything that is common — that is, *not sanctified* by divine permission to eat of it, and so “unclean.” “The distinction of meats

was a sacrament of national distinction, separation, and consecration” [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

15. What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common — The ceremonial distinctions are at an end, and Gentiles, ceremonially separated from the chosen people (^{<4103>}Acts 10:28), and debarred from that access to God in the visible ordinances of His Church which they enjoyed, are now on a perfect equality with them.

16. done thrice — See ^{<4113>}Genesis 41:32.

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

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

22. they said, Cornelius ... a just man, etc. — fine testimony this from his own servants.

of good report among all the nation of the Jews — specified, no doubt, to conciliate the favorable regard of the Jewish apostle.

to hear words of thee — (See on ^{<4114>}Acts 11:14).

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

Peter went ... with them, and certain brethren — six in number (^{<4112>}Acts 11:12).

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

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

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

fell down at his feet, and worshipped him — In the East this way of showing respect was customary not only to kings, but to others occupying a superior station; but among the Greeks and Romans it was reserved for the gods. Peter, therefore, declines it as due to no mortal [GROTIUS]. “*Those who claim to have succeeded Peter, have not imitated this part of his conduct*” [ALFORD] (therein only verifying ^{<3110>}2 Thessalonians 2:4, and compare ^{<690>}Revelation 19:10 22:9).

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

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

30-33. Four days ago — the messengers being despatched on the first; on the second reaching Joppa (^{<4110>}Acts 10:9); starting for Caesarea on the third; and on the fourth arriving.

33. we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God — Beautiful expression of entire preparedness to receive the expected divine teaching through the lips of this heaven-commissioned teacher, and delightful encouragement to Peter to give free utterance to what was doubtless already on his lips!

34, 35. Peter opened his mouth — (See on ^{<4110>}Matthew 5:2).

Of a truth I perceive — that is, “I have it now demonstrated before mine eyes.”

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

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

he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness — This being the well-known phraseology of the Old Testament in describing the truly godly man, within the pale of revealed religion, it cannot be alleged that Peter meant it to denote a merely *virtuous* character, in the heathen sense; and as

Peter had learned enough, from the messengers of Cornelius and from his own lips, to convince him that the whole religious character of this Roman officer had been moulded in the Jewish faith, there can be no doubt that the apostle intended to describe exactly such saintship — in its internal spirituality and external fruitfulness — as God had already pronounced to be genuine and approved. And since to such “He giveth more grace,” according to the law of His Kingdom (⁵⁰⁰⁶James 4:6 ⁴¹²⁹Matthew 25:29), He sends Peter, not to be the instrument of his *conversion*, as this is very frequently called, but simply to “show him the way of God more perfectly,” as before to the devout Ethiopian eunuch.

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

preaching peace by Jesus Christ — the glorious sum of all Gospel truth (⁴⁰⁰¹1 Corinthians 1:20-22).

he is Lord of all — exalted to embrace under the canopy of His peace, Jew and Gentile alike, whom the blood of His Cross had cemented into one reconciled and accepted family of God (⁴⁰²³Ephesians 2:13-18).

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

which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee — (See ⁴⁰¹⁴Luke 4:14,37,44 7:17 9:6 23:5).

after the baptism which John preached — (See on ⁴⁰⁰²Acts 1:22).

38. Now God anointed Jesus of Nazareth — rather, “Jesus of Nazareth (as the burden of that ‘published word’), how God anointed Him.”

with the Holy Ghost and with power — that is, at His baptism, thus visibly proclaiming Him MESSIAH, “the Lord’s Christ.” See ⁴⁰¹⁸Luke 4:18-21. For it is not His unction for personal holiness at His incarnation that is referred to — as many of the Fathers and some moderns take it — but His investiture with the insignia of the Messianic office, in which He presented Himself after His baptism to the acceptance of the people.

went about doing good — holding up the *beneficent* character of all His miracles, which was their predicted character (²³⁸⁶Isaiah 35:5,6, etc.).

healing all that were oppressed of the devil — whether in the form of demoniacal possessions, or more indirectly, as in her “whom Satan had bound with a spirit of infirmity eighteen years” (^{<2136>}Luke 13:16); thereby showing Himself the Redeemer from all evil.

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

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

slew and hanged — that is, slew by hanging.

on a tree — So ^{<4150>}Acts 5:30 (and see on ^{<4183>}Galatians 3:13).

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

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

he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead — He had before proclaimed Him “Lord of all,” for the dispensing of “*peace*” to all alike; now he announces Him in the same supreme lordship, for the exercise of *judgment* upon all alike. On this divine ordination, see ^{<4182>}John 5:22,23,27 ^{<4173>}Acts 17:31. Thus we have here all Gospel truth in brief. But, *forgiveness through this exalted One* is the closing note of Peter’s beautifully simple discourse.

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

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

44, 45. While Peter yet spake ... the Holy Ghost fell — by visible and audible manifestation (^{<4006>}Acts 10:46).

45. they of the circumcision ... were astonished ... because that on the Gentiles also was poured out, etc. — without circumcision.

46. heard them speak with tongues and magnify God — As on the day of Pentecost it was no empty miracle, no mere speaking of foreign languages, but utterance of “the wonderful works of God” in tongues to them unknown (^{<4021>}Acts 2:11), so here; but more remarkable in this case, as the speakers were perhaps less familiar with the Old Testament songs of praise.

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

47. which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we — and are thus, in all that is essential to salvation, on a level with ourselves.

48. he commanded them to be baptized — not doing it with his own hands, as neither did Paul, save on rare occasions (^{<4014>}1 Corinthians 1:14-17; compare ^{<4028>}Acts 2:38 ^{<4002>}John 4:2).

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

CHAPTER 11

4100 ACTS 11:1-18.

PETER VINDICATES HIMSELF BEFORE THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM FOR HIS PROCEDURE TOWARDS THE GENTILES.

1-11. the apostles and brethren ... in Judea — rather, “throughout Judea.”

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

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

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

13. seen an angel — literally, “*the* angel,” for the rumor took that definite shape.

14. Who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved — The historian makes the angel express this much more generally (4100Acts 10:6). So also the subsequent report of it by the deputies and by Cornelius himself to Peter (4100Acts 10:22,32). But as Peter tarried with Cornelius certain days, and they doubtless talked over the wonderful scene together, perhaps this fuller and richer form of what the angel said was given to Peter; or the apostle himself may have *expressed* what the angel certainly *designed* by directing them to send for him. Observe, “salvation” is here made to hang upon “*words*,” that is, the Gospel message

concerning Christ. But on the “salvation” of Cornelius, see on ~~440B~~ Acts 10:34,35. On that of his “house,” see on ~~429C~~ Luke 19:10.

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

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

Then hath God also granted to the Gentiles, etc. — rather, “granted to the Gentiles also.” (See a similar misplacement of “also” in ~~580E~~ Hebrews 12:1). To “grant repentance unto life” — that is, “such as issues in life” (compare ~~470D~~ 2 Corinthians 7:10, “repentance unto salvation”) — is more than to be willing to pardon upon repentance [GROTIUS]. The case of Cornelius is so manifestly one of *grace* reigning in every stage of his religious history, that we can hardly doubt that this was just the feature of it which they meant here to express. *And this is the grace that reigns in every conversion.*

~~411B~~ ACTS 11:19-24.

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

19. they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen — and who “went everywhere preaching the word” (~~440B~~ Acts 8:4).

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

and Cyprus — (See on ~~440E~~ Acts 4:36). An active commercial intercourse subsisted between Phenice and Cyprus.

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

20. some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene — (see on ^{<4236>}Luke 23:26); as Lucius, mentioned in ^{<4401>}Acts 13:1.

spake unto the Grecians — rather, “the *Greeks*,” that is, uncircumcised Gentiles (as the true reading beyond doubt is). The Gospel had, from the first, been preached to “the Grecians” or Greek-speaking *Jews*, and these “men of Cyprus and Cyrene” were themselves “Grecians.” How, then, can we suppose that the historian would note, as something new and singular (^{<4412>}Acts 11:22), that some of the dispersed Christians preached to *them*?

21. a great number believed — Thus the accession of Cornelius and his party was not the first admission of uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church. (See on ^{<4401>}Acts 10:1.) Nay, we read of no influence which the accession of Cornelius and his house had on the further progress of the Gospel among the Gentiles; whereas there here open upon us operations upon the Gentiles from quite a different quarter, and attended with ever growing success. The only great object served by the case of Cornelius was *the formal recognition of the principles which that case afterwards secured*. (See on ^{<4459>}Acts 15:19-29.)

22. sent ... Barnabas ... as far as Antioch — implying that even on the way to Antioch he found churches to visit [OLSHAUSEN]. It was in the first instance, no doubt, a mission of inquiry; and no one could be more suitable to inquire into the proceedings of those Cyprians and Cyrenians than one who was himself a “Grecian” of Cyprus (^{<4406>}Acts 4:36), and “a son of consolation.”

23. when he ... had seen the grace of God — in the new converts.

was glad — owned and rejoiced in it at once as divine, though they were uncircumcised.

exhorted them all that with purpose of heart — as opposed to a hasty and fickle discipleship.

they would cleave unto the Lord — the Lord Jesus.

24. For he was a good man — The sense of “good” here is plainly “large-hearted,” “liberal-minded,” rising above narrow Jewish

sectarianism, and that because, as the historian adds, he was “full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.”

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

~~41125~~ ACTS 11:25, 26.

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

25. Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus for to seek Saul — Of course, this was after the hasty despatch of Saul to Tarsus, no doubt by Barnabas himself among others, to escape the fury of the Jews at Jerusalem. And as Barnabas was the first to take the converted persecutor by the hand and procure his recognition as a disciple by the brethren at Jerusalem (~~41327~~ Acts 9:27), so he alone seems at that early period to have discerned in him those peculiar endowments by virtue of which he was afterwards to eclipse all others. Accordingly, instead of returning to Jerusalem, to which, no doubt, he sent accounts of his proceedings from time to time, finding that the mine in Antioch was rich in promise and required an additional and powerful hand to work, he leaves it for a time, takes a journey to Tarsus, “finds Saul” (seemingly implying — not that he lay hid [BENGEL], but that he was engaged at the time in some preaching circuit — see on ~~41523~~ Acts 15:23), and returns with him to Antioch. Nor were his hopes disappointed. As co-pastors, for the time being, of the Church there, they so labored that the Gospel, even in that great and many-sided community, achieved for itself a name which will live and be gloried in as long as this world lasts, as the symbol of all that is most precious to the fallen family of man: — “*The disciples were called CHRISTIANS first in Antioch.*” This name originated not within, but without, the Church; not with their *Jewish* enemies, by whom they were styled “Nazarenes” (~~4215~~ Acts 24:5), but with the *heathen* in Antioch, and (as the form of the word shows) with the *Romans*, not the *Greeks* there [OLSHAUSEN]. It was not at first used in a good sense (as ~~4038~~ Acts 26:28 ~~40465~~ 1 Peter 4:16 show), though hardly framed out of contempt (as DE WETTE, BAUMGARTEN, etc.); but as it was a noble testimony to the light in which the Church regarded Christ — honoring Him as their only

Lord and Savior, dwelling continually on His name, and glorying in it — so it was felt to be too apposite and beautiful to be allowed to die.

~~<4117>~~ ACTS 11:27-30.

BY OCCASION OF A FAMINE BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURN TO JERUSALEM WITH A CONTRIBUTION FOR THE RELIEF OF THEIR SUFFERING BRETHREN.

27. came prophets from Jerusalem — inspired teachers, a class we shall afterwards frequently meet with, who sometimes, but not necessarily, foretold future events. They are classed next to apostles (~~<4128>~~ 1 Corinthians 12:28,29 ~~<4041>~~ Ephesians 4:11).

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 12

411 ACTS 12:1-19.

PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH BY HEROD AGRIPPA I — MARTYRDOM OF JAMES AND MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE OF PETER.

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

2. killed James ... with the sword — beheaded him; a most ignominious mode of punishment, according to the Jews. Blessed martyr! Thou hast indeed “drunk of thy Lord's cup, and hast been baptized with his baptism.” (See on 411 Mark 10:38-40.) A grievous loss this would be to the Church; for though nothing is known of him beyond what we read in the Gospels, the place which he had as one of the three whom the Lord admitted to His closest intimacy would lead the Church to look up to him with a reverence and affection which even their enemies would come to hear of. They could spring only upon one more prized victim; and flushed with their first success, they prevail upon Herod to seize him also.

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

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

Then were the days of unleavened bread — seven in number, during which, after killing and eating the Passover, no leaven was allowed in Jewish houses (412 Exodus 12:15,19).

4. delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers — that is, to four parties of four each, corresponding to the four Roman watches; two watching in prison and two at the gates, and each party being on duty for the space of one watch.

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

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

5, 6. prayer was made without ceasing — rather, “instant,” “earnest,” “urgent” (*Margin*); as in ^{<4224>}Luke 22:44 ^{<4237>}Acts 26:7 and ^{<4048>}1 Peter 4:8 (see *Greek*).

of the church unto God for him — not in public assembly, for it was evidently not safe to meet thus; but in little groups in private houses, one of which was Mary’s (^{<4122>}Acts 12:12). And this was kept up during all the days of unleavened bread.

6. And when Herod would have brought him forth — “was going to bring him forth.”

the same night — but a few hours before the intended execution. Thus long were the disciples kept waiting; their prayers apparently unavailing, and their faith, as would seem from the sequel, waxing feeble. Such, however, is the “law” of God’s procedure (^{<4726>}Deuteronomy 32:36 and see on ^{<4218>}John 21:3).

Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains — Roman prisoners had a chain fastened at one end to the wrist of their fight hand, and at the other to the wrist of a soldier’s left hand, leaving the right arm of the keeper free in case of any attempt to escape. For greater security the prisoner was sometimes, as here, chained to two soldiers, one on each side. (See ^{<4023>}Acts 21:23.) Ye think your prey secure, bloodthirsty priests and thou obsequious tyrant who, to “please the Jews,” hast shut in this most eminent of the servants of Christ within double gates, guarded by double sentinels, while double keepers and double chains seem to defy all rescue! So thought the chief priests, who “made the sepulcher of the Lord sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch.” But “He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh at you.” Meanwhile, “Peter is sleeping!” In a few hours he expects a stingless death; “neither counts he his life dear unto him, so that he may finish his course with joy and the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus.” In this frame of spirit he has dropped asleep, and lies the picture of peace.

7-11. the angel of the Lord — rather, “an angel.”

came upon him — so in ^{<403>}Luke 2:9, expressive of the unexpected nature of the visit.

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

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

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

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

passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him — when he had placed him beyond pursuit. Thus “He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their heads cannot perform their enterprise” (^{<4052>}Job 5:12).

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

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

12-17. he came to the house of Mary, etc. — who “must have had a house of some pretensions to receive a large number; and, accordingly, we read that her brother Barnabas (^{<5040>}Colossians 4:10) was a person of substance (^{<4037>}Acts 4:37). She must also have been distinguished for faith and courage to allow such a meeting in the face of persecution” [WEBSTER and WILKINSON]. To such a house it was natural that Peter should come.

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

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

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

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

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

she constantly affirmed — “kept steadfastly affirming.”

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

16. Peter continued knocking — delay being dangerous.

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

Go show these things unto James and to the brethren — Whether James the son of Alphaeus, one of the Twelve, usually known as “James the Less,” and “James the Lord’s brother” (^{ROM}Galatians 1:19), were the same person; and if not, whether the James here referred to was the former or the latter, critics are singularly divided, and the whole question is one of the most difficult. To us, it appears that there are strong reasons for thinking that they were *not* the same person, and that the one here meant, and throughout the Acts, is *the apostle* James. (But on this more hereafter). James is singled out, because he had probably begun to take the oversight of the Church in Jerusalem, which we afterwards find him exercising (^{445E}Acts 15:1-29).

And he departed, and went into another place — according to his Lord's express command (^{<4023>}Matthew 10:23). When told, on a former miraculous liberation from prison, to go and speak unto the people (^{<4151>}Acts 5:20), he did it; but in this case to present himself in public would have been to tempt God by rushing upon certain destruction.

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

19. examined the keepers — who, either like the keepers of our Lord's sepulcher, had "shaken and become as dead men" (^{<41804>}Matthew 28:4), or had slept on their watch and been divinely kept from awaking.

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

^{<4123>}ACTS 12:20-25.

HEROD'S MISERABLE END — GROWING SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL — BARNABAS AND SAUL RETURN TO ANTIOCH.

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

their country was nourished by the king's country — See ^{<41511>}1 Kings 5:11 ^{<41810>}Ezra 3:7 ^{<43717>}Ezekiel 27:17. Perhaps the famine (^{<41128>}Acts 11:28) made them the more urgent for reconciliation.

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

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

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

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

when they had fulfilled their ministry — or service; that mentioned on ~~41129~~Acts 11:29,30.

took with them John ... Mark — (See on ~~41212~~Acts 12:12), not to be confounded with the second Evangelist, as is often done. As his uncle was Barnabas, so his spiritual father was Peter (~~41163~~1 Peter 5:13).

CHAPTER 13

Paul's First Missionary Journey: *In Company with Barnabas.*

~~41E1E~~Acts 13:1-14:28.

~~41E1E~~ACTS 13:1-3.

BARNABAS AND SAUL, DIVINELY CALLED TO LABOR AMONG THE GENTILES, ARE SET APART AND SENT FORTH BY THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH.

The first seven chapters of this book might be entitled, *The Church among the Jews*; the next five (chapters eight through twelve), *The Church in Transition from Jews to Gentiles*; and the last sixteen (chapters thirteen through twenty-eight), *The Church among the Gentiles* [BAUMGARTEN]. “Though Christianity had already spread beyond the limits of Palestine, still the Church continued a stranger to *formal* missionary effort. Casual occurrences, particularly the persecution at Jerusalem (~~44XP~~Acts 8:2), had hitherto brought about the diffusion of the Gospel. It was from Antioch that teachers were first sent forth with the definite purpose of spreading Christianity, and organizing churches, with regular institutions (~~44Q3~~Acts 14:23)” [OLSHAUSEN].

1. there were ... certain prophets — (See on ~~441Z~~Acts 11:27).

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

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

Lucius of Cyrene — (~~44Z1~~Acts 2:20). He is mentioned, in ~~451Q1~~Romans 16:21, as one of Paul's kinsmen.

Manaen — or Menahem, the name of one of the kings of Israel (~~125H~~2 Kings 15:14).

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

Herod the tetrarch — that is, Antipas, who was himself “brought up with a certain private person at Rome” [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 17.1,3]. How

differently did these two foster brothers turn out — the one, abandoned to a licentious life and stained with the blood of the most distinguished of God’s prophets, though not without his fits of reformation and seasons of remorse; the other, a devoted disciple of the Lord Jesus and prophet of the Church at Antioch! But this is only what may be seen in every age: “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.” If the courtier, whose son, at the point of death, was healed by our Lord (^{<4046>}John 4:46) was of Herod’s establishment, while Susanna’s husband was his steward (^{<4083>}Luke 8:3), his foster brother’s becoming a Christian and a prophet is something remarkable.

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

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

and fasted — As this was done in other cases on special occasions (^{<4433>}Acts 13:3,14,23), it is not improbable that they had been led to expect some such prophetic announcement at this time.

the Holy Ghost said — through some of the prophets mentioned in ^{<4433>}Acts 13:1.

Separate me — So ^{<4500>}Romans 1:1.

for the work whereunto I have called them — by some communication, perhaps, to themselves: in the case of Saul at least, such a designation was indicated from the first (^{<4021>}Acts 22:21). *Note.* — While the *personality* of the Holy Ghost is manifest from this language, His supreme *divinity* will appear equally so by comparing it with ^{<3806>}Hebrews 5:4.

3. laid their hands on them — (See on ^{<4466>}Acts 6:6) — “recommending them to the grace of God for the work which they had to fulfill” (^{<4405>}Acts 14:26).

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

~~4104~~ **ACTS 13:4-12.****ARRIVING IN CYPRUS THEY PREACH IN THE
SYNAGOGUES OF SALAMIS — AT PAPHOS, ELYMAS IS
STRUCK BLIND, AND THE GOVERNOR OF THE ISLAND IS
CONVERTED.**

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

thence sailed to Cyprus — whose high mountain summits are easily seen in clear weather from the coast [COLONEL CHESNEY in HOWSON]. “Four reasons may have induced them to turn in first to this island:

(1) Its nearness to the mainland;

(2) It was the native place of Barnabas, and since the time when Andrew found his brother Simon, and brought him to Jesus, and “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus,” family ties had not been without effect on the progress of the Gospel.

(3) It could not be unnatural to suppose that the truth would be welcomed in Cyprus when brought by Barnabas and his kinsman Mark, to their own connections or friends. The Jews were numerous in Salamis. By sailing to that city, they were following the track of the synagogues; and though their mission was chiefly to the Gentiles, their surest course for reaching them was through the proselytes and Hellenizing Jews.

(4) Some of the Cypriotes were already Christians. Indeed, no one place out of Palestine, except Antioch, had been so honorably associated with the work of successful evangelization” [HOWSON].

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

they had ... John — Mark.

to their minister — “for their officer”. (See on ~~4104~~ Luke 4:20). With what fruit they preached here is not said. Probably their feeling was what Paul afterwards expressed at Antioch in Pisidia (~~4136~~ Acts 13:46).

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

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

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

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

8-12. But Elymas — or “the wise.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

and all malice — The word signifies “readiness for anything,” knavish dexterity.

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

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

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

there fell on him a mist, etc. — This is in Luke’s *medical* style.

12. Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord — so marvellously attested; compare ^{<4102>}Mark 1:27. What fruit, if any, followed this remarkable conversion, or how long after it the missionaries remained at Paphos, we know not.

~~<4133>~~ACTS 13:13-52.

AT PERGA JOHN MARK FORSAKES THEM — AT ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA, PAUL PREACHES WITH GLORIOUS EFFECT — THE JEWS, ENRAGED, EXPEL THEM OUT OF THEM COASTS.

13. they came to Perga in Pamphylia — The distance from Paphos to Attalia, on the Gulf of Pamphylia (see on ^{<4142>}Acts 14:25), sailing in a northwest direction, is not much greater than from Seleucia to Salamis on the east. Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia, on the river Cestrus, and about seven miles inland from Attalia.

and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem — As Paul afterwards peremptorily refused to take Mark with him on his second missionary journey, because he “had departed [or ‘fallen off’] from them and had not gone with them to the work” (^{<4153>}Acts 15:38), there can be no doubt that he had either wearied of it or been deterred by the prospect of the dangers which lay before him. (But see on ^{<4157>}Acts 15:37, etc.).

14. departed from Perga — apparently without making any stay or doing any work: compare the different language of ^{<4425>}Acts 14:25, and see immediately below.

came to Antioch in Pisidia — usually so called, to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria, from which they had started, though it actually lies in Phrygia, and almost due north from Perga. It was a long journey, and as it lay almost entirely through rugged mountain passes, while “rivers burst out at the base of huge cliffs, or dash down wildly through narrow ravines,” it must have been a perilous one. The whole region was, and to this day is, infested by robbers, as ancient history and modern travels abundantly attest; and there can be but little doubt that to this very journey Paul many years after alludes, when he speaks amidst his “journeyings often,” of his “*perils of rivers*” (as the word is), and his “*perils of robbers*” (^{<4712>}2 Corinthians 11:26). If this journey were taken in May — and earlier than that the passes would have been blocked up with snow — it would account for their not staying at Perga, whose hot streets are then deserted; “men, women, and children, flocks, herds, camels, and asses, all ascending at the beginning of the hot season from the plains to the cool basin-like hollows on the mountains, moving in the same direction with our missionaries” [HOWSON].

15-17. Then Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand — as was his manner on such occasions (^{<4214>}Acts 21:40; and see ^{<4211>}Acts 26:1).

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

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

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

20. after that he gave ... judges ... about the space of four hundred and fifty years — As this appears to contradict ^{<1003>}1 Kings 6:1, various solutions have been proposed. Taking the words as they stand in the *Greek*, thus, “after that, by the space of four hundred fifty years, He gave judges,” the meaning may be, that about four hundred fifty years elapsed from the time of the covenant with Abraham *until* the period of the judges; which is historically correct, the word “about” showing that chronological exactness was not aimed at. But taking the sense to be as in our version, that it was the period of the judges itself which lasted about four hundred fifty years,

this statement also will appear historically correct, if we include in it the interval of subjection to foreign powers which occurred during the period of the judges, and understand it to describe the whole period from the settlement of the tribes in Canaan to the establishment of royalty. Thus, from the Exodus to the building of the temple were five hundred ninety-two years [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 8.3.1]; deduct forty years in the wilderness; twenty-five years of Joshua's rule [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 5.1.29]; forty years of Saul's reign (^{<4132>}Acts 13:2); forty of David's and the first four years of Solomon's reign (^{<1005>}1 Kings 6:1), and there remain, just four hundred forty-three years; or, in round numbers, "about four hundred fifty years."

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

forty years — With this length of Saul's reign (not mentioned in the Old Testament), JOSEPHUS coincides [*Antiquities*, 6.14.9].

22. I have found David, etc. — This quotation is the substance of ^{<4822>}Psalm 89:20 ^{<4934>}1 Samuel 13:14; and perhaps also of ^{<4920>}Psalm 78:70-72.

23-25. Of this man's seed hath God, according to ... promise, raised unto Israel a Savior, Jesus — The emphasis on this statement lies:

(1) in the *seed* from which Christ sprang — David's — and the *promise* to that effect, which was thus fulfilled;

(2) on the *character* in which this promised Christ was given of God — "a SAVIOR." His personal name "JESUS" is emphatically added, as designed to express that very character. (See on ^{<4102>}Matthew 1:21).

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

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

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

28. found no cause of death — though they *sought* it (^{<405>}Matthew 26:59,60).

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

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

33. God hath fulfilled the same — “hath completely fulfilled.”

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

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

this day have I begotten thee — As the apostle in ^{<410>}Romans 1:4 regards the resurrection of Christ merely as the *manifestation* of a prior Sonship, which he afterwards (^{<412>}Acts 8:32) represents as *essential*, it is plain that this is his meaning here. (Such *declarative* meaning of the verb “to be” is familiar to every reader of the Bible). See ^{<415>}John 15:8, “So shall ye be,” that is, *be seen* to be “My disciples.” It is against the whole sense of the New Testament to ascribe the *origin* of Christ’s Sonship to His resurrection.

34-37. now no more to return to corruption — that is, to the grave where death reigns; and compare ^{<416>}Romans 6:9, “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more, *death hath no more dominion over him.*”

I will give you the sure mercies of David — (^{<238>}Isaiah 55:3). The word rendered “mercies” is peculiar, denoting the *sanctity* of them, as comprehending the whole riches of the new covenant; while the other word, “sure,” points to the *certainty* with which they would, through David’s Seed, be at length all substantiated. See on ^{<414>}John 1:14. But how do these

words prove the resurrection of Christ? “They presuppose it; for since an eternal kingdom was promised to David, the Ruler of this kingdom could not remain under the power of death. But to strengthen the indefinite prediction by one more definite, the apostle adduces ^{<91610>}Psalm 16:10, of which Peter had given the same explanation (see on ^{<4127>}Acts 2:27; ^{<4123>}Acts 2:30,31), both apostles denying the possibility of its proper reference to David” [OLSHAUSEN].

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

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

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

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

40. Beware, therefore, etc. — By this awful warning of the Old Testament the apostle would fain “shut them up unto the faith.”

41. ye will not believe though a man declare it unto you — that is, even on unexceptionable testimony. The words, from ^{<3015>}Habakkuk 1:5, were originally a merciful but fruitless warning against the approaching destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and the Babylonish captivity. As

such nothing could more fitly describe the more awful calamity impending over the generation which the apostle addressed.

42, 43. And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath — rather (according to what is beyond doubt the true reading), “Now, as they were going out [of the synagogue], they besought” — that is, not the Gentiles, whose case comes in afterwards, but the mixed congregation of Jews and proselytes, to whom the discourse had been addressed, entreated to have another hearing of such truths; those of them, that is, who had been impressed. “And after the breaking up of the synagogue, many of” both classes, Jews and religious; proselytes, followed Paul and Barnabas (observe, from this time forward, the inverted order of these names; except ^{<4144>}Acts 14:14 13:7 12:25; see on ^{<4144>}Acts 14:14; ^{<4137>}Acts 13:7; ^{<4125>}Acts 12:25). These names evidently been won to the Gospel by what they had heard, and felt a clinging to their spiritual benefactors.

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

persuaded them to continue in the grace of God — which they had experienced through the Gospel. (Compare ^{<4123>}Acts 11:23).

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

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

saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy — rather, “indignation,” and broke out in their usual manner.

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

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

It was necessary that the word should first have been spoken to you — See the direction of Christ in ^{<2447>}Luke 24:47; also ^{<6116>}Romans 1:16.

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

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

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

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

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

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

49-52. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region — implying some stay in Antioch and missionary activity in its vicinity.

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

expelled them — an easier thing than to refute them.

51. shook off the dust of their feet against them — as directed (⁴⁰⁰⁴Matthew 10:14).

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

52. the disciples — who, though not themselves expelled, had to endure sufferings for the Gospel, as we learn from ⁴⁴⁴²Acts 14:22.

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

CHAPTER 14

◀440▶ACTS 14:1-7.

MEETING WITH SIMILAR SUCCESS AND SIMILAR OPPOSITION AT ICONIUM, PAUL AND BARNABAS FLEE FOR THEIR LIVES TO LYSTRA AND DERBE, AND PREACH THERE.

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

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

a ... multitude ... of the Greeks believed — meaning probably the religious proselytes, as opposed to “the Gentiles” mentioned ▶442▶Acts 14:2.

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

speaking boldly in the Lord — rather, “in dependence on the Lord,” that is, on their glorified Head.

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

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

5. an assault made ... to stone them — rather here, “an impetuous movement” with a view to stoning them: for in ▶712▶2 Corinthians 11:25, Paul says, “*Once* I was stoned,” and that was at Lystra, as expressly related in ▶444▶Acts 14:19. (PALEY’S remarks — *Horae Paulinae* — on this singular coincidence between the Epistle and the history are very striking).

fled — (See ▶1023▶Matthew 10:23).

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

~~4418~~ ACTS 14:8-21.

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

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

8-10. there sat there a certain man ... a cripple from his mother's womb ... The same heard Paul speak — in the open air and (~~4441B~~ Acts 14:11) to a crowd of people.

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

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

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

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

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

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

13. the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city — that is, whose temple stood

before their city, brought oxen and garlands — to crown the victims and decorate, as on festive occasions, the porches.

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

they rent their clothes and ran in — rather (according to the true reading), “ran forth.”

among the people, crying out ... Sirs, why do ye these things? — This was something more than that abhorrence of idolatry which took possession of the Jews as a nation from the time of the Babylonish captivity: it was that delicate sensibility to everything which affects the honor of God which Christianity, giving us in God a reconciled Father, alone can produce; making the Christian instinctively feel himself to be wounded in all dishonor done to God, and filling him with mingled horror and grief when such gross insults as this are offered to him.

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

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

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

16. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways — that is, without extending to them the revelation vouchsafed to the seed of Abraham, and the grace attending it; compare ^{<4173>}Acts 17:30 ^{<4121>}1 Corinthians 1:21. Yet not without guilt on their part was this privation (^{<4110>}Romans 1:20, etc.).

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

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

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

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

18. with these sayings scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice to them — In spite of this, and Peter’s repudiation of all such honor (^{<4406>}Acts 10:26), how soon idolatrous tendencies began to show themselves in the Christian Church, at length to be systematized and enjoined in the Church of Rome!

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

persuaded the people — “the multitudes.”

and having stoned Paul — (See on ^{<4445>}Acts 14:5). Barnabas they seem to have let alone; Paul, as the prominent actor and speaker, being the object of all their rage. The words seem to imply that it was the Jews who did this; and no doubt they took the lead (^{<4449>}Acts 14:19), but it was the act of the instigated and fickle multitudes along with them.

drew *him* out of the city — By comparing this with ^{<4478>}Acts 7:58 it will be seen that the Jews were the chief actors in this scene.

20. as the disciples stood round about him — sorrowing. So his labors here had not been in vain: “Disciples” had been gathered, who now rallied around the bleeding body. And *one appears to have been gained on this occasion, of far more importance than all the rest* — TIMOTHEUS. See on ^{<4401>}Acts 16:1-3. (It could scarcely have been at the *subsequent* visit, ^{<4401>}Acts 14:21, for the reason given in ^{<5200>}2 Timothy 3:10,11; while at the *third* visit, ^{<4401>}Acts 16:1-3, he was already a Christian).

he rose up — It is possible that this recovery was natural; the insensibility occasioned by such treatment as he had received sometimes passing away

of itself, and leaving the patient less hurt than appeared. But certainly the impression naturally left on the mind by the words is that the restoration was miraculous; and so the best interpreters understand the words. This is confirmed by what follows.

came into the city — Noble intrepidity!

next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe — a journey for which he could hardly be fit if his recovery had been natural. (As to Derbe, see on ~~444B~~ Acts 14:6).

21. and when they had preached ... to that city and had taught many — rather, “had made many disciples” (*Margin*); but probably without suffering any persecution, as Derbe is not mentioned along with Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra (~~381B~~ 2 Timothy 3:11).

~~444B~~ ACTS 14:21-28.

PAUL AND BARNABAS RETRACE THEIR STEPS, RETURN TO ANTIOCH IN SYRIA, AND THUS COMPLETE THEIR FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

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

23, 24. when they had ordained them elders — literally, “chosen by show of hands.” But as that would imply that this was done by the apostles’ own hands, many render the word, as in our version, “ordained.” Still, as there is no evidence in the New Testament that the word had then lost its proper meaning, as this is beyond doubt its meaning in ~~409B~~ 2 Corinthians 8:19, and as there is indisputable evidence that the concurrence of the people was required in all elections to sacred office in the earliest ages

of the Church, it is perhaps better to understand the words to mean, “when they had made a choice of elders,” that is, superintended such choice on the part of the disciples.

and had prayed with fasting — literally, “fastings,” thus setting them solemnly apart. This last clause confirms our interpretation of the former. For if “ordination” was by prayer and fasting (see ^{<413>}Acts 13:3), why should it be said they first “ordained elders,” and after that “prayed with fasting?” Whereas if the first clause refer to the *choice* and the second to the *ordination*, all is natural.

they commended — “committed”

them — that is, all these churches.

to the Lord — Jesus.

25. when they had preached the word in Perga — now doing what, for some reason, they had not done on their former visit, but probably with no visible fruit.

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

26. sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended — (See on ^{<413>}Acts 13:3).

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

and how — in particular.

he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles — to such even as before had not been proselytes. (See on ^{<412>}Acts 11:21; and on the language, see ^{<619>}1 Corinthians 16:9 ^{<4122>}2 Corinthians 2:12 ^{<5048>}Colossians 4:3). The ascribing directly to God of such access to the Gentiles is to be noted.

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

CHAPTER 15

ACTS 15:1-35.

COUNCIL AT JERUSALEM TO DECIDE ON THE NECESSITY OF CIRCUMCISION FOR THE GENTILE CONVERTS.

1, 2. certain men — See the description of them in ^{410}Galatians 2:4.

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

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

that Paul and Barnabas, and certain others of them — Titus was one (^{410}Galatians 2:1); probably as an uncircumcised Gentile convert endowed with the gifts of the Spirit. He is not mentioned in the Acts, but only in Second Corinthians, Galatians, Second Timothy, and the Epistle addressed to him [ALFORD].

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

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

they passed through Phenice — (See on ^{411}Acts 11:19).

and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles, and they caused great joy to the brethren — As the converts in those parts were Jewish (^{411}Acts 11:19), their spirit contrasts favorably with that of others of their nation.

4. And when they were come to Jerusalem — This was Paul's THIRD VISIT TO JERUSALEM after his conversion, and *on this occasion took place what is related in* ^{410}Galatians 2:1-10. (See there).

were received of the church, and the apostles and elders — evidently at a meeting formally convened for this purpose: the deputation being one so influential, and from a church of such note.

they declared all things that God had done with them — (See on ~~444~~Acts 14:14-27).

6. the apostles and elders came together to consider of this — but in presence, as would seem, of the people (~~445~~Acts 15:12,22,23).

7. Peter, etc. — This is the last mention of him in the Acts, and one worthy of his standing, as formally pronouncing, from the divine decision of the matter already in his own case, in favor of the views which all of Paul's labors were devoted to establishing.

a good while ago — probably about fifteen years before this.

made choice ... that the Gentiles by my mouth — (See on ~~442~~Acts 11:21).

8. God, which knoweth the hearts — implying that the real question for admission to full standing in the visible Church is *the state of the heart*. Hence, though that cannot be known by men, no principle of admission to church privileges which *reverses* this can be sound.

9. put no difference between us and them: purifying their hearts by faith — “Purification” here refers to “sprinkling (of the conscience by the blood of Jesus) from dead works to serve the living God.” (See on ~~441~~1 Corinthians 6:11). How rich is this brief description of the inward revolution wrought upon the genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus!

10. why tempt — “try,” “provoke”

ye God — by standing in the way of His declared purpose.

to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, etc. — He that was circumcised became thereby bound to keep the whole law. (See ~~440~~Galatians 5:1-6). It was not then the mere yoke of burdensome ceremonies, but of an obligation which the more earnest and spiritual men became, the more impossible they felt it to fulfill. (See ~~439~~Romans 3:5 ~~438~~Galatians 2:4, etc.).

11. through the grace of the Lord Jesus — that is, by that only.

we shall be saved, even as they — circumcision in our case being no advantage, and in their case uncircumcision no loss; but *grace* doing all for both, and the same for each.

12. Then all ... gave audience to Barnabas and Paul — On this order of the names here, see on ~~443~~Acts 15:25.

declaring what miracles and signs God wrought among the Gentiles by them — This detail of facts, immediately following up those which Peter had recalled to mind, would lead all who waited only for divine teaching to see that God had Himself pronounced the Gentile converts to be disciples in as full standing as the Jews, without circumcision; and the attesting *miracles* to which Paul here refers would tend, in such an assembly to silence opposition.

13. James answered, saying, etc. — Whoever this James was (see on ^{<R119}Galatians 1:19), he was the acknowledged head of the church at Jerusalem, and here, as president of the assembly, speaks last, winding up the debate. His decision, though given as his own judgment only, could not be of great weight with the opposing party, from his conservative reverence for all Jewish usages within the circle of Israelitish Christianity.

14-17. Simeon — a *Hebrew* variation of Simon, as in ^{<G002}2 Peter 1:1; (*Greek*), the Jewish and family name of Peter.

hath declared how God at the first — answering to Peter's own expression "a good while ago" (^{<A157}Acts 15:7).

did visit the Gentiles to take out of them — in the exercise of His adorable sovereignty.

a people for his name — the honor of his name, or for His glory.

15. to this agree the words of the prophets — generally; but those of Amos (^{<A091}Amos 9:11) are specified (nearly as in the *Septuagint version*). The point of the passage lies in the predicted purpose of God, under the new economy, that "the heathen" or "Gentiles" should be "called by His name," or have "His name called upon them." By the "building again of the fallen tabernacle of David," or restoring its decayed splendor, is meant that only and glorious recovery which it was to experience under David's "son and Lord."

18, 19. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning — He who announced these things so long before, and He who had now brought them to pass, were one and the same; so that they were no novelty.

19. Wherefore, my sentence — or "judgment."

is, that we trouble not — with Jewish obligations.

them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God — rather, "are turning." The work is regarded as in progress, and indeed was rapidly advancing.

20. But ... that they abstain from pollutions of idols — that is, things polluted by having been offered in sacrifice to idols. The heathen were accustomed to give away or sell portions of such animals. From such food James would enjoin the Gentile converts to abstain, lest it should seem to the Jews that they were not entirely weaned from idolatry.

and from fornication — The characteristic sin of heathendom, unblushingly practiced by all ranks and classes, and the indulgence of which on the part of the Gentile converts would to Jews, whose Scriptures branded it as an abomination of the heathen, proclaim them to be yet joined to their old idols.

and from things strangled — which had the blood in them.

and from blood — in every form, as peremptorily forbidden to the Jews, and the eating of which, therefore, on the part of the Gentile converts, would shock their prejudices. See on ^{<4153>}Acts 15:28.

21. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him ... every sabbath day — thus keeping alive in every Jew those feelings which such practices would shock, and which, therefore, the Gentile converts must carefully respect if the oneness of both classes in Christ was to be practically preserved. The wisdom of these suggestions commended itself to all present.

22, 23. Judas surnamed Barsabas — therefore not the apostle “Judas the brother of James” (^{<4013>}Acts 1:13), surnamed “Thaddeus” (^{<4008>}Matthew 10:3); nor can it be shown that he was a brother of “Joseph called Barsabas” (^{<4023>}Acts 1:23). But nothing is known of him beyond what is here said.

and Silas — the same as “Silvanus” in the Epistles. He became Paul’s companion on his second missionary journey (^{<4150>}Acts 15:40).

chief men among the brethren — selected purposely as such, to express the honor in which they held the church at Antioch, and the deputies they had sent to the council, and, as the matter affected all Gentile converts, to give weight to the written decision of this important assembly. They were “prophets,” ^{<4152>}Acts 15:32 (and see on ^{<4117>}Acts 11:27), and as such doubtless their eminence in the church at Jerusalem had been obtained.

23. And they wrote ... by them — This is the first mention in the New Testament history of *writing* as an element in its development. And the combination here of written and oral transmission of an important decision reminds us of the first occasion of writing mentioned in the Old Testament, where a similar combination occurs (^{<0274>}Exodus 17:14). But whereas *there*

it is the deep *difference* between Israel and the Gentiles which is proclaimed, here it is the *obliteration of that difference* through faith in the Lord Jesus [BAUMGARTEN].

greeting — The only other place in the New Testament where this word occurs (except in the letter of Lysias, ^{<423>}Acts 23:26) is ^{<500>}James 1:1, which seems to show that both letters were drawn up by the same hand [BENGE].

the Gentiles in Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia — showing that churches then existed in Cilicia as well as Syria, which owed their existence, in all likelihood, to Paul's labors during the interval between his return to Tarsus (^{<408>}Acts 9:30) and his departure in company with Barnabas for Antioch (see on ^{<412>}Acts 11:25).

24-27. Forasmuch as we have heard that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words — without authority or even knowledge of the church at Jerusalem, though they belonged to it, and probably pretended to represent its views.

subverting your souls — Such strong language is evidently designed to express indignation at this attempt, by an unauthorized party, to bring the whole Christian Church under judicial and legal bondage.

25. our beloved Barnabas and Paul — Barnabas is put first here, and in ^{<415>}Acts 15:12, on account of his former superior position in the church at Jerusalem (see ^{<402>}Acts 9:27 11:22) — an evidence this that we have the document precisely as written, as also of the credibility of this precious history.

26. Men that have hazarded — literally, “rendered up,” as in *will* they did.

their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ — Noble testimony to those beloved men! It was doubtless prompted more immediately by the narrative they had just listened to from their own lips (^{<415>}Acts 15:12), and judiciously inserted in this letter, to give them the highest weight as the bearers of it, along with their own deputies.

Judas and Silas ... shall tell you the same ... by mouth — Mark here how considerate and tender it was to send men who would be able to say of Barnabas and Paul what could not be expected to come from themselves.

28, 29. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, etc. — The One, inwardly guiding to and setting His seal on the decision come to: the other, the external ecclesiastical authority devoutly embracing, expressing,

and conveying to the churches that decision: — a great principle this for the Church in all time.

to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things ... from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well — The whole language of these prohibitions, and of ^{<4150>}Acts 15:20,21, implies that they were designed as concessions to Jewish feelings on the part of the Gentile converts, and not as things which were all of unchanging obligation. The only cause for hesitation arises from “fornication” being mixed up with the other three things; which has led many to regard the whole as permanently prohibited. But the remarks on ^{<4150>}Acts 15:20 may clear this (see on ^{<4150>}Acts 15:20). The then state of heathen society in respect of all the four things seems the reason for so mixing them up.

31-33. they rejoiced for the consolation — As the same word is in ^{<4151>}Acts 15:31 properly rendered “exhorted,” the meaning probably is “rejoiced for the exhortation” (*Margin*), or advice; so wise in itself and so contrary to the imposition attempted to be practiced upon them by the Judaizers.

32. Judas and Silas, being prophets themselves — that is, inspired teachers.

exhorted the brethren with many words — “much discourse.”

and confirmed them — opening up, no doubt, the great principle involved in the controversy now settled, of gratuitous salvation, or the purification of the heart by faith alone (as expressed by Peter, ^{<4150>}Acts 15:9,11), and dwelling on the necessity of harmony in principle and affection between the Gentile disciples and their Jewish brethren.

33. were let go in peace — with peace, as the customary parting salutation.

34, 35. it pleased Silas — Silas determined.

to abide there still — (The authorities against the insertion of this verse are strong. It may have been afterwards added to explain ^{<4150>}Acts 15:40). Doubtless the attraction to Antioch for Silas was Paul’s presence there, to whom he seems to have now formed that permanent attachment which the sequel of this book and Paul’s Epistles show to have existed.

35. Paul ... and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching — to the disciples.

and preaching — to those without.

the word of the Lord, with many others — other laborers.

also — How rich must Antioch at this time have been in the ministrations of the Gospel! (*For a painful scene on this occasion between Paul and Peter, see* ^{<411>}Galatians 2:11-14).

^{<415>}ACTS 15:36-46.

DISSENSION BETWEEN PAUL AND BARNABAS — THEY PART COMPANY TO PROSECUTE SEPARATE MISSIONARY TOURS.

36. And some days after — How long is a matter of conjecture.

Paul said to Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren — the true reading is, “the brethren.”

in every city where we have preached ... and see how they do — whether they were advancing or declining, etc.: a pattern for churches and successful missionaries in every age. (“Reader, how stands it with thee?”) [BENGEL]. “Paul felt that he was not called to spend a peaceful, though laborious life at Antioch, but that his true work was far off among the Gentiles.” We notice here, for the first time, a trace of that tender solicitude for his converts, that earnest longing to see their faces, which appears in the letters which he wrote afterwards, as one of the most remarkable and attractive features of his character. He thought, doubtless, of the Pisidians and Lycaonians, as he thought afterwards at Athens and Corinth of the Thessalonians, from whom he had been lately “taken in presence, not in heart, night and day praying exceedingly that he might see their face and perfect that which was lacking in their faith” [HOWSON].

37. Barnabas determined to take with them John ... Mark — his nephew (^{<5040>}Colossians 4:10).

38. But Paul thought not good to take him with them who departed from them — that is, who *had* departed; but the word is stronger than this — “who stood aloof” or “turned away” from them.

from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work — the work yet before them. The allusion is to what is recorded in ^{<4133>}Acts 13:13 (see on ^{<4133>}Acts 13:13).

39. And the contention was so sharp between them — such was the “irritation,” or “exacerbation.”

that they departed asunder one from the other — Said they not truly to the Lystrians that they were “men of like passions with them”; (^{<4445>}Acts 14:15). But *who was to blame?*

(1) That John Mark had either tired of the work or shrunk from the dangers and fatigues that yet lay before them, was undeniable; and Paul concluded that what he had done he might, and probably would, do again. Was he wrong in this? (See ^{<3159>}Proverbs 25:19). But

(2) To this Barnabas might reply that no rule was without exception; that one failure, in a young Christian, was not enough to condemn him for life; that if near relationship might be thought to warp his judgment, it also gave him opportunities of knowing the man better than others; and that as he was himself anxious to be allowed another trial (and the result makes this next to certain), in order that he might wipe out the effect of his former failure and show what “hardness he could now endure as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” his petition ought not to be rejected. Now, since John Mark *did* retrieve his character in these respects, and a reconciliation took place between Paul and him, so cordial that the apostle expresses more than once the confidence he had in him and the value he set upon his services (^{<5041>}Colossians 4:10,11 ^{<5111>}2 Timothy 4:11), it may seem that events showed Barnabas to be in the right, and Paul too harsh and hasty in his judgment. But, in behalf of Paul, it may well be answered, that not being able to see into the future he had only the unfavorable past to judge by; that the gentleness of Barnabas (^{<4085>}Acts 4:36 11:24) had already laid him open to imposition (see on ^{<4013>}Galatians 2:13), to which near relationship would in this case make him more liable; and that in refusing to take John Mark on this missionary journey he was not judging his Christian character nor pronouncing on his fitness for future service, but merely providing in the meantime against being again put to serious inconvenience and having their hands weakened by a possible second desertion. On the whole, then, it seems clear that each of these great servants of — Christ had something to say for himself, in defense of the position which they respectively took up; that while Barnabas was quite able to appreciate the grounds on which Paul proceeded, Paul was not so competent to judge of the considerations which Barnabas probably urged; that while Paul had but one object in view, to see that the companion of their arduous work was one of thoroughly congenial spirit and sufficient nerve, Barnabas, over and above the same desire, might not unreasonably be afraid for the soul of his nephew, lest the refusal to allow him to accompany them on their journey might injure his Christian character and deprive the Church of a true servant of Jesus

Christ; and that while both sought only the glory of their common Master, each looked at the question at issue, to some extent, through the medium of his own temperament, which grace sanctifies and refines, but does not destroy — *Paul*, through the medium of absolute devotion to the cause and kingdom of Christ, which, warm and womanly as his affections were, gave a tinge of lofty sternness to his resolves where that seemed to be affected; *Barnabas*, through the medium of the same singleness of heart in Christ's service, though probably not in equal strength (⁴⁰¹³Galatians 2:13), but also of a certain natural gentleness which, where a Christian relative was concerned, led him to attach more weight to what seemed for his spiritual good than Paul could be supposed to do. In these circumstances, it seems quite possible that they might have amicably "agreed to differ," each taking his own companion, as they actually did. But the "paroxysm" (as the word is), the "exacerbation" which is expressly given as the cause of their parting, shows but too plainly, that human infirmity amidst the great labors of the Church at Antioch at length sundered those who had sweetly and lovingly borne together the heat and burden of the day during a protracted tour in the service of Christ. "Therefore let no man glory in men" (⁴⁰²¹1 Corinthians 3:21). As for John Mark, although through his uncle's warm advocacy of his cause he was put in a condition to dissipate the cloud that hung over him, how bitter to him must have ever afterwards been the reflection that it was his culpable conduct which gave occasion to whatever was sinful in the strife between Paul and Barnabas, and to a separation in action, though no doubt with a mutual Christian regard, between those who had till then wrought nobly together! How watchful does all this teach Christians, and especially Christian ministers and missionaries, to be against giving way to rash judgment and hot temper towards each other, especially where on both sides the glory of Christ is the ground of difference! How possible is it that in such cases both parties may, on the question at issue, be more or less in the right! How difficult is it even for the most faithful and devoted servants of Christ, differing as they do in their natural temperament even under the commanding influence of grace, to see even important questions precisely in the same light! And if, with every disposition to yield what is unimportant, they still feel it a duty each to stand to his own point, how careful should they be to do it lovingly, each pursuing his own course without disparagement of his Christian brother! And how affectingly does the Lord overrule such difference of judgment and such manifestations of human infirmity, by making them "turn out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel"; as in this case is eminently seen in the two missionary parties instead of one, not travelling over the same ground and carrying their dispute over all

the regions of their former loving labors, but dividing the field between them!

and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas — (See on ^{<4153>}Acts 15:34) — going two and two, as the Twelve and the Seventy (^{<4107>}Mark 6:7 ^{<4207>}Luke 10:1).

40. and departed, being recommended ... to the grace of God — (No doubt by some solemn service; see ^{<4143>}Acts 13:3), as in ^{<4146>}Acts 14:26. It does not follow from the historian's silence that Barnabas was not so recommended, too; for this is the last mention of Barnabas in the history, whose sole object now is to relate the proceedings of Paul. Nor does it seem quite fair (with DE WETTE, MEYER, HOWSON, ALFORD, HACKET, WEBSTER and WILKINSON, etc.) to conclude from this that the Church at Antioch took that marked way of showing their sympathy with Paul in opposition to Barnabas.

41. and he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches — “It is very likely that Paul and Barnabas made a deliberate and amicable arrangement to divide the region of their first mission between them; Paul taking the *continental*, and Barnabas the *insular*, part of the proposed visitation. If Barnabas visited Salamis and Paphos, and if Paul (travelling westward), after passing through Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium, went as far as Antioch in Pisidia, the whole circuit of the proposed visitation was actually accomplished, for it does not appear that any converts had been made at Perga and Attalia” [HOWSON]. “This second missionary tour appears to have proceeded at first solely from the desire of visiting the churches already planted. In the end, however, it took a much wider sweep, for it brought the apostle to Europe” [OLSHAUSEN].

CHAPTER 16

Paul's Second Missionary Journey. ~~415E~~ Acts 15:41-18:22.

~~415E~~ ACTS 15:41-16:5.

VISITATION OF THE CHURCHES FORMERLY ESTABLISHED, TIMOTHEUS HERE JOINING THE MISSIONARY PARTY.

41. he went through Syria and Cilicia — (See on ~~415C~~ Acts 15:23). Taking probably the same route as when despatched in haste from Jerusalem to Tarsus, he then went by land (see on ~~448B~~ Acts 9:30).

1-5. Then came he to Derbe and Lystra; and, behold, a certain disciple was there — that is, at Lystra (not Derbe, as some conclude from ~~440E~~ Acts 20:4).

named Timotheus — (See on ~~444D~~ Acts 14:20). As Paul styles him “his own son in the faith” (~~500E~~ 1 Timothy 1:2), he must have been gained to Christ at the apostle’s first visit; and as Paul says he “had fully known his persecutions which came on him at Lystra” (~~510E~~ 2 Timothy 3:10,11), he may have been in that group of disciples that surrounded the apparently lifeless body of the apostle outside the walls of Lystra, and that at a time of life when the mind receives its deepest impressions from the spectacle of innocent suffering and undaunted courage [HOWSON]. His would be one of “the souls of the disciples confirmed” at the apostle’s second visit, “exhorted to continue in the faith, and” warned “that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (~~444E~~ Acts 14:21,22).

the son of a certain ... Jewess — “The unfeigned faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois” descended to “his mother Eunice,” and thence it passed to this youth (~~500E~~ 2 Timothy 1:5), who “from a child knew the Holy Scriptures” (~~510E~~ 2 Timothy 3:15). His gifts and destination to the ministry of Christ had already been attested (~~500B~~ 1 Timothy 1:18 4:14); and though some ten years after this Paul speaks of him as still young (~~504E~~ 1 Timothy 4:12), “he was already well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (~~444E~~ Acts 16:2), and consequently must have been well known through all that quarter.

but his father was a Greek — Such mixed marriages, though little practiced, and disliked by the stricter Jews in Palestine, must have been very frequent among the Jews of the dispersion, especially in remote districts, where but few of the scattered people were settled [HOWSON].

3. Him would Paul have to go forth with him — This is in harmony with all we read in the Acts and Epistles of Paul's affectionate and confiding disposition. He had no relative ties which were of service to him in his work; his companions were few and changing; and though Silas would supply the place of Barnabas, it was no weakness to yearn for the society of one who might become, what Mark once appeared to be, a *son* in the Gospel [HOWSON]. And such he indeed proved to be, the most attached and serviceable of his associates (^{<S169>}Philippians 2:19-23 ^{<A117>}1 Corinthians 4:17 16:10,11 ^{<S101>}Thessalonians 3:1-6). His double connection, with the Jews by the mother's side and the Gentiles by the father's, would strike the apostle as a peculiar qualification for his own sphere of labor. "So far as appears, Timothy is the first Gentile who after his conversion comes before us as a regular missionary; for what is said of Titus (^{<A118>}Galatians 2:3) refers to a later period" [WIES]. But before his departure, Paul

took and circumcised him — a rite which every Israelite might perform.

because of the Jews ... for they knew all that his father was a Greek — This seems to imply that the father was no proselyte. Against the wishes of a Gentile father no Jewish mother was, as the Jews themselves say, permitted to circumcise her son. We thus see why all the religion of Timothy is traced to the female side of the family (^{<S102>}2 Timothy 1:5). "Had Timothy not been circumcised, a storm would have gathered round the apostle in his farther progress. His fixed line of procedure was to act on the cities through the synagogues; and to preach the Gospel to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. But such a course would have been impossible had not Timothy been circumcised. He must necessarily have been repelled by that people who endeavored once to murder Paul because they imagined he had taken a Greek into the temple (^{<A119>}Acts 21:29). The very intercourse of social life would have been almost impossible, for it was still "an abomination" for the circumcised to eat with the uncircumcised" [HOWSON]. In refusing to compel Titus afterwards to be circumcised (^{<A118>}Galatians 2:3) at the bidding of Judaizing Christians, as necessary to salvation, he only vindicated "the truth of the Gospel" (^{<A118>}Galatians 2:5); in circumcising Timothy, "to the Jews he became as a Jew that he might gain the Jews." Probably Timothy's ordination took place now (^{<S104>}1 Timothy 4:14 ^{<S102>}2 Timothy 1:6); and it was a service, apparently, of much solemnity — "before many witnesses" (^{<S102>}1 Timothy 6:12).

4, 5. And as they went through the cities, they delivered ... the decrees ... And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily — not the churches, but the number of their members, by this visit and the written evidence laid before them of the triumph of Christian liberty at Jerusalem, and the wise measures there taken to preserve the unity of the Jewish and Gentile converts.

~~4416~~ ACTS 16:6-12.

THEY BREAK NEW GROUND IN PHRYGIA AND GALATIA — THEIR COURSE IN THAT DIRECTION BEING MYSTERIOUSLY HEDGED UP, THEY TRAVEL WESTWARD TO TROAS, WHERE THEY ARE DIVINELY DIRECTED TO MACEDONIA — THE HISTORIAN HIMSELF HERE JOINING THE MISSIONARY PARTY, THEY EMBARK FOR NEAPOLIS, AND REACH PHILIPPI.

6-8. Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia — proceeding in a northwesterly direction. At this time must have been formed “the churches of Galatia” (~~400D~~Galatians 1:2 ~~461E~~1 Corinthians 16:1); founded, as we learn from the Epistle to the Galatians (particularly ~~4089~~Galatians 4:19), by the apostle Paul, and which were already in existence when he was on his *third* missionary journey, as we learn from ~~44823~~Acts 18:23, where it appears that he was no less successful in Phrygia. *Why* these proceedings, so interesting as we should suppose, are not here detailed, it is not easy to say; for the various reasons suggested are not very satisfactory: for example, that the historian had not joined the party [ALFORD]; that he was in haste to bring the apostle to Europe [OLSHAUSEN]; that the main stream of the Church’s development was from Jerusalem to Rome, and the apostle’s labors in Phrygia and Galatia lay quite out of the line of that direction [BAUMGARTEN].

and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost — speaking by some prophet, see on ~~44127~~Acts 11:27.

to preach the word in Asia — not the great Asiatic continent, nor even the rich peninsula now called Asia Minor, but only so much of its western coast as constituted the Roman province of Asia.

7. After they were come to Mysia — where, as being part of Roman Asia, they were forbidden to labor (~~44168~~Acts 16:8).

they assayed — or attempted

to go into — or, towards.

Bithynia — to the northeast.

but the Spirit — speaking as before.

suffered them not — probably because,

(1) Europe was ripe for the labors of this missionary party; and

(2) other instruments were to be honored to establish the Gospel in the eastern regions of Asia Minor, especially the apostle Peter (see ~~BOOK~~ Peter 1:1). By the end of the first century, as testified by PLINY the governor, Bithynia was filled with Christians. “This is the first time that the Holy Ghost is expressly spoken of as determining the course they were to follow in their efforts to evangelize the nations, and it was evidently designed to show that whereas hitherto the diffusion of the Gospel had been carried on in unbroken course, connected by natural points of junction, it was now to take a leap to which it could not be impelled but by an immediate and independent operation of the Spirit; and though primarily, this intimation of the Spirit was only negative, and referred but to the immediate neighborhood, we may certainly conclude that Paul took it for a sign that a new epoch was now to commence in his apostolic labors” [BAUMGARTEN].

8. came down to Troas — a city on the northeast coast of the aegean Sea, the boundary of Asia Minor on the west; the region of which was the scene of the great Trojan war.

9, 10. a vision appeared to Paul in the night — while awake, for it is not called a dream.

There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us — Stretching his eye across the aegean Sea, from Troas on the northeast, to the Macedonian hills, visible on the northwest, the apostle could hardly fail to think this the destined scene of his future labors; and, if he retired to rest with this thought, he would be thoroughly prepared for the remarkable intimation of the divine will now to be given him. This visional Macedonian discovered himself by what he said. But it was a cry not of conscious *desire* for the Gospel, but of deep *need* of it and unconscious *preparedness* to receive it, not only in that region, but, we may well say, throughout all that western empire which Macedonia might be said to represent. It was a virtual confession “that the highest splendor of heathendom, which we must recognize in the arts of Greece and in the polity and imperial power of Rome, had arrived at the end of all its resources. God had left the Gentile peoples to walk in their own

ways (^{444D}Acts 14:2). They had sought to gain salvation for themselves; but those who had carried it farthest along the paths of natural development were now pervaded by the feeling that all had indeed been vanity. This feeling is the simple, pure result of all the history of heathendom. And Israel, going along the way which God had marked out for him, had likewise arrived at his end. At last he is in a condition to realize his original vocation, by becoming the guide who is to lead the Gentiles unto God, the only Author and Creator of man's redemption; and Paul is in truth the very person in whom this vocation of Israel is now a present divine reality, and to whom, by this nocturnal apparition of the Macedonian, the preparedness of the heathen world to receive the ministry of Israel towards the Gentiles is confirmed" [BAUMGARTEN]. *This voice cries from heathendom still to the Christian Church, and never does the Church undertake the work of missions, nor any missionary go forth from it, in the right spirit, save in obedience to this cry.*

10. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia — The "we," here first introduced, is a modest intimation that the historian himself had now joined the missionary party. (The modern objections to this are quite frivolous). Whether Paul's broken health had anything to do with this arrangement for having "the beloved physician" with him [WIES], can never be known with certainty; but that he would deem himself honored in taking care of so precious a life, there can be no doubt.

11, 12. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came — literally, "ran." **with a straight course** — that is, "ran before the wind."

to Samothracia — a lofty island on the Thracian coast, north from Troas, with an inclination westward. The wind must have set in strong from the south or south-southeast to bring them there so soon, as the current is strong in the opposite direction, and they afterwards took five days to what they now did in two (^{444B}Acts 20:6) [HOWSON].

next day to Neapolis — on the Macedonian, or rather Thracian, coast, about sixty-five miles from Samothracia, and ten from Philippi, of which it is the harbor.

12. Philippi ... the chief — rather, perhaps, "the first"

city of that part of Macedonia — The meaning appears to be — the first city one comes to, proceeding from Neapolis. The sense given in our version hardly consists with fact.

a colony — that is, possessing all the privileges of Roman citizenship, and, as such, both exempted from scourging and (in ordinary cases) from arrest, and entitled to appeal from the local magistrate to the emperor. Though the Pisidian *Antioch* and *Troas* were also “colonies,” the fact is mentioned in this history of Philippi only on account of the frequent references to Roman privileges and duties in the sequel of the chapter.

~~4412~~ ACTS 16:12-34.

AT PHILIPPI, LYDIA IS GAINED AND WITH HER HOUSEHOLD BAPTIZED — AN EVIL SPIRIT IS EXPELLED, PAUL AND SILAS ARE SCOURGED, IMPRISONED, AND MANACLED, BUT MIRACULOUSLY SET FREE, AND THE JAILER WITH ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD CONVERTED AND BAPTIZED.

12, 13. we were in that city abiding certain days — waiting till the sabbath came round: their whole stay must have extended to some weeks. As their rule was to begin with the Jews and proselytes, they did nothing till the time when they knew that they would convene for worship.

13. on the sabbath day — the first after their arrival, as the words imply.

we went out of the city — rather, as the true reading is, “outside of the (city) gate.”

by a river-side — one of the small streams which gave name to the place ere the city was founded by Philip of Macedon.

where prayer was wont to be made — or a prayer-meeting held. It is plain there was no synagogue at Philippi (contrast ~~4410~~ Acts 17:1), the number of the Jews being small. The meeting appears to have consisted wholly of women, and these not all Jewish. The neighborhood of streams was preferred, on account of the ceremonial washings used on such occasions.

we sat down and spake unto the women, etc. — a humble congregation, and simple manner of preaching. *But here and thus were gathered the first-fruits of Europe unto Christ, and they were of the female sex*, of whose accession and services honorable mention will again and again be made.

14, 15. Lydia — a common name among the Greeks and Romans.

a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira — on the confines of Lydia and Phrygia. The Lydians, particularly the inhabitants of Thyatira, were celebrated for their dyeing, in which they inherited the reputation of the Tyrians. Inscriptions to this effect, yet remaining, confirm the accuracy of our historian. This woman appears to have been in good circumstances, having an establishment at Philippi large enough to accommodate the missionary party (^{<4165>}Acts 16:15), and receiving her goods from her native town.

which worshipped God — that is, was a proselyte to the Jewish faith, and as such present at this meeting.

whose heart the Lord opened — that is, the Lord Jesus (see ^{<4165>}Acts 16:15; and compare ^{<4245>}Luke 24:45 ^{<4117>}Matthew 11:27).

that she attended to the things ... spoken by Paul — “showing that the inclination of the heart towards the truth originates not in the will of man. The first disposition to turn to the Gospel is a work of grace” [OLSHAUSEN]. Observe here the place assigned to “giving attention” or “heed” to the truth — that species of attention which consists in having the whole mind engrossed with it, and in apprehending and drinking it in, in its vital and saving character.

15. And when ... baptized ... and her household — probably without much delay. The mention of baptism here for the first time in connection with the labors of Paul, while it was doubtless performed on all his former converts, indicates a special importance in this first European baptism. Here also is the first mention of a Christian *household*. Whether it included children, also in that case baptized, is not explicitly stated; but the presumption, as in other cases of household baptism, is that it did. Yet the question of infant baptism must be determined on other grounds; and such incidental allusions form only part of the historical materials for ascertaining the practice of the Church.

she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord — the Lord Jesus; that is, “By the faith on Him which ye have recognized in me by baptism.” There is a beautiful modesty in the expression.

And she constrained us — The word seems to imply that they were reluctant, but were overborne.

16-18. as we went to prayer — The words imply that it was *on their way to the usual place of public prayer*, by the river-side, that this took place; therefore not on the same day with what had just occurred.

a ... damsel — a female servant, and in this case a slave (^{<416>}Acts 16:19).

possessed of a spirit of divination — or, of Python, that is, a spirit supposed to be inspired by the Pythian Apollo, or of the same nature. The reality of this demoniacal possession is as undeniable as that of any in the Gospel history.

17. These men are servants of the most high God, etc. — Glorious testimony! But see on ^{<444>}Luke 4:41.

this did she many days — that is, on many successive occasions when on their way to their usual place of meeting, or when engaged in religious services.

18. Paul being grieved — for the poor victim; grieved to see such power possessed by the enemy of man's salvation, and grieved to observe the malignant design with which this high testimony was borne to Christ.

19. when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas — as the leading persons.

and drew them into the market-place — or Forum, where the courts were.

to the magistrates, saying, etc. — We have here a full and independent confirmation of the reality of this supernatural cure, since on any other supposition such conduct would be senseless.

20. These men, being Jews — objects of dislike, contempt, and suspicion by the Romans, and at this time of more than usual prejudice.

do exceedingly trouble our city — See similar charges, ^{<417>}Acts 17:6 24:5 ^{<1187>}1 Kings 18:17. There is some color of truth in all such accusations, in so far as the Gospel, and generally the fear of God, as a reigning principle of human action, is in a godless world a thoroughly *revolutionary* principle ... How far external commotion and change will in any case attend the triumph of this principle depends on the breadth and obstinacy of the resistance it meets with.

21. And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans — Here also there was a measure of truth; as the introduction of new gods was forbidden by the laws, and this might be thought to apply to any change of religion. But the whole charge was pure hypocrisy; for as these men would have let the missionaries preach what religion they pleased if they had not dried up the source of their gains, so

they conceal the real cause of their rage under color of a zeal for religion, and law, and good order: so ^{<4470>}Acts 17:6,7 19:25,27.

22. the multitude rose up together against them — so ^{<4482>}Acts 19:28,34 21:30 ^{<4238>}Luke 23:18.

the magistrates rent off their — Paul's and Silas'

clothes — that is, ordered the lictors, or rod-bearers, to tear them off, so as to expose their naked bodies (see on ^{<4467>}Acts 16:37). The word expresses the roughness with which this was done to prisoners preparatory to whipping.

and commanded to beat them — without any trial (^{<4467>}Acts 16:37), to appease the popular rage. Thrice, it seems, Paul endured this indignity (^{<4712>}2 Corinthians 11:25).

23, 24. when they had laid many stripes upon them — the bleeding wounds from which they were not washed till it was done by the converted jailer (^{<4463>}Acts 16:33).

charged the jailer ... who ... thrust them into the inner prison — “pestilential cells, damp and cold, from which the light was excluded, and where the chains rusted on the prisoners. One such place may be seen to this day on the slope of the Capitol at Rome” [HOWSON].

24. made their feet fast in the stocks — an instrument of torture as well as confinement, made of wood bound with iron, with holes for the feet, which were stretched more or less apart according to the severity intended. (ORIGEN at a later period, besides having his neck thrust into an iron collar, lay extended for many days with his feet apart in the rack). Though jailers were proverbially unfeeling, the manner in which the order was given in this case would seem to warrant all that was done.

25. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises — literally, “praying, were singing praises”; that is, while engaged in pouring out their hearts in prayer, had broken forth into singing, and were hymning loud their joy. As the word here employed is that used to denote the Paschal hymn sung by our Lord and His disciples after their last Passover (^{<4230>}Matthew 26:30), and which we know to have consisted of ^{<4331>}Psalms 113:1-118:29, which was chanted at that festival, it is probable that it was portions of the Psalms, so rich in such matter, which our joyous sufferers chanted forth; nor could any be more seasonable and inspiring to them than those very six Psalms, which every devout Jew would no doubt know by heart. “*He giveth songs in the night*” (^{<4350>}Job 35:10). Though their bodies were still bleeding and tortured in the stocks, their spirits, under “the

expulsive power of a new affection,” rose above suffering, and made the prison wails resound with their song. “In these midnight hymns, by the imprisoned witnesses for Jesus Christ, the whole might of Roman injustice and violence against the Church is not only set at naught, but converted into a foil to set forth more completely the majesty and spiritual power of the Church, which as yet the world knew nothing of. And if the sufferings of these two witnesses of Christ are the beginning and the type of numberless martyrdoms which were to flow upon the Church from the same source, in like manner the unparalleled triumph of the Spirit over suffering was the beginning and the pledge of a spiritual power which we afterwards see shining forth so triumphantly and irresistibly in the many martyrs of Christ who were given up as a prey to the same imperial might of Rome” [NEANDER in BAUMGARTEN].

and the prisoners heard them — literally, “were listening to them,” that is, when the astounding events immediately to be related took place; not asleep, but wide awake and rapt (no doubt) in wonder at what they heard.

26-28. And suddenly there was a great earthquake — in answer, doubtless, to the prayers and expectations of the sufferers that, for the truth’s sake and the honor of their Lord, some interposition would take place.

every one’s bands — that is, the bands of all the prisoners.

were loosed — not by the earthquake, of course, but by a miraculous energy accompanying it. By this and the joyous strains which they had heard from the sufferers, not to speak of the change wrought on the jailer, these prisoners could hardly fail to have their hearts in some measure opened to the truth; and this part of the narrative seems the result of information afterwards communicated by one or more of these men.

27. the keeper ... awaking ... drew ... his sword, and would have killed himself, etc. — knowing that his life was forfeited in that case (^{412B}Acts 12:19; and compare ^{412D}Acts 27:42).

28. But Paul cried with a loud voice — the better to arrest the deed.

Do thyself no harm, for we are all here — What divine calmness and self-possession! No elation at their miraculous liberation, or haste to take advantage of it; but one thought filled the apostle’s mind at that moment — anxiety to save a fellow creature from sending himself into eternity, ignorant of the only way of life; and his presence of mind appears in the assurance which he so promptly gives to the desperate man, that his prisoners had none of them fled as he feared. But how, it has been asked by

skeptical critics, could Paul in his inner prison know what the jailer was about to do? In many conceivable ways, without supposing any supernatural communication. Thus, if the jailer slept at the door of “the inner prison,” which suddenly flew open when the earthquake shook the foundations of the building; if, too, as may easily be conceived, he uttered some cry of despair on seeing the doors open; and, if the clash of the steel, as the affrighted man drew it hastily from the scabbard, was audible but a few yards off, in the dead midnight stillness, increased by the awe inspired in the prisoners by the miracle — what difficulty is there in supposing that Paul, perceiving in a moment how matters stood, after crying out, stepped hastily to him, uttering the noble entreaty here recorded? Not less flat is the question, why the other liberated prisoners did not make their escape: — as if there were the smallest difficulty in understanding how, under the resistless conviction that there must be something supernatural in their instantaneous liberation without human hand, such wonder and awe should possess them as to take away for the time not only all desire of escape, but even all thought on the subject.

29, 30. Then he called for a light, and sprang in ... and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out and said — How graphic this rapid succession of minute details, evidently from the parties themselves, the prisoners and the jailer, who would talk over every feature of the scene once and again, in which the hand of the Lord had been so marvellously seen.

30. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? — If this question should seem in advance of any light which the jailer could be supposed to possess, let it be considered

(1) that the “trembling” which came over him could not have arisen from any fear for the safety of his prisoners, for they were all there; and if it had, he would rather have proceeded to secure them again than leave them, to fall down before Paul and Silas. For the same reason it is plain that his trembling had nothing to do with any account he would have to render to the magistrates. Only one explanation of it can be given — that he had become all at once alarmed about his spiritual state, and that though, a moment before, he was ready to plunge into eternity with the guilt of self-murder on his head, without a thought of the sin he was committing and its awful consequences, his unfitness to appear before God, and his need of salvation, now flashed full upon his soul and drew from the depths of his spirit the cry here recorded. If still it be asked how it could take such definite shape, let it be considered

(2) that the jailer could hardly be ignorant of the nature of the charges on which these men had been imprisoned, seeing they had been publicly whipped by order of the magistrates, which would fill the whole town with the facts of the case, including that strange cry of the demoniac from day to-day — “These men are the servants of the most high God, which *show unto us the way of salvation*” — words proclaiming not only the divine commission of the preachers, but the news of salvation they were sent to tell, the miraculous expulsion of the demon and the rage of her masters. All this, indeed, would go for nothing with such a man, until roused by the mighty earthquake which made the building to rock; then despair seizing him at the sight of the open doors, the sword of self-destruction was suddenly arrested by words from one of those prisoners such as he would never imagine could be spoken in their circumstances — words evidencing something divine about them. Then would flash across him the light of a new discovery; “That was a true cry which the Pythoness uttered, ‘These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation! That I now must know, and from them, as divinely sent to me, must I learn that way of salvation!’” Substantially, this is the cry of every awakened sinner, though the degree of light and the depths of anxiety it expresses will be different in each case.

31-34. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved —

The brevity, simplicity, and directness of this reply are, in the circumstances, singularly beautiful. Enough at that moment to have his faith directed simply to the Savior, with the assurance that this would bring to his soul the needed and sought salvation — the *how* being a matter for after teaching.

thou shalt be saved, and thy house — (See on ~~290~~ Luke 19:10).

32. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord — unfolding now, doubtless, more fully what “the Lord Jesus Christ” was to whom they had pointed his faith, and what the “salvation” was which this would bring him.

and to all that were in his house — who from their own dwelling (under the same roof no doubt with the prison) had crowded round the apostles, aroused first by the earthquake. (From their addressing the Gospel message “to all that were in the house” it is not necessary to infer that it contained no children, but merely that as it contained adults besides the jailer himself, so to all of these, as alone of course fit to be addressed, they preached the word).

33. And he took them — the word implies change of place.

the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes — in the well or fountain which was within or near the precincts of the prison [HOWSON]. The mention of “the same hour of the night” seems to imply that they had to go forth into the open air, which, unseasonable as the hour was, they did. These bleeding wounds had never been thought of by the indifferent jailer. But now, when his whole heart was opened to his spiritual benefactors, he cannot rest until he has done all in his power for their bodily relief.

and was baptized, he and all his, straightway — probably at the same fountain, since it took place “straightway”; the one washing on his part being immediately succeeded by the other on theirs.

34. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them and rejoiced, believing — that is, as the expression implies, “rejoiced because he had believed.”

in God — as a converted heathen, for the faith of a *Jew* would not be so expressed [ALFORD].

with all his house — the wondrous change on himself and the whole house filling his soul with joy. “This is the second house which, in the Roman city of Philippi, has been consecrated by faith in Jesus, and of which the inmates, by hospitable entertainment of the Gospel witnesses, have been sanctified to a new beginning of domestic life, pleasing and acceptable to God. The first result came to pass in consequence simply of the preaching of the Gospel; the second was the fruit of a testimony sealed and ennobled by suffering” [BAUMGARTEN].

35, 36. when it was day, the magistrates sent the sergeants, saying, Let those men go — The cause of this change can only be conjectured. When the commotion ceased, reflection would soon convince them of the injustice they had done, even supposing the prisoners had been entitled to no special privileges; and if rumor reached them that the prisoners were somehow under supernatural protection, they might be the more awed into a desire to get rid of them.

36. the keeper — overjoyed to have such orders to execute.

told this ... to Paul ... now therefore ... go in peace — Very differently did Paul receive such orders.

37. Paul said unto them — to the sergeants who had entered the prison along with the jailer, that they might be able to report that the men had departed.

They have beaten us openly — The *publicity* of the injury done them, exposing their naked and bleeding bodies to the rude populace, was evidently the most stinging feature of it to the apostle's delicate feeling, and to this accordingly he alludes to the Thessalonians, probably a year after: "Even after we had suffered before, and *were shamefully entreated* (or 'insulted') as ye know at Philippi" (^{<310>}1 Thessalonians 2:2).

uncondemned — unconvicted on trial.

being Romans — (See on ^{<422>}Acts 22:28).

and cast us into prison — both illegal. Of Silas' citizenship, if meant to be included, we know nothing.

and now do they thrust us out — hurry us out — see ^{<408>}Mark 9:38, *Greek*.

privily? — Mark the intended contrast between the *public* insult they had inflicted and the *private* way in which they ordered them to be off.

nay verily — no, indeed.

but let them come themselves and fetch us out — by open and formal act, equivalent to a public declaration of their innocence.

38. they feared when they heard they were Romans — their authority being thus imperilled; for they were liable to an action for what they had done.

39, 40. And they came — in person.

and besought them — not to complain of them. What a contrast this suppliant attitude of the preachers of Philippi to the tyrannical air with which they had the day before treated the preachers! (See ^{<204>}Isaiah 60:14 ^{<409>}Revelation 3:9).

brought them out — conducted them forth from the prison into the street, as insisted on.

and desired — "requested."

them to depart out of the city — perhaps fearing again to excite the populace.

40. And they went out of the prison — Having attained their object — to vindicate their civil rights, by the infraction of which in this case the Gospel in their persons had been illegally affronted — they had no mind to carry the matter farther. Their citizenship was valuable to them only as a shield

against unnecessary injuries to their Master's cause. What a beautiful mixture of *dignity* and *meekness* is this! Nothing secular, which may be turned to the account of the Gospel, is morbidly disregarded; in any other view, nothing of this nature is set store by: — an example this for all ages.

and entered into the house of Lydia — as if to show by this leisurely proceeding that they had not been made to leave, but were at full liberty to consult their own convenience.

and when they had seen the brethren — not only her family and the jailer's, but probably others now gained to the Gospel.

they comforted them — rather, perhaps, “exhorted” them, which would include comfort. “*This assembly of believers in the house of Lydia was the first church that had been founded in Europe*” [BAUMGARTEN].

and departed — but not all; for two of the company remained behind (see on ^{<4174>}Acts 17:14): *Timotheus*, of whom the Philippians “learned the proof” that he honestly cared for their state, and was truly like-minded with Paul, “serving with him in the Gospel as a son with his father” (^{<369>}Philippians 2:19-23); and *Luke*, “whose praise is in the Gospel,” though he never praises himself or relates his own labors, and though we only trace his movements in connection with Paul, by the change of a pronoun, or the unconscious variation of his style. In the seventeenth chapter the narrative is again in the *third* person, and the pronoun is not changed to the *second* till we come to ^{<415>}Acts 20:5. The modesty with which Luke leaves out all mention of his own labors need hardly be pointed out. We shall trace him again when he rejoins Paul in the same neighborhood. His vocation as a physician may have brought him into connection with these contiguous coasts of Asia and Europe, and he may (as MR. SMITH suggests, “Shipwreck,” etc.) have been in the habit of exercising his professional skill as a surgeon at sea [HOWSON].

CHAPTER 17

ACTS 17:1-15.

AT THESSALONICA THE SUCCESS OF PAUL'S PREACHING ENDANGERING HIS LIFE, HE IS DESPATCHED BY NIGHT TO BEREA, WHERE HIS MESSAGE MEETS WITH ENLIGHTENED ACCEPTANCE — A HOSTILE MOVEMENT FROM THESSALONICA OCCASIONS HIS SUDDEN DEPARTURE FROM BEREA — HE ARRIVES AT ATHENS.

1. when they had passed through Amphipolis — thirty-three miles southwest of Philippi, on the river Strymon, and at the head of the gulf of that name, on the northern coast of the aegean Sea.

and Apollonia — about thirty miles southwest of Amphipolis; but the exact site is not known.

they came to Thessalonica — about thirty-seven miles due west from Apollonia, at the head of the Thermaic (or Thessalonian) Gulf, at the northwestern extremity of the aegean Sea; the principal and most populous city in Macedonia. “We see at once how appropriate a place it was for one of the starting-points of the Gospel in Europe, and can appreciate the force of what Paul said to the Thessalonians within a few months of his departure from them: “From you, the word of the Lord sounded forth like a trumpet, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place,”” (^{SM081} Thessalonians 1:8) [HOWSON].

where was a synagogue of the Jews — implying that (as at Philippi) there was none at Amphipolis and Apollonia.

2-4. Paul, as his manner was — always to begin with the Jews.

went in unto them — In writing to the converts but a few months after this, he reminds them of the courage and superiority to indignity, for the Gospel's sake, which this required after the shameful treatment he had so lately experienced at Philippi (^{SM021} Thessalonians 2:2).

3. Opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, etc. — His preaching, it seems, was chiefly expository, and designed to establish from the Old Testament Scriptures

(1) that the predicted Messiah was to be a suffering and dying, and therefore a rising, Messiah;

(2) that this Messiah was none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

4. consorted — cast in their lot.

with Paul and Silas — Compare ^{<4176>}2 Corinthians 8:5.

of the chief women — female proselytes of distinction. From the First Epistle to the Thessalonians it appears that the converts were nearly all Gentiles; not only such as had before been proselytes, who would be gained in the synagogue, but such as up to that time had been idolaters (^{<5100>}1 Thessalonians 1:9,10). During his stay, while Paul supported himself by his own labor (^{<5100>}1 Thessalonians 2:9 ^{<5100>}2 Thessalonians 3:7-9), he received supplies once and again from the Philippians, of which he makes honorable acknowledgment (^{<5100>}Philippians 4:15,16).

5-9. the Jews ... moved with envy — seeing their influence undermined by this stranger.

lewd fellows of the baser sort — better, perhaps, “worthless market people,” that is, idle loungers about the market-place, of indifferent character.

gathered a company — rather, “having raised a mob.”

assaulted the house of Jason — with whom Paul and Silas abode (^{<4176>}Acts 17:7), one of Paul’s kinsmen, apparently (^{<5100>}Romans 16:21), and from his name, which was sometimes used as a *Greek* form of the word *Joshua* [GROTIUS], probably a Hellenistic Jew.

sought to bring them — Jason’s lodgers.

6. And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers — literally, “the politarchs”; the very name given to the magistrates of Thessalonica in an inscription on a still remaining arch of the city — so minute is the accuracy of this history.

crying, These that have turned the world upside down — (See on ^{<4176>}Acts 16:20).

7. all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, etc. — meaning, probably, nothing but what is specified in the next words.

saying ... there is another king, *one* Jesus — (See on ^{<5100>}John 19:12).

9. And when they had taken security of Jason and of the other — “the others” — probably making them deposit a money pledge that the preachers should not again endanger the public peace.

10-12. the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night — for it would have been as useless as rash to attempt any further preaching at that time, and the conviction of this probably made his friends the more willing to pledge themselves against any present continuance of missionary effort.

unto Berea — fifty or sixty miles southwest of Thessalonica; a town even still of considerable population and importance.

11. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica — The comparison is between *the Jews* of the two places; for the triumphs of the Gospel at Thessalonica were mostly among the Gentiles. See on ACTS Acts 17:2-4.

in that they received the word with all readiness of mind — heard it not only without prejudice, but with eager interest, “in an honest and good heart” (LUKE Luke 8:17), with sincere desire to be taught aright (see JOHN John 7:17). Mark the “nobility” ascribed to this state of mind.

searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so — whether the *Christian* interpretation which the apostle put upon the Old Testament Scriptures was the true one.

12. Therefore many of them believed — convinced that Jesus of Nazareth whom Paul preached was indeed the great Promise and Burden of the Old Testament. From this it is undeniable,

(1) that *the people*, no less than the ministers of the Church, *are entitled and bound to search the Scriptures*;

(2) that *they are entitled and bound to judge, on their own responsibility, whether the teaching they receive from the ministers of the Church is according to the word of God*;

(3) that *no faith but such as results from personal conviction ought to be demanded, or is of any avail*.

of honorable women which were Greeks, and of men — which were Greeks.

not a few — “The upper classes in these European-Greek and Romanized towns were probably better educated than those of Asia Minor” [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

13. the Jews of Thessalonica ... came thither also — “like hunters upon their prey, as they had done before from Iconium to Lystra” [HOWSON].

14. immediately the brethren — the converts gathered at Berea.

sent away Paul — as before from Jerusalem (^{<400>}Acts 9:30), and from Thessalonica (^{<4470>}Acts 17:10). How long he stayed at Berea we know not; but as we know that he longed and expected soon to return to the Thessalonians (^{<5127>}1 Thessalonians 2:17), it is probable he remained some weeks at least, and only abandoned his intention of revisiting Thessalonica at that time when the virulence of his enemies there, stimulated by his success at Berea, brought them down thither to counterwork him.

to go as it were to the sea — rather, perhaps, “in the direction of the sea.” Probably he delayed fixing his next destination till he should reach the coast, and the providence of God should guide him to a vessel bound for the destined spot. Accordingly, it was only on arriving at Athens, that the convoy of Berean brethren, who had gone thus far with him, were sent back to bid Silas and Timothy follow him thither.

Silas and Timotheus abode there still — “to build it up in its holy faith, to be a comfort and support in its trials and persecutions, and to give it such organization as might be necessary” [HOWSON]. Connecting this with the apostle’s leaving Timothy and Luke at Philippi on his own departure (see on ^{<4160>}Acts 16:40), we may conclude that this was his fixed plan for cherishing the first beginning of the Gospel in European localities, and organizing the converts. Timotheus must have soon followed the apostle to Thessalonica, the bearer, probably, of one of the Philippian “contributions to his necessity” (^{<5015>}Philippians 4:15,16), and from thence he would with Silas accompany him to Berea.

15. Silas and Timotheus to come to him with all speed — He probably wished their company and aid in addressing himself to so new and great a sphere as Athens. Accordingly it is added that he “waited for them” there, as if unwilling to do anything till they came. That they did come, there is no good reason to doubt (as some excellent critics do). For though Paul himself says to the Thessalonians that he “thought it good to be left at Athens alone” (^{<5121>}1 Thessalonians 3:1), he immediately adds that he “sent Timotheus to establish and comfort them” (^{<4470>}Acts 17:2); meaning, surely, that he despatched him from Athens back to Thessalonica. He had indeed sent for him to Athens; but, probably, when it appeared that little fruit was to be reaped there, while Thessalonica was in too interesting a state to be left uncherished, he seems to have thought it better to send him back again. (The other explanations which have been suggested seem less satisfactory). Timotheus rejoined the apostle at Corinth (^{<4485>}Acts 18:5).

~~4176~~ ACTS 17:16-34.

PAUL AT ATHENS.

16, 17. wholly given to idolatry — “covered with idols”; meaning the city, not the inhabitants. Petronius, a contemporary writer at Nero’s court, says satirically that it was easier to find a god at Athens than a man. This “stirred the spirit” of the apostle. “The first impression which the masterpieces of man’s taste for art left on the mind of St. Paul was a revolting one, since all this majesty and beauty had placed itself between man and his Creator, and bound him the faster to his gods, who were not God. Upon the first contact, therefore, which the Spirit of Christ came into with the sublimest creations of human art, the judgment of the Holy Ghost — through which they have all to pass — is set up as “the strait gate,” and this must remain the correct standard for ever” [BAUMGARTEN].

17. Therefore disputed — or, discussed.

he in the synagogue with the Jews — The sense is not, “Therefore went he to the Jews,” because the Gentile Athenians were steeped in idolatry; but, “Therefore set he himself to lift up his voice to the idol city, but, as his manner was, he began with the Jews.”

and with the devout persons — Gentile proselytes. After that,

in the market — the *Agora*, or place of public concourse.

daily with them that met with him — or “came in his way.”

18-21. certain ... of the Epicureans — a well-known school of *atheistic materialists*, who taught that pleasure was the chief end of human existence; a principle which the more rational interpreted in a refined sense, while the sensual explained it in its coarser meaning.

and of the Stoics — a celebrated school of *severe and lofty pantheists*, whose principle was that the universe was under the law of an iron necessity, the spirit of which was what is called the Deity: and that a passionless conformity of the human will to this law, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes, is the perfection of virtue. While therefore the Stoical was in itself superior to the Epicurean system, both were alike hostile to the Gospel. “The two enemies it has ever had to contend with are the two ruling principles of the Epicureans and Stoics — *Pleasure and Pride*” [HOWSON].

What will this babler say? — The word, which means “a picker-up of seeds,” bird-like, is applied to a gatherer and retailer of scraps of knowledge, a prater; a general term of contempt for any pretended teacher.

a setter forth of strange gods — “demons,” but in the Greek (not Jewish) sense of “*objects of worship*.”

because he preached Jesus and the resurrection — Not as if they thought he made these to be two divinities: the strange gods were *Jehovah* and *the Risen Savior*, ordained to judge the world.

19. they took him, and brought him to Areopagus — “the hill where the most awful court of judicature had sat from time immemorial to pass sentence on the greatest criminals, and to decide on the most solemn questions connected with religion. No place in Athens was so suitable for a discourse on the mysteries of religion” [HOWSON]. The apostle, however, was not here on his *trial*, but to expound more fully what he had thrown out in broken conversations in the Agora.

21. all the Athenians ... spent their time in nothing else but to tell or hear some new thing — literally, “newer thing,” as if what was new becoming presently stale, they craved something still more new [BENGEL]. This lively description of the Athenian character is abundantly attested by their own writers.

22. Then Paul stood ... and said — more graphically, “standing in the midst of Mars’ hill, said.” This prefatory allusion to the position he occupied shows the writer’s wish to bring the situation vividly before us [BAUMGARTEN].

I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious — rather (with most modern interpreters and the ancient Greek ones), “in all respects extremely reverential” or “much given to religious worship,” a conciliatory and commendatory introduction, founded on his own observation of the symbols of devotion with which their city was covered, and from which all Greek writers, as well as the apostle, inferred the exemplary religiousness of the Athenians. (The authorized translation would imply that only *too much* superstition was wrong, and represents the apostle as repelling his hearers in the very first sentence; whereas the whole discourse is studiously courteous).

23. as I passed by and beheld your devotions — rather, “the objects of your devotion,” referring, as is plain from the next words, to their works of art consecrated to religion.

I found an altar ... To the — or, “an”

unknown god — erected, probably, to commemorate some divine interposition, which they were unable to ascribe to any known deity. That there were such altars, Greek writers attest; and on this the apostle skilfully fastens at the outset, as the text of his discourse, taking it as evidence of that dimness of religious conception which, in virtue of his better light, he was prepared to dissipate.

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship — rather, “Whom, therefore, knowing Him not, ye worship,” alluding to “The Unknown God.”

him declare — announce.

I unto you — *This is like none of his previous discourses, save that to the idolaters of Lycaonia* (⁴⁴⁴⁵Acts 14:15-17). His subject is not, as in the synagogues, the Messiahship of Jesus, but THE LIVING GOD, in opposition to the materialistic and pantheistic polytheism of Greece, which subverted all true religion. Nor does he come with *speculation* on this *profound subject* — of which they had had enough from others — but an authoritative “announcement” of Him after whom they were groping not giving Him any name, however, nor even naming the Savior Himself but unfolding the true character of both as they were able to receive it.

24, 25. God that made the world and all ... therein — The most profound philosophers of Greece were unable to conceive any real distinction between God and the universe. Thick darkness, therefore, behooved to rest on all their religious conceptions. To dissipate this, the apostle sets out with a sharp statement of the fact of *creation* as the central principle of all true religion — not less needed now, against the transcendental idealism of our day.

seeing he is Lord — or Sovereign.

of heaven and earth — holding in free and absolute subjection all the works of His hands; presiding in august royalty over them, as well as pervading them all as the principle of their being. How different this from the blind Force or Fate to which all creatures were regarded as in bondage!

dwelleth not in temples made with hands — This thought, so familiar to Jewish ears (¹⁰²⁷1 Kings 8:27 ^{2301E}Isaiah 66:1,2 ⁴⁰⁷⁸Acts 7:48), and so elementary to Christians, would serve only more sharply to define to his heathen audience the spirituality of that living, personal God, whom he “announced” to them.

25. Neither is worshipped with — ministered unto, served by

men's hands, as though he needed anything — No less familiar as this thought also is to us, even from the earliest times of the Old Testament (^{<18816>}Job 35:6,8 ^{<19102>}Psalms 16:2,3 50:12-14 ^{<23114>}Isaiah 40:14-18), it would pour a flood of light upon any candid heathen mind that heard it.

seeing he — He Himself.

giveth to all life, and breath, and all things — The Giver of all cannot surely be dependent for aught upon the receivers of all (^{<13914>}1 Chronicles 29:14). This is the culminating point of a pure Theism.

26, 27. and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth — Holding with the Old Testament teaching, that in the blood is the life (^{<01904>}Genesis 9:4 ^{<81711>}Leviticus 17:11 ^{<61223>}Deuteronomy 12:23), the apostle sees this life stream of the whole human race to be one, flowing from one source [BAUMGARTEN].

and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation — The apostle here opposes both Stoical Fate and Epicurean Chance, ascribing the *periods* and *localities* in which men and nations flourish to the sovereign will and prearrangements of a living God.

27. That they should seek the Lord — That is the high end of all these arrangements of Divine Power, Wisdom, and Love.

if haply they might feel after him — as men groping their way in the dark.

and find him — a lively picture of the murky atmosphere of Natural Religion.

though he be not far from every one of us — The difficulty of finding God outside the pale of revealed religion lies not in His distance from us, but in our distance from Him through the blinding effect of sin.

28. For in him we live, and move, and have our being — (or, more briefly, “exist”). — This means, not merely, “Without Him we have no *life*, nor that *motion* which every inanimate nature displays, nor even *existence* itself” [MEYER], but that God is the living, immanent Principle of all these in men.

as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring — the first half of the fifth line, word for word, of an astronomical poem of Aratus, a Greek countryman of the apostle, and his predecessor by about three centuries. But, as he hints, the same sentiment is to be found in other Greek poets. They meant it doubtless in a *pantheistic*

sense; but the truth which it expresses the apostle turns to his own purpose — to teach a pure, personal, spiritual Theism. (Probably during his quiet retreat at Tarsus. ^{<408>}Acts 9:30, revolving his special vocation to the Gentiles he gave himself to the study of so much Greek literature as might be turned to Christian account in his future work. Hence this and his other quotations from the Greek poets, ^{<453>}1 Corinthians 15:33 ^{<502>}Titus 1:12).

29. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think — *The courtesy of this language is worthy of notice.*

that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device — (“graven by the art or device of man”). One can hardly doubt that the apostle would here point to those matchless monuments of the plastic art, in gold and silver and costliest stone, which lay so profusely beneath and around him. The more intelligent pagan Greeks no more pretended that these sculptured gods and goddesses were real deities, or even their actual likenesses. than Romanist Christians do their images; and Paul doubtless knew this; yet here we find him condemning all such efforts visibly to represent the invisible God. How shamefully inexcusable then are the Greek and Roman churches in paganizing the worship of the Christian Church by the encouragement of pictures and images in religious service! (In the eighth century, the second council of Nicea decreed that the image of God was as proper an object of worship as God Himself).

30. the times of this ignorance God winked at — literally (and far better), “overlooked,” that is, bore with, without interposing to punish it, otherwise than suffering the debasing tendency of such worship to develop itself (compare ^{<446>}Acts 14:16, and see on ^{<424>}Romans 1:24, etc.).

but now — that a new light was risen upon the world.

commandeth — “That duty — all along lying upon man estranged from his Creator, but hitherto only silently recommending itself and little felt — is now peremptory.”

all men every where to repent — (compare ^{<500>}Colossians 1:6,23 ^{<501>}Titus 1:11) — a tacit allusion to the narrow precincts of favored Judaism, within which immediate and entire repentance was ever urged. The word “repentance” is here used (as in ^{<423>}Luke 13:3,5 15:10) in its most comprehensive sense of “repentance unto life.”

31. Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world — Such language beyond doubt teaches that the judgment will, in its

essence, be a solemn judicial assize held upon all mankind *at once*. “Aptly is this uttered on the Areopagus, the seat of judgment” [BENGEL].

by that man whom he hath ordained — compare ^{<462>}John 5:22,23,27
^{<400>}Acts 10:42.

whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead — the most patent evidence to mankind at large of the judicial authority with which the Risen One is clothed.

32-34. when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked — As the Greek religion was but the glorification of the present life, by the worship of all its most beautiful forms, the Resurrection, which presupposes the vanity of the present life, and is nothing but life out of the death of all that sin has blighted, could have no charm for the true Greek. It gave the death blow to his fundamental and most cherished ideas; nor until these were seen to be false and fatal could the Resurrection, and the Gospel of which it was a primary doctrine, seem otherwise than ridiculous.

others said, We will hear thee again of this — “an idle compliment to Paul and an opiate to their consciences, such as we often meet with in our own day. They probably, like Felix, feared to hear more, lest they should be constrained to believe unwelcome truths” (^{<465>}Acts 24:25; and compare ^{<415>}Matthew 13:15) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

33. So Paul departed — Whether he would have opened, to any extent, the Gospel scheme in this address, if he had not been interrupted, or whether he reserved this for exposition afterwards to earnest inquirers, we cannot tell. Only the speech is not to be judged of as quite complete.

34. Howbeit certain men clave unto him — Instead of mocking or politely waiving the subject, having listened eagerly, they joined themselves to the apostle for further instruction; and so they “believed.”

Dionysius the Areopagite — a member of that august tribunal. Ancient tradition says he was placed by the apostle over the little flock at Athens. “Certainly the number of converts there and of men fit for office in the Church was not so great that there could be much choice” [OLSHAUSEN].

a woman named Damaris — not certainly one of the apostle’s audience on the Areopagus, but won to the faith either before or after. Nothing else is known of her. Of any further labors of the apostle at Athens, and how long he stayed, we are not informed. Certainly he was not driven away. But “it is a serious and instructive fact that the mercantile populations of Thessalonica and Corinth received the message of God with greater readiness than the highly educated and polished Athenians. Two letters to the Thessalonians,

and two to the Corinthians, remain to attest the flourishing state of those churches. But we possess no letter written by Paul to the Athenians; and we do not read that he was ever in Athens again” [HOWSON].

CHAPTER 18

~~<480>~~ACTS 18:1-22.

PAUL'S ARRIVAL AND LABORS AT CORINTH, WHERE HE IS REJOINED BY SILAS AND TIMOTHY, AND, UNDER DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT, MAKES A LONG STAY — AT LENGTH, RETRACING HIS STEPS, BY EPHESUS, CAESAREA, AND JERUSALEM, HE RETURNS FOR THE LAST TIME TO ANTIOCH, THUS COMPLETING HIS SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY.

1-4. came to Corinth — rebuilt by Julius Caesar on the isthmus between the aegean and Ionian Seas; the capital of the Roman province of Achaia, and the residence of the proconsul; a large and populous mercantile city, and the center of commerce alike for East and West; having a considerable Jewish population, larger, probably, at this time than usual, owing to the banishment of the Jews from Rome by Claudius Caesar (~~<480>~~Acts 18:2). Such a city was a noble field for the Gospel, which, once established there, would naturally diffuse itself far and wide.

2. a Jew ... Aquila ... with his wife Priscilla — From these *Latin* names one would conclude that they had resided so long in Rome as to lose their Jewish family names.

born in Pontus — the most easterly province of Asia Minor, stretching along the southern shore of the Black Sea. From this province there were Jews at Jerusalem on the great Pentecost (~~<480>~~Acts 2:9), and the Christians of it are included among “the strangers of the dispersion,” to whom Peter addressed his first Epistle (~~<480>~~1 Peter 1:1). Whether this couple were converted before Paul made their acquaintance, commentators are much divided. They may have brought their Christianity with them from Rome [OLSHAUSEN], or Paul may have been drawn to them merely by like occupation, and, lodging with them, have been the instrument of their conversion [MEYER]. They appear to have been in good circumstances, and after travelling much, to have eventually settled at Ephesus. The Christian friendship now first formed continued warm and unbroken, and the highest testimony is once and again borne to them by the apostle.

Claudius, etc. — This edict is almost certainly that mentioned by SÜETONIUS, in his life of this emperor [*Lives of the Caesars*, “Claudius,” 25].

3. tentmakers — manufacturers, probably, of those hair-cloth tents supplied by the goats of the apostle’s native province, and hence, as sold in the markets of the Levant, called *cilicium*. Every Jewish youth, whatever the pecuniary circumstances of his parents, was taught some trade (see on ^{<406>}Luke 2:42), and Paul made it a point of conscience to work at that which he had probably been bred to, partly that he might not be burdensome to the churches, and partly that his motives as a minister of Christ might not be liable to misconstruction. To both these he makes frequent reference in his Epistles.

4. the Greeks — that is, Gentile proselytes; for to the heathen, as usual, he only turned when rejected by the Jews (^{<416>}Acts 18:6).

5, 6. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia — that is, from Thessalonica, whither Silas had probably accompanied Timothy when sent back from Athens (see on ^{<417>}Acts 17:15).

Paul was pressed in the spirit — rather (according to what is certainly the true reading) “was pressed with the word”; expressing not only his zeal and assiduity in preaching it, but some inward *pressure* which at this time he experienced in the work (to convey which more clearly was probably the origin of the common reading). What that pressure was we happen to know, with singular minuteness and vividness of description, from the apostle himself, in his first Epistles to the Corinthians and Thessalonians (^{<401>}1 Corinthians 2:1-5 ^{<406>}1 Thessalonians 3:1-10). He had come away from Athens, as he remained there, in a depressed and anxious state of mind, having there met, for the first time, with unwilling Gentile ears. He continued, apparently for some time, laboring alone in the synagogue of Corinth, full of deep and anxious solicitude for his Thessalonian converts. His early ministry at Corinth was colored by these feelings. Himself deeply humbled, his power as a preacher was more than ever felt to lie in demonstration of the Spirit. At length Silas and Timotheus arrived with exhilarating tidings of the faith and love of his Thessalonian children, and of their earnest longing again to see their father in Christ; bringing with them also, in token of their love and duty, a pecuniary contribution for the supply of his wants. This seems to have so lifted him as to put new life and vigor into his ministry. *He now wrote his FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS*, in which the “pressure” which resulted from all this strikingly appears. (See Introduction to First Thessalonians). Such emotions are known only to

the ministers of Christ, and, even of them, only to such as “travail in birth until Christ be formed in” their hearers.

6. Your blood be upon your own heads, etc. — See ^{<4304>}Ezekiel 33:4,9.

from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles — Compare ^{<4136>}Acts 13:46.

7, 8. he departed thence, and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus — not changing his lodging, as if Aquila and Priscilla up to this time were with the opponents of the apostle [ALFORD], but merely ceasing any more to testify in the synagogue, and henceforth carrying on his labors in this house of Justus, which “joining hard to the synagogue,” would be easily accessible to such of its worshippers as were still open to light. Justus, too, being probably a proselyte, would more easily draw a mixed audience than the synagogue. From this time forth conversions rapidly increased.

8. Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house — an event felt to be so important that the apostle deviated from his usual practice (^{<4014>}1 Corinthians 1:14-16) and baptized him, as well as Caius (Gaius) and the household of Stephanas, with his own hand [HOWSON].

many of the Corinthians ... believed and were baptized — The beginning of the church gathered there.

9-11. Then spake the Lord to Paul ... by a vision, Be not afraid ... no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, etc. — From this it would seem that these signal successes were stirring up the wrath of the unbelieving Jews, and probably the apostle feared being driven by violence, as before, from this scene of such promising labor. He is reassured, however, from above.

10. I have much people in this city — “whom in virtue of their election to eternal life He already designates as His” (compare ^{<4138>}Acts 13:48) [BAUMGARTEN].

11. continued there a year and six months — the whole period of this stay at Corinth, and not merely up to what is next recorded. *During some part of this period he wrote his SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.* (See Introduction to Second Thessalonians.)

12-17. when Gallio was the deputy — “the proconsul.” See on ^{<4137>}Acts 13:7. He was brother to the celebrated philosopher SENECA, the tutor of Nero, who passed sentence of death on both.

13. contrary to the — Jewish

law — probably in not requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised.

14. If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness — any offense punishable by the magistrate.

15. if it be a question of words and names, and of your law ... I will be no judge, etc. — in this only laying down the proper limits of his office.

16. drave them, etc. — annoyed at such a case.

17. all the Greeks — the Gentile spectators.

took Sosthenes — perhaps the successor of Crispus, and certainly the head of the accusing party. It is very improbable that this was the same Sosthenes as the apostle afterwards calls “his brother” (⁴⁰⁰¹1 Corinthians 1:1).

and beat him before the judgment-seat — under the very eye of the judge.

And Gallio cared for none of those things — nothing loath, perhaps, to see these turbulent Jews, for whom probably he felt contempt, themselves getting what they hoped to inflict on another, and indifferent to whatever was beyond the range of his office and case. His brother eulogizes his loving and lovable manners. Religious indifference, under the influence of an easy and amiable temper, reappears from age to age.

18. Paul ... tarried ... yet a good while — During his long residence at Corinth, Paul planted other churches in Achaia (⁴⁰⁰²2 Corinthians 1:1).

then took ... leave of the brethren, and sailed ... into — rather, “for”

Syria — to Antioch, the starting-point of all the missions to the Gentiles, which he feels to be for the present concluded.

with him Priscilla and Aquila — In this order the names also occur in ⁴¹⁰²⁶Acts 18:26 (according to the true reading); compare ⁴¹⁰⁰⁸Romans 16:3 ⁴¹⁰¹⁹2 Timothy 4:19, which seem to imply that the wife was the more prominent and helpful to the Church. Silas and Timotheus doubtless accompanied the apostle, as also Erastus, Gaius, and Aristarchus (⁴¹⁰²²Acts 19:22,29). Of Silas, as Paul’s associate, we read no more. His name occurs last in connection with Peter and the churches of Asia Minor [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

having shorn *his* head in Cenchrea — the eastern harbor of Corinth, about ten miles distant, where a church had been formed (⁴¹⁰¹¹Romans 16:1).

for he — Paul.

had a vow — That it was the Nazarite vow (^{<0000>}Numbers 6:1-27) is not likely. It was probably one made in one of his seasons of difficulty or danger, in prosecution of which he cuts off his hair and hastens to Jerusalem to offer the requisite sacrifice within the prescribed thirty days [JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.15.1]. This explains the haste with which he leaves Ephesus (^{<4000>}Acts 18:21), and the subsequent observance, on the recommendation of the brethren, of a similar vow (^{<4000>}Acts 21:24). This one at Corinth was voluntary, and shows that even in heathen countries he systematically studied the prejudices of his Jewish brethren.

19. he came to Ephesus — the capital of the Roman province of Asia. (See Introduction to Ephesians). It was a sail, right across from the west to the east side of the aegæan Sea, of some eight or ten days, with a fair wind.

left them there — Aquila and Priscilla.

but he himself entered into the synagogue — merely taking advantage of the vessel putting in there.

and reasoned with the Jews — the *tense* here not being the usual one denoting *continuous* action (as in ^{<4000>}Acts 17:2 18:4), but that expressing a *transient act*. He had been forbidden to preach the word in Asia (^{<4000>}Acts 16:6), but he would not consider that as precluding this passing exercise of his ministry when Providence brought him to its capital; nor did it follow that the prohibition was still in force.

20. when they desired him to tarry — The Jews seldom rose against the Gospel till the successful preaching of it stirred them up, and there was no time for that here.

21. I must ... keep this feast — probably Pentecost, presenting a noble opportunity of preaching the Gospel.

but I will return — the fulfillment of which promise is recorded in ^{<4000>}Acts 19:1.

22. And when he had landed at Caesarea — where he left the vessel.

and gone up — that is, to Jerusalem.

and saluted the church — In these few words does the historian despatch the apostle's FOURTH VISIT TO JERUSALEM after his conversion. The expression "going *up*" is invariably used of a journey to the metropolis; and thence he naturally "went *down* to Antioch." Perhaps the vessel reached too late for the feast, as he seems to have done nothing in Jerusalem beyond "saluting the Church," and privately offering the

sacrifice with which his vow (~~44838~~Acts 18:18) would conclude. It is left to be understood, as on his arrival from his first missionary tour, that “when he was come, and had gathered the church together, he rehearsed all that God had done with him” (~~44427~~Acts 14:27) on this his *second missionary journey*.

~~44823~~ACTS 18:23-21:16.

PAUL’S THIRD AND LAST MISSIONARY JOURNEY — HE VISITS THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA AND PHRYGIA.

23. And after he had spent some time there — but probably not long.

he departed — little thinking, probably, he was never more to return to Antioch.

went over all ... Galatia and Phrygia in order — visiting the several churches in succession. See on ~~44466~~Acts 16:6. Galatia is mentioned first here, as he would come to it first from Antioch. It was on this visitation that he ordained the weekly collection (~~44301~~1 Corinthians 16:1,2), which has been since adopted generally, and converted into a public usage throughout Christendom. Timotheus and Erastus, Gaius and Aristarchus, appear to have accompanied him on this journey (~~44422~~Acts 19:22,29 ~~44001~~2 Corinthians 1:1), and from Second Corinthians we may presume, Titus also. The details of this visit, as of the former (~~44466~~Acts 16:6), are not given.

~~44823~~ACTS 18:24-28.

EPISODE CONCERNING APOLLOS AT EPHESUS AND IN ACHAIA.

This is one of the most interesting and suggestive incidental narratives in this precious history.

24, 25. a ... Jew named Apollos — a contraction from Apollonius.

born at Alexandria — the celebrated city of Egypt on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean, called after its founder, Alexander the Great. Nowhere was there such a fusion of Greek, Jewish, and Oriental peculiarities, and an intelligent Jew educated in that city could hardly fail to manifest all these elements in his mental character.

eloquent — turning his Alexandrian culture to high account.

and mighty in the scriptures — his eloquence enabling him to express clearly and enforce skilfully what, as a Jew, he had gathered from a diligent study of the Old Testament Scriptures.

came to Ephesus — on what errand is not known.

25. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord ... knowing only the baptism of John — He was instructed, probably, by some disciple of the Baptist, in the whole circle of John's teaching concerning Jesus, but no more: he had yet to learn the new light which the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost had thrown upon the Redeemer's death and resurrection; as appears from ^{418B}Acts 19:2,3.

being fervent in the spirit — His heart warm, and conscious, probably, of his gifts and attainments, he burned to impart to others the truth he had himself received.

he spake and taught diligently — rather, "accurately" (it is the same word as is rendered "perfectly" in ^{418B}Acts 18:26).

26. speak boldly in the synagogue, whom when Aquila and Priscilla heard — joying to observe the extent of Scripture knowledge and evangelical truth which he displayed, and the fervency, courage, and eloquence with which he preached the truth.

they took him unto them — privately.

and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly — opening up those truths, to him as yet unknown, on which the Spirit had shed such glorious light. (In what appears to be the true reading of this verse, Priscilla is put before Aquila, as in ^{418B}Acts 18:18 [see on ^{418B}Acts 18:18]; she being probably the more intelligent and devoted of the two). One cannot but observe how providential it was that this couple should have been left at Ephesus when Paul sailed thence for Syria; and no doubt it was chiefly to pave the way for the better understanding of this episode that the fact is expressly mentioned by the historian in ^{418B}Acts 18:19. We see here also an example of not only *lay* agency (as it is called), but *female* agency of the highest kind and with the most admirable fruit. Nor can one help admiring the humility and teachableness of so gifted a teacher in sitting at the feet of a Christian woman and her husband.

27, 28. And when he was disposed — "minded," "resolved."

to pass into Achaia — of which Corinth, on the opposite coast (see on ^{418B}Acts 18:1), was the capital; there to proclaim that Gospel which he now more fully comprehended.

the brethren — We had not before heard of such gathered at Ephesus. But the desire of the Jews to whom Paul preached to retain him among them for some time (^{<41820>}Acts 18:20), and his promise to return to them (^{<41821>}Acts 18:21), seem to indicate some drawing towards the Gospel, which, no doubt, the zealous private labors of Priscilla and Aquila would ripen into discipleship.

wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him — a beautiful specimen of “letters of recommendation” (as ^{<41823>}Acts 15:23,25-27, and see ^{<41701>}2 Corinthians 3:1); by which, as well as by interchange of deputations, etc., the early churches maintained active Christian fellowship with each other.

when he was come, helped them much — was a great acquisition to the Achaian brethren.

which believed through grace — one of those incidental expressions which show that *faith's being a production of God's grace in the heart* was so current and recognized a truth that it was taken for granted, as a necessary consequence of the general system of grace, rather than expressly insisted on. (It is against the natural order of the words to read them, as BENGEL, MEYER, and others, do, “helped through grace those who believed”).

28. For he mightily convinced the Jews — The word is very strong: “stoutly bore them down in argument,” “vigorously argued them down,” and the *tense* in that he *continued* to do it, or that this was the characteristic of his ministry.

showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ — Rather, “that the Christ (or Messiah) was Jesus.” This expression, when compared with ^{<41825>}Acts 18:25, seems to imply a richer testimony than with his partial knowledge he was at first able to bear; and the power with which he bore down all opposition in argument is that which made him such an acquisition to the brethren. Thus his ministry would be as good as another visitation to the Achaian churches by the apostle himself (see ^{<41861>}1 Corinthians 3:6) and the more as, in so far as he was indebted for it to Priscilla and Aquila, it would have a decidedly *Pauline* cast.

CHAPTER 19

~~400~~ACTS 19:1-41.

SIGNAL SUCCESS OF PAUL AT EPHESUS.

1-3. while Apollos was at Corinth — where his ministry was so powerful that a formidable party in the Church of that city gloried in his type of preaching in preference to Paul's (~~402~~1 Corinthians 1:12 3:4), no doubt from the marked infusion of Greek philosophic culture which distinguished it, and which the apostle studiously avoided (~~401~~1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

Paul having passed through the upper coasts — “parts,” the interior of Asia Minor, which, with reference to the seacoast, was elevated.

came to Ephesus — thus fulfilling his promise (~~403~~Acts 18:21).

finding certain disciples — in the same stage of Christian knowledge as Apollos at first, newly arrived, probably, and having had no communication as yet with the church at Ephesus.

2. Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? — rather, “Received ye the Holy Ghost when ye believed?” implying, certainly, that the one did not of necessity carry the other along with it (see on ~~404~~Acts 8:14-17). Why this question was asked, we cannot tell; but it was probably in consequence of something that passed between them from which the apostle was led to suspect the imperfection of their light.

We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost — This cannot be the meaning, since the personality and office of the Holy Ghost, in connection with Christ, formed an especial subject of the Baptist's teaching. Literally, the words are, “We did not even hear whether the Holy Ghost was (given)”; meaning, at the time of their baptism. That the word “given” is the right supplement, as in ~~405~~John 7:39, seems plain from the nature of the case.

4. Then said Paul, John ... baptized with the baptism of repentance — water unto repentance.

saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him — that is, who should baptize with the Holy Ghost. The

point of contrast is not between John and Christ personally, but between the *water* baptism of John unto *repentance*, and the promised baptism of *the Spirit* from the hands of his coming Master unto *new life*. As to all the facts, or at least the significance, of this baptism, which made the whole life and work of Christ another thing from what it was conceived to be before it was vouchsafed, these simple disciples were unenlightened.

5-7. When they heard this — not the mere words reported in ^{<4896>}Acts 19:4, but *the subject expounded* according to the tenor of those words.

they were baptized — not however by Paul himself (^{<4014>}1 Corinthians 1:14).

in the name of the Lord Jesus — into the whole fullness of the new economy, as now opened up to their believing minds.

6. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them ... they spake with tongues, etc. — See on ^{<4104>}Acts 10:44,45.

8-10. he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for ... three months, etc. — See on ^{<4172>}Acts 17:2,3.

9. when divers — “some.”

were hardened, etc. — implying that others, probably a large number, believed.

spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed — from the synagogue, as at Corinth (^{<4807>}Acts 18:7).

and separated the disciples — withdrawing to a separate place of meeting, for the sake both of the converts already made, and the unsophisticated multitude.

disputing — “discoursing” or “discussing.”

daily in the school — or lecture hall.

of one Tyrannus — probably a converted teacher of rhetoric or philosophy.

10. this continued ... two years — in addition to the former three months. See on ^{<4118>}Acts 20:31. But during some part of this period he must have paid a second unrecorded visit to Corinth, since the one next recorded (see on ^{<4101>}Acts 20:2,3) is twice called his *third* visit (^{<4724>}2 Corinthians 12:14 13:1). See on ^{<4015>}2 Corinthians 1:15,16, which might seem inconsistent with this. The passage across was quite a short one (see on ^{<4189>}Acts 18:19) — Towards the close of this long stay at Ephesus, as we learn from ^{<4668>}1

Corinthians 16:8, he wrote his FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS; also (though on this opinions are divided) the EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS. (See Introduction to First Corinthians, and Introduction to Galatians). And just as at Corinth his greatest success was after his withdrawal to a separate place of meeting (^{<4181>}Acts 18:7-10), so at Ephesus.

so that all they which dwelt in — the Roman province of

Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks — This is the “great door and effectual opened unto him” while resident at Ephesus (^{<4369>}1 Corinthians 16:9), which induced him to make it his headquarters for so long a period. The unwearied and varied character of his labors here are best seen in his own subsequent address to the elders of Ephesus (^{<4017>}Acts 20:17, etc.). And thus Ephesus became the “ecclesiastical center for the entire region, as indeed it remained for a very long period” [BAUMGARTEN]. Churches arose at Colosse, Laodicea, and Hierapolis eastward, either through his own labors or those of his faithful helpers whom he sent out in different directions, Epaphras, Archippus, Philemon (^{<5007>}Colossians 1:7 4:12-17 ^{<5023>}Philemon 1:23).

11, 12. God wrought special — no ordinary

miracles by the hands of Paul — implying that he had not been accustomed to work such.

12. So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, etc. — Compare ^{<4655>}Acts 5:15,16, very different from the magical acts practiced at Ephesus. “*God wrought these miracles*” merely “*by the hands of Paul*”; and the very exorcists (^{<4913>}Acts 19:13), observing that the name of Jesus was the secret of all his miracles, hoped, by aping him in this, to be equally successful; while the result of all in the “magnifying of the Lord Jesus” (^{<4917>}Acts 19:17) showed that in working them the apostle took care to hold up Him whom he *preached* as the source of all the miracles which he *wrought*.

13. vagabond Jews — simply, “wandering Jews,” who went from place to place practicing exorcism, or the art of conjuring evil spirits to depart out of the possessed. That such a power did exist, for some time at least, seems implied in ^{<4027>}Matthew 12:27. But no doubt this would breed imposture; and the present case is very different from that referred to in ^{<4049>}Luke 9:49,50.

We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth — a striking testimony to the power of Christ’s name in Paul’s mouth.

14-17. seven sons of ... Sceva ... chief of the priests — head, possibly, of one of the twenty-four courts.

15. the evil spirit answered, Jesus I know — “recognize.”

and Paul I know — “know intimately,” in contrast to them, whom he altogether disowns.

but who are ye?

16. And the man in whom the evil spirit was — Mark the clear line of demarcation here between “*the evil spirit* which answered and said” and “*the man in whom the evil spirit was.*” The reality of such possessions could not be more clearly expressed.

leaped on them ... so that they fled ... naked and wounded — This was so appalling a testimony at once against those profane impostors and in favor of Paul and the Master whom he preached, that we wonder not that it spread to “all the Jews and Greeks at Ephesus, that fear fell on them,” and that “the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”

18-20. many that believed came and confessed ... their deeds — the dupes of magicians, etc., acknowledging how shamefully they had been deluded, and how deeply they had allowed themselves to be implicated in such practices.

19. Many of them ... which used curious arts — The word signifies things “overdone”; significantly applied to arts in which laborious but senseless incantations are practiced.

brought their books — containing the mystic formularies.

and burned them before all — The *tense*, here used graphically, expresses progress and continuance of the conflagration.

counted the price ... and found *it* fifty thousand pieces of silver — probably about \$10,000 (presuming it to be the *drachma*). From their nature they would be costly, and books then bore a value above any standard we are familiar with. The scene must have been long remembered at Ephesus, as a strong proof of honest conviction on the part of the sorcerers and a striking triumph of Jesus Christ over the powers of darkness. The workers of evil were put to scorn, like Baal’s priests on Carmel, and the word of God mightily grew and prevailed [HOWSON].

21, 22. After these things were ended — completed, implying something like a natural finish to his long period of labor at Ephesus.

Paul purposed ... when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem ... After I have been there, I must also see Rome — Mark here the vastness of the apostle's missionary plans. They were all fulfilled, though he "saw Rome" only as a prisoner.

22. So he sent into Macedonia ... Timotheus and Erastus — as his pioneers, in part to bring "them into remembrance of his ways which were in Christ" (^{<4017>}1 Corinthians 4:17 16:10), partly to convey his mind on various matters. After a brief stay he was to return (^{<4181>}1 Corinthians 16:11). It is very unlikely that this Erastus was "the chamberlain of the city" of Corinth, of that name (^{<4163>}Romans 16:23).

he himself stayed in — the province of

Asia for a season — that is, at Ephesus, its chief city. (Asia is mentioned in contrast with Macedonia in the previous clause).

23. the same time — of Paul's proposed departure.

about that — "the"

way — So the new religion seemed then to be designated (^{<4002>}Acts 9:2 22:4 24:14).

24-26. silver shrines for — "of"

Diana — small models of the Ephesian temple and of the shrine or chapel of the goddess, or of the shrine and statue alone, which were purchased by visitors as memorials of what they had seen, and were carried about and deposited in houses as a charm. (The models of the chapel of *our Lady of Loretto*, and such like, which the Church of Rome systematically encourages, are such a palpable imitation of this heathen practice that it is no wonder it should be regarded by impartial judges as *Christianity paganized*).

gain to the craftsmen — the master-artificers.

25. Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation — rather, "with the workmen (or fabricators) of such articles," meaning the artisans employed by the master-artificers, all who manufactured any kind of memorial of the temple and its worship for sale.

26. ye see and hear — The evidences of it were to be seen, and the report of it was in everybody's mouth.

that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath ... turned away much people — Noble testimony this to the extent of Paul's influence!

saying that they be no gods which are made with hands — The universal belief of *the people* was that they were gods, though the more intelligent regarded them only as habitations of Deity, and some, probably, as mere aids to devotion. It is exactly so in the Church of Rome.

27. So that not only this our craft is in danger ... but, etc. — that is, “that indeed is a small matter; but there is something far worse.” So the masters of the poor Pythoness put forward the *religious revolution* which Paul was attempting to effect at Philippi, as the sole cause of their zealous alarm, to cloak the self-interest which they felt to be touched by his success (~~4169~~Acts 16:19-21). In both cases religious zeal was the hypocritical pretext; self-interest, the real moving cause of the opposition made.

also the temple of the great goddess Diana ... despised, and her magnificence ... destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth — It was reckoned one of the wonders of the world. It was built about 550 B.C., of pure white marble, and though burned by a fanatic on the night of the birth of Alexander the Great, 356 B.C., was rebuilt with more splendor than before. It was four hundred twenty-five feet long by two hundred twenty broad, and the columns, one hundred twenty-seven in number, were sixty feet in height, each of them the gift of a king, and thirty-six of them enriched with ornament and color. It was constantly receiving new decorations and additional buildings, statues, and pictures by the most celebrated artists, and kindled unparalleled admiration, enthusiasm, and superstition. *Its very site is now a matter of uncertainty.* The little wooden image of Diana was as primitive and rude as its shrine was sumptuous; not like the *Greek* Diana, in the form of an imposing huntress, but quite Asiatic, in the form of a many-breasted female (emblematic of the manifold ministrations of Nature to man), terminating in a shapeless block. Like some other far-famed idols, it was believed to have fallen from heaven (~~4468~~Acts 19:35), and models of it were not only sold in immense numbers to private persons, but set up for worship in other cities [HOWSON]. What power must have attended the preaching of that one man by whom the death blow was felt to be given to their gigantic and witching superstition!

28, 29. Great is Diana of the Ephesians — the civic cry of a populace so proud of their temple that they refused to inscribe on it the name of Alexander the Great, though he offered them the whole spoil of his Eastern campaign if they would do it [STRABO in HOWSON].

29. having caught Gaius and Aristarchus — disappointed of Paul, as at Thessalonica (^{447b}Acts 17:5,6). They are mentioned in ^{400d}Acts 20:4 27:2 ^{51c3}Romans 16:23 ^{401d4}1 Corinthians 1:14; and probably ^{600c3}John 1:1. If it was in the house of Aquila and Priscilla that he found an asylum (see ^{430b1}1 Corinthians 16:9), that would explain ^{510b}Romans 16:3,4, where he says of them that “for his life they laid down their own necks” [HOWSON].

rushed ... into the theater — a vast pile, whose ruins are even now a wreck of immense grandeur [SIR C. FELLOWES, *Asia Minor*, 1839].

30-34. when Paul would have entered in — with noble forgetfulness of self.

unto the people — the *demos*, that is, the people met in public assembly.

the disciples suffered him not — The *tense* used implies only that they were *using their efforts* to restrain him; which might have been unavailing but for what follows.

31. And certain of the chief of Asia — literally, “And certain also of the Asiarchs.” These were wealthy and distinguished citizens of the principal towns of the Asian province, chosen annually, and ten of whom were selected by the proconsul to preside over the games celebrated in the month of May (the same month which Romanism dedicates to *the Virgin*). It was an office of the highest honor and greatly coveted. Certain of these, it seems, were favorably inclined to the Gospel, at least were Paul’s “friends,” and knowing the passions of a mob, excited during the festivals, “sent (a message) to him desiring him not to adventure himself into the theater.”

33. they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward — rather, “some of the multitude urged forward Alexander, the Jews thrusting him forward.” As the blame of such a tumult would naturally be thrown upon the Jews, who were regarded by the Romans as the authors of all religious disturbances, they seem to have put forward this man to clear them of all responsibility for the riot. (BENGEI’S conjecture, that this was Alexander the coppersmith, ^{530d42}2 Timothy 4:14, has little to support it).

beckoned with the hand — compare ^{413b6}Acts 13:16 21:40.

would have made his defense — “offered to speak in defense.”

34. But when they knew he was a Jew, all with one voice, for the space of two hours, cried out, Great is Diana, etc. — The very appearance of a Jew had the opposite effect to that intended. To prevent him obtaining a

hearing, they drowned his voice in one tumultuous shout in honor of their goddess, which rose to such frantic enthusiasm as took two hours to exhaust itself.

35-41. when the town-clerk — keeper of the public archives, and a magistrate of great authority.

had appeased — “calmed.”

the people — “the multitude,” which the very presence of such an officer would go far to do.

he said ... what man ... knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana — literally, the *neocoros* or “warden.” The word means “temple-sweeper”; then, “temple-guardian.” Thirteen cities of Asia had an interest in the temple, but Ephesus was honored with the charge of it. (Various cities have claimed this title with reference to *the Virgin* or certain *saints*) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

and of the *image* which fell down from Jupiter — “from the sky” or “from heaven.” See on ~~44827~~ Acts 19:27. “With this we may compare various legends concerning images and pictures in the Romish Church, such as the traditional likenesses of Christ, which were said to be “not made with hands”” [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

36. Seeing that these things cannot be spoken against, etc. — Like a true legal man, he urges that such was notoriously the constitution and fixed character of the city, with which its very existence was all but bound up. Did they suppose that all this was going to be overturned by a set of itinerant orators? Ridiculous! What did they mean, then, by raising such a stir?

37. For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches — “temple-plunderers,” or sacrilegious persons.

nor yet blasphemers of your goddess — This is a remarkable testimony, showing that the apostle had, in preaching against idolatry, studiously avoided (as at Athens) insulting the feelings of those whom he addressed — a lesson this to missionaries and ministers in general.

38. if Demetrius have a matter — of complaint.

against any man, the law is open — rather, “the court days are being held.”

and there are deputies — literally “proconsuls” (see on ~~44837~~ Acts 13:7); that is, probably, the proconsul and his council, as a court of appeal.

39. if ye inquire — “have any question.”

concerning other matters — of a public nature.

40. For we — the public authorities.

are in danger of being called in question — by our superiors.

CHAPTER 20

ACTS 20:1-12.

PAUL FULFILS HIS PURPOSE OF PROCEEDING AGAIN TO MACEDONIA AND GREECE — RETURNING THENCE, ON HIS ROUTE FOR JERUSALEM, HE REVISITS PHILIPPI AND TROAS — HIS MINISTRATIONS AT TROAS.

This section of the apostle's life, though peculiarly rich in material, is related with great brevity in the History. Its details must be culled from his own Epistles.

1, 2. departed — after Pentecost (~~4608~~1 Corinthians 16:8).

to go into Macedonia — in pursuance of the *first* part of his plan (~~4492~~Acts 19:21). From his Epistles we learn;

- (1) That, as might have been expected from its position on the coast, he revisited Troas (~~4406~~2 Corinthians 2:12; see on ~~4468~~Acts 16:8).
- (2) That while on his former visit he appears to have done no missionary work there, he now went expressly “to preach Christ’s Gospel,” and found “a door opened unto him of the Lord” there, which he entered so effectually as to lay the foundation of a church there (~~4406~~Acts 20:6,7).
- (3) That he would have remained longer there but for his uneasiness at the non-arrival of Titus, whom he had despatched to Corinth to finish the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem (~~4601~~1 Corinthians 16:1,2 ~~4406~~2 Corinthians 8:6), but still more, that he might bring him word what effect his first Epistle to that church had produced. (He had probably arranged that they should meet at Troas).
- (4) That in this state of mind, afraid of something wrong, he “took leave” of the brethren at Troas, and went from thence into Macedonia. It was, no doubt, the city of PHILIPPI that he came to (landing at Nicopolis, its seaport, see on ~~4461~~Acts 16:11,12), as appears by comparing ~~4709~~2 Corinthians 11:9, where “Macedonia” is named, with ~~4015~~Philippians 4:15, where it appears that Philippi is meant. Here he found the brethren, whom he had left on his former visit in circumstances of such

deep interest, a consolidated and thriving church, generous and warmly attached to their father in Christ; under the superintendence, probably, of our historian, “the beloved physician” (see on ^{<4460>}Acts 16:40). All that is said by our historian of this Macedonian visit is that “he went over those parts and gave them much exhortation.”

(5) Titus not having reached Philippi as soon as the apostle, “his flesh had no rest, but he was troubled on every side: without were fightings, within were fears” (^{<4015>}2 Corinthians 7:5).

(6) At length Titus arrived, to the joy of the apostle, the bearer of better tidings from Corinth than he had dared to expect (^{<4016>}2 Corinthians 7:6,7,13), but checkered by painful intelligence of the efforts of a hostile party to undermine his apostolic reputation there (^{<4017>}2 Corinthians 10:1-18).

(7) Under the mixed feelings which this produced, he wrote — from Macedonia, and probably Philippi — *his* SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS (see Introduction to Second Corinthians); despatching Titus with it, and along with him two other unnamed deputies, expressly chosen to take up and bring their collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, and to whom he bears the beautiful testimony, that they were “the glory of Christ” (^{<4022>}2 Corinthians 8:22,23).

(8) It must have been at this time that he penetrated as far as to the confines of “Illyricum,” lying along the shores of the Adriatic (^{<6159>}Romans 15:19). He would naturally wish that his second Letter to the Corinthians should have some time to produce its proper effect ere he revisited them, and this would appear a convenient opportunity for a northwestern circuit, which would enable him to pay a passing visit to the churches at Thessalonica and Berea, though of this we have no record. On his way southward to Greece, he would preach the Gospel in the intermediate regions of Epirus, Thessaly, and Boeotia (see ^{<6159>}Romans 15:19), though of this we have no record.

2. he came into Greece — or Achaia, in pursuance of the *second* part of his plan (^{<4482>}Acts 19:21).

3. And there abode three months — Though the province only is here mentioned, it is the city of CORINTH that is meant, as the province of “Macedonia” (^{<4218>}Acts 20:1) meant the city of Philippi. Some rough work he anticipated on his arrival at Corinth (^{<4700>}2 Corinthians 10:1-8,11 13:1-10) though he had reason to expect satisfaction on the whole; and as we know there were other churches in Achaia besides that at Corinth (^{<4700>}2 Corinthians 1:1 11:10), he would have time enough to pay them all a brief

visit during the three months of his stay there. This period was rendered further memorable by the despatch of *the* EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS, written during his stay at Corinth and sent by “Phoebe, a servant [deaconess] of the Church at Cenchrea” (see on ^{<418>}Acts 18:3), a lady apparently of some standing and substance, who was going thither on private business. (See on ^{<510>}Romans 16:1 and see Introduction to Romans).

And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria — He had intended to embark, probably at Cenchrea, the eastern harbor of the city, for Palestine, on his route to Jerusalem, the *third* part of his plan (^{<412>}Acts 19:21). But having detected some conspiracy against his life by his bitter Jewish enemies as at Damascus (^{<402>}Acts 9:22-25) and Jerusalem (^{<403>}Acts 9:29,30), he changed his plan and determined “to return” as he had come, “through Macedonia.” As he was never more to return to Corinth, so this route would bring him, for the last time, face to face with the attached disciples of *Berea*, *Thessalonica*, and *Philippi*.

4, 5. there accompanied him into Asia — the province of Asia.

Sopater of Berea — The true reading, beyond doubt, is, “Sopater [the son] of Pyrrhus of Berea.” Some think this mention of his father was to distinguish him from Sosipater (the same name in fuller form), mentioned in ^{<512>}Romans 16:21. But that they were the same person seems more probable.

of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus — (See on ^{<413>}Acts 19:29).

and Secundus — of whom nothing else is known.

Gaius of Derbe — Though the Gaius of ^{<413>}Acts 19:29 is said to be of “Macedonia,” and this one “of Derbe,” there is no sufficient reason for supposing them different persons; on the contrary, ^{<512>}Romans 16:23 (compare with ^{<601>}3 John 1:1, where there is hardly any reason to doubt that the same Gaius is addressed) seems to show that though he spent an important part of his Christian life away from his native Derbe, he had latterly retired to some place not very far from it.

and Timothy — not probably of Derbe, as one might suppose from this verse, but of Lystra (see on ^{<411>}Acts 16:1); both being so associated in his early connection with the apostle that the mention of the one in the previous clause would recall the other on the mention of his name.

and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus — The latter was an Ephesian, and probably the former also. They seem to have put themselves, from this time forward, at the apostle’s disposal, and to the very last been a great comfort to him (^{<402>}Ephesians 6:21,22 ^{<510>}Colossians 4:7,8 ^{<403>}Acts 21:29

2 Timothy 4:12,20). From the mention of the places to which each of these companions belonged, and still more the order in which they occur, we are left to conclude that they were deputies from their respective churches, charged with taking up and bringing on the collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, first at Berea, next at Thessalonica, then at Philippi [HOWSON], *where we gather that our historian himself rejoined the party* (from the resumption at Acts 20:5 of the “us,” dropped at Acts 16:17), by whom the Philippian collection would naturally be brought on.

5, 6. These going before — perhaps to announce and prepare for the apostle’s coming.

carried for us at Troas.

6. And we sailed ... from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread — (that is, the Passover). This, compared with 1 Corinthians 16:8, shows that the three months spent at Corinth (Acts 20:3) were the winter months.

came ... to Troas — for the third and last time. (See on Acts 16:8 and Acts 20:1).

in the five days — As it might have been done in two days, the wind must have been adverse. The vivid style of one now present will be here again observed.

where we abode seven days — that is, arriving on a Monday, they stayed over the Jewish sabbath and the Lord’s Day following; Paul occupying himself, doubtless, in refreshing and strengthening fellowship with the brethren during the interval.

7. upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together — This, compared with 1 Corinthians 16:2, and other similar allusions, plainly indicates that the Christian observance of the day afterwards distinctly called “the Lord’s Day,” was already a fixed practice of the churches.

Paul preached — discoursed. The *tense* implies continued action — “kept discoursing.”

8. there were many lights in the upper chamber — not a mere piece of graphic detail by an eye-witness [HACKETT, HOWSON], but mentioned, probably, as increasing the heat and contributing to drowsiness [WEBSTER and WILKINSON], as the next clause seems to show.

9. in a — “the.”

window — or window seat, or recess.

fell down from the third loft — “story.”

and was taken up dead — “The window projected (according to the side of the room where it was situated) either over the street or over the interior court; so that in either case he fell on the hard earth or pavement below.”

10-12. Paul ... fell on him — like Elisha (⁴¹⁰⁶⁴2 Kings 4:34).

his life is in him — now restored; compare ⁴¹⁶⁵⁹Mark 5:39.

11. broken bread and eaten — with what a mixture of awe and joy after such an occurrence! “And eaten” — denoting a common repast, as distinguished from the breaking of the eucharistic bread. and talked a long while, even till break of day. How lifelike this record of dear Christian fellowship, as free and gladsome as it was solemn! (See ²¹⁰⁰⁷Ecclesiastes 9:7).

⁴¹⁰¹³ACTS 20:13-38.

CONTINUING HIS ROUTE TO JERUSALEM HE REACHES MILETUS, WHENCE HE SENDS FOR THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS — HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THEM.

13, 14. we ... sailed — from Troas.

unto Assos; there ... to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot — “to go by land.” (See on ⁴¹⁰⁶⁵Mark 6:33). In sailing southward from Troas to Assos, one has to round Cape Lectra, and keeping due east to run along the northern shore of the Gulf of Adramyttium, on which it lies. This is a sail of nearly forty miles; whereas by land, cutting right across, in a southeasterly direction, from sea to sea, by that excellent Roman road which then existed, the distance was scarcely more than half. The one way Paul wished his companions to take, while he himself, longing perhaps to enjoy a period of solitude, took the other, joining the ship, by appointment, at Assos.

14. came to Mitylene — the capital of the beautiful and classical island of Lesbos, which lies opposite the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, about thirty miles south of Assos; in whose harbor they seem to have lain for the night.

15, 16. came the next day over against Chios — now Scio: one of the most beautiful of those islands between which and the coast the sail is so charming. They appear not to have touched at it.

next *day* we arrived — “touched” or “put in.”

at Samos — another island coming quite close to the mainland, and about as far south of Chios as it is south of Lesbos.

tarried — for the night.

at Trogyllium — an anchorage on the projecting mainland, not more than a mile from the southern extremity of the island of Samos.

next day we came to Miletus — on the mainland; the ancient capital of Ionia, near the mouth of the Meander.

16. For Paul had determined to sail by — or “sail past.”

Ephesus — He was right opposite to it when approaching Chios.

because he would not spend time in Asia — the Asian province of which Ephesus was the chief city.

for he hasted, if ... possible ... to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost — as a suitable season for giving in the great collection from all the western churches, for keeping the feast, and clearing his apostolic position with the Church, then represented in large number at Jerusalem. The words imply that there was considerable ground to doubt if he would attain this object — for more than three of the seven weeks from Passover to Pentecost had already expired — and they are inserted evidently to explain why he did not once more visit Ephesus.

17. from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church — As he was now some forty miles south of Ephesus, we might think that more time would be lost by sending thus far for the elders to come to him, than by going at once to Ephesus itself, when so near it. But if unfavorable winds and stormy weather had overtaken them, his object could not have been attained, and perhaps he was unwilling to run the risk of detention at Ephesus by the state of the church and other causes. Those here called “*elders*” or “*presbyters*,” are in ^{40B}Acts 20:28 called “*bishops*.” (See on ^{40B}Acts 20:28). The identity of presbyters and bishops in the New Testament is beyond all reasonable dispute.

18. Ye know ... after what manner I have been with you at all seasons — For the Christian integrity and fidelity of his whole official intercourse with them he appeals to themselves.

19. Serving the Lord — Jesus.

with all humility ... and many tears and temptations — Self-exaltation was unknown to him, and ease of mind: He “sowed in tears,” from anxieties both on account of the converts from whom he “travailed in birth,” and of the Jews, whose bitter hostility was perpetually plotting against him, interrupting his work and endangering his life.

20. kept back — timidly withheld from fear of consequences.

nothing that was profitable — edification directing all.

have taught you publicly, and from house to house — Did an *apostle*, whose functions were of so wide a range, not feel satisfied without *private* as well as public ministrations? How then must *pastors* feel? [BENDEL].

21. Testifying both to Jews and ... Greeks — laboring under a common malady, and recoverable only by a common treatment.

repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ — (See on ^{445B}Acts 5:31). REPENTANCE, as distinguished from *faith*, is that state of the “honest and good heart” which arises from a discovery of one’s contrariety to the righteous demands of the divine law. This is said to be “*toward God*,” because seeing Him to be the party dishonored by sin, it feels all its acknowledgments and compunctions to be properly due to Him, as the great Lawgiver, and directs them to Him accordingly; condemning, humbling itself, and grieving before Him, looking also to Him as its only Hope of deliverance. FAITH is said to be “*toward our Lord Jesus Christ*,” because in that frame of mind just described it eagerly credits the testimony of relief divinely provided in Christ, gladly embraces the overtures of reconciliation in Him, and directs all its expectations of salvation, from its first stage to its last, to Him as the one appointed Medium of all grace from God to a sinful world. Thus we have here a brief summary of all Gospel preaching. And it is easy to see why repentance is here put before faith; for the former must of necessity precede the latter. There is a repentance subsequent to faith, the fruit of felt pardon and restoration. It was this which drew the tears with which the Savior’s feet were once so copiously moistened. (^{445C}Luke 7:37,38,47; and compare ^{246B}Ezekiel 16:63). But that is not the light in which it is here presented.

22, 23. And now, behold, I — “I” is emphatic here.

bound in the spirit — compare ^{445D}Acts 19:21. This internal pressure, unattended with any knowledge of “what was to befall him there,” was the result of that higher guidance which shaped all his movements.

23. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, etc. — by prophetic utterances from city to city, as in ^{<4104>}Acts 11:4 21:10,11. Analogous premonitions of coming events are not unknown to the general method of God's providence. They would tend to season the apostle's spirit.

24. But none of these things move me, neither, etc. — In this noble expression of absolute dedication to the service of Christ and preparedness for the worst that could befall him in such a cause, note

(1) his jealousy for the peculiar character of his mission, as *immediately from Christ Himself* on which all the charges against him turned;

(2) the burden of that Gospel which he preached — GRACE; it was “the Gospel of the Grace of God.”

25-27. I know that ye all ... shall see my face no more — not an inspired prediction of what was certainly to be, but what the apostle, in his peculiar circumstances, fully expected. Whether, therefore, he ever did see them again, is a question to be decided purely on its own evidence.

26. I am pure from the blood of all men — (^{<41816>}Acts 18:6; and compare ^{<9123>}1 Samuel 12:3,5 ^{<3187>}Ezekiel 3:17-21 33:8,9).

27. For I have not shunned to declare ... all the counsel of God — God's way of salvation, and His kingdom of souls saved by His Son Jesus Christ. See ^{<3173>}Luke 7:30.

28. Take heed ... unto yourselves — Compare ^{<5182>}1 Timothy 3:2-7 4:16 6:11.

and to all the flock — Compare ^{<5837>}Hebrews 13:17. Observe here how the *personal* is put before the *pastoral* care.

over ... which the Holy Ghost hath made you — Compare ^{<3122>}John 20:22,23 ^{<4018>}Ephesians 4:8,11,12 ^{<6101>}Revelation 3:1. (^{<4123>}Acts 14:23 shows that the apostle did not mean to exclude *human* ordination).

overseers — or, as the same word is *everywhere else* rendered in our version, “bishops.” The *English Version* has hardly dealt fair in this case with the sacred text, in rendering the word “overseers,” whereas it ought here, as in all other places, to have been “bishops,” in order that the fact of elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous, might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not [ALFORD]. The distinction between these offices cannot be certainly traced till the second century, nor was it established till late in that century.

to feed the church of God — or, “the Church of the Lord.” Which of these two readings of the text is the true one, is a question which has divided the best critics. The evidence of manuscripts preponderates in favor of “THE LORD”; some of the most ancient Versions, though not all, so read; and ATHANASIUS, the great champion of the supreme Divinity of Christ early in the fourth century, says the expression “Church of God” is unknown to the Scriptures. Which reading, then, does the *internal* evidence favor? As “Church of God” occurs nine times elsewhere in Paul’s writings, and “Church of the Lord” nowhere, the probability, it is said, is that he used his wonted phraseology here also. But if he did, it is extremely difficult to see how so many early transcribers should have altered it into the quite unusual phrase, “Church of the Lord”; whereas, if the apostle did use this latter expression, and the historian wrote it so accordingly, it is easy to see how transcribers might, from being so accustomed to the usual phrase, write it “Church of God.” On the whole, therefore, we accept the *second* reading as most probably the true one. But see what follows.

which he hath purchased — “made His own,” “acquired.”

with his own blood — “His own” is emphatic: “That glorified Lord who from the right hand of power in the heavens is gathering and ruling the Church, and by His Spirit, through human agency, hath set you over it, cannot be indifferent to its welfare in your hands, seeing He hath given for it His own most precious blood, thus making it His own by the dearest of all ties.” The transcendent sacredness of the Church of Christ is thus made to rest on the dignity of its Lord and the consequent preciousness of that blood which He shed for it. And as the sacrificial atoning character of Christ’s death is here plainly *expressed*, so His supreme dignity is *implied* as clearly by the second reading as it is *expressed* by the first. What a motive to *pastoral fidelity* is here furnished!

29, 30. after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you — Two classes of coming enemies are here announced, the one more external to themselves, the other bred in the bosom of their own community; both were to be teachers, but the one, “grievous wolves,” not sparing, that is, making a prey of the flock; the other (^{440B}Acts 20:30), simply sectarian “perverters” of the truth, with the view of drawing a party after them. Perhaps the one pointed to that subtle poison of Oriental Gnosticism which we know to have very early infected the Asiatic churches; the other to such Judaizing tendencies as we know to have troubled nearly all the early churches. See the Epistles to the *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Timothy*, also those to the seven churches of Asia (^{440B}Revelation 2:1-3:22). But watchfulness against *all* that tends to injure and corrupt the Church is the duty of its pastors in every age.

31. by the space of three years — speaking in round numbers; for it was nearer three than two years.

I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears — What an appeal to be able to make! “And if this was an apostle’s part, how much more a pastor’s!” [BENDEL].

32-35. I commend you to God — the almighty Conservator of His people.

and to the word of his grace — that message of His pure grace (⁴⁰¹Acts 20:24) by the faith of which He keeps us (⁶⁰⁵1 Peter 1:5).

which — that is, God.

is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance, etc. — Observe how salvation — not only in its *initial stages* of pardon and regeneration, but in all its *subsequent stages* of “up-building,” even to its *consummation* in the final inheritance — is here ascribed to the “ability” of God to bestow it, as in ⁶⁶⁵Romans 16:25 ⁴¹¹Ephesians 3:20; particularly ⁶¹²Jude 1:24; and compare ⁵¹²2 Timothy 1:12, where *the same thing is ascribed to Christ*.

among all them which are sanctified — Sanctification is here viewed as the final character and condition of the heirs of glory, regarded as one saved company.

34. these hands — doubtless holding them up, as before Agrippa in chains (⁴⁰³Acts 26:29).

have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me — See ⁴⁸³Acts 18:3 ⁶¹²1 Corinthians 4:12 9:6, written from Ephesus; also ⁵¹¹1 Thessalonians 2:9.

35. that so laboring — as I have done for others as well as myself.

you ought to support the weak to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he — “how Himself.”

said, It is more blessed to give than to receive — This golden saying, snatched from oblivion, and here added to the Church’s abiding treasures, is apt to beget the wish that more of what issued from those Lips which “dropped as an honeycomb,” had been preserved to us. But see on ⁶¹²John 21:25.

36-38. he kneeled down and prayed with them all, etc. — Nothing can be more touching than these three concluding verses, leaving an indelible impression of rare ministerial fidelity and affection on the apostle’s part,

and of warm admiration and attachment on the part of these Ephesian presbyters. Would to God that such scenes were more frequent in the Church!

CHAPTER 21

<420>ACTS 21:1-16.

SAILING FROM EPHESUS, THEY LAND AT TYRE, AND THENCE SAILING TO PTOLEMAIS, THEY PROCEED BY LAND TO CAESAREA AND JERUSALEM.

1. we were gotten — “torn.”

from them — expressing the difficulty and pain of the parting.

with a straight course — running before the wind, as <4461>Acts 16:11.

unto Coos — Cos, an island due south from Miletus, which they would reach in about six hours, and coming close to the mainland.

the day following unto Rhodes — another island, some fifty miles to the southeast, of brilliant classic memory and beauty.

thence unto Patara — a town on the magnificent mainland of Lycia, almost due east from Rhodes. It was the seat of a celebrated oracle of Apollo.

2. And finding a ship — their former one going no farther, probably.

to Phoenicia — (See on <4419>Acts 11:19).

went abroad — One would almost think this extracted from a journal of the voyage, so graphic are its details.

3. when we ... discovered — “sighted,” as the phrase is.

Cyprus, we left it on the left hand — that is, steered southeast of it, leaving it on the northwest.

sailed into — “unto”

Syria, and landed at Tyre — the celebrated seat of maritime commerce for East and West. It might be reached from Patara in about two days.

there the ship was to unlade her burden — which gave the apostle time for what follows.

4-6. finding disciples — finding out the disciples, implying some search. They would expect such, from what is recorded, ^{<4119>}Acts 11:19. Perhaps they were not many; yet there were gifted ones among them.

who said to Paul ... that he should not go up to Jerusalem — (See on ^{<4423>}Acts 20:23; also see on ^{<4411>}Acts 21:11-14).

5. they all brought us on our way with wives and children ... and we kneeled down on the shore and prayed — (See on ^{<4436>}Acts 20:36). Observe here that the *children* of these Tyrian disciples not only were taken along with their parents, but must have joined in this act of solemn worship. See on ^{<4401>}Ephesians 6:1.

7. when we had finished our course — completing the voyage
from Tyre, we came — which they would do the same day.

to Ptolemais — anciently called Accho (^{<0063>}Judges 1:31), now St. Jean d’Acre, or Acre.

and saluted the brethren, and abode, etc. — disciples gathered probably as at Tyre, on the occasion mentioned (^{<4419>}Acts 11:19).

8-10. next day we that were of Paul’s company departed — (The words “the were of Paul’s company” are omitted in the best manuscripts. They were probably added as the connecting words at the head of some church lessons).

and came to Caesarea — a run along the coast, southward, of some thirty miles.

Philip the evangelist — a term answering apparently very much to our *missionary* [HOWSON], by whose ministry such joy had been diffused over Samaria and the Ethiopian eunuch had been baptized (^{<4404>}Acts 8:4-40).

one of the seven — deacons, who had “purchased to himself a good degree” (^{<5013>}1 Timothy 3:13). He and Paul now meet for the first time, some twenty-five years after that time.

9. the same man had four daughters ... which did prophesy — fulfilling ^{<2128>}Joel 2:28 (see ^{<4428>}Acts 2:18). This is mentioned, it would seem, merely as a high distinction divinely conferred on so devoted a servant of the Lord Jesus, and probably indicates the high tone of religion in his family.

10. tarried there many — “a good many”

days — Finding himself in good time for Pentecost at Jerusalem, he would feel it a refreshing thing to his spirit to hold Christian communion for a few days with such a family.

there came down from Judea — the news of Paul's arrival having spread.

a certain prophet ... Agabus — no doubt the same as in ^{<41128>}Acts 11:28.

11-14. So shall the Jews bind the man that owneth this girdle, etc. — For though the Romans did it, it was at the Jews' instigation (^{<42133>}Acts 21:33 ^{<42877>}Acts 28:17). Such dramatic methods of announcing important future events would bring the old prophets to remembrance. (Compare ^{<23107>}Isaiah 20:2, etc. ^{<24133>}Jeremiah 13:1, and ^{<23011>}Ezekiel 5:1, etc.). This prediction and that at Tyre (^{<42104>}Acts 21:4) were intended, not to prohibit him from going, but to put his courage to the test and when he stood the test, to deepen and mature it.

12. we and they at that place — the Caesarean Christians.

besought him — even with tears, ^{<42113>}Acts 21:13.

not to go to Jerusalem.

13. Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart — Beautiful union of manly resoluteness and womanly tenderness, alike removed from mawkishness and stoicism!

I am ready not to be bound only — “If that is all, let it come.”

but to die, etc. — It was well he could add this, for he had that also to do.

15, 16. we took up our carriages — “our baggage.”

and went up to Jerusalem — for the *fifth* time after his conversion, thus concluding *his third missionary tour*, which proved his *last*, so far as recorded; for though he accomplished the fourth and last part of the missionary plan sketched out (^{<44221>}Acts 19:21) — “After I have been at Jerusalem, I must also see Rome” — it was as “a prisoner of Jesus Christ.”

16. went with us ... and brought with them — rather, “brought us to.”

One Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, etc. — not an “aged” disciple, but probably “a disciple of old standing,” perhaps one of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost, or, more likely still, drawn to the Savior Himself during His lifetime. He had come, probably, with the other

Cyprians (^{<411D>}Acts 11:20), to Antioch, “preaching the Lord Jesus unto the Grecians,” and now he appears settled at Jerusalem.

~~<4217>~~ACTS 21:17-40.

PAUL REPORTS THE EVENTS OF HIS THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY — IN THE TEMPLE, PURIFYING HIMSELF FROM A JEWISH VOW, HE IS SEIZED BY A MOB AND BEATEN TO THE DANGER OF HIS LIFE — THE UPROAR BECOMING UNIVERSAL, THE ROMAN COMMANDANT HAS HIM BROUGHT IN CHAINS TO THE FORTRESS, FROM THE STAIRS OF WHICH HE IS PERMITTED TO ADDRESS THE PEOPLE.

The apostle was full of anxiety about this visit to Jerusalem, from the numerous prophetic intimations of danger awaiting him, and having reason to expect the presence at this feast of the very parties from whose virulent rage he had once and again narrowly escaped with his life. Hence we find him asking the Roman Christians to wrestle with him in prayer, “for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, *that he might be delivered from them that believed not in Judea,*” as well as “that his service which he had for Jerusalem (the great collection for the poor saints there) might be accepted of the saints” (^{<6150>}Romans 15:30,31).

17-19. the brethren received us gladly — the disciples generally, as distinguished from the official reception recorded in ^{<4218>}Acts 21:18.

18. Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present — to “report himself” formally to the acknowledged head of the church at Jerusalem, and his associates in office. See on ^{<4153>}Acts 15:13. Had any other of the apostles been in Jerusalem on that occasion, it could hardly fail to have been noted.

19. he declared particularly — in detail.

what God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry — as on previous occasions (^{<4147>}Acts 14:27; and see ^{<6151>}Romans 15:15); no doubt referring to the insidious and systematic efforts of the Judaizing party in a number of places to shrivel the Church of Christ into a Jewish sect, and his own counter-procedure.

20-25. they glorified the Lord, etc. — constrained to justify his course, notwithstanding the Jewish complexion of the Christianity of Jerusalem.

21. they are informed ... that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles — those residing in heathen countries.

to forsake Moses, etc. — This calumny of the unbelieving Jews would find easy credence among the Christian zealots for Judaism.

23. we have four men — Christian Jews, no doubt.

which have a vow — perhaps kept ready on purpose.

24. be at charges with them — that is, defray the expense of the sacrifices legally required of them, along with his own, which was deemed a mark of Jewish generosity.

25. touching the Gentiles ... we have written and concluded that they observe no such things, etc. — This shows that with all their conciliation to Jewish prejudice, the Church of Jerusalem was taught to adhere to the decision of the famous council held there (⁴⁴⁵⁹Acts 15:19-29).

26. to signify — that is, announce to the priest.

the accomplishment of the days of purification, etc. — (See on ⁴⁴¹⁸Numbers 6:14-21).

27-30. the Jews ... of Asia — in all likelihood those of *Ephesus* (since they recognized Trophimus apparently as a townsman, ⁴⁴¹⁹Acts 21:29), embittered by their discomfiture (⁴⁴¹⁰Acts 19:9, etc.).

29. Trophimus — (See on ⁴⁴⁰⁶Acts 20:4).

30. took Paul, and drew him out of the temple; and forthwith the doors were shut — that the murder they meant to perpetrate might not pollute that holy place.

31. tidings came — literally, “went up,” that is, to the fortress of Antonia, where the commandant resided. See on ⁴⁴²³Acts 21:32. This part of the narrative is particularly graphic.

32. the chief captain — “the chiliarch,” or tribune of the Roman cohort, whose full number was one thousand men.

33. commanded him to be bound with two chains — (See on ⁴⁴¹⁶Acts 12:6).

34. some cried one thing — The difficulty would be so to state his crimes as to justify their proceedings to a Roman officer.

to be carried into the castle — rather, perhaps, “the barracks,” or that part of the fortress of Antonia appropriated to the soldiers. The fort was built by Herod on a high rock at the northwest corner of the great temple area, and called after Mark Antony.

35, 36. Away with him — as before of his Lord (^{<4238}Luke 23:18 ^{<48915}John 19:15).

37-40. Art not thou that Egyptian, etc. — The form of the question implies that the answer is to be in the negative, and is matter of some surprise: “Thou art not then?” etc.

38. madest an uproar, etc. — The narrative is given in JOSEPHUS [*Wars of the Jews*, 2.8.6; 13.5], though his two allusions and ours seem to refer to different periods of the rebellion.

39. a citizen of no mean city — (See on ^{<44657}Acts 16:37).

40. stood on the stairs — “What nobler spectacle than that of Paul at this moment! There he stood, bound with two chains, ready to make his defense to the people. The Roman commander sits by, to enforce order by his presence. An enraged populace look up to him from below. Yet in the midst of so many dangers, how self-possessed is he, how tranquil!” [CHRYSOSTOM (or in his name) in HACKETT].

a great silence — the people awed at the permission given him by the commandant, and seeing him sitting as a listener.

in the Hebrew tongue — the *Syro-Chaldaic*, the vernacular tongue of the Palestine Jews since the captivity.

CHAPTER 22

~~<421>~~ ACTS 22:1-30.

PAUL'S DEFENSE FROM THE STAIRS OF THE FORTRESS — THE RAGE OF THE AUDIENCE BURSTING FORTH, THE COMMANDANT HAS HIM BROUGHT INTO THE FORT TO BE EXAMINED BY SCOURGING, BUT LEARNING THAT HE IS A ROMAN, HE ORDERS HIS RELEASE AND COMMANDS THE SAMHEDRIM TO TRY HIM.

2. when they heard ... the Hebrew tongue — (See on ~~<421>~~ Acts 21:40).

they kept the more silence — They could have understood him in *Greek*, and doubtless fully expected the renegade to address them in that language, but the sound of their holy mother tongue awed them into deeper silence.

3. a Jew of Tarsus, brought up in this city, at the feet — (See on ~~<421>~~ Luke 10:39).

of Gamaliel — (See on ~~<405>~~ Acts 5:34); a fact of great importance in the apostle's history, standing in the same relation to his future career as Moses' education in the Egyptian court to the work for which he was destined.

the perfect manner of the law of the fathers — the strictest form of traditional Judaism.

zealous — “a zealot.”

toward God as ye all are this day — his own former murderous zeal against the disciples of the Lord Jesus being merely reflected in their present treatment of himself.

4. I persecuted, etc. — (See on ~~<405>~~ Acts 9:1,2; ~~<405>~~ Acts 9:5-7).

5. the high priest — still alive.

doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders — the whole Sanhedrim.

8. Jesus of Nazareth — the Nazarene. See on ~~<405>~~ Acts 9:5.

9-11. they that were with me — (See on ^{<400>}Acts 9:7, etc.)

12. Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there — One would not know from this description of Ananias that he was a Christian at all, the apostles object being to hold him up as unexceptionable, even to the most rigid Jews.

13-15. The God of our fathers hath chosen thee — studiously linking the new economy upon the old, as but the sequel of it; both having one glorious Author.

14. that thou shouldest ... see that — “the”

Just One — compare ^{<404>}Acts 3:14 7:52.

hear the voice of his mouth — in order to place him on a level with the other apostles, who had “seen the [risen] Lord.”

16. be baptized and wash away thy sins — This way of speaking arises from baptism being the visible seal of remission.

calling on the name of the Lord — rather, “having called,” that is, *after* having done so; referring to the confession of Christ which *preceded* baptism, as ^{<403>}Acts 8:37.

17-21. it came to pass, etc. — This thrilling dialogue between the glorified Redeemer and his chosen vessel is nowhere else related.

when I was come again to Jerusalem — on the occasion mentioned in ^{<405>}Acts 9:26-29.

while I prayed in the temple — He thus calls their attention to the fact that after his conversion he kept up his connection with the temple as before.

18. get ... quickly out of Jerusalem — compare ^{<409>}Acts 9:29.

for they will not receive thy testimony ... And I said, Lord, they know, etc. — “Can it be, Lord, that they will resist the testimony of one whom they knew so well as among the bitterest of all against Thy disciples, and whom nothing short of resistless evidence could have turned to Thee?”

21. depart for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles — that is, “Enough; thy testimony is not to be thrown away upon Jerusalem; the Gentiles, afar off, are thy peculiar sphere.”

22, 23. gave him audience to this word ... then ... Away with such a fellow from the earth, etc. — Their national prejudices lashed into fury at the mention of a mission to the Gentiles, they would speedily have done to

him as they did to Stephen, but for the presence and protection of the Roman officer.

24-26. examined by scourging — according to the Roman practice.

that he might know wherefore they cried so — Paul's speech being to him in an unknown tongue, he concluded from the horror which it kindled in the vast audience that he must have been guilty of some crime.

25. Paul said to the centurion that stood by — to superintend the torture and receive the confession expected to be wrung from him.

Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, etc. — See on ^{<4167>}Acts 16:37.

27-29. art thou a Roman? — showing that this being of Tarsus, which he had told him before (^{<4133>}Acts 21:39) did not necessarily imply that he was a Roman citizen.

28. With a great sum obtained I this freedom — Roman citizenship was bought and sold in the reign of Claudius, we know, at a high price: at a subsequent date, for next to nothing. But to put in a false claim to this privilege was a capital crime.

I was free born — born to it, by purchase, or in reward of services, on the part of his father or some ancestor.

29. chief captain also was afraid, etc. — See on ^{<4168>}Acts 16:38.

30. commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear — that is, the Sanhedrim to be formally convened. Note here the power to order a Sanhedrim to try this case, assumed by the Roman officers and acquiesced in on their part.

CHAPTER 23

⌚ ACTS 23:1-10.

PAUL'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE SAMHEDRIM DIVIDES THE RIVAL FACTIONS, FROM WHOSE VIOLENCE THE COMMANDANT HAS THE APOSTLE REMOVED INTO THE FORTRESS.

1. Paul, earnestly beholding the council — with a look of conscious integrity and unfaltering courage, perhaps also recognizing some of his early fellow pupils.

I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day — The word has an indirect reference to the “polity” or “commonwealth of Israel,” of which he would signify that he had been, and was to that hour, an honest and God-fearing member.

2. the high priest ... commanded ... to smite him on the mouth — a method of silencing a speaker common in the East to this day [HACKET]. But for a judge thus to treat a prisoner on his “trial,” for merely prefacing his defense by a protestation of his integrity, was infamous.

3, 4. God shall smite thee — as indeed He did; for he was killed by an assassin during the Jewish war [JOSEPHUS, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.17.9].

thou whited wall — that is, hypocrite (⌚ Matthew 23:27). This epithet, however correctly describing the man, must not be defended as addressed to a judge, though the remonstrance which follows — “for sittest thou,” etc. — ought to have put him to shame.

5. I wist not ... that he was the high priest — All sorts of explanations of this have been given. The high priesthood was in a state of great confusion and constant change at this time (as appears from JOSEPHUS), and the apostle's long absence from Jerusalem, and perhaps the manner in which he was habited or the seat he occupied, with other circumstances to us unknown, may account for such a speech. But if he was thrown off his guard by an insult which touched him to the quick, “what can surpass the grace with which he recovered his self-possession, and the frankness with which he acknowledged his error? If his conduct in yielding to the momentary impulse was not that of Christ Himself under a similar

provocation (⁴¹⁸²John 18:22,23), certainly the manner in which he atoned for his fault was *Christ-like* [HACKET].

6-9. when Paul perceived — from the discussion which plainly had by this time arisen between the parties.

that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out — raising his voice above both parties.

I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee — The true reading seems to be, “the son of Pharisees,” that is, belonging to a family who from father to son had long been such.

of the hope and resurrection of the dead — that is, not the vague hope of immortality, but the definite expectation of the resurrection.

I am called in question — By this adroit stroke, Paul engages the whole Pharisaic section of the council in his favor; the doctrine of a resurrection being common to both, though they would totally differ in their *application* of it. This was, of course, quite warrantable, and the more so as it was already evident that no impartiality in trying his cause was to be looked for from such an assembly.

8. the Sadducees say ... there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit — (See on ⁴²¹⁷Luke 20:37).

the scribes ... of the Pharisees' part ... strove, saying, We find no evil in this man, but — as to those startling things which he brings to our ears.

if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him — referring, perhaps, to his trance in the temple, of which he had told them (⁴²⁰⁷Acts 22:17). They put this favorable construction upon his proceedings for no other reason than that they had found him one of their own party. They care not to inquire into the *truth* of what he alleged, over and above their opinions, but only to explain it away as something not worth raising a noise about. (The following words, “Let us not fight against God,” seem not to belong to the original text, and perhaps are from ⁴¹⁵⁹Acts 5:39. In this case, either the meaning is, “If he has had some divine communication, *what of that?*” or, the conclusion of the sentence may have been drowned in the hubbub, which ⁴²³⁰Acts 23:10 shows to have been intense).

10. the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled to pieces ... commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force, etc. — This shows that the commandant was not himself present, and further, that instead of the Sanhedrim trying the cause, the proceedings

quickly consisted in the one party attempting to seize the prisoner, and the other to protect him.

~~4231~~ ACTS 23:11-35.

IN THE FORTRESS PAUL IS CHEERED BY A NIGHT VISION — AN INFAMOUS CONSPIRACY TO ASSASSINATE HIM IS PROVIDENTIALY DEFEATED, AND HE IS DESPATCHED BY NIGHT WITH A LETTER FROM THE COMMANDANT TO FELIX AT CAESAREA, BY WHOM ARRANGEMENTS ARE MADE FOR A HEARING OF HIS CAUSE.

11. the night following — his heart perhaps sinking, in the solitude of his barrack ward, and thinking perhaps that all the predictions of danger at Jerusalem were now to be fulfilled in his death there.

the Lord — that is, Jesus.

stood by him ... Be of good cheer, Paul; for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou ... also at Rome — that is, “Thy work in Jerusalem is done, faithfully and well done; but thou art not to die here; thy purpose next to ‘see Rome’ (~~4402~~ Acts 19:21) shall not be disappointed, and there also must thou bear witness of Me.” As this vision was not unneeded now, so we shall find it cheering and upholding him throughout all that befell him up to his arrival there.

12-14. bound themselves under a curse ... that they would neither eat ... fill they had killed Paul — Compare ~~4085~~ 2 Samuel 3:35 ~~0941~~ 1 Samuel 14:24.

15. Now ... ye with the council signify to the chief captain ... as though, etc. — That these high ecclesiastics fell in readily with this infamous plot is clear. What will not unscrupulous and hypocritical religionists do under the mask of religion? The narrative bears unmistakable internal marks of truth.

or ever he come near — Their plan was to assassinate him on his way down from the barracks to the council. The case was critical. but He who had pledged His word to him that he should testify for Him at Rome provided unexpected means of defeating this well-laid scheme.

16-22. Paul’s sister’s son — (See on ~~4480~~ Acts 9:30). If he was at this time residing at Jerusalem for his education, like Paul himself, he may have got at the schools those hints of the conspiracy on which he so promptly acted.

17. Then Paul called one of the centurions — Though divinely assured of safety, he never allows this to interfere with the duty he owed to his own life and the work he had yet to do. (See on ~~4072~~ Acts 27:22-25; ~~4273~~ Acts 27:31).

19. took him by the hand — This shows that he must have been quite in his boyhood, and throws a pleasing light on the kind-hearted impartiality of this officer.

21. and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee — Thus, as is so often the case with God's people, not till the last moment, when the plot was all prepared, did deliverance come.

23, 24. two hundred soldiers — a formidable guard for such an occasion; but Roman officials felt their honor concerned in the preservation of the public peace, and the danger of an attempted rescue would seem to require it. The force at Jerusalem was large enough to spare this convoy.

the third hour of the night — nine o'clock.

24. beasts ... set Paul on — as relays, and to carry baggage.

unto Felix, the governor — the procurator. See on ~~4003~~ Acts 24:24,25.

26-30. Claudius — the Roman name he would take on purchasing his citizenship.

Lysias — his Greek family name.

the most excellent governor — an honorary title of office.

27. came I with an army — rather, "with the military."

29. perceived to be accused of questions of their law, etc. — Amidst all his difficulty in getting at the charges laid against Paul, enough, no doubt, come out to satisfy him that the whole was a question of religion, and that there was no case for a civil tribunal.

30. gave commandment to his accusers ... to say before thee — This was not done when he wrote, but would be before the letter reached its destination.

31, 32. brought him ... to Antipatris — nearly forty miles from Jerusalem, on the way to Caesarea; so named by Herod in honor of his father, Antipater.

32. On the morrow they — the infantry.

left the horsemen — themselves no longer needed as a guard. The remaining distance was about twenty-five or twenty-six miles.

34, 35. asked of what province he was — the letter describing him as a Roman citizen.

35. I will hear thee — The word means, “give thee a full hearing.”

to be kept in Herod’s judgment hall — “praetorium,” the palace built at Caesarea by Herod, and now occupied by the Roman procurators; in one of the buildings attached to which Paul was ordered to be kept.

CHAPTER 24

~~400~~ ACTS 24:1-27.

PAUL, ACCUSED BY A PROFESSIONAL PLEADER BEFORE FELIX, MAKES HIS DEFENSE, AND IS REMANDED FOR A FURTHER HEARING. AT A PRIVATE INTERVIEW FELIX TREMBLES UNDER PAUL'S PREACHING, BUT KEEPS HIM PRISONER FOR TWO YEARS, WHEN HE WAS SUCCEEDED BY FESTUS.

1. after five days — or, on the fifth day from their departure from Jerusalem.

Ananias ... with the elders — a deputation of the Sanhedrim.

a certain orator — one of those Roman advocates who trained themselves for the higher practice of the metropolis by practicing in the provinces, where the *Latin* language, employed in the courts, was but imperfectly understood and Roman forms were not familiar.

informed ... against Paul — “laid information,” that is, put in the charges.

2-4. Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, etc. — In this fulsome flattery there was a semblance of truth: nothing more. Felix acted with a degree of vigor and success in suppressing lawless violence [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.8.4; confirmed by TACITUS, *Annals*, 12.54].

by thy providence — a phrase applied to the administration of the emperors.

5-8. a pestilent fellow — a plague, or pest.

and a mover of sedition among all the Jews — by exciting disturbances among them.

throughout the world — (See on ~~400~~ Luke 2:1). This was the *first* charge; and true only in the sense explained on ~~410~~ Acts 16:20.

a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes — the *second* charge; and true enough.

6. hath gone about — attempted.

to profane the temple — the *third* charge; and entirely false.

we ... would have judged according to our law.

7. But ... Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him out of our hands — a wilful falsehood and calumnious charge against a public officer. He had commanded the Sanhedrim to meet for no other purpose than to “judge him according to their law”; and only when, instead of doing so, they fell to disputing among themselves, and the prisoner was in danger of being “pulled in pieces of them” (^{<4230>}Acts 23:10) — or as his own letter says “killed of them” (^{<4237>}Acts 23:27) — did he rescue him, as was his duty, “by force” out of their hands.

8. Commanding his accusers to come unto thee — Here they insinuate that, instead of troubling Felix with the case, he ought to have left it to be dealt with by the Jewish tribunal; in which case his life would soon have been taken.

by examining whom — Lysias, as would seem (^{<4022>}Acts 24:22).

thyself mayest, etc. — referring all, as if with confidence, to Felix.

9. the Jews assented, etc. — See on ^{<4215>}Acts 23:15.

10. thou hast been many years a judge to this nation — He had been in this province for six or seven years, and in Galilee for a longer period. Paul uses no flattery, but simply expresses his satisfaction at having to plead before one whose long official experience of Jewish matters would enable him the better to understand and appreciate what he had to say.

11. thou mayest understand — canst easily learn.

that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem — namely,

1. The day of his arrival in Jerusalem (^{<4215>}Acts 21:15-17);
2. The interview with James (^{<4218>}Acts 21:18-26);
3. The assumption of the vow (^{<4216>}Acts 21:26);
- 4, 5, 6. Continuance of the vow, interrupted by the arrest (^{<4217>}Acts 21:27, etc.);
7. Arrest of Paul (^{<4217>}Acts 21:27);
8. Paul before the Sanhedrim (^{<4231>}Acts 22:30 23:1-10);

9. Conspiracy of the Jews and defeat of it (⁴²³²Acts 23:12-24), and despatch of Paul from Jerusalem on the evening of the same day (⁴²³³Acts 23:23,31);

10, 11, 12, 13. The remaining period referred to (⁴²⁴¹Acts 24:1) [MEYER]. This short period is mentioned to show how unlikely it was that he should have had time to do what was charged against him.

for to worship — a very different purpose from that imputed to him.

12, 13. **they neither found me ... Neither can they prove the things**, etc. — After specifying several particulars, he challenges proof of any one of the charges brought against him. So much for the charge of *sedition*.

14, 15. **But this I confess to thee** — in which Felix would see no crime.

that after the way they call heresy — literally, and better, “a sect.”

so worship I the God of my fathers — the ancestral God. Two arguments are contained here:

(1) Our nation is divided into what they call *sects* — the sect of the Pharisees, and that of the Sadducees — all the difference between them and me is, that I belong to neither of these, but to another sect, or religious section of the nation, which from its Head they call *Nazarenes*: for this reason, and this alone, am I hated.

(2) The Roman law allows every nation to worship its own deities; I claim protection under that law, worshipping the God of my ancestors, even as they, only of a different sect of the common religion.

believing all, etc. — Here, disowning all opinions at variance with the Old Testament Scriptures, he challenges for the Gospel which he preached the authority of the God of their fathers. So much for the charge of *heresy*.

15. **And have hope ... as they themselves ... allow, that there shall be a resurrection**, etc. — This appeal to the faith of his accusers shows that they were chiefly of the *Pharisees*, and that the favor of that party, to which he owed in some measure his safety at the recent council (⁴²¹⁶Acts 23:6-9), had been quite momentary.

16. **And herein** — On this account, accordingly; that is, looking forward to that awful day (compare ⁴¹⁵⁰2 Corinthians 5:10).

I exercise myself — The “I” here is emphatic; “Whatever they do, this is my study.”

to have always a conscience void of offense, etc. — See ~~Acts~~ Acts 23:1 ~~12~~2 Corinthians 1:12 2:17, etc.; that is, “These are the great principles of my life and conduct — how different from turbulence and sectarianism!”

17. Now after many — several

years absence from Jerusalem — I came to bring alms to my of Macedonia and Greece, which he had taken such pains to gather. This only allusion in the Acts to what is dwelt upon so frequently in his own Epistles (~~55~~Romans 15:25,26 ~~61~~1 Corinthians 16:1-4 ~~62~~2 Corinthians 8:1-4), throws a beautiful light on the truth of this History. (See PALEY’S *Horae Paulinae*).

and offerings — connected with his Jewish vow: see ~~418~~Acts 24:18.

18-21. found me purified in the temple — not polluting it, therefore, by my own presence, and neither gathering a crowd nor raising a stir: If then these Asiatic Jews have any charge to bring against me in justification of their arrest of me, why are they not here to substantiate it?

20. Or else let these ... here say — “Or, passing from all that preceded my trial, let those of the Sanhedrim here present say if I was guilty of aught there.” No doubt his hasty speech to the high priest might occur to them, but the provocation to it on his own part was more than they would be willing to recall.

21. Except ... this one voice ... Touching the resurrection, etc. — This would recall to the Pharisees present their own inconsistency, in befriending him then and now accusing him.

22, 23. having more perfect knowledge of that — “the”

way — (See on ~~419~~Acts 19:23; and ~~424~~Acts 24:14).

When Lysias ... shall come ... I will how, etc. — Felix might have dismissed the case as a tissue of unsupported charges. But if from his interest in the matter he really wished to have the presence of Lysias and others involved, a brief delay was not unworthy of him as a judge. Certainly, so far as recorded, neither Lysias nor any other parties appeared again in the case. ~~423~~Acts 24:23, however, seems to show that *at that time* his prepossessions in favor of Paul were strong.

24, 25. Felix ... with his wife Drusilla ... a Jewess — This beautiful but infamous woman was the third daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who was eaten of worms (see on ~~411~~Acts 12:1), and a sister of Agrippa II, before whom Paul pleaded, ~~431~~Acts 26:1, etc. She was “given in marriage to

Azizus, king of the Emesenes, who had consented to be circumcised for the sake of the alliance. But this marriage was soon dissolved, after this manner: When Festus was procurator of Judea, he saw her, and being captivated with her beauty, persuaded her to desert her husband, transgress the laws of her country, and marry himself" [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.7.1,2]. Such was this "wife" of Felix.

he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ —

Perceiving from what he had heard on the trial that the new sect which was creating such a stir was represented by its own advocates as but a particular development of the Jewish faith, he probably wished to gratify the curiosity of his Jewish wife, as well as his own, by a more particular account of it from this distinguished champion. And no doubt Paul would so far humor this desire as to present to them the great leading features of the Gospel. But from ⁴⁴⁰⁵Acts 24:25 it is evident that his discourse took an entirely practical turn, suited to the life which his two auditors were notoriously leading.

25. And as he reasoned of righteousness — with reference to the *public* character of Felix.

temperance — with reference to his immoral life.

and judgment to come — when he would be called to an awful account for both.

Felix trembled — and no wonder. For, on the testimony of TACITUS, the Roman Annalist [*Annals*, 9; 12.54], he ruled with a mixture of cruelty, lust, and servility, and relying on the influence of his brother Pallas at court, he thought himself at liberty to commit every sort of crime with impunity. How noble the fidelity and courage which dared to treat of such topics in such a presence, and what withering power must have been in those appeals which made even a Felix to tremble!

Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee — Alas for Felix! This was his golden opportunity, but — *like multitudes still* — he missed it. Convenient seasons in abundance he found to call for Paul, but never again to "hear him concerning the faith in Christ," and writhe under the terrors of the wrath to come. Even in those moments of terror he had no thought of submission to the Cross or a change of life. The Word discerned the thoughts and intents of his heart, but that heart even then clung to its idols; even as Herod, who "did many things and heard John gladly," but in his best moments was enslaved to his lusts. How many Felixes have appeared from age to age!

26. He hoped ... that money should have been given him ... wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him — Bribery in a judge was punishable by the Roman law, but the spirit of a slave (to use the words of TACITUS) was in all his acts, and his communing with Paul” — as if he cared for either him or his message — simply added hypocrisy to meanness. The position in life of Paul’s Christian visitors might beget the hope of extracting something from them for the release of their champion; but the apostle would rather lie in prison than stoop to this!

27. after two years — What a trial to this burning missionary of Christ, to suffer such a tedious period of inaction! How mysterious it would seem! But this repose would be medicine to his spirit; he would not, and could not, be entirely inactive, so long as he was able by pen and message to communicate with the churches; and he would doubtless learn the salutary truth that even he was not essential to his Master’s cause. That Luke wrote his Gospel during this period, under the apostle’s superintendence, is the not unlikely conjecture of able critics.

Porcius Festus — Little is known of him. He died a few years after this [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.8.9-9.1].

came into Felix’ room — He was recalled, on accusations against him by the Jews of Caesarea, and only acquitted through the intercession of his brother at court [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.8,10].

Felix, willing to show the Jews a pleasure — “to earn the thanks of the Jews,” which he did not.

left Paul bound — (~~4029~~Acts 26:29) — which does not seem to have been till then.

CHAPTER 25

~~<420>~~ ACTS 25:1-12.

FESTUS, COMING TO JERUSALEM, DECLINES TO HAVE PAUL BROUGHT THITHER FOR JUDGMENT, BUT GIVES THE PARTIES A HEARING ON HIS RETURN TO CAESAREA — ON FESTUS ASKING THE APOSTLE IF HE WOULD GO TO JERUSALEM FOR ANOTHER HEARING BEFORE HIM, HE IS CONSTRAINED IN JUSTICE TO HIS CAUSE TO APPEAL TO THE EMPEROR.

1-3. Festus ... after three days ... ascended ... to Jerusalem — to make himself acquainted with the great central city of his government without delay.

2. Then the high priest — a successor of him before whom Paul had appeared (~~<421>~~Acts 23:2).

and the chief of the Jews — and “the whole multitude of the Jews” (~~<423>~~Acts 25:24) clamorously.

informed him against Paul ...

3. desired favor — in ~~<425>~~Acts 25:15, “judgment.”

against him — It would seem that they had the insolence to ask him to have the prisoner executed even without a trial (~~<426>~~Acts 25:16).

laying wait ... to kill him — How deep must have been their hostility, when two years after the defeat of their former attempt, they thirst as keenly as ever for his blood! Their plea for having the case tried at Jerusalem, where the alleged offense took place, was plausible enough; but from ~~<428>~~Acts 25:10 it would seem that Festus had been made acquainted with their causeless malice, and that in some way which Paul was privy to.

4-6. answered that Paul should be kept — rather, “is in custody.”

at Caesarea, and ... himself would depart shortly thither.

5. Let them ... which among you are able, go down — “your leading men.”

7. the Jews ... from Jerusalem — clamorously, as at Jerusalem; see ⁴²⁵¹Acts 25:24.

many and grievous complaints against Paul — From his reply, and Festus' statement of the case before Agrippa, these charges seem to have been a jumble of political and religious matter which they were unable to substantiate, and vociferous cries that he was unfit to live. Paul's reply, not given in full, was probably little more than a challenge to prove any of their charges, whether political or religious.

9, 10. Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure — to ingratiate himself with them.

said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and ... be judged ... before me — or, "under my protection." If this was meant in earnest, it was temporizing and vacillating. But, possibly, anticipating Paul's refusal, he wished merely to avoid the odium of refusing to remove the trial to Jerusalem.

10. Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat — that is, I am already before the proper tribunal. This seems to imply that he understood Festus to propose handing him over to the Sanhedrim for judgment (and see on ⁴²⁵¹Acts 25:11), with a mere promise of protection from him. But from going to Jerusalem at all he was too well justified in shrinking, for there assassination had been quite recently planned against him.

to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou knowest very well — literally, "better," that is, (perhaps), better than to press such a proposal.

if there be none of these things ... no man may deliver me unto them — The word signifies to "surrender in order to gratify" another.

11. I appeal to Caesar — The right of appeal to the supreme power, in case of life and death, was secured by an ancient law to every Roman citizen, and continued under the empire. Had Festus shown any disposition to pronounce final judgment, Paul, strong in the consciousness of his innocence and the justice of a Roman tribunal, would not have made this appeal. But when the only other alternative offered him was to give his own consent to be transferred to the great hotbed of plots against his life, and to a tribunal of unscrupulous and bloodthirsty ecclesiastics whose vociferous cries for his death had scarcely subsided, no other course was open to him.

12. Festus — little expecting such an appeal, but bound to respect it.

having conferred with the council — his assessors in judgment, as to the admissibility of the appeal.

said, Hast thou — for “thou hast.”

to Caesar shalt thou go — as if he would add perhaps “and see if thou fare better.”

~~<42513>~~ ACTS 25:13-27.

HEROD AGRIPPA II ON A VISIT TO FESTUS, BEING CONSULTED BY HIM ON PAUL’S CASE, DESIRES TO HEAR THE APOSTLE, WHO IS ACCORDINGLY BROUGHT FORTH.

13. King Agrippa — great-grandson of Herod the Great, and Drusilla’s brother (see on ~~<44004>~~ Acts 24:24). On his father’s awful death (~~<44123>~~ Acts 12:23), being thought too young (seventeen) to succeed, Judea, was attached to the province of Syria. Four years after, on the death of his uncle Herod, he was made king of the northern principalities of Chalcis, and afterwards got Batanea, Iturea, Trachonitis, Abilene, Galilee, and Perea, with the title of king. He died A.D. 100, after reigning fifty-one years.

and Bernice — his sister. She was married to her uncle Herod, king of Chalcis, on whose death she lived with her brother Agrippa — not without suspicion of incestuous intercourse, which her subsequent licentious life tended to confirm.

came to salute Festus — to pay his respects to him on his accession to the procuratorship.

14, 15. when there many — “several”

days, Festus declared Paul’s cause — taking advantage of the presence of one who might be presumed to know such matters .better than himself; though the lapse of “several days” ere the subject was touched on shows that it gave Festus little trouble.

16-21. to deliver any man to die — On the word “deliver up,” see on ~~<44251>~~ Acts 25:11.

18. as I supposed — “suspected” — crimes punishable by civil law.

19. questions ... of their own superstition — rather, “religion” (see on ~~<44172>~~ Acts 17:22). It cannot be supposed that Festus would use the word in any discourteous sense in addressing his Jewish guest.

one Jesus — “Thus speaks this miserable Festus of Him to whom every knee shall bow” [BENGE].

whom Paul affirmed — “kept affirming.”

to be alive — showing that the resurrection of the Crucified One had been the burden, as usual, of Paul’s pleading. The insignificance of the whole affair in the eyes of Festus is manifest.

20. because I doubted of such manner of questions — The “I” is emphatic. “I,” as a Roman judge, being at a loss how to deal with such matters.

21. the hearing of Augustus — the imperial title first conferred by the Roman Senate on Octavius.

22-27. I would also hear — “should like to hear.”

the man myself — No doubt Paul was fight when he said, “The king knoweth of these things ... for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner” (^{403b}Acts 26:26). Hence his curiosity to see and hear the man who had raised such commotion and was remodelling to such an extent the whole Jewish life.

23. when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp — in the same city in which their father, on account of his pride, had perished, eaten up by worms [WETST].

with the chief captains — (See on ^{403c}Acts 21:32). JOSEPHUS [*Wars of the Jews*, 3.4.2] says that five cohorts, whose full complement was one thousand men, were stationed at Caesarea.

principal men of the city — both Jews and Romans. “This was the most dignified and influential audience Paul had yet addressed, and the prediction (^{403d}Acts 9:15) was fulfilled, though afterwards still more remarkably at Rome (^{403e}Acts 27:24 ⁵⁰¹⁶2 Timothy 4:16,17) [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

26. I have no certain — “definite”

thing to write my lord — Nero. “The writer’s accuracy should be remarked here. It would have been ... a mistake to apply this term (“lord”) to the emperor a few years earlier. Neither Augustus nor Tiberius would let himself be so called, as implying the relation of master and slave. But it had now come (rather, “was coming”) into use as one of the imperial titles” [HACKET].

CHAPTER 26

ACTS 26:1-32.

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIMSELF BEFORE KING AGRIPPA, WHO PRONOUNCES HIM INNOCENT, BUT CONCLUDES THAT THE APPEAL TO CAESAR MUST BE CARRIED OUT.

This speech, though in substance the same as that from the fortress stairs of Jerusalem (^{<421>}Acts 22:1-29), differs from it in being less directed to meet the charge of apostasy from the Jewish faith, and giving more enlarged views of his remarkable change and apostolic commission, and the divine support under which he was enabled to brave the hostility of his countrymen.

1-3. Agrippa said — Being a king he appears to have presided.

Paul stretched forth the hand — chained to a soldier (^{<423>}Acts 26:29, and see on ^{<426>}Acts 12:6).

3. *I know* thee to be expert, etc. — His father was zealous for the law, and he himself had the office of president of the temple and its treasures, and the appointment of the high priest [JOSEPHUS, *Antiquities*, 20.1.3].

hear me patiently — The idea of “indulgently” is also conveyed.

4, 5. from my youth, which was at the first ... at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning — plainly showing that he received his education, even from early youth, at Jerusalem. See on ^{<423>}Acts 22:3.

5. if they would — “were willing to”

testify — but this, of course, they were not, it being a strong point in his favor.

after the most straitest — “the strictest.”

sect — as the Pharisees confessedly were. This was said to meet the charge, that as a Hellenistic Jew he had contracted among the heathen lax ideas of Jewish peculiarities.

6, 7. I ... am judged for the hope of the promise made ... to our fathers — “for believing that the promise of Messiah, the Hope of the Church (^{<413D>}Acts 13:32 28:20) has been fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth risen from the dead.”

7. Unto which promise — the fulfillment of it.

our twelve tribes — (^{<500E>}James 1:1; and see on ^{<412E>}Luke 2:36).

instantly — “intently”; see on ^{<412E>}Acts 12:5.

serving *God* — in the sense of religious worship; on “ministered,” see on ^{<413E>}Acts 13:2.

day and night, hope to come — The apostle rises into language as catholic as the thought — representing his despised nation, all scattered thought it now was, as twelve great branches of one ancient stem, in all places of their dispersion offering to the God of their fathers one unbroken worship, reposing on one great “promise” made of old unto their fathers, and sustained by one “hope” of “coming” to its fulfillment; the single point of difference between him and his countrymen, and the one cause of all their virulence against him, being, that his hope had found rest in One already come, while theirs still pointed to the future.

For which hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews — “I am accused of Jews, O king” (so the true reading appears to be); of all quarters the most surprising for such a charge to come from. The charge of *sedition* is not so much as alluded to throughout this speech. It was indeed a mere pretext.

8. Why should it be thought a thing incredible ... that God should raise the dead? — rather, “Why is it judged a thing incredible if God raises the dead?” the case being viewed as an accomplished *fact*. No one dared to call in question the overwhelming evidence of the resurrection of Jesus, which proclaimed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God; the only way of getting rid of it, therefore, was to pronounce it incredible. But *why*, asks the apostle, *is it so judged?* Leaving this pregnant question to find its answer in the breasts of his audience, he now passes to his personal history.

9-15. (See on ^{<413E>}Acts 9:1, etc. and compare ^{<422E>}Acts 22:4, etc.)

16-18. But rise, etc. — Here the apostle appears to condense into one statement various sayings of his Lord to him in visions at different times, in order to present at one view the grandeur of the commission with which his Master had clothed him [ALFORD].

a minister ... both of these things which thou hast seen — putting him on a footing with those “eye-witnesses and ministers of the word” mentioned in ^{<4002>}Luke 1:2.

and of those in which I will appear to thee — referring to visions he was thereafter to be favored with; such as ^{<4400>}Acts 18:9,10 22:17-21 23:11 ^{<4700>}2 Corinthians 12:1-10, etc. (^{<8012>}Galatians 1:12).

17. Delivering thee from the people — the Jews.

and *from* the Gentiles — He was all along the object of Jewish malignity, and was at that moment in the hands of the Gentiles; yet he calmly reposes on his Master’s assurances of deliverance from both, at the same time taking all precautions for safety and vindicating all his legal rights.

unto whom now I send thee — The emphatic “I” here denotes the authority of the Sender [BENGEL].

18. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light — rather, “that they may turn” (as in ^{<4400>}Acts 26:20), that is, as the effect of their eyes being opened. The whole passage leans upon ^{<2600>}Isaiah 61:1 (^{<4008>}Luke 4:18).

and from the power of Satan — Note the connection here between being “turned from darkness” and “from the power of Satan,” whose whole power over men lies in keeping them *in the dark*: hence he is called “the ruler of the darkness of this world.” See on ^{<4700>}2 Corinthians 4:4.

that they may receive forgiveness ... and inheritance among the sanctified by faith that is in me — *Note: Faith* is here made the instrument of salvation at once in its first stage, *forgiveness*, and its last, *admission to the home of the sanctified*; and the faith which introduces the soul to all this is emphatically declared by the glorified Redeemer to *rest upon Himself* — “FAITH, EVEN THAT WHICH IS IN ME.” And who that believes this can refrain from casting his crown before Him or resist offering Him supreme worship?

19-21. Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision — This musical and elevated strain, which carries the reader along with it, and doubtless did the hearers, bespeaks the lofty region of thought and feeling to which the apostle had risen while rehearsing his Master’s communications to him from heaven.

20. showed ... to them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem — omitting Arabia; because, beginning with the Jews, his object was to mention first the places where his former hatred of the name of Christ was best known:

the mention of the Gentiles, so unpalatable to his audience, is reserved to the last.

repent and return to God, and do works meet for repentance — a brief description of conversion and its proper fruits, suggested, probably, by the Baptist's teaching (^{<407>}Luke 3:7,8).

22, 23. having obtained help — "succor."

from God — "that [which cometh] from God."

I continue — "stand," "hold my ground."

unto this day, witnessing, etc. — that is, This life of mine, so marvellously preserved, in spite of all the plots against it, is upheld for the Gospel's sake; therefore I "witnessed," etc.

23. That Christ should suffer, etc. — The construction of this sentence implies that in regard to the question "whether the Messiah is a suffering one, and whether, rising first from the dead, he should show light to the (Jewish) people and to the Gentiles," he had only said what the prophets and Moses said should come.

24. Festus said with a loud voice — surprised and bewildered.

Paul, thou art beside thyself, much learning doth make thee mad — "is turning thy head." The union of flowing *Greek*, deep acquaintance with the sacred writings of his nation, reference to a resurrection and other doctrines to a Roman utterly unintelligible, and, above all, lofty religious earnestness, so strange to the cultivated, cold-hearted skeptics of that day — may account for this sudden exclamation.

25, 26. I am not mad, most noble Festus, but, etc. — Can anything surpass this reply, for readiness, self-possession, calm dignity? Every word of it refuted the rude charge, though Festus, probably, did not intend to hurt the prisoner's feelings.

26. the king knoweth, etc. — (See on ^{<408>}Acts 26:1-3).

27-29. believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest — The courage and confidence here shown proceeded from a vivid persuasion of Agrippa's knowledge of the *facts* and faith in the *predictions* which they verified; and the king's reply is the highest testimony to the correctness of these presumptions and the immense power of such bold yet courteous appeals to conscience.

28. Almost — or, "in a little time."

thou persuadest me to be a Christian — Most modern interpreters think the ordinary translation inadmissible, and take the meaning to be, “Thou thinkest to make me with little persuasion (or small trouble) a Christian” — but I am not to be so easily turned. But the apostle’s *reply* can scarcely suit any but the sense given in our authorized version, which is that adopted by CHRYSOSTOM and some of the best scholars since. The objection on which so much stress is laid, that the word “Christian” was at that time only a term of contempt, has no force except on the other side; for taking it in that view, the sense is, “Thou wilt soon have me one of that despised sect.”

29. I would to God, etc. — What unequalled magnanimity does this speech breathe! Only his Master ever towered above this.

not only ... almost ... but altogether — or, “whether soon or late,” or “with little or much difficulty.”

except these bonds — doubtless holding up his two chained hands (see on ⁴⁴¹⁷⁶Acts 12:6): which in closing such a noble utterance must have had an electrical effect.

30-32. when he had thus spoken, the king rose — not over-easy, we may be sure.

32. This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar — It would seem from this that such appeals, once made, behooved to be carried out.

CHAPTER 27

<427>ACTS 27:1-44.

THE VOYAGE TO ITALY — THE SHIPWRECK AND SAFE LANDING AT MALTA.

1. we should sail, etc. — The “we” here reintroduces the historian as one of the company. Not that he had left the apostle from the time when he last included himself (<4218>Acts 21:18), but the apostle was parted from him by his arrest and imprisonment, until now, when they met in the ship.

delivered Paul and certain other prisoners — State prisoners going to be tried at Rome; of which several instances are on record.

Julius — who treats the apostle throughout with such marked courtesy (<4273>Acts 27:3,43 <4236>Acts 28:16), that it has been thought [BENDEL] he was present when Paul made his defense before Agrippa (see <4273>Acts 25:23), and was impressed with his lofty bearing.

a centurion of Augustus’ band — the Augustan cohort, an honorary title given to more than one legion of the Roman army, implying, perhaps, that they acted as a bodyguard to the emperor or procurator, as occasion required.

2. a ship of — belonging to.

Adramyttium — a port on the northeast coast of the aegean Sea. Doubtless the centurion expected to find another ship, bound for Italy, at some of the ports of Asia Minor, without having to go with this ship all the way to Adramyttium; and in this he was not disappointed. See on <4276>Acts 27:6.

meaning to sail by the coasts — “places.”

of Asia — a coasting vessel, which was to touch at the ports of proconsular Asia.

one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us — rather, “Aristarchus the Macedonian,” etc. The word “one” should not have been introduced here by our translators, as if this name had not occurred before; for we find him seized by the Ephesian mob as a “man of *Macedonia* and

Paul's companion in travel" (^{<418>}Acts 19:29) and as a "*Thessalonian*" accompanying the apostle from Ephesus on his voyage back to Palestine (^{<410>}Acts 20:4). Here both these places are mentioned in connection with his name. After this we find him at Rome with the apostle (^{<5010>}Colossians 4:10 ^{<5021>}Philemon 1:24).

3. next day we touched at Sidon — To reach this ancient and celebrated Mediterranean port, about seventy miles north from Caesarea, in one day, they must have had a fair wind.

Julius courteously — (See on ^{<420>}Acts 27:1).

gave him liberty to go to his friends — no doubt disciples, gained, it would seem, by degrees, all along the Phoenician coast since the first preaching there (see on ^{<4119>}Acts 11:19 and ^{<421>}Acts 21:4).

to refresh himself — which after his long confinement would not be unnecessary. Such small personal details are in this case extremely interesting.

4. when we had launched — "set sail."

from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary — The wind blowing from the westward, probably with a touch of the north, which was adverse, they sailed *under the lee* of Cyprus, keeping it on their *left*, and steering between it and the mainland of Phoenicia.

5. when we had sailed over the Sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia — coasts with which Paul had been long familiar, the one, perhaps, from boyhood, the other from the time of his first missionary tour.

we came to Myra, a city of Lycia — a port a little east of Patara (see on ^{<421>}Acts 21:1).

6. there ... found a ship of Alexandria, sailing into Italy, and he put us therein — (See on ^{<421>}Acts 27:2). As Egypt was the granary of Italy, and this vessel was laden with wheat (^{<425>}Acts 27:35), we need not wonder it was large enough to carry two hundred seventy-six souls, passengers and crew together (^{<425>}Acts 27:37). Besides, the Egyptian merchantmen, among the largest in the Mediterranean, were equal to the largest merchantmen in our day. It may seem strange that on their passage from Alexandria to Italy they should be found at a Lycian port. But even still it is not unusual to stand to the north towards Asia Minor, for the sake of the current.

7. sailed slowly many days — owing to contrary winds.

and scarce — “with difficulty.”

were come over against Cnidus — a town on the promontory of the peninsula of that name, having the island of Coos (see on ^{<420>}Acts 21:1) to the west of it. But for the contrary wind they might have made the distance from Myra (one hundred thirty miles) in one day. They would naturally have put in at Cnidus, whose larger harbor was admirable, but the strong westerly current induced them to run south.

under — the lee of

Crete — (See on ^{<500>}Titus 1:5).

over against Salmone — the cape at the eastern extremity of the island.

8. And hardly passing it — “with difficulty coasting along it,” from the same cause as before, the westerly current and head winds.

came to ... the Fair Havens — an anchorage near the center of the south coast, and a little east of Cape Matala, the southern most point of the island.

nigh whereunto was the city Lasea — identified by the REVEREND GEORGE BROWN [SMITH, *Voyages and Shipwreck of St. Paul*, Appendix 3, Second Edition, 1856]. (To this invaluable book commentators on this chapter, and these notes, are much indebted).

9, 10. when much time was spent — since leaving Caesarea. But for unforeseen delays they might have reached the Italian coast before the stormy season.

and when sailing — the navigation of the open sea.

was now dangerous, because the fast was now ... past — that of the day of atonement, answering to the end of *September* and beginning of *October*, about which time the navigation is pronounced unsafe by writers of authority. Since all hope of completing the voyage during that season was abandoned, the question next was, whether they should winter at Fair Havens, or move to Port Phenice, a harbor about forty miles to the westward. Paul assisted at the consultation and strongly urged them to winter where they were.

10. Sirs, I perceive, that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, etc. — not by any divine communication, but simply in the exercise of a good judgment aided by some experience. The event justified his decision.

11. Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and owner ... more than ... Paul — He would naturally think them best able to judge, and there was much to say for their opinion, as the bay at Fair Havens, being open to nearly one-half of the compass, could not be a good winter harbor.

12. Phenice — “Phenix,” now called *Lutro*.

which lieth toward the southwest and northwest — If this means that it was open to the west, it would certainly not be good anchorage! It is thought therefore to mean that a *wind from* that quarter would lead into it, or that it lay in an *easterly* direction from such a wind [SMITH]. ^{<4073>}Acts 27:13 seems to confirm this.

13. when the south wind blew softly, supposing they had attained their purpose — With such a wind they had every prospect of reaching their destination in a few hours.

14, 15. a tempestuous — “typhonic”

wind — that is, like a *typhon* or tornado, causing a whirling of the clouds, owing to the meeting of opposite currents of air.

called Euroclydon — The true reading appears to be *Euro-aquilo*, or east-northeast, which answers all the effects here ascribed to it.

15. could not bear up into — “face”

the wind, we let her drift — before the gale.

16, 17. under — the lee of.

a certain — “small”

island ... Claudia — southwest of Crete, now called *Gonzo*; about twenty-three miles to leeward.

we had much work to come by — that is, to hoist up and secure.

the boat — now become necessary. But why was this difficult? Independently of the gale, raging at the time, the boat had been towed between twenty and thirty miles after the gale sprang up, and could scarcely fail to be filled with water [SMITH].

17. undergirding the ship — that is, passing four or five turns of a cable-laid rope round the hull or frame of the ship, to enable her to resist the violence of the seas, an operation rarely resorted to in modern seamanship.

fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands — “be cast ashore” or “stranded upon the Syrtis,” the *Syrtis Major*, a gulf on the African coast, southwest of Crete, the dread of mariners, owing to its dangerous shoals.

they strake — “struck”

sail — This cannot be the meaning, for to strike sail would have driven them directly towards the Syrtis. The meaning must be, “lowered the gear” (appurtenances of every kind); here, perhaps, referring to the lowering of the heavy mainyard with the sail attached to it [SMITH].

19, 20. cast out with our own hands — passengers and crew together.

the tackling of the ship — whatever they could do without that carried weight. This further effort to lighten the ship seems to show that it was now in a *leaking* condition, as will presently appear more evident.

20. neither sun nor stars appeared in many — “several”

days — probably most of the fourteen days mentioned in ~~407b~~ Acts 27:27. This continued thickness of the atmosphere prevented their making the necessary observations of the heavenly bodies by day or by night; so that they could not tell where they were.

all hope that we should be saved was taken away — “Their exertions to subdue the leak had been unavailing; they could not tell which way to make for the nearest land, in order to run their ship ashore, the only resource for a sinking ship: but unless they did make the land, they must founder at sea. Their apprehensions, therefore, were not so much caused by the fury of the tempest, as by the state of the ship” [SMITH]. From the inferiority of ancient to modern naval architecture, leaks were sprung much more easily, and the means of repairing them were fewer than now. Hence the far greater number of shipwrecks from this cause.

21-26. But after long abstinence — (See on ~~407b~~ Acts 27:33). “The hardships which the crew endured during a gale of such continuance, and their exhaustion from laboring at the pumps and hunger, may be imagined, but are not described” [SMITH].

Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened to me, etc. — not meaning to reflect on them for the past, but to claim their confidence for what he was now to say:

23. there stood by me this night the angel of God — as in ~~407b~~ Acts 16:9 23:11.

whose I am — (~~407b~~ 1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

and whom I serve — in the sense of *worship* or *religious consecration* (see on ⁴¹¹²Acts 13:2).

24. saying, Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Caesar and, lo, God hath given thee all ... that sail with thee — While the crew were toiling at the pumps, Paul was wrestling in prayer, not for himself only and the cause in which he was going a prisoner to Rome, but with true magnanimity of soul for all his shipmates; and God heard him, “giving him” (remarkable expression!) all that sailed with him. “When the cheerless day came he gathered the sailors (and passengers) around him on the deck of the laboring vessel, and raising his voice above the storm” [HOWSON], reported the divine communication he had received; adding with a noble simplicity, “*for I believe God* that it shall be even as it was told me,” and encouraging all on board to “be of good cheer” in the same confidence. What a contrast to this is the speech of Caesar in similar circumstances to his pilot, bidding him keep up his spirit because he carried Caesar and Caesar’s fortune! [PLUTARCH]. The Roman general knew no better name for the Divine Providence, by which he had been so often preserved, than *Caesar’s fortune* [HUMPHRY]. From the explicit particulars — that the ship would be lost, but not one that sailed in it, and that they “must be cast on a certain island” — one would conclude a visional representation of a total wreck, a mass of human beings struggling with the angry elements, and one and all of those whose figures and countenances had daily met his eye on deck, standing on some unknown island shore. From what follows, it would seem that Paul from this time was regarded with a deference akin to awe.

27-29. when the fourteenth night was come — from the time they left Fair Havens.

as we were driven — drifting

up and down in Adria — the *Adriatic*, that sea which lies between Greece and Italy.

about midnight the shipmen deemed — no doubt from the peculiar sound of the breakers.

that they drew near some country — “that some land was approaching them.” This nautical language gives a graphic character to the narrative.

29. they cast four anchors out of the stern — The ordinary way was to cast the anchor, as now, from the *bow*: but ancient ships, built with both ends alike, were fitted with hawseholes in the stern, so that in case of need they could anchor either way. And when the fear was, as here, that they

might fall on the rocks *to leeward*, and the intention was to run the ship ashore as soon as daylight enabled them to fix upon a safe spot, the very best thing they could do was to anchor by the stern [SMITH]. In stormy weather two anchors were used, and we have instances of four being employed, as here.

and wished — “anxiously” or “devoutly wished.”

for day — the remark this of one present, and with all his shipmates alive to the horrors of their condition. “The ship might go down at her anchors, or the coast to leeward might be iron-bound, affording no beach on which they could land with safety. Hence their anxious longing for day, and the ungenerous but natural attempt, not peculiar to ancient times, of the seamen to save their own lives by taking to the boat” [SMITH].

30. as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship — under cover of night.

when they had let down the boat ... as though they would ... cast anchors out of the foreship — “bow” — rather, “carry out” anchors, to hold the ship fore as well as aft. “This could have been of no advantage in the circumstances, and as the pretext could not deceive a seaman, we must infer that the officers of the ship were parties to the unworthy attempt, which was perhaps detected by the nautical skill of St. Luke, and communicated by him to St. Paul” [SMITH].

31. Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers — the only parties now to be trusted, and whose own safety was now at stake.

except ye abide in the ship ye cannot be saved — The soldiers and passengers could not be expected to possess the necessary seamanship in so very critical a case. The flight of the crew, therefore, might well be regarded as certain destruction to all who remained. *In full assurance of ultimate safety, in virtue of a DIVINE pledge, to all in the ship, Paul speaks and acts throughout this whole scene in the exercise of a sound judgment as to the indispensable HUMAN conditions of safety*; and as there is no trace of any feeling of inconsistency between these two things in his mind, so even the centurion, under whose orders the soldiers acted on Paul’s views, seems never to have felt perplexed by the twofold aspect, divine and human, in which the same thing presented itself to the mind of Paul. *Divine agency and human instrumentality are in all the events of life quite as much as here*. The only difference is that the one is for the most part shrouded from view, while the other is ever naked and open to the senses.

32. Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat — already lowered.

and let her fall off — let the boat drift away.

33-37. while day was coming on — “until it should be day”; that is, in the interval between the cutting off of the boat and the approach of day, which all were “anxiously looking for” (⁴⁰⁷⁹Acts 27:29).

Paul — now looked up to by all the passengers as the man to direct them.

besought them all to take meat — “partake of a meal.”

saying, This is the fourteenth day ye have tarried — “waited for a breathing time.”

having eaten nothing — that is, taken no regular meal. The impossibility of cooking, the occupation of all hands to keep down leakage, etc., sufficiently explain this, which is indeed a common occurrence in such cases.

34. I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your health, for there shall not a hair fall from ... any of you — On this beautiful union of confidence in the divine pledge and care for the whole ship’s health and safety see on ⁴⁰⁷⁸Acts 27:31.

35. when he had thus spoken he took bread — assuming the lead.

and gave thanks to God in presence of them all — an impressive act in such circumstances, and fitted to plant a testimony for the God he served in the breasts of all.

when he had broken it, he began to eat — not understood by the Christians in the ship as a love-feast, or celebration of the Lord’s Supper, as some think, but a meal to recruit exhausted nature, which Paul shows them by his own example how a Christian partakes of.

36. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat — “took food”; the first full meal since the commencement of the gale. Such courage in desperate circumstances as Paul here showed is wonderfully infectious.

38-40. when they had eaten enough, etc. — With fresh strength after the meal, they make a third and last effort to lighten the ship, not only by pumping, as before, but by throwing the whole cargo of wheat into the sea (see on ⁴⁰⁷⁶Acts 27:6).

39. when it was day they knew not the land — This has been thought surprising in sailors accustomed to that sea. But the scene of the wreck is remote from the great harbor, and possesses no marked features by which

it could be recognized, even by a native if he came unexpectedly upon it [SMITH], not to speak of the rain pouring in torrents (^{440E}Acts 28:2), which would throw a haze over the coast even after day broke. Immediately on landing they knew where they were (^{440E}Acts 28:1).

discovered a creek with a shore — Every creek of course, must have a shore; but the meaning is, a *practicable* shore, in a nautical sense, that is, one with a smooth beach, in contradistinction to a rocky coast (as ^{447E}Acts 27:41 shows).

into which they were minded, if ... possible, to thrust the ship — This was their one chance of safety.

40. taken up the anchors, they committed themselves to the sea — The *Margin* is here evidently right, “cut the anchors (away), they left them in the sea.”

loosed the rudder bands — Ancient ships were steered by two large paddles, one on each quarter. When anchored by the stern in a gale, it would be necessary to lift them out of the water and secure them by lashings or rudder bands, and to loose these when the ship was again got under way [SMITH].

hoised up the mainsail — her, “the foresail,” the best possible sail that be set in the circumstances. How necessary must the crew have been to execute all these movements, and how obvious the foresight which made their stay indispensable to the safety of all on board (see on ^{447E}Acts 27:31)!

41. falling into a place where two seas met — SMITH thinks this refers to the channel, not more than one hundred yards broad, which separates the small island of Salmone from Malta, forming a communication between the sea inside the bay and that outside.

the fore part stuck fast, and remained immovable — “The rocks of Malta disintegrate into extremely minute particles of sand and clay, which, when acted upon by the currents or surface agitation, form a deposit of tenacious clay; but, in still waters, where these causes do not act, mud is formed; but it is only in creeks, where there are no currents, and at such a depth as to be undisturbed by the waves, that the mud occurs. A ship, therefore, impelled by the force of a gale, into a creek, with such a bottom, would strike a bottom of mud, graduating into tenacious clay, into which the fore part would fix itself, and be held fast, while the stern was exposed to the force of the waves” [SMITH].

hinder part was broken — The *continued action* denoted by the tense here is to be noted — “was fast breaking,” going to pieces.

42-44. the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any ... should escape — Roman cruelty, which made the keepers answerable for their prisoners with their own lives, is here reflected in this cruel proposal.

43. the centurion, etc. — Great must have been the influence of Paul over the centurion's mind to produce such an effect. All followed the swimmers in committing themselves to the deep, and according to the divine pledge and Paul's confident assurance given them, every soul got safe to land — yet without miracle. (While the graphic minuteness of this narrative of the shipwreck puts it beyond doubt that the narrator was himself on board, the great number of *nautical phrases*, which all critics have noted, along with the *unprofessional* air which the whole narrative wears, agrees singularly with all we know and have reason to believe of “the beloved physician”; see on ^{<4460>}Acts 16:40).

CHAPTER 28

ACTS 28:1-31.

THE WINTERING AT MALTA, AND NOTABLE OCCURRENCES THERE — PROSECUTION OF THE VOYAGE TO ITALY AS FAR AS PUTEOLI, AND LAND JOURNEY THENCE TO ROME — SUMMARY OF THE APOSTLE’S LABORS THERE FOR THE TWO FOLLOWING YEARS.

1. knew the island was called Melita — (See on ~~Acts~~ Acts 27:39). The opinion that this island was not Malta to the south of Sicily, but Meleda in the Gulf of Venice — which till lately had respectable support among Competent judges — is now all but exploded; examination of all the places on the spot, and of all writings and principles bearing on the question, by gentlemen of the highest qualification, particularly SMITH (see on ~~Acts~~ Acts 27:41), having set the question, it may now be affirmed, at rest.

2. the barbarous people — so called merely as speaking neither the *Greek* nor the *Latin* language. They were originally Phoenician colonists.

showed us no little — “no ordinary”

kindness, for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain — “the rain that was on us” — not now first falling, but then falling heavily.

and because of the cold — welcomed us all, drenched and shivering, to these most seasonable marks of friendship. In this these “barbarians” contrast favorably with many since bearing the Christian name. The lifelike style of the narrative here and in the following verses gives it a great charm.

3. when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks — “a quantity of dry sticks.” The vigorous activity of Paul’s character is observable in this comparatively trifling action [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat — Having laid itself up among the sticks on the approach of the cold winter season, it had suddenly recovered from its torpor by the heat.

and fastened — its fangs.

on his hand — Vipers dart at their enemies sometimes several feet at a bound. They have now disappeared from Malta, owing to the change which cultivation has produced.

4-6. No doubt this man is a murderer — His chains, which they would see, might strengthen the impression.

whom ... vengeance suffereth not to live — They believed in a *Supreme, Resistless, Avenging Eye and Hand*, however vague their notions of *where* it resided.

5. shook off the beast and felt no harm — See ^{<4168>}Mark 16:18.

6. they looked — “continued looking.”

when he should have swollen or fallen down dead — familiar with the effects of such bites.

and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said ... he was a god — from “a murderer” to “a god,” as the Lycaonian greeting of Paul and Silas from “sacrificing to them” to “stoning them” (^{<4443>}Acts 14:13,19). What has not the Gospel done for the uncultivated portion of the human family, while its effects on the educated and refined, though very different, are not less marvellous! Verily it is God’s chosen restorative for the human spirit, in all the multitudinous forms and gradations of its lapsed state.

7, 8. possessions of the chief man — “the first man.”

of the island — He would hardly be so styled in the lifetime of his father, if his distinction was that of the *family*. But it is now ascertained that this was the proper *official* title of the Maltese representative of the Roman praetor to Sicily, to whose province Malta belonged; two inscriptions having been discovered in the island, one in *Greek*, the other in *Latin*, containing the same words which Luke here employs.

who received us — of Paul’s company, but doubtless including the “courteous” Julius.

and lodged us three days courteously — till proper winter lodgings could be obtained for them.

8. the father of Publius lay sick of a fever — “fevers.” The word was often thus used in the plural number, probably to express *recurring attacks*.

and of a bloody flux — “of dysentery.” (The *medical* accuracy of our historian’s style has been observed here.)

to whom Paul entered in, and prayed — thereby precluding the supposition that any charm resided in himself.

and laid his hands on him, and healed him — Thus, as our Lord rewarded Peter for the use of his boat (⁴⁰⁰⁸Luke 5:3,4, etc.), so Paul richly repays Publius for his hospitality. Observe the fulfillment here of two things predicted in ⁴¹⁶⁸Mark 16:18 — the “taking up serpents,” and “recovering of the sick by laying hands on them.”

9. this ... done, others ... came and were healed — “kept coming to [us] and getting healed,” that is, during our stay, not all at once [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

10. who also honored us ... and when we departed they laded us, etc. — This was not taking hire for the miracles wrought among them (⁴⁰⁰⁸Matthew 10:8), but such grateful expressions of feeling, particularly in providing what would minister to their comfort during the voyage, as showed the value they set upon the presence and labors of the apostle among them, and such as it would have hurt their feelings to refuse. Whether any permanent effects of this three months’ stay of the greatest of the apostles were left at Malta, we cannot certainly say. But though little dependence is to be placed upon the tradition that Publius became bishop of Malta and afterwards of Athens, we may well believe the accredited tradition that the beginnings of the Christian Church at Malta sprang out of this memorable visit.

11. we departed in a ship of Alexandria — (See on ⁴²⁷⁶Acts 27:6).

which had wintered in the isle — no doubt driven in by the same storm which had wrecked on its shores the apostle’s vessel — an incidental mark of consistency in the narrative.

whose sign — or “figurehead”; the figure, carved or painted on the bow, which gave name to the vessel. Such figureheads were anciently as common as now.

was Castor and Pollux — the tutelar gods of mariners, to whom all their good fortune was ascribed. St. Anthony is substituted for them in the modern superstitions of Mediterranean (Romanist) sailors. They carry his image in their boats and ships. It is highly improbable that two ships of Alexandria should have been casually found, of which the owners were able and willing to receive on board such a number of passengers (⁴²⁷⁶Acts 27:6). We may then reasonably conceive that it was compulsory on the owners to convey soldiers and state travelers [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

12, 13. landing at Syracuse — the ancient and celebrated capital of Sicily, on its eastern coast, about eighty miles, or a day's sail, north from Malta.

we tarried *there* three days — probably from the state of the wind. Doubtless Paul would wish to go ashore, to find out and break ground among the Jews and proselytes whom such a mercantile center would attract to it; and if this was allowed at the outset of the voyage (^{407B}Acts 27:3), much more readily would it be now when he had gained the reverence and confidence of all classes with whom he came in contact. At any rate we cannot wonder that he should be regarded by the Sicilians as the founder of the Church of that island.

13. from thence we fetched a compass — that is, proceeded circuitously, or *tacked*, working to windward probably, and availing themselves of the sinuosities of the coast, the wind not being favorable [SMITH]. What follows confirms this.

and came to Rhegium — now *Reggio*, a seaport on the southwest point of the Italian coast, opposite the northeast point of Sicily, and at the entrance of the narrow straits of Messina.

after one day the south wind blew — a south wind having sprung up; being now favored with a fair wind, for want of which they had been obliged first to stay three days at Syracuse, and then to tack and put in for a day at Rhegium.

the next day to Puteoli — now *Pozzuoli*, situated on the northern part of the magnificent bay of Naples about one hundred eighty miles north of Rhegium, a distance which they might make, running before their “south wind,” in about twenty-six hours. The Alexandrian corn ships enjoyed a privilege peculiar to themselves, of not being obliged to strike their topsail on landing. By this they were easily recognized as they hove in sight by the crowds that we find gathered on the shore on such occasions [HOWSON].

14, 15. Where we found brethren — not “*the* brethren” (see on ^{420B}Acts 21:4), from which one would conclude they did not expect to find such [WEBSTER and WILKINSON].

and were desired — “requested.”

to tarry with them seven days — If this request came from Julius, it may have proceeded partly from a wish to receive instructions from Rome and make arrangements for his journey thither, partly from a wish to gratify Paul, as he seems studiously and increasingly to have done to the last. One can hardly doubt that he was influenced by both considerations. However this may be, the apostle had thus an opportunity of spending a Sabbath with

the Christians of the place, all the more refreshing from his long privation in this respect, and as a seasoning for the unknown future that lay before him at the metropolis.

so we went toward Rome.

15. And from thence, when the brethren — of Rome

heard of us — by letter from Puteoli, and probably by the same conveyance which took Julius' announcement of his arrival.

they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum — a town forty-one miles from Rome.

and the Three Taverns — thirty miles from Rome. Thus they came to greet the apostle in two parties, one stopping short at the nearer, the other going on to the more distant place.

whom when Paul saw, he thanked God — for such a welcome. How sensitive he was to such Christian affection all his Epistles show (~~4009~~Romans 1:9, etc.).

and took courage — his long-cherished purpose to “see Rome” (~~4421~~Acts 19:21), there to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the divine pledge that in this he should be gratified (~~4431~~Acts 23:11), being now about to be auspiciously realized.

16. when we came to Rome — the renowned capital of the ancient world, situated on the Tiber.

the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard — the *Praetorian Prefect*, to whose custody, as commander of the Praetorian guard, the highest military authority in the city, were committed all who were to come before the emperor for trial. Ordinarily there were two such prefects; but from A.D. 51 to 62, one distinguished general — *Burrus Aframus*, who had been Nero's tutor — held that office; and as our historian speaks of “*the captain*,” as if there were but one, it is thought that this fixes the apostle's arrival at Rome to be not later than the year 62 [WIES]. But even though there had been two when Paul arrived, he would be committed only to one of them, who would be “*the captain*” who got charge of him. (At most, therefore, this can furnish no more than confirmation to the chronological evidence otherwise obtained).

but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a — “the”

soldier that kept him — “guarded” him. (See on ~~4416~~Acts 12:6). This privilege was allowed in the case of the better class of prisoners, not

accused of any flagrant offense, on finding security — which in Paul’s case would not be difficult among the Christians. The extension of this privilege to the apostle may have been due to the terms in which Festus wrote about him; but far more probably it was owing to the high terms in which Julius spoke of him, and his express intercession in his behalf. It was overruled, however, for giving the fullest scope to the labors of the apostle compatible with confinement at all. As the soldiers who kept him were relieved periodically, he would thus make the personal acquaintance of a great number of the Praetorian guard; and if he had to appear before the Prefect from time to time, the truth might thus penetrate to those who surrounded the emperor, as we learn, from ³¹¹²Philippians 1:12,13, that it did.

17-20. Paul called the chief of the Jews together — Though banished from the capital by Claudius, the Jews enjoyed the full benefit of the toleration which distinguished the first period of Nero’s reign, and were at this time in considerable numbers, wealth, and influence settled at Rome. We have seen that long before this a flourishing Christian Church existed at Rome, to which Paul wrote his Epistle (see on ⁴⁰¹⁵Acts 20:3), and the first members of which were probably Jewish converts and proselytes. (See Introduction to Romans.)

yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans — the Roman authorities, Felix and Festus.

19. I was constrained to appeal ... not that I had ought to accuse my nation of — “I am here not as their accuser, but as my own defender, and this not of choice but necessity.” His object in alluding thus gently to the treatment he had received from the Jews was plainly to avoid whatever might irritate his visitors at the first; especially as he was not aware whether any or what information against him had reached their community.

20. For this cause ... have I called for you ... because ... for the hope of Israel — (See on ⁴⁰¹⁵Acts 26:6,7).

I am bound with this chain — “This cause is not so much mine as yours; it is the nation’s cause; all that is dear to the heart and hope of Israel is bound up with this case of mine.” From the touching allusions which the apostle makes to his chains, before Agrippa first, and here before the leading members of the Jewish community at Rome, at his first interview with them, one would gather that his great soul felt keenly his being in such a condition; and it is to this keenness of feeling, under the control of Christian principle, that we owe the noble use which he made of it in these two cases.

21, 22. We neither received letters out of Judea concerning thee, etc. — We need not suppose (with THOLUCK and others) that there was any dishonest concealment here. The distinction made between himself, against whom they heard nothing, and his “sect,” as “everywhere spoken against,” is a presumption in favor of their sincerity; and there is ground to think that as the case took an unexpected turn by Paul’s appealing to Caesar, so no information on the subject would travel from Jerusalem to Rome in advance of the apostle himself.

22. we desire — “deem it proper”

to hear of thee what thou thinkest — what are thy sentiments, views, etc. The apparent freedom from prejudice here expressed may have arisen from a prudent desire to avoid endangering a repetition of those dissensions about Christianity to which, probably, SUTTONIUS alludes, and which had led to the expulsion of the Jews under Claudius [HUMPHRY]. See on ^{488B}Acts 18:2.

23, 24. there came many — “considerable numbers”

into *his* lodging — The word denotes one’s place of stay as a *guest* (⁵⁰⁰⁰Philemon 1:1:22), not “his own hired house,” mentioned in ⁴⁰³⁰Acts 28:30. Some Christian friends — possibly Aquila and Priscilla, who had returned to Rome (⁵¹⁰³Romans 16:3), would be glad to receive him, though he would soon find himself more at liberty in a house of his own.

to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God — opening up the great spiritual principles of that kingdom in opposition to the contracted and secular views of it entertained by the Jews.

persuading them concerning Jesus — as the ordained and predicted Head of that kingdom.

out of the law ... and the prophets — drawing his materials and arguments from a source mutually acknowledged.

from morning till evening — “Who would not wish to have been present?” exclaims BENGEL; but virtually we *are* present while *listening* to those Epistles which he *dictated* from his prison at Rome, and to his other epistolary expositions of Christian truth against the Jews.

24. and some believed ... some not — What simplicity and candor are in this record of a result repeated from age to age where the Gospel is presented to a promiscuous assemblage of sincere and earnest inquirers after truth, frivolous worldlings, and prejudiced bigots!

25-29. when they — the Jews.

agreed not among themselves — the discussion having passed into one between the two parties into which the visitors were now divided, respecting the arguments and conclusions of the apostle.

they departed — the material of discussion being felt by both parties to be exhausted.

after Paul had spoken one word — one solemn parting testimony, from those Scriptures regarded by both alike as “the Holy Ghost speaking” to Israel.

26. Hearing, ye shall hear, etc. — (See on ^{<4133>}Matthew 13:13-15 and ^{<4128>}John 12:38-40). With what pain would this stern saying be wrung from him whose “heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved,” and who “had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart” on their account (^{<4101>}Romans 10:1 9:2)!

28. the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear — (See on ^{<4134>}Acts 13:44-48). “This departure to the Gentiles” he had intimated to the perverse Jews at *Antioch* (^{<4136>}Acts 13:46), and at *Corinth* (^{<4106>}Acts 18:6); now at *Rome*: thus in *Asia, Greece, and Italy*” [BENGE].

29. the Jews departed, and had great — “much”

reasoning among themselves — “This verse is wanting in many manuscripts [and omitted by several recent editors], but certainly without reason. Probably the words were regarded as superfluous, as they seem to tell us what we were told before, that Paul “departed” (see ^{<4025>}Acts 28:25). But in ^{<4025>}Acts 28:25 it is the breaking off of the discourse that is meant, here the final departure from the house” [OLSHAUSEN].

30. in his own hired house — (See on ^{<4023>}Acts 28:23), yet still in custody, for he only “received all that *came to him*”; and it is not said that he went to the synagogue or anywhere else.

31. with all confidence, no man forbidding him — enjoying, in the uninterrupted exercise of his ministry, all the liberty of a *guarded* man.

Thus closes this most precious monument of the beginnings of the Christian Church in its march from east to west, among the Jews first, whose center was Jerusalem; next among the Gentiles, with Antioch for its headquarters; finally, its banner is seen waving over imperial Rome, foretoking its universal triumphs. That distinguished apostle whose conversion, labors, and sufferings for “the faith which once he destroyed”

occupy more than half of this History, it leaves a prisoner, unheard, so far as appears, for two years. His accusers, whose presence was indispensable, would have to await the return of spring before starting for the capital, and might not reach it for many months; nor, even when there, would they be so sanguine of success — after Felix, Festus, and Agrippa had all pronounced him innocent — as to be impatient of delay. And if witnesses were required to prove the charge advanced by Tertullus, that he was “a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the [Roman] world” (^{404B}Acts 24:5), they must have seen that unless considerable time was allowed them the case would certainly break down. If to this be added the capricious delays which the emperor himself might interpose, and the practice of Nero to hear but one charge at a time, it will not seem strange that the historian should have no proceedings in the case to record for two years. Begun, probably, before the apostle’s arrival, its progress at Rome under his own eye would furnish exalted employment, and beguile many a tedious hour of his two years’ imprisonment. Had the case come on for hearing during this period, much more if it had been disposed of, it is hardly conceivable that the History should have closed as it does. But if, at the end of this period, the Narrative only wanted the decision of the case, while hope deferred was making the heart sick (^{413C}Proverbs 13:12), and if, under the guidance of that Spirit whose seal was on it all, it seemed of more consequence to put the Church at once in possession of this History than to keep it back indefinitely for the sake of what might come to be otherwise known, we cannot wonder that it should be wound up as it is in its two concluding verses. All that we know of the apostle’s proceedings and history beyond this must be gathered from the *Epistles of the Imprisonment* — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon — written during this period, and the *Pastoral Epistles* — to Timothy and Titus, which, in our judgment, are of subsequent date. From the former class of Epistles we learn the following particulars:

(1) That the trying restraint laid upon the apostle’s labors by his imprisonment had only turned his influence into a new channel; the Gospel having in consequence penetrated even into the palace, and pervaded the city, while the preachers of Christ were emboldened; and though the Judaizing portion of them, observing his success among the Gentiles, had been led to inculcate with fresh zeal their own narrower Gospel, even this had done much good by extending the truth common to both (See on ^{5011C}Philippians 1:12-18; ^{5102C}Philippians 4:22);

(2) That as in addition to all his other labors, “the care of all the churches pressed upon him from day to-day” (^{4712C}2 Corinthians 11:28), so with these churches he kept up an active correspondence by means

of letters and messages, and on such errands he lacked not faithful and beloved brethren enough ready to be employed — *Luke; Timotheus; Tychicus; (John) Mark; Demas; Aristarchus; Epaphras; Onesimus; Jesus*, called Justus; and, for a short time, *Epaphroditus* (See on ^{<5047}Colossians 4:7; ^{<5049}Colossians 4:9-12; ^{<5044}Colossians 4:14; ^{<5023}Philemon 1:23,24; see Introduction to Ephesians, Introduction to Philippians, and Introduction to Philemon). That the apostle suffered martyrdom under Nero at Rome has never been doubted. But that the appeal which brought him to Rome issued in his liberation, that he was at large for some years thereafter and took some wide missionary circuits, and that he was again arrested, carried to Rome, and then executed — was the undisputed belief of the early Church, as expressed by CHRYSOSTOM, JEROME, and EUSEBIUS, in the fourth century, up to CLEMENT OF ROME, the “fellow laborer” of the apostle himself (^{<5048}Philippians 4:3), in the first century. The strongest possible confirmation of this is found in the Pastoral Epistles, which bear marks throughout of a more advanced state of the Church, and more matured forms of error, than can well have existed at any period before the appeal which brought the apostle to Rome; which refer to movements of himself and Timothy that cannot without some straining (as we think) be made to fit into any prior period; and which are couched in a manifestly riper style than any of his other Epistles. (See Introduction to First Timothy, Introduction to Second Timothy Introduction to Titus and *Notes*). All this has been called in question by modern critics of great research and acuteness [PETAVIUS, LARDNER, DE WETTE, WIESELER, DAVIDSON, and others]. But those who maintain the ancient view are of equal authority and more numerous, while the weight of argument appears to us to be decidedly on their side.